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## Revolt on the Left

The Norwegian Trade Union Movement's  
Contestation of the European Union

Master's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Dr. Pieter de Wilde

June 2020

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## ABSTRACT

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A considerable amount of political conflict surrounds the European Union (EU). The organisation has confronted a series of crises over the past decade, some conceivably of its own making, giving rise to frequent contestations by domestic actors. How this contestation unfolds, particularly the motivation and process that underlies it, has received little empirical analysis. This thesis undertakes a single case study and claims-making analysis of the Norwegian trade union movement's political contestation of the EU. A case within a non-member state is deemed to be of relevance due to the close and increasingly contested nature of the Norwegian affiliation with the EU. By collecting public claims by trade union actors, a mapping of the content and structure of the movement's EU discourse is performed, relying on an original dataset covering the period 2003-2013. The findings suggest that internal conflict over Norway's association with the EU have intensified over the period, from the reserved though sporadic support for membership in 2003, to the renewed opposition to the EEA Agreement in 2013. The utility and symbolic merits of Europe are a source of competing views within the movement, with the EU commonly framed in opposition to a "Norwegian model".

**Keywords:** European politics, political conflict, EU, trade unionism, claims-analysis

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Labour Party.
EC	European Communities.
ECB	European Central Bank.
ECJ	European Court of Justice.
EEA	European Economic Area.
EEC	European Economic Community.
EFTA	European Free Trade Association.
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union.
ESA	EFTA Surveillance Authority.
EU	European Union.
IMF	International Monetary Fund.
LO	Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions.
NHO	The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise.
SME	Social Democrats against the EU.
SP	Centre Party.
SV	Socialist Left Party.
TCE	The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe.
TEU	Treaty on the European Union.
UK	United Kingdom.
US	United States.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE IS NO politics in Brussels. This is a common assumption about the window, or the lack thereof, for political conflict over the European Union (EU). Over the past 70 years of integration, the EU in its different incarnations has seen a remarkable expansion in size and authority. Despite the many areas of political life over which it holds considerable sway, the organisation has come to earn a reputation for being disconnected from the politics of its constituent societies. This theme is familiar to most; the EU has been an elitist and technocratic endeavour, which has governed by “imagining politics away” (Middelaar, 2019, p. 1). Whereas one might assume that EU politics has rarely been at the forefront of most people’s consciousness, it is likely that some in “Brussels” have preferred to keep it that way.

At the turn of the decade, however, EU conflict has moved to the centre stage of world affairs. Radical right parties and new protest movements across the political spectrum visibly contest the EU polity and its policies. Support for European integration is believed to have been in steady decline throughout the past decade (de Vries, 2018; Hooghe & Marks, 2018). This mood of contestation reached its pinnacle thus far on June 23 2016; when a majority of the British electorate decided, against the advice of most political and economic experts, to withdraw the United Kingdom’s (UK) membership of the EU (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). While many social movements in particular have come to question the merits of “ever closer union”, scholarly and public understanding continue to suffer under the notion that those

who contest the EU have a choice between blind support or resolute rejection of “Europe”. Against this backdrop, attention should be directed towards what mass movements support and oppose about “Europe” and the manner in which they do so. This could add a more nuanced understanding of civil society actors’ support and opposition towards the EU.

This is the purpose of the present thesis. Through a single-case study of one movement whose EU discourse has turned more critical over the years – that of the Norwegian trade union movement – the thesis maps the dynamics of EU contestation, using public claims by members of The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) from 2003 to 2013. The collection of claims allows for mapping the content and structure of EU contestation; what support and opposition is substantially about, which actors are at the centre of it, and to what extent conflict is driven by utilitarian or symbolic concerns. Thus, the thesis asks;

*How does the Norwegian trade union movement contest the European Union?*

The question is empirical and descriptive in focus. It addresses how actors contest the EU, that is, how they act in appraising the merits of the political system and its policies, justify their views and pose questions about alternatives publicly. The EU – within the framework of this thesis – includes not only the question of formal membership accession, but rather covers the entirety of the Norwegian affiliation with Europe. Three sub-questions further inform the thesis structure. These are; (i) *what* issue or object is contested, (ii) *who* in the organisation make which claims and (iii) *why* do they support or oppose certain EU issues.

### **1.1 A history of LO and the EU**

There is a long history of division over the EU within the ranks of the union movement. When a majority of Norwegian voters rejected membership of the EU in the winter of 1994, closely mirroring its sibling event in 1972, the referendum produced deep discord in a country where societal conflict rarely sets the agenda. What is perhaps less known is that similar fault lines over the EU divided the trade union movement. Prior to the 1994 referendum, LO decided – with a slim margin of three votes – to go against EU membership (Dølvik, 2017). Against the wishes of the LO leadership, rank-and-file scepticism proved pivotal in the final vote to oppose accession. This stood in contrast to LO’s stance in 1972, where the organisation decided to provide support for the Norwegian bid for membership.

Since then, however, the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) appeared to largely settle heated debates over the proper response of labour to the European project. Even though LO was hesitant in their collective support for the “half-way house” arrangement that they deemed the EEA Agreement when it was initially conceived in the early 1990s, it has afterwards been fronted as the preferred solution to Norway’s association with the EU (Geyer, 1997, p. 68). Together with the country’s largest employer organisation, The Norwegian Confederation of Enterprise (NHO), LO has for a number of years proved to be among the EEA’s staunchest defenders in the domestic arena (NOU 2012:2, p. 429).

Support for the EEA association from the tripartite organisations has constituted a societal compromise over Norway’s relationship to the EU. However, the compromise has been put under pressure by the rise of a considerable opposition within LO (Dølvik, 2017, p. 190). Though parts of the movement have always displayed scepticism towards grandiose plans for integration, many considered the EEA Agreement to have secured the best of both worlds. On the one hand, it assured market access for trade and commerce that are essential for industrial and export unions while, on the other, circumventing a loss of sovereignty and collective bargaining power thought to follow membership in the EU (Dølvik, 2017). Recent developments have called this belief into question. At the LO congress in 2013, several unions sought to renegotiate the EEA Agreement or terminate the deal altogether, even though it ended with LO narrowly deciding to continue its formal backing (LO, 2013).

For the purposes of this thesis, part of the relevance of the Norwegian case lies in the fact that the movement is once again dealing with a salient debate over Europe. The impression from Norwegian public debate suggests that there might be an increasing hostility towards the EEA Agreement from the trade unions, based on a more principled opposition. This could hold implications for a domestic EU conflict that has long been dominated by strong civil society organisations and comparably weaker parties (Fossum, 2019; Pettersen, Jenssen, & Listhaug, 1996). Furthermore, the case has a wider relevance. Since the movement appears to have gone from staunch supporter of Norway’s current EU affiliation, to one of its sharpest critics, this may constitute one of the few instances where a social-democratic organisation turns “Eurosceptic”. This is perhaps not uncommon in Norway, as there has always been some scepticism towards “Europe”. The country is not a member of the EU.

On the contrary, it is the only state to have rejected membership through popular referenda – twice. Nonetheless, the country is closely integrated in the EU in practice, not least in matters concerning the domestic labour market<sup>1</sup> (Dølvik & Ødegård, 2004; NOU 2012:2, 2012). Thus, while the thesis is restricted to the case of LO, the patterns and themes established may hold some future implications for other centre-left forces' contestation of the EU.

## **1.2 The politicisation of Europe**

While trade unions have rarely been considered central to the study of EU politics, there have long been calls for greater attention to the social and political forces that underlie European integration. In fact, the need for addressing how domestic actors contest and politicise “Europe” has become a focal point of academic analysis ever since the ratification of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), commonly referred to as the Maastricht Treaty, in 1993. Throughout much of the early history of the integration process, partisan politics, civil society and public opinion were believed to play at most a minor role in shaping the course of integration. There was little visible conflict over Europe at the mass level, and the dissenting voices that did exist, generally had little impact on the decisions of governmental elites and supranational actors. This was the era of the so-called “permissive consensus”<sup>2</sup>, when elites were assumed to pursue deeper integration “by stealth”, on the unspoken support of its citizens (Inglehart, 1971; Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970).

However, the consensus is thought to have ended in 1993.<sup>3</sup> The controversies over the Maastricht Treaty, which transformed the European Communities (EC) into the EU, a political union with competences beyond limited matters of trade and economics, strongly polarised public opinion. This period witnessed the “uncorking” of popular opposition to European integration, suggesting that, once public opposition was let out of the bottle, it could not be

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<sup>1</sup> See the Official Norwegian Report (NOU 2012:2, 2012) for a comprehensive overview of Norway's association with the EU.

<sup>2</sup> This is a term widely used among scholars to denote the first forty years of the Community's existence. A largely indifferent public was believed to provide a tacit approval to the European integration project. There are also those who question if the consensus really can be said to have existed (Crespy & Verschuere, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> The demise of the “permissive consensus” is well documented, though the ensuing politicisation of Europe is not always seen as having the EU as its central cause. Bickerton (2018), building on the work of Mair (2013), suggests that the rise of opposition to the EU owes more to a hollowing out of state-society relations and a crisis of representation in Western politics, than as a direct consequence of the creation of the EU.

easily put back in (Franklin, Marsh, & McLaren, 1994). As Hix (2018, p. 73) narrates it, the publics of Europe woke up one day in 1993 to a new reality; a political union with its own flag, anthem, constitutional order and common market had been created, on a rather flimsy popular mandate. In turn, the formation of a new supranational authority gave rise to an enduring opposition to the EU. Mass actors increasingly came to realise the extent to which the EU had a significant impact on domestic societies (Usherwood & Startin, 2012).

In addition to the significance of the Maastricht Treaty in establishing the EU, it also called into question EU scholars' lack of attention to mass politics (Crespy & Verschuere, 2009). On the one hand, there has been a certain tendency among historians to study "Europe" as the outcome of intergovernmental bargaining between "great" and stubborn statesmen or as the final triumph of federalism (Milward, 2000, pp. 281–303). Indeed, some scholars have even mostly ignored European integration.<sup>4</sup> Political scientists, on the other hand, have often focused on bargaining between governments, the (neo)functionalist pressures for further integration, or more narrowly on policymaking at the supranational level (Crespy & Verschuere, 2009, pp. 379–381). However, scholars of both disciplines have tended to avoid connecting their work to the societal foundations that underlie the European project.<sup>5</sup>

Fligstein (2008, p. 9), in his attempt to describe the problem, compared the EU to an iceberg; a massive, floating object whose true size is not perceptible to the naked eye. What lies above the water are only the *visible* institutions and policies of the EU. Most of its structural and societal foundations, are hidden beneath the sea. To Fligstein (2008, p. 27), existing EU scholarships have correctly identified the peak of the iceberg, but are missing the deeper (and sociological) dynamics at work. Hence, as the process of European integration gains momentum and "hits" national societies, the major impact of the collision unfolds within the nation-state – where there are fully formed public spheres and national, political systems with established social cleavages – as opposed to at the EU level. Integration thus works as a *restructuring* force, which opens distributional conflicts and social identities that have remained stable for a long time. This pits domestic actors and organisations against

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<sup>4</sup> *Dark Continent* by Mazower (2009) and *Postwar* by Judt (2011b) make only minor mentions of the EEC/EC/EU.

<sup>5</sup> There are notable exceptions among both historians and political scientists (Haas, 1958; Milward, 2000).

each other in restructured political conflicts, what he calls “euroclashes”.<sup>6</sup>

While Fligstein (2008) sought to reimagine European integration as a set of processes that originated in national societies, the most apparent implication of his approach is the emphasis on political and domestic conflict over the EU. That is, if mass actors, such as political parties, movements, interest groups are the primary participants in new societal “clashes” fought over culture or class, it seems clear that this is where scholars must turn their gaze to examine how these conflicts manifest. These sentiments are already echoed across the research field. There is a consensus that “something like politicisation” has happened in Europe since the Maastricht Treaty (Schmitter, 2009, p. 211). Despite some disagreement over what the central causes and drivers are, many agree that EU conflicts are salient, politicised and increasingly intertwined with sensitive areas of sovereignty, globalisation, distributional conflicts and national identity (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009; De Wilde & Trenz, 2012; De Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, 2018; Kriesi, 2007; Risse, 2014; Schmidt, 2009).

There has been little attention to trade unions’ role in contesting these societal struggles. This may reflect the belief that traditional class politics as the major conflict dimension of Western societies is disappearing. Even so, this has not stopped the many attempts to illustrate “labour’s” supposed grievances in recent years. Since the financial crisis of 2008, and most crucially after the UK’s referendum in 2016 and the election Donald Trump as President of the United States (US), the discontent and disenfranchisement of labour have assumed centre stage in a number of discourses. Working-class citizens from former industrial heartlands, sometimes depicted as causing great “revolts of the rustbelts”, have been central to explanations of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018; Hazeldine, 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Labour is thought to no longer believe they can fully access, or feel deprived of, the benefits of free trade and open markets. Thus, they revolt against the liberal, political settlement that has characterised the Western world for the better part of a century (Gest, 2016; Gidron & Hall, 2017; Rodrik, 2018).

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<sup>6</sup> Though the restructuring effect of European integration have long been known (Haas, 1958; Inglehart, 1971; Schmitter, 1970), most have assumed that domestic social groups would shift loyalties and interests to the supranational level more evenly and smoothly, without the level of conflict that currently characterises EU politics.



Regardless of the accuracy of these assessments, it is difficult to disregard the political volatility and dysfunction that seem to be characterising many Western societies at present. Gone seem the high hopes of the early 1990s, when liberal capitalism was thought to be “the final form of human government” (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 4). As many scholars trace the ills of contemporary globalisation to the internal, societal discontents in Western societies (Ikenberry, 2018; Rodrik, 2018), the particular omission of organised labour seems strange. The organisations of labour and trade unions have been among the central allies in the post-war settlement that characterised many Western societies. They have been characterised as stabilising institutions for the post-war, liberal-democratic state and the regulated, market economy of a “Fordist” class compromise between capital and labour (Streeck & Hassel, 2003). As there is much discussion of a failure of the “liberal order” to provide basic, societal stability and fairness, there is surprisingly less attention to how unions might contest contemporary, political developments; what they say, how they appraise and act towards societal arrangements, and whether they seek to provide corrections or alternatives – which in the Norwegian case would presumably be directed towards the EU.

### **1.3 Interests, ideas or ideologies?**

As illustrated by the previous section, there is extensive literature on mass conflict over the EU. However, research on trade unionism and the EU, save for a few valuable scholarships, is more sporadic. This is also complicated by the substantial differences among trade unions between countries, which makes comparative analysis difficult. For instance, while continental unions have mostly been supportive of EU integration, Scandinavian unions are often considered “Eurosceptic” and labelled “reluctant Europeans” (Leconte, 2010, p. 227; Mathers, Milner, & Taylor, 2017; Miljan, 1977). Previous research on Norwegian “scepticism” has been characterised by two approaches; a rationalist tradition that focuses on interests and a constructivist school placing emphasis on the role of ideas and values.

Geyer (1997) provides a comprehensive, historical interpretation of the Norwegian labour movement’s relationship to the EU ahead of the 1994 referendum. In a comparative study of the Norwegian and British social democrats’ shift to pro-EU membership positions in 1980s, he asks why this went so smoothly in the UK Labour Party, while it proved incredible divisive within the ranks of the Norwegian Labour Party (AP). The answer lies, according to him, in

the relative strength of Norwegian social democracy. The system of centralised, corporate bargaining and tripartite relations made the EU an unattractive alternative to organised labour. Membership did not suit their preferences. Given the likely loss of position and power should LO have to bargaining at the EU level, membership “offered few immediate advantages to Norwegian unions” (Geyer, 1997, p. 5). Market access was, at the time, already secured through the EEA Agreement, signed in 1992. Marks and Wilson (2000, pp. 442–448), argue along similar lines; EU positions among social democratic parties is explained by the extent to which the national, political system is conducive to social democracy. From within strong and highly institutionalised welfare states, social democrats will commonly regard integration as a threat to previous, national achievements.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, Ingebritsen (2000) applies the lens of political economy to explain why the Nordic states decided to pursue integrationist policies in the 1990s. Although her work seeks to explain the variation in the countries’ approach to the European question, not the role of trade unions as such, Ingebritsen (2000) sees opposition or support to the EU as driven primarily by the (material) interest of the country’s leading, economic sectors. This gives a prominent place to trade unions and industrial relations actors, who, in the Norwegian case, were not convinced by the economic benefits of EU membership. While her perspective does not exclude ideational explanations altogether, she regards ideas as secondary to interests. Material preferences underlie, or act as a substructure to, the visible discourses and politics of the referendum campaigns in the 1990s. As she notes, “Nordic constructions of the EC. . . reflect the preferences of prominent, well-organised groups within each society” (Ingebritsen, 2000, p. 43). Dølvik and Stokland (1992, p. 165) also highlight the importance of sectoral interests, but note how there are *conflicting* interests within the movement – there is no singular preference for the trade union confederation. Those organised in sheltered sectors were sceptical of open EU markets and the effects of international capital mobility. Conversely, unions from export industries were more inclined to view integration as advantageous to their core preferences.

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<sup>7</sup> The argument is also stated in reverse; in systems with weak traditions or unfavourable conditions for social democracy, centre-left parties are likely to adopt pro-EU positions on integration issues (Marks & Wilson, 2000).

While these studies provide valuable insights into the Norwegian trade union movement's relationship to the EU, they are insufficient to parts of the research agenda of this thesis. There are two shortcomings which are of particular importance. First, all referenced studies, with the exception of Marks and Wilson (2000), are tied in the temporal sense to the 1994 referendum on membership and does not specifically concern the manner in which trade unions contest the EU. Notably, the issue Norwegian entry into the EU is not the main dividing line in current debates on Europe within the trade union movement, nor are the trade unions contesting a popular referendum. It is not given that, over a decade after the referendum, explanations for the outcome in 1994 are as relevant for the question of how unions contest the EU or EEA Agreement as they might have been at the time. Referendums are also highly contentious events (Sara Binzer Hobolt, 2009). Voters are faced with making a binary in/out choice at the ballot box, within a highly polarised setting, which resolves once the referendum campaign ends and "ordinary" politics resumes.

Second, the approach to the actors' alleged "interests" are perhaps not as convincing upon closer inspection. Ingebritsen (2000) argues that industrial relations organisations make rational calculations about whether or not they stand to gain from market integration in Europe. This is not an unreasonable argument. However, the "preferences" of the trade unions' ahead of the membership referendum, are in fact deduced from their placement and position in the country's industrial structure. Marks and Wilson (2000) *hypothesise* positions of political parties based on societal cleavage structures. Geyer (1997) too, bestow trade unions a stance and a particular kind of opposition, based on their "traditionalist" defence of the domestic system of industrial relations. When taking these points into consideration, how certain can we be of the unions supposed preferences against the EU? Presumably, the close victory for the LO factions that opposed EU membership ahead of 1994, also suggests that there was considerable *support* for entry into the newly formed EU among the trade unions. Can these scholarships show which arguments and motivations that one would assume interests against membership are based on?

The constructivist school argue that motivations are essentially beyond the reach of the rationalists. Neumann (2001, 2003), echoed by Skinner (2012), takes issue with Ingebritsen's (2000) basic presupposition; that interests can be understood from certain economic and

industrial characteristics. According to him, the political economy and electoral research approaches which have used Rokkan's (1967) six socio-economic cleavages to explain the referendum outcomes, suffer from a particular problem.<sup>8</sup> They do not, or are not able to, explore the central question of *why* actors decided to oppose EU entry. These works may correctly identify important patterns of behaviour but do not process the motivations that underlie said behaviour. Their attempts at exploring motivations, on the back of statistical patterns, are misguided (Neumann, 2003, pp. 88–89). There is no given link between a particular placement in an economic structure or a certain social affiliation which “reveal”, so to speak, the interests of the actor in question. He reiterates an argument by anthropologist Geertz to criticise the common rationalist deduction of preferences:

The main defects of the interest theory are that its psychology is too anemic and its sociology too muscular. Lacking a developed analysis of motivation, it has been constantly forced to oscillate between a narrow and superficial utilitarianism that sees men as impelled by rational calculation of their consciously recognized personal advantage and a broader, but no less superficial, heroicism that speaks with a studied vagueness of men's ideas as somehow “reflecting”, “expressing”, “corresponding to”, “emerging from” or “conditioned by” their social commitments (Neumann, 2001, p. 21).

Geertz' criticism is in many ways directed towards both rationalist analysis and constructivist attempts to infer characteristics of political actors, such as interests, identities and values. The criticism seems applicable to certain parts of the literature on Euroscepticism, which has shown a preoccupation with distinguishing between types of oppositions, which are treated as the attitudes or predispositions of the groups and actors (De Wilde & Trenz, 2012, p. 545).<sup>9</sup> Neumann (2001) draws on Geertz' perspective to do away with “rational interests” and voting behaviour, to locate Norwegian scepticism towards “Europe” in language and discursive representations. Namely, the EU or Europe as concept are interpreted in relation to histories and cultural narratives about the nation-state and its significance. This obviously

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<sup>8</sup> Rokkan and Lipset's cleavage theory conceives of party systems as rooted in a series of historical conflicts and revolutions that have given way to durable structures – or social cleavages – within national societies. These are thought to have been activated in the EU referendums, and have, subsequently, been the subject of much research (Bjørklund, 1982, 1996; Pettersen, Jenssen, & Listhaug, 1996; Ryghaug & Jenssen, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Some applications of Euroscepticism run counter to the understanding of contestation that is chosen for this thesis. Although insights from the literature on Euroscepticism is used here, the term itself is not employed.

takes a very different understanding compared to Ingebritsen (2000), who notably considered discursive representations and ideas secondary to interests.

The two traditions thus provide several starting points for an analysis of how organised labour contests the EU, even if the conclusions of the studies differ significantly. There are few scholars on Europe that reject the importance of either interests or ideas on the way in which actors contest the EU; few are comfortable choosing one explanation over the other. In fact, a deficiency in the existing literature is the lack of studies that actually combine a focus on positions and preferences on the EU, with attention to which meanings and representations might characterise the discourse over Europe that these actors are a part of. Díez Medrano (2003) seminal work on attitudes towards European integration does just this. It asks the basic question of how views on “Europe” can differ so significantly, depending on which national identity you hold. He compares the UK, Spain and Germany with respect to their discourses on integration, using frame analysis and statistical methods, to show how national understandings are crucial for shaping both attitudes and behaviour. Despite disagreements over analytical tradition and purpose in the Norwegian case, it is not clear that the rationalist focus on interests exclude the constructivist attention to ideas, and vice versa. In establishing an approach to the study of trade union action on EU issues, specifically, it seems paramount not to limit the analysis to either material interests *or* discursive meanings, but rather combine them. This will allow for a more comprehensive mapping of actor positions as well as central understandings that the trade union movement’s draw on when they contest the EU.

#### **1.4 Thesis outline**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two introduces the conceptual framework that the frame analysis is based on. The variety of ways to employ frames require some elaboration on which approach is chosen and, in particular, what it is meant to achieve in this thesis. The sections of the second chapter partly correspond to the sub-questions posed at the beginning of the introduction, which are summarised in a more coherent framework at the end of the chapter. Hence, the choices of the theoretical approach inform and runs through the subsequent analysis.

Chapter three designs the methodology of the thesis. The conceptual concerns of the previous chapter are revisited and operationalised into a systematic approach to the empirical analysis. It builds on an established method known as claims-making analysis. This method is adapted to the case of how the trade union movement provide support and opposition to the EU. The conflict within the ranks of organised labour is deemed to be channelled through the mass media. Certainly, few are surprised by the fact that the media is not always a reliable source of information. Nevertheless, it is argued that certain features of the thesis' design make such issues less pressing. Chapter four present the findings of the thesis, which are analysed as a conventional mapping of contestation. Its structure corresponds to the sub-questions outlined, thus focusing on *what* the conflict is about, *who* contests and *why* they choose to do so.

In contrast, chapter five goes beyond the stricter confines of the claims analysis and links the empirical findings to a historical discussion of the themes and causes that underlie the trade unions' conflict over the EU. The chapter seeks to reconstruct three periodical narratives that are essential to understand the conflict over the European question in an overarching sense. The main findings of the thesis are summarised in chapter six. Organised labour's debate over the EU has shifted from a conflict over membership, to a revolt over the EEA Agreement, mostly driven by the grassroots, while there are changes and reassertions in the dominant framing of the EU over the course of the period.

## EUROPE — CONTESTED IDEAS, COMPETING FRAMES

*Europe, evidently, does not exist. It is neither a continent, nor a culture, nor a people, nor a history. It is neither defined by a single frontier nor by a common destiny or dream.*

— JACQUES ATTALI

**W**HAT IS THE meaning of Europe? One of the challenges of approaching political conflict over Europe is that the term is so often without a clear and common meaning. Historically, attempts to define its cultural and territorial boundaries have always been deeply contested, while this endeavour has proven no less difficult in the contemporary context, which sees the idea of Europe so entangled with the politics and governance of the EU. Historian Tony Judt (2011a, p. 1) once remarked that Europe had become “not so much a place as an idea”. While this may be true, the ensuing problem, however, is that political actors assign the EU several, *conflicting* meanings. The idea of the EU, or “Europe” in a broader sense, are malleable inventions. When political actors contest the EU, it cannot be assumed that they do so on the basis of shared representations of the world. In order to study contestation, it seems necessary to engage with the ideas and perceptions of the actors that contest the political system and its policies.

This chapter develops the theoretical foundation of the thesis. It establishes the concepts that inform the analysis of trade union contestation of the EU in subsequent chapters. In the first section, *framing* is introduced as a way to capture the reasoning and justification of political actors. The second section explores what can be expected from the political behaviour of trade unions, while this is followed by a discussion of what it means to contest the political system and policies of the EU, with particular attention to Norway as a non-member state. The conceptual approach of the thesis is summarised at the end of the chapter.

## 2.1 What's at stake? Framing the issue

When we interpret the world, we must emphasise certain aspects of perceived reality, while leaving out others. This selection is, at its most basic level, understood as a frame (Entman, 1993, p. 52). We rely on frames as fragments or partial images that guide our perception of a world that lies beyond direct experience. Frames can be seen as “[. . .] a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 143).<sup>1</sup>

Political conflict always entails some disagreement over what the problem is and how it is best solved (Schattschneider, 1975). Frames therefore lie at the heart of politics. However, at this general level, the frame concept is too broad to be of much analytical use. Entman (2007, p. 164) has made a further distinction between the four functions of the framing process. This thesis restricts itself to the first of his identified functions; namely the problem definition aspect. What about the EU is defined as a problem, and what is the preferred solution? Applied to the case of the Norwegian union movement, analysing frames allows for an assessment of trade union members' justifications for EU support or opposition. The problem definition tells us something about *how* members of LO defend their positions, and *why* they, by their own utterances, are for or against the EU. This approach to frame analysis cannot explore the processes in which political attitudes were formed. However, the attention to the arguments of actors provides information about an aspect deemed lacking in

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<sup>1</sup> The frame concept has its origins in research on social movements, and their capacity for collective mobilisation and social meaning construction (Goffman, 1974; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Snow & Benford, 1988).



EU contestation, namely “the way in which Europe was conceived” (Mair, 2007b, p. 162).

There are arguably few issues in politics where individual perceptions differ as much as in the case of the EU. For many of its supporters, the EU symbolises a civilizational dream; it is the Kantian project that helped entrench peace on a continent with a “dark” past of war and hostility. “Europe” holds the promise of a “normative” or postmodern order that advances and protects a certain liberal model on the world stage (Cooper, 2000; Manners, 2002; Rifkin, 2004). For of its critics, conversely, the EU acts as the antagonist of the European nation-state – as opposed to its rescuer. Here, the project of “ever closer union” is held responsible for the demise of the welfare state and the hollowing out of national democracy.

While it is tempting to simply disregard these evaluations, certainly those that clash with our own, these are common ways of representing the EU in national discourses. The frames are part of the construction and reproduction of ideas about the “European project”, even if some of the arguments make little sense on objective grounds. Disregarding their existence, however, would as Díez Medrano and Gray (2010, p. 196) argue, “mistakenly assume that all actors represent reality in the same way”. There are likely few that would disagree with the statement that individuals differ in the way they represent their social environment. However, in research on European integration, the opposite has often been assumed (Díez Medrano, 2003, p. 5).<sup>2</sup> Citizens and organisations – even cultures, societies and nation-states – have been examined as if they always assign the same meaning to “Europe” – that their frame of the political world is a shared one.

Most claims about the merits or disadvantages of the EU can be considered a frame. However, it is possible to distinguish between two, broad categories: *economic* and *cultural frames*. This distinction is well-established in political behaviour research, and corresponds to the interest and identity traditions, respectively, which were outlined in the literature review (Sara B. Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; McLaren, 2006). It has also been explicitly linked to Habermas’ (1989, 1995) communicative theory of action, and his demarcation between the different justifications that actors may invoke when they explain and defend their actions in

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<sup>2</sup> In studies on the EU, outside of the perspective of Díez Medrano, it has been more common to analyse how the mass media “frame” news stories on the EU (de Vreese, Semetko, & Peter, 2001; Statham & Trenz, 2012)

the public sphere (Helbling, Hoeglinger, & Wüest, 2009).

*Economic frames* refer to arguments based on utilitarian reasoning. When a claim is justified by references to the attainment of a specific, instrumental goal, the actor calls upon an economic frame. These frames can be seen as pragmatic justifications, or a form of instrumental rationality that has its roots in utilitarian philosophy (Habermas, 1995).<sup>3</sup> When the EU is framed in economic terms, an evaluation of utility of the EU in relation to its constituent states and societies (regardless of whether that utility is tied to its institutions, markets, specific policies or the regime itself) is performed (Helbling, Höglinger, & Wüest, 2012, p. 239). If EU integration is said to impact on labour market employment and protection, wages, or deemed necessary for economic growth, arguments are justified using an economic frame. These frames are seen as common in the classic left-right conflict (Helbling et al., 2012).

*Cultural frames*, on the other hand, appeal to symbolic or ethical purposes. When using a cultural frame, a position is justified by whether it adheres to a particular set of values. This can be the values of a community of belonging or a cultural identity, whether at the national or cosmopolitan level. These are issues not defended for their mere instrumental utility, sometimes referred to as ethical-political arguments (Habermas, 1995). When cultural frames are used to evaluate the EU, it typically concerns how “Europe” influences values, identities and cultural traditions (Helbling et al., 2012, pp. 237–239). Cultural frames can also evaluate issues deemed to exist on a left-right cleavage. However, if issues are evaluated through a cultural frame, they are notably judged on symbolic (and not utilitarian) grounds. Crucially though, both economic and cultural frames can be invoked in support or opposition to the EU; they can go both ways on the question of where the EU’s political authority should start and end. This particular point is revisited at the end of the chapter.

## 2.2 Two faces of trade unionism

What is a trade union? In a classic definition from the industrial relations discipline, unions were described as “continuous associations of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining

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<sup>3</sup> One of the key principles of utilitarianism is the argument the consequence of any action – its utility – should act as the main ethical standard by which the action should be judged as either right or wrong.

or improving the conditions of their employment” (Webb & Webb, 1894/1975, p. 1). Put differently, unions can be seen as organisations or collectives of workers, who bargain on their constituents’ behalf in the labour market. This definition may give the impression that trade unions are a straightforward matter; they behave and contest in whatever way meets the preferences and improves the welfare of its organised members.

However, the nature of the union is a matter of scholarly disagreement.<sup>4</sup> Neoclassical economists, for instance, often characterise unions as “market imperfections”. Trade unions seek to monopolise the supply of a particular kind of commodity – human labour – inadvertently raising wages above competitive levels, which hinders the free market from delivering efficient output and optimal outcomes (see J. T. Bennett & Kaufman, 2011). This perspective construes the union as a *market* actor. It is seen as an organisation for interest representation that has a specific role and particular economic impact when defending its members’ preferences in the labour market. Social science disciplines, on the other hand, have commonly found this position far too narrow. Although the organisation performs an instrumental, market function, they exert considerable, political pressure on policymakers and function as distinct social communities. In historical terms, the union became a vehicle for mass representation and labour involvement in politics (Ebbinghaus, 1995; Hyman, 2001). Certainly, it is difficult to look beyond the fact that trade unions have a *political* function, even if this “face” is often sacrificed at the altar of parsimony by the neoclassical economist.

Trade unions can contest the EU by both utilitarian and cultural frames. The integration process clearly influences the structure and function of labour markets, and the policy area falls, at least partly, under the jurisdiction of EU legislation. It must be assumed that trade unions will exhibit instrumental responses to any legislative or political changes that influences their members wages, benefits, rights and level of protection in the market. There must obviously be some degree of utilitarian reasoning in organised labour’s interpretation of the EU. However, this does not mean that the trade union movement will not contest

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<sup>4</sup> Students of social movements (Marks, 2014; Marks & McAdam, 1996; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 1978), political science, economy and sociology (Bourdieu, 2003; Habermas, 1979; Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Olson, 1965; Schmitter, 1974; Streeck & Schmitter, 1985), Norwegian labour historians (Maurseth, 1987; Nyhamar, 1990) and industrial relations scholars (Dølvik, 2000; Hyman, 2001; Kelly, 2012) conceptualise “the union” differently.

“softer” issues, such as communal values, national identities or ideology, all of which typically assume a symbolic logic, when they contest the EU. This perspective is often overlooked, which seems strange taking into account the historical development of union organisations.

Trade unions originally emerged from national struggles between labour and capital from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century across Western Europe (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Tilly, 1978). The rise of democratic polities allowed labour movements to mobilise for mass representation within the institutions of European states, significantly expanding civil rights, as well as the ability of lower classes to organise as social movements. As Ebbinghaus (1995) remarks, this meant that the working-class party and trade union were conceived as the “twin” offspring of a larger labour movement. The separation into two institutions – the union and the party – was mostly the result of the movement’s desire to contest two domains of the state; the corporate and electoral arena, respectively (Ebbinghaus, 1995, p. 56). While labour parties have eclipsed unions in political importance in later decades, unions were in some countries the more central of the two in mass mobilisation. Often, they also assumed formative roles in the establishment of labour parties. This was the case in Britain, where statesman Ernest Bevin declared that “the Labour Party has grown out of the bowels of the Trade Union Congress” (Marks, 2014, p. 3).

Even though labour organisations were borne out of similar conflicts that arose from the labour-capital cleavage across Western Europe, they in practice became *national* organisations. Unions have evolved to primarily organise members and press for changes *inside* the nation-state, where they are “embedded in distinctly national structures of political opportunity” (Marks & McAdam, 1996, p. 260). Even though organised labour is often known for having internationalist policies and causes, they were indeed prone to embrace nationalist ideologies throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, like most other societal groups at the time (Erne, 2008, pp. 26–27).<sup>5</sup> These characteristic have made unions idiosyncratic organisations, with notable differences between countries (Freeman, 1994, p. 15). In many ways, this should not be surprising. Trade unions depend on national communities to organise the workforce and

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<sup>5</sup> Internationalist ideology and national practices are not seen as opposites here, as they can clearly be complementary. One feature of the EU opposition in 1994 in Norway was indeed the embrace of an open internationalism, with a positive conception of the sovereign state (Ryghaug & Jenssen, 1999)

mobilise for political change. They are strongly rooted to the institutions of the nation-state and may interpret, or just strategically invoke, cultural frames when it comes to the EU and European integration.

As for the trade unions' political behaviour, there has been some confusion over how the internal and institutional structure of the organisations shape their actions (Marks, 2014). Political scientists have tended to see unions as a parallel to political parties. This has meant tools of research on partisan politics have also been applied to the trade union. According to Marks (2014, p. 6), however, unions are much less coherent entities, compared to the centralised and hierarchical structure of most political parties. Following this assertion, it cannot simply be assumed that these organisations operate on similar grounds. Ebbinghaus (1995, p. 52) further emphasises this criticism by describing some of the crucial difference between the sectoral trade unions and the leadership of the national confederation:

One of the problems in applying a thesis on party systems to union movements is related to the more complex organizational structure of labor unions. Unlike a centralized political party, a union movement is an alliance that is composed not of one organization, but of a loosely coupled network of relatively autonomous affiliates that are incompletely coordinated by a higher order peak association: the union center (Ebbinghaus, 1995, p. 52).

While leaders of professionalised parties can rely on hierarchical, cartel-like structures, where it is easier to force members into line (Katz & Mair, 2009), this luxury is rarer for union peak organisations. They will have to tread more carefully around its affiliated unions.<sup>6</sup> It can be assumed that the fault line between the leadership and union grassroots grows when the EU is discussed. Traditionally, it has been assumed that there is an elite-public divide for support for European integration in general, and the EU in particular (Hooghe, 2003). This suggests that an analysis of trade union behaviour has to account for differences in opinion between leadership and membership, as well as the looser, organisational structure of the union movement.

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<sup>6</sup>Michels' famous *Iron law of oligarchy* states that all organisations eventually succumb to oligarchical rule by a few. The theory was partly inspired by Michels' own observations of elite-membership divides within trade unions.

### 2.3 Euroscepticism — sceptical about what?

Too often the question of support and opposition for the EU lacks the subtlety that most would take for granted in national, political debates. Politicians are quickly labelled “europhile” if they acknowledge some benefit from EU cooperation, while, on the other hand, any minor criticism will see them lumped together with the “eurosceptics”. This builds on the assumption that “the EU” is some singular object that one can either praise or reject. Yet, support and opposition are not incompatible categories insofar as the EU is concerned. As Pierre Bourdieu remarks;

One can be against a Europe that supports financial markets, and at the same time be in favour of a Europe that, through concerted policies, blocks the way to the violence of those markets . . . [...] only a social, European state would be able to contrast the disaggregative effects of monetary economy: so one can be hostile to a European integration based only upon the Euro, without opposing the political integration of Europe (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 62).

In national, political systems, it is common to express support and opposition towards different aspects of a political regime. Some even see this as a prerequisite for a functioning, democratic polity (Mair, 2007a). Following Easton’s (1965) classic understanding of political support, analysing contestation makes little sense without also addressing what the contestation is *directed at* – the polity or policies of the EU, in this case. Easton (1965) distinguishes between specific and diffuse support. While the former term may be seen as support for certain *policies* and collective decisions acted on by authorities or an incumbent government, the latter refers to a (often deeper) affective support for the *polity* or entire political regime. The necessity of distinguishing between the various objects which political actors may choose to contest, has already been noted thoroughly in the literature on Euroscepticism (De Wilde & Trenz, 2012; Sara B. Hobolt & de Vries, 2016; Kopecký & Mudde, 2002; Risse, 2014).

What does the Norwegian union movement contest about the EU? Is it primarily the issue of EU membership or the EEA Agreement, and what kind of contestation is it?<sup>7</sup> These

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<sup>7</sup> Some may see all Norwegian contestation of the EU to be at the “polity” level, i.e. directed towards the political system in its entirety, due to its status as a non-member. However, this makes little in terms of the country’s close EEA association and the assumed willingness of central political actors to participate in

questions are important for understanding to what extent contestation is of a “softer” or more principled character, but it is also greatly complicated by two factors in particular. First, the political entity of the EU has an “unsettled” status. While most nation-state regimes commonly have a reserve of *polity* support from its citizens, the EU regime cannot rely on the same base of diffuse and affective support. The nature of the EU polity is itself unclear, as it has moved beyond a mere intergovernmental cooperation between nation-states – though not (yet) evolved into a full-fledged federation (Mair, 2013). This constitutional ambiguity can also be seen to blur the conceptual boundaries between the two types of support.

Second, in addition to the complexities of the EU system, the Norwegian non-membership introduces more institutional layers to account for. Within the Union, someone contesting a country’s EU membership displays *polity* scepticism (as they, ostensibly, reject the desirability of their country’s continued participation in the EU). The same could be said for contesting Norwegian membership, that it involves *polity contestation*, since it must be assumed that political actors for or against the option, make judgements on the merits of the EU as a political system. However, it is less clear whether debate over the EEA Agreement represents a form of polity or policy contestation.

Certainly, even as a non-member state of the EU, Norway is subject to EU regulations through the EEA Agreement. Formally speaking, the EEA is the legal construct that brings together the European Free Trade Association<sup>8</sup> (EFTA) countries with the 28 member-states of the EU on the policy areas that are specified in the Agreement. In exchange for, among other things, market access for Norwegian goods and services, the EEA requires EFTA states to adopt the accumulated legislation<sup>9</sup> of the EU on relevant policy areas. However, the countries lack the right to participate in the policy formulation process at the EU level (Fossum, 2015). In 2012, the Norwegian EEA Review Committee (2012) even concluded that Norway’s unusual association was an attempt to be both outside and inside the EU at the same time; as both a member and a non-member state. With regards to the internal

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European integration.

<sup>8</sup> EFTA is the regional trade organization that is composed of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway, originally set up as an alternative, intergovernmental association to rival the European Economic Community.

<sup>9</sup> The body of Community law is sometimes referred to as the EU’s *acquis communautaire*.

market, Norwegian participation and compliance is considered on par with other member states (Gstöhl, 2015).

On the face of it, arguments on the merits of the EEA Agreement cannot be automatically assigned to one category of support. One can imagine that actors oppose the EEA Agreement on the basis that they want certain parts removed or renegotiated, without wanting to opt out of EU association altogether. It is also common for policy evaluation of directive or regulations, to contribute to evaluations of the EEA. Some trade unionist may also want to terminate the current association, in order to apply for formal membership. It is likely that debate over the EEA Agreement will be characterised by both *policy* and *polity* contestation. According to Skinner (2013, p. 126), this may be a minor problem, as debates on the EU in non-member states are dominated by issues of membership, where “divisions between pro-European and Eurosceptic stances run along this divide”. However, in the current context, this seems rather outdated, as there is a lively “EEA-debate”, at least within the Norwegian trade union movement. Europe is discussed more in terms of Norway’s current association agreement with the EU, or with regards to particularly controversial directives, as opposed to the issue of formal membership (Dølvik, 2017). Opposition to EU directives or regulations resembles *policy* contestation. Commonly these are contested in similar fashion to the “normal politics” of the domestic system, though without the ability to directly influence the policy-making process.

#### 2.4 A frame typology of EU contestation

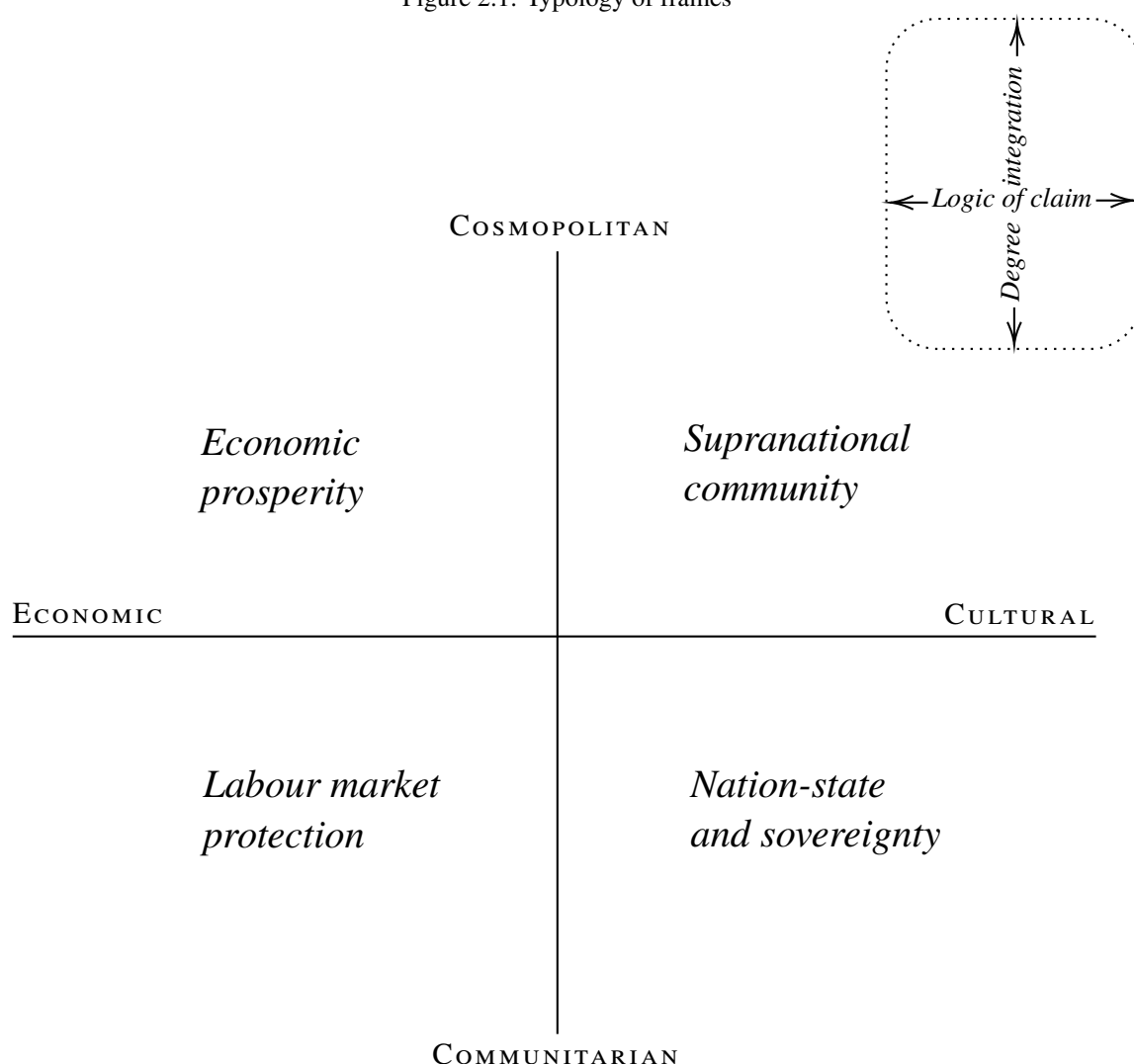
To map the trade unions conflict over the EU, the elements of this chapter can be synthesised into a more coherent, conceptual approach. At the basic level, the trade unions’ behaviour can be differentiated into the arguments (or *frames*) that LO members use when contesting the EU, the primary objects (or *issues*) they aim their actions towards, and whether contestation is driven by the LO leadership or its many affiliated trade unions (as *actors*).

With regards to framing, unionists who defend material interests, such as wages, labour rights or market regulations, are assumed to draw on *economic* frames. Furthermore, if the trade unions are concerned about the erosion of a national tradition or set of values, they are expected to invoke *cultural* frames. Notably, the frames can appeal to both support and



opposition to the EU. This is an important realisation. Namely, that the act of contesting the EU almost inevitably touches upon the question of what constitutes the appropriate allocation of political authority between the national and supranational level (Erne, 2008). Phrased in simpler terms; should there be more or less Europe? To clarify the assumptions about trade union argument on the EU, a typology of frames is established. When frame type is combined with the question of the allocation of political authority (or the *degree* of integration)<sup>10</sup>, this produces an overview of the trade unionists' most likely arguments about the EU. This is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Typology of frames



<sup>10</sup>Cosmopolitan and communitarian may refer to distinct, political ideologies. Within the framework of this thesis, however, the terms are used for the purpose of building frame categories, indicating the end points of where the limits of decision-making competency should be drawn.

This typology provides a framework to analyse the various arguments that are articulated about the EU polity and its policies. It distinguishes between four broad types of frames. Thus, arguments that draw on *economic prosperity* frames are utilitarian and advocate attachment to the EU system, presumably to gain the benefits of market access. Conversely, *labour market protection* frames are also utilitarian, but seeks to reassert national control in order to stem a perceived threat of the loss of labour rights, lack of worker protection and erosion of core, welfare-state features. *Nation-state and sovereignty* prioritise the values or institutions of a national community and deems EU integration problematic towards this cause. This category has its reverse in *supranational community*, which perceives Europe as advantageous due to a shared set of values and complementary identities with the rest of Europe. Naturally, there may be other ways political actors frame the EU which do not correspond, or even appears to contradict, this stylised typology. Nevertheless, a clear, conceptual framework is required for the analysis. In subsequent chapters, this typology informs central operationalisations and empirical choices.

## DESIGNING THE CLAIMS-ANALYSIS

**T**HIS CHAPTER explains the research design and methods of the thesis. As political conflict over the EU is established as a multidimensional phenomenon at the conceptual level, how can one go about measuring it empirically? This question concerns the choice of appropriate methods for social scientific inquiry. Although employing methods is sometimes considered among the more mundane and procedural tasks of the research process, it is far from a trivial exercise. On the contrary, for while theory, or its building blocks, concepts, provide an initial means to reduce the complexity of the political world for analysis, the choice of methods is where abstract assumptions are translated into observable phenomena (Manheim, Rich, Willnat, & Brians, 2008, p. 15). As the study of EU politics, or any politics for that matter, is rife with abstract terms and competing meanings for the concepts we wish to study, the discipline is more, not less, dependent on its tools of measurement being precise.

The purpose of the chapter is to deliver such precision in the examination of Norwegian trade unions' contestation of the EU. The first section conceptualises the claims-making analysis and its central unit of analysis. While care is taken to avoid a lengthy detour on the philosophy of science, analysing the political arguments in the public sphere indeed exhibits a certain disciplinary attraction, insofar as it combines rationalist precision with the contextually rich, or "thick", description often associated with the interpretative tradition. In later sections, data selection, and the central concepts of frame, actor and issue are operationalised.

### 3.1 Defining the claim

This thesis uses a mixed methods form of content analysis known as claims-making analysis (Koopmans & Statham, 1999b, 2010). The approach has as its basis a small unit of analysis – a “claim” – which is analysed and aggregated to show discursive and behavioural patterns for the political actors or groups under scrutiny. A “claim” is defined as a communicative action in the public sphere that consists of:

[ . . . ] the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors (Statham & Gray, 2005, p. 64).

Thus, claims-making includes any speech act “performed” by a claimant in the public domain. When political actors express political opinions – whether they criticise a policy, seek to shape the public’s definition of a social problem or try to mobilise mass support for their cause – they participate in claims-making (Koopmans & Statham, 1999b, 2010). Claims are, in other words, a constituent part of most, if not all, political debates. In its original guise, the term incorporated other forms of action – such as civil protests, social struggles for recognition, often outside traditional political arenas, and even violence – which most would deem to be beyond the “conventional” idea of a claim, that is, a type of argument expressed in verbal terms. The method was initially borne out of social movement research. Its central scholars wanted to gain a richer understanding of what was studied under the label of “contentious” or protest politics, which was often deemed to be an unconventional form of political behaviour (Benford & Snow, 2000; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Imig & Tarrow, 2001; Tarrow, 1994).

For the purposes of the thesis, a claim is more narrowly defined. With media articles as the source of data, it limits claims-making to the verbal arguments that are expressed by political actors and, in turn, come to feature in the news cycle. This defines the “claim” as any speech act articulated by a trade unionist associated with the Norwegian union confederation, who holds a purposeful view on an EU issue (*for* or *against*), and who may frame and justify his or her position in terms of a distinct evaluation or problem definition (*economic* or *cultural*). With regards to the textual structure, the claims may be elaborate and several paragraphs long, or only a few words long. In either case, it is only counted as a single claim, if it satisfies

the criteria of the definition. One central requirement, however, is that the claim is made directly by a claimant or political actor. It is not uncommon for opinions and statements to be attributed to public figures in newspaper, either by journalists or other claimants. Yet, in such cases, we are really getting an *interpretation* of an actor's argument, not the claim as it was originally articulated. Therefore, an argument attributed to a claimant does not pass the selection criteria.

This way of conducting content analysis has two notable advantages. First, the claims that are included in the analysis are the result of the direct, strategic action of political actors. This allows the researcher to link claims-makers to the actual arguments that comprise a discourse. In agreement with Schmidt (2008), discourse is understood as the processes in which ideas and narrative content is conveyed legitimated through the public sphere by political actors, which is referred to as "the communicative discourse". In conventional discourse analyses, the researcher relies on *contextual* interpretation of debates, text, semiotics and other discursive practices. However immersive the analysis is, most rely on implicit methods; the researcher's subjective evaluation is at the centre, and many struggle to connect discursive findings to actual claims-makers that participate in the public sphere, not least so that it can be reproduced by others (Crespy, 2015, p. 105). However, in a claims-analysis, it is the direct claims and political demands of actors that are analysed. This allows researchers to explore the linkages between the opinions that actors promote (which position), on political problems (on what issue), and connect this to specific claims-makers (expressed by whom), in methodologically explicit terms.

Secondly, the interpretative qualities of the discourse analysis are not lost by resorting to a quantitative aggregation of actor claims. On the contrary, the choice of collecting various elements of a claim – including its discursive content and argumentative structure – means that the researcher can retain or integrate attractive features from the discourse analysis (Koopmans & Statham, 1999b). When political actors make claims in the public sphere, they do not simply provide positions on objective and unequivocal societal phenomena. They also assign and attribute *meaning* to the issue in question, an element that is difficult to approach unless one is also attentive to the discursive aspects of claims (Crespy & Verschueren, 2009; Díez Medrano, 2003).

By making the structure of the argument part of the coding scheme, it is then possible to link issue, position and actor, with the *justification* (or frame) for why actors adopt certain positions in the first place (Koopmans & Statham, 1999b). Concerning “Europe”, there are a plurality of competing representations and contested meanings, that are difficult to attain with a quantitative-only approach. As already touched on briefly, the statistical methodology of electoral studies can often only assume what kind of motivations underlie their patterns. These studies excel at precise and reliable measurement of macro patterns. Yet, they are not particularly suited to explore the frames, meanings and representations that may guide political behaviour (Neumann, 2001, pp. 88–90). Claims-making analysis, on the other hand, combine elements from the “positivist” and “interpretivist” tradition in the study of politics, since it combines the former’s positional analysis, with the latter’s sensitivity to actor perceptions.<sup>1</sup>

These two, long-standing, ontological traditions in the social sciences – positivism and interpretivism – have often been held to be incommensurable paradigms and mutually exclusive of one another. Others are not so sure of this exclusivity (Moses & Knutsen, 2012, p. 5; Risse, 2009, p. 146). The positivist (also often referred to as rationalist) methodology places its emphasis on *explanation*; studies that are wedded to this tradition, estimate and weigh, with the aim to arrive at casual inference, almost seeking to uncover the laws of the social and political world (Parsons, 2017, pp. 75–91). Interpretivism, on the other hand, is geared towards *understanding*; it traces dominant ideas, norms and meanings, and seek to explore how these relate to, or are constitutive of, an actor’s political behaviour. People do exist independently from their social environment and are consistently guided in their everyday practice by society’s collective systems of meaning.

Contrary to the former tradition, interpretivists are often sceptical of exclusively causal-explanatory scholarship (Parsons, 2017, pp. 79–82; Risse, 2009). They prefer to take political concepts as constitutive of, rather than strictly causal to, political action. Interpretivism

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<sup>1</sup> The division of the sum total of political scholarship into two, competing camps does of course not do justice to the methodological pluralism of the covered disciplines. However, most scholars of methodology apply and find some utility in this basic division (Lowndes, Marsh, & Stoker, 2017; Moses & Knutsen, 2012; Rosamond, 2006).

thus draws on the Weberian concept of “explanation through interpretation”.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, explaining social action is only possible by including the subjective reasons and motivations – whether overt or covert – that actors provide for their behaviour (Weber, 1922/1978, p. 4). Although one should be attentive not to exaggerate what can be gained from analysing the claims of political actors, some of the disciplinary attraction of the method is that it, if done correctly, draws on the strengths of the positivist and interpretivist traditions. The following sections of the chapter explain how the features of the approach were translated into an operable method for empirical analysis.

### 3.2 Data and method

The empirical assessment of Norwegian trade unions’ contestation of the EU draws on authentic claims conveyed by LO actors through the mass media. Two broadsheet publications were chosen to provide the source material. They are *Aftenposten* and *Klassekampen*. Most content analysis approaches tend to choose at least two quality newspapers that are applicable to the case(s) of the studies. In order to control for political bias in the newspapers’ selection and creation of content, a “best practice” solution is to include two publications; one with a centre-right leaning and another with a centre-left ideology or editorial profile (Koopmans & Statham, 2010, p. 51). This advice is also followed in this thesis, as shown in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Selected newspapers

Type	Broadsheet
<i>Centre-right</i>	<i>Aftenposten</i>
<i>Centre-left</i>	<i>Klassekampen</i>

Claims were operationalised in relation to the position actors expressed towards the EU. Each claim was given a score on a scale from +1 (Pro-European) to -1 (Anti-European). This was based on an underlying five-point scale, to allow for more complexity in the arguments of the union actors. From the collected claims, an aggregated mean coefficient (between +1 and

<sup>2</sup> German sociologist Max Weber’s main work traced the development of the modern, capitalist system to an ideational foundation (a protestant ethic). He held that the social sciences cannot approach causal mechanisms without an interpretative understanding of the ideas and motivations that underlie social behaviour.

-1) was calculated to suggest whether the trade union actors were predominantly in support of, or in opposition to, the EU issue they referenced. While this coding and calculation of actor positions are a common practice, both in many content analysis methods and studies on political parties, the reliance on a mean coefficient is considered appropriate if the underlying data shows a normal distribution.<sup>3</sup> While there was some initial concern about the data distribution, particularly for the actors with the smallest sample size, this was not deemed a major issue. The position coefficient is employed to show a tendency between the two types of trade union actor. It is not appropriate to think of the numerical values as official, policy position. It would likely have posed a more serious issue had the same approach been used on a larger field of actors, like that of a mapping of political parties, where minor inconsistencies might misrepresent the entire political space.

Furthermore, each collected claim was categorised with regards to the specific *issue* that the claim addressed (*EU membership*, *EEA Agreement* or *policy evaluation*) and as well as the type of *frame* it invoked (*cultural* or *economic*). This approach has been widely used in the study of political party Euroscepticism (Koopmans & Statham, 2010; Statham & Gray, 2005) and the Europeanization of public spheres (Díez Medrano & Gray, 2010; Risse, 2014; Statham, Koopmans, Tresch, & Firmstone, 2010). In previous studies, a categorisation scheme that is most often attributed to Koopmans and Statham (1999b) has appeared in different variations, though for research projects far larger in scope than what is the case in this thesis. Thus, the scheme was simplified to cover five variables for the coding of claims (see Example of claim structure in Appendix B).<sup>4</sup>

News data was retrieved from the digital archives of *Aftenposten* and *Klassekampen* using key word searches. It was established that the search string *LO + EU* would yield the most appropriate results for this analysis. Although it is plausible that LO members may choose to contest the EEA Agreement more frequently than, say, the issue of EU membership, it was considered highly unlikely that an article will reference a trade unionist's claim on the EEA Agreement, without the rest of the article also containing the word "EU", at some point

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<sup>3</sup> Skewness refers to the asymmetrical distribution of data. If the data set is heavily skewed to the left or right, in which case it no longer has a normal distribution, the mean coefficient will not be an accurate tool.

<sup>4</sup> Tables and figures that exceeded the page margins are available in landscape orientation in Appendix B.



throughout the article. As such, an *LO + EU* search string returns the relevant hits either way. Using the *Retriever* database to search the news archives, a total of 520 articles matched the *LO + EU* search string.

The archival results were divided into periods based on a longitudinal design. To capture LO positions and frames on the EU over a longer time span – thus avoiding the issue of findings being conjectural or pertinent only to a smaller time period – ten years was periodized into three, separate periods. These were initially selected at random, with the only criteria being that one of the periods should precede the 2004 enlargement of the EU. As the accession of several Central and Eastern European states to the EU became a fact in 2004, an opening of domestic, Nordic markets for labour and services to workers from countries with far lower wages and costs of living, is widely believed to have posed challenges to core trade union activities (Dølvik & Eldring, 2016; Meardi, 2012). As new EU citizens exercised the right to free labour mobility within the expanded EEA market, organised labour needed to react to more flexible labour markets and a supply of workers that is drastically expanded, following an influx of workers from “low-cost” countries (Meardi, 2012). The subsequent periods were chosen at five-year intervals. Notably, the final interval was slightly shortened. This was a choice made so that the entire period under scrutiny would accumulate to ten years. Thus, data was sampled from: 2003-2004, 2008-2009 and 2012-2013. The search of the newspaper archives returned the results referenced in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Results of newspaper search string

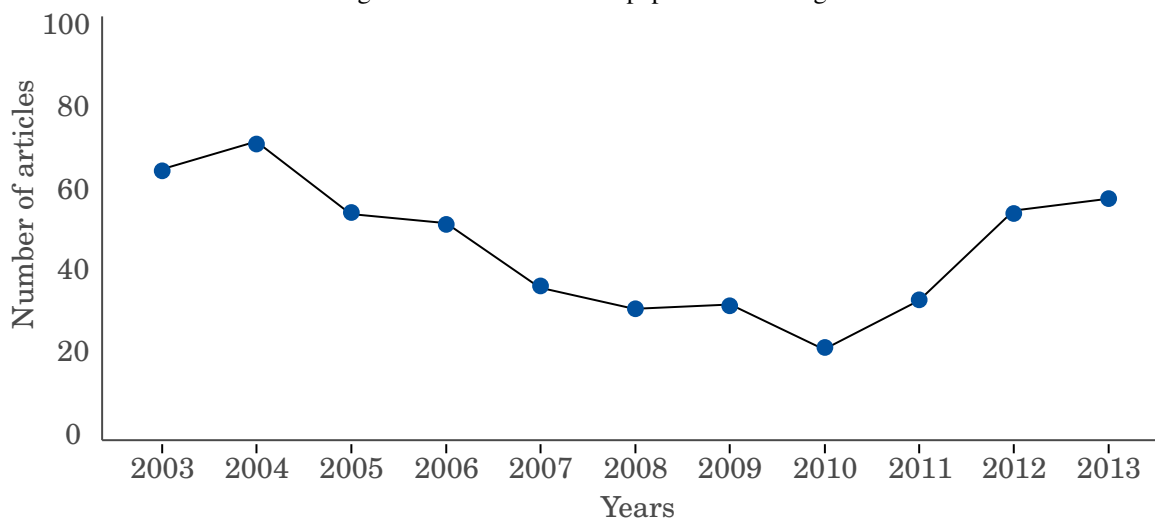


Figure 3.1 shows a consistent number of news articles on Norwegian trade unionism and EU issues over the ten years in question. *Aftenposten* and *Klassekampen* published somewhat more of these articles in the beginning of the period, reaching its high point in 2004. Although in the years following 2004, the frequency of articles shows a downward trajectory until 2010 (when the hits start rising again), the tendency should not be taken as *a priori* evidence of a decrease in the saliency of EU issues for Norwegian organised labour. Here it is crucial to note that an instance of an article is not interchangeable with the thesis' main unit of analysis – the claim. This distinction holds major implications for the kind of information that can be gathered from the results of the search string. This short example illustrates why; in the data collection process, a single newspaper article can contain, say, five distinct LO actor claims on the EU or the EEA Agreement. However, the following three articles may not include a single speech act performed by an actor that satisfy the requirements of the concept of the claim. This means that the count of articles does not in itself suggest a count of claims-making. Figure 3.1 is a representation of the number of articles published that contain references to EU and trade union issues. It outlines neither the distribution nor the frequency with which LO actors articulated opinions on the EU over the course of the period.<sup>5</sup>

The retrieval of news data laid the foundation for the coding of LO members' claims-making. As a final remark on the article sampling, the data selection does not cover all articles or claims which reference the EU and LO in the respective years. As the coding of claims is labour-intensive, a smaller sample of the article hits was defined. Articles were chosen by the following, randomised routine; select an article to search, skip the next article – and repeat. There were some instances where this routine resulted in the chosen article containing no relevant LO claim about any EU issue. In such cases, a routine was established to return to the skipped article for examination, thus preserving a randomised sampling of articles from the news archives.

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<sup>5</sup> Although the distinction between an article and a claim is crucial, it may be reasonable to expect some overlap between the number of article hits and the number of claims made by LO actors on the EU each year.

### 3.3 Why mass media?

The decision of drawing on the printed press as a source for EU contestation hold some obvious advantages. News is, in fact, a “rich” source for exploring political conflict. Although the mass media can be seen as messy and inaccessible, it is, methodologically speaking, a vital source of so-called “mediated politics”; it can provide information on what political positions actors adopt, who they represent and address, what kind of interests and arguments they approve of or oppose, as well as reflecting which actors are ultimately successful in mobilising support and admiration (or rejection and disgust) from the mass public (W. L. Bennett & Entman, 2000). Indeed, for some scholars, the media is of such an importance to politics in contemporary, liberal democracies, that it is both examined for its formative role in supplying information and in the construction of public opinion. Others again, study the media as a political actor in its own right. According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), the societal reliance on communicative arenas, online or otherwise, has;

[ . . . ] made the media an increasingly central social institution, to a significant extent displacing churches, parties, trade unions, and other traditional organisations of “civil society” as the central means by which individuals are connected to the wider social and political world (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 33–34).

While Hallin and Mancini’s (2004) position might suggest to scholars of political conflict that they might be better served by a direct attention to the role of the mass media, an alternative position informs this thesis. As Fligstein (2008) argued, conflicts over the emergence of the EU polity have intensified as European integration split open political cleavage structures within national societies (as covered in Chapter 1). This thesis holds that it is more appropriate to approach the media as the primary *arena* where conflicts over Europe manifest. The “euroclash” thesis suggests that conflicts unfold within the confines and structures of the national political system. However, an assumption of the thesis is that the articulation and manifestation of these conflicts take place within mediated discourses on Europe. It is thus more appropriate to view the mass media as the infrastructure through which societal conflicts develop, rather than its principal source.

Still, there are many critics who are quick to condemn the choice of the mass media as a source on which to base political analysis. The news cycle is infamous across most of the

Western world for its bias in selecting, creating and disseminating content to the public. Even so-called “quality” newspapers are often shown to have a proclivity for prioritising scandals and portraying politics as a world of lies and intrigue (W. L. Bennett & Entman, 2000).<sup>6</sup> The selection bias sees news-makers chase sensationalist cases and headlines, often at the expense of the accuracy of reporting. According to Risse (2010, p. 113), the “mass media create their own reality; they often manipulate public opinion, or they might simply reproduce the voices of the powerful”.

In particular, this raises concern about the extent to which the media can serve as useful transmitters of political contestation. Certainly, political parties, social movements and interest groups produce a plethora of claims every day in democratic states, and only a fragment of their demands pass the selection criteria of the press. Furthermore, social groups and political actors do not enjoy equal coverage (Risse, 2010, p. 113). If the news cycle only reports sensationalist demands, then the image of political contestation provided is essentially a distorted one. There may be many positions and frames on the EU, say from within the trade union movement, that the press never chooses to report on. This will, naturally, skew the portrayal of LO’s conflict over the association with the EU and future of European integration.

There are two reasons why these concerns over the mass media should not be seen to contaminate the methodological foundation of the thesis. First, in the claims-making method, news articles are merely chosen as the channel for gathering information on political actors’ authentic claims. It is comprised of the personal reporting of journalists or the editorial pieces of the newspapers, as they fall outside of the definition of a claim. In other words, concerns that a broadsheet have framed the news to fit its political or negativity bias is less of an issue. Journalists need not be objective in their writing for this method; they merely need to report the arguments of political actors accurately.

Second, while it is true that the press will disregard many claims that are deemed not newsworthy, it is not clear that this should be regarded as a disadvantage. Since newspapers

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<sup>6</sup>News coverage of EU politics is especially characterised by sensationalist reporting, according to De Vreese (2005). The news consistently prioritises “battles” or personal “clashes” between statesmen and governments in EU negotiations, even if these are only minor in scope, while more important aspects of the (famously) technocratic and complex decision-making process of the EU, it very rarely considered newsworthy.

prioritise what is, at the time of reporting, most visible and conflictual, means that the reported claims represent active and mobilised positions within the groups from which they originate (Statham & Gray, 2005, p. 66). Scholars of politics should *want* the arguments of claimants to be front and centre, as this visibility in the public arena ensures that the data gathered is, in fact, indicative of broader political significance. News coverage can be seen as already having filtered out political positions and arguments that hold little salience and/or significance to the topics they address.

However, this argument comes with a small caveat with regards to the Norwegian trade union confederation. There are political actors that are in less need of media coverage to voice their concerns. Some trade union members, particularly in the leadership, could be considered to have privileged access to policymakers. They may see it as more beneficial to address opposition to EU policies or the EEA Agreement through the corporate channel – behind closed doors. Norwegian unions are fortunate to operate in a favourable and institutionalised tripartite cooperation with long traditions of collective bargaining (Dølvik, 2000; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2013).<sup>7</sup> Thus, some trade unionists may have the option to take conflicts over Europe into discussion with its “social partners”, or through its close cooperation with the Labour Party. The claims of LO members that choose the corporate channel, will obviously not appear in the print press. Despite this possibility, it seems somewhat unlikely that professional trade unions would introduce conflicts over “Europe” into technical policy discussions or wage bargaining, and would, in most cases, only concern members in leadership positions.

#### **3.4 Operationalisation of frame, actor and issue**

The central concepts of frame, actor and issue were discussed in conceptual terms in Chapter 2. In this section, the assumptions are operationalised for use in empirical analysis. The classification of frame, actor and issue is explained and supplemented with examples. All following categories were developed through a deductive process, although some terms and concepts needed inductive revision as work on the empirical material progressed.

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<sup>7</sup> This model of interest mediation is often referred to as corporatism (Schmitter, 1974). Democratic corporatism denotes a system of centralized wage bargaining and a tripartite partnership between labour, state and capital.

*Frames* on the EU can be mapped along two dimensions, as established in Figure 2.1. We can distinguish between a speech act or argument that invokes a utilitarian or symbolic logic. They can be referred to as *economic* and *cultural* frames, respectively. Moreover, claims about the EU commonly reference the issue of where political authority should reside; at the nation-state (*communitarian*) or EU (*cosmopolitan*) level. Some actors may only *imply* a normative position on the question of national versus supranational competency. This presents a challenge to the researcher. Without an explicit argument, it difficult to code this EU vs. state competency dimension as an element of the claim. The categories *communitarian* and *cosmopolitan* thus inform the development of frames but are not used directly in the coding process. The frame categories are repeated in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2: Frame categories

<i>Economic frames</i>	Economic prosperity
	Labour market protection
<i>Cultural frames</i>	Supranational community
	Nation-state and sovereignty

A claim invokes an *economic* frame when it evaluates the EU in light of its material utility, or lack thereof. *Economic prosperity* includes arguments that some association to Europe is vital for economic growth and national wealth. For instance, typical claims would be about the centrality of EU market access, the need for harmonious trade in goods and services, international competitiveness, or any other argument where the EU is seen as delivering economic benefit. *Labour market protection*, on the other hand, concerns arguments about the loss of labour rights, lack of worker protection and social security, erosion of the welfare state and/or decreasing wages, which are seen as a result of an association with the EU.

*Cultural* frames emphasise the symbolic value of community. Such arguments are not based on rational output or utility, but rather on the importance of adhering to certain ideas, norms and conceptions because of their inherent quality. *Nation-state and sovereignty* prioritise the community of the nation-state. It can take the form of championing an exclusive identity (typically xenophobic claims) or underline the need for boundaries that delineate a

Norwegian citizenry, society and ideas of governance from the rest of Europe. *Supranational community* include arguments that the EU is of a certain cultural worth, with reference to a common European identity or the idea of a shared history and community of values among European societies.

*Actor* is defined in order to explore the extent to which there is a significant difference between the leadership of the union confederation and the rank-and-file membership when it comes to their evaluations of the EU. It is generally believed that the loose structure of a union confederation produces a large diversity of political opinions, in particular between *the peak organisation* and its *trade union affiliates*. This informs the separation of the trade union actor into two categories, as outlined in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3: Definition of trade union actors

<i>LO peak association</i>	The central leadership of the national confederation. A peak organisation under which sectoral unions are organised
<i>Trade union affiliate</i>	National or local trade union, such as white-collar occupational unions, blue-collar craft unions or other union associations

Whether a member of LO is counted as a part of the peak organisation or associated with one of the many union affiliates, is determined by the association they represent and speak on the behalf of, when making public claims through the media.

*Issue* refers to the differentiation between the object that political actors can address when they contest the EU. As is rather obvious, opposing a specific EU directive is not the same as opposing EU membership or rejecting the process of European integration altogether. For valid, empirical analysis, the different issues under the “EU umbrella” need to be disentangled from each other. Norwegian actors are likely to contest the option of an *EU membership*. It should also be assumed that they debate a continuation or termination of the *EEA Agreement* as well as a “softer” kind of *policy evaluation* of specific EU directives that are introduced into Norwegian legislation. As per the assumptions in Chapter 2, this also provides some indication of what kind of contestation the actor makes. The issues are defined in Table 3.5.

Table 3.4: Differentiation between EU issues

Issue	Definition	Contestation
<i>EU membership</i>	Judgment on the merits of a formal Norwegian membership in the EU	Polity
<i>EEA Agreement</i>	Opinion expressing a position in favour or in opposition to the country's current EEA association	Polity & policy
<i>Policy evaluation</i>	Assessment of the benefits or disadvantages of EU/EEA policies, but without taking a position for or against EU membership or the EEA Agreement	Policy

To categorise claims with regards to the issue they address, seem a straightforward matter, as long as they are explicit in which object they contest. However, there are examples where this might not be the case. A trade unionist may oppose an EU directive (which suggests it is a *policy evaluation* argument), but have an underlying intention, though never articulated, to take a stance on the EEA Agreement, by referencing the detrimental effects of the EU directive. Here, it is necessary to count the argument as a *policy evaluation*, on the basis that this is the explicit point being conveyed. Allowing the researcher to perform broad interpretations of political actors' motivations – what they are “really saying” – would pose major issues to the approach, as it relies on gauging unspoken arguments that are not actually present in the claim. In other words, claims must be coded according to the explicit argument made by a claimant.

### 3.5 Challenges in the classification of political claims

There were some arguments that were not easily categorised according to the outlined concepts. One frame that was invoked often by LO actors proved especially difficult; arguments about national sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> It is common in Norwegian debates on the EU for opposition to

<sup>8</sup> “Sovereignty” is a contested term that is really comprised of several, distinct concepts. The classic variant is the idea of Westphalian, or state-territorial sovereignty. There is also a popular or “people’s sovereignty”, that refers to the supremacy of the citizenry in a democratic system. EU studies, on the other hand, often conceptualise sovereignty as a resource that states are required to “pool” if it is to have any utility in the international system. As an argument in popular EU debates, it often seems to be understood by mass publics and political actors as the degree to which a nation-state has, and should have, a national freedom of action from EU authority.



be framed as a matter of preserving national sovereignty. These kinds of claims were originally seen as belonging to the *nation-state and sovereignty* category. However, it is also possible that actor may want some degree of national independence from EU authority for the utilitarian benefits it brings. An example are claims where retaining a national competency for regulating the labour market, against a perceived threat of EU market liberalism, are voiced. This argument would see the argument draw on the *labour market protection* frame.<sup>9</sup>

How, then, can claims about “sovereignty” be classified as invoking either an *economic* or *cultural* logic? Sørensen (2008) has positioned that this kind of opposition towards European integration can be thought of as its own “sovereignty-based Euroscepticism”. While this might be a useful ideal type for understanding EU opposition, it does not really indicate what kind of reasoning went into the sovereignty-argument in the first place. Sørensen’s ideal type answers the descriptive question of *whether* an argument is based on national sovereignty or not. When it comes to the more interesting question of *why* national sovereignty was invoked, this approach draws blank.

As seems clear, sovereignty is a position that can be invoked using *both* economic and cultural frames in debates on the EU. If a claimant calls for Norway to reassert the country’s national sovereignty, in order to preserve the cultural homogeneity of the population, then the logic is *cultural*. However, if another actor contends that national independence is a prerequisite for being able to properly regulate the Norwegian labour market, then the argument fits within the *economic* (and the *labour market protection*) category.

The fact that national sovereignty is a concept that can be justified using both economic and cultural frames, poses a challenge for how the claims can be coded into mutually exclusive categories. According to Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest (2009, p. 500), it is crucial to ask why sovereignty is pursued. Is it for utilitarian reasons, or is it rather that sovereignty “[. . .] has become an end in itself: something that needs to be defended for the mere sake of its existence” (Helbling et al., 2009, p. 500). To code these arguments, a simple heuristic was

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<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a union actor may also argue the opposite case; that Norwegian sovereignty is more readily utilised, and delivers a larger “output”, so to speak, by opting for a formal EU membership or preserving the EEA Agreement.

established. When faced with a claim, the question was asked; “towards what end is national sovereignty a means?”. If a claimant’s argument had an explicit aim for which sovereignty was needed, then it was seen to employ a utilitarian logic and could be classified as an *economic* frame. On the other hand, if the argument called for national sovereignty to be protected but did not provide a reasoning of what particular goal sovereignty was to be used for, then they supported the symbolic value of sovereignty and drew on a *cultural* frame.

In the findings, it was common for members of LO to oppose EU membership or the EEA Agreement with references to Norwegian institutions, political traditions or a vaguely defined “Norwegian model”. This is clearly different from a xenophobic argument or an invocation of exclusive nationalism. The claim passes a judgement on the symbolic value of the political institutions of the welfare state. It is primarily a defence of certain Norwegian institutional structures, not a call for national institutions be based on ethnic boundaries. Though neither is the defence justified on mere utilitarian grounds. To recognise this nuance in the sovereignty frame, it was decided that this frame category should be split between exclusive-nationalist reasoning and a logic of institutional protection of the national model of governance. Though this separation is not unproblematic, it is widely supported by much of scholarship on nationalism, where it has been common to distinguish between *exclusive* and *civic* nationalism (Gellner, 1983; Koopmans & Statham, 1999a; Smith, 1998). Claims based on support for nation-state institutions, using non-ethnic, cultural-communitarian reasoning, in some ways resembles a more liberal or civic type of nationalism. Thus, the *nation-state and sovereignty* quadrant were separated into two categories; they are *institutional sovereignty* and *exclusive nationalism*, as outlined in Table 3.6.

Table 3.5: Adjusted frame categories

<i>Economic frames</i>	Economic prosperity Labour market protection
<i>Cultural frames</i>	Supranational community Exclusive nationalism Institutional sovereignty

The choice was made after the empirical actor claims had been collected. It is a decision to revise frame categories inductively, as the empirical analysis is performed, although the choice still upholds the coding scheme and categories established at the outset. This was deemed to better represent the trade unions' arguments, as failing to introduce another category would mean that no distinction could be made between the potential finding of xenophobic, anti-immigrants arguments and claims that involve a symbolic concern about Norwegian, institutional integrity. The failure to recognise this distinction would introduce far more uncertainty to the arguments of the thesis.

## NORWEGIAN UNIONS' CONTESTATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

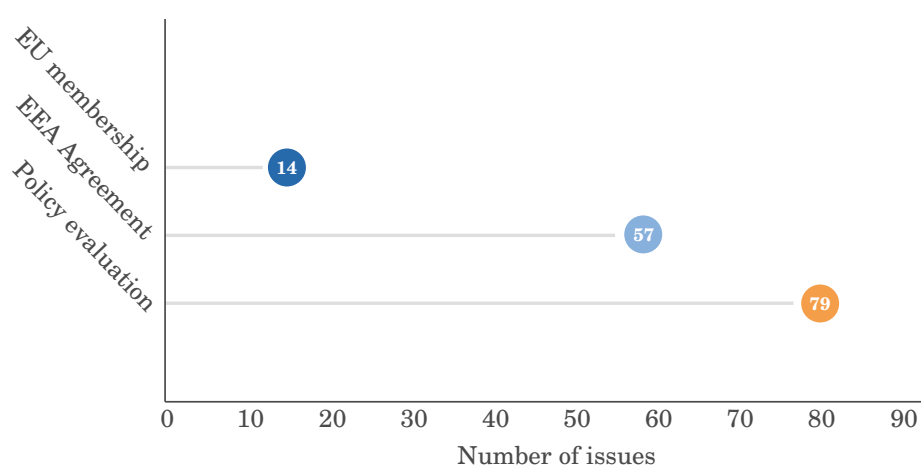
**T**HE PRECEDING chapters suggested that conflicts over the EU are not easily reduced to a simple set of causes. They are closely tied, though rarely exclusively, to considerations about economics and trade. Contestations of the EU consistently touches on more sensitive areas of politics, such as the content of collective identities, the boundaries of peoples' communities of belonging and the appropriate allocation of decision-making authority in the international system. To allow for this complexity to be approached empirically, a method was designed to collect and classify claims on the EU, which for this thesis are the claims expressed by Norwegian organised labour.

In this chapter, the findings from the approach are analysed. The chapter offers a mapping and evaluation of LO's contestation of the EU as it has manifested through political claims-making in the mass media. The first three sections are organised according to each of the supporting research questions. Respectively, the sections deal with; 1) *what* issue or object is contested, 2) *who* in the organisation make which claims, and 3) *why* do they support or oppose certain EU issues.

#### 4.1 From EU debate to EEA revolt

Several features of the trade unions' debate on the EU can be noted at the outset of the analysis. From the total number of claims, LO members have addressed all three issues identified in earlier chapters, even though they have done so at different times and with varying degrees of salience. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the distribution of all issue claims.

Figure 4.1: Total claims on EU issues

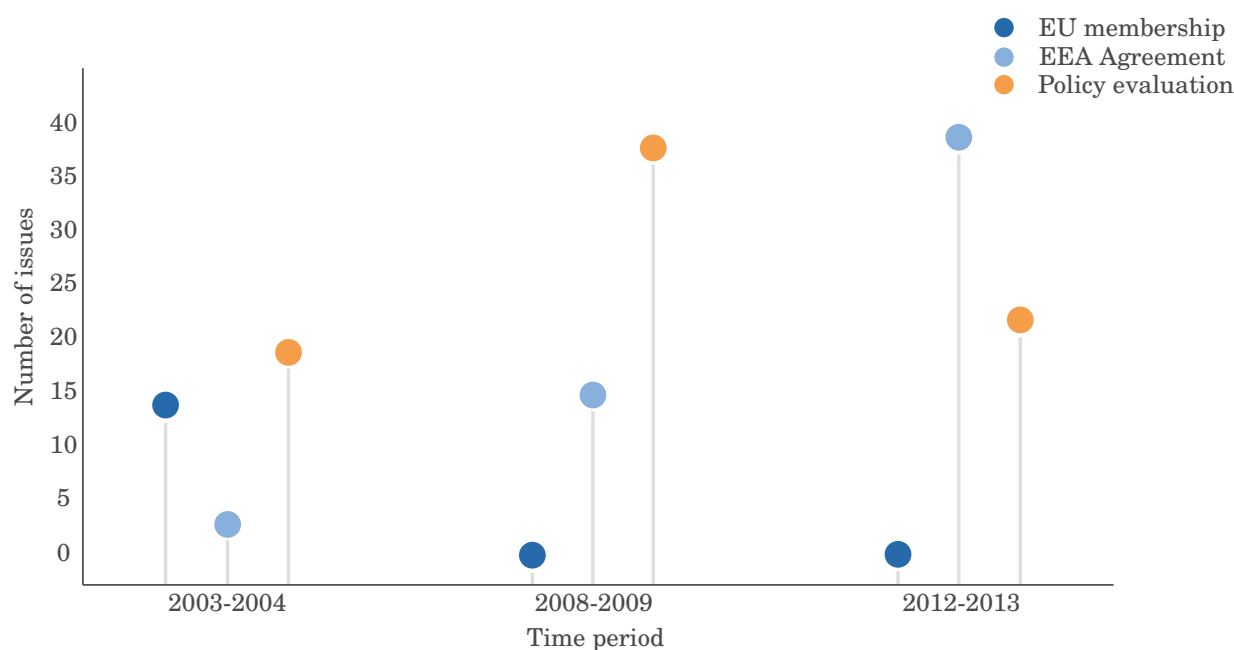


As a simple illustration of EU issue contestation, Figure 4.1 shows the number of claims on each specific issue per time period. From this, it is clear that Norwegian EU membership has been referenced the least by LO. The EEA Agreement is the addressee of over twice the number of claims as the membership question, while the most claims in total are made contesting specific EU directives or other EU policies. This suggests that membership is not a particularly active issue within the union organisation, as the trade unions predominantly debate the continuation or termination of the EEA Agreement and the particular policies which they support or oppose. However, this impression changes when LO's contestation is shown divided by years, as visualised in Figure 4.2.

Although the question of EU membership is the least contested overall, this issue was frequently addressed in 2003 to 2004. In fact, all claims that concerns membership are made in this period. From the illustration, it is plausible to assume that EU accession was a salient issue at the start of the decade, before it largely disappears from the political agenda for LO. The opposite is the case for the EEA Agreement, as it is the least covered in 2003 to

#### 4 Norwegian unions' contestation of the European Union

Figure 4.2: Total claims on EU issues by year



2004, while it is the most referenced in the latest period, eclipsing the membership question in salience. The trade unions' membership debate thus turns into a debate over the future of the EEA Agreement the two latest periods. Membership was assumed to involve *polity* contestation, a more principled form of support or opposition, as actors will have to make some sort of evaluation of the political regime to gauge membership. However, as the issue dies down in the successive years, it suggests that a change restructured the overall EU debate and settled the membership question at some point between 2003 and 2008.

Contestation of the EEA Agreement may also involve a diffuse or affective evaluation of the EU polity. It is no limited to *policy* contestation only. This is especially the case if the claims tend towards the termination of the agreement. As has often been seen, portions of the EEA debate have seen trade unionists opposing its continuation, as they want to renegotiate the agreement or replace it with a bilateral trade deal. The issue of policy evaluations is consistently referred to from 2003 to 2013. This is less of a surprise. It was assumed that an actor, whose primary role is to press for workers' interests in the labour market, would frequently use the mass media to voice criticisms and concerns about particular EU directives and regulations that has a likely impact on their main sector of operation. There is also the

possibility that EEA opposition and policy criticism are intertwined. For example, it can be argued that a “softer” objection to a specific policy also drives opposition towards the EEA Agreement.

## 4.2 The elitist embrace

On the question of who drives EU contestation, there is a clear difference between the LO peak organisation and its affiliate unions. The mean coefficient (ranges from 1 to -1) for the trade unions consistently show a more negative stance towards the EU issue, whereas the opposite is true for members of the LO leadership. This tendency is clear, and it is shown across all issue dimensions, as indicated by Table 4.1.<sup>1</sup>

Table 4.1: The position of LO actors on EU issues (calculated mean)

	EU membership		EEA Agreement		Policy evaluation	
	Share (%)	Position	Share (%)	Position	Share (%)	Position
LO-peak	57	0,44	9	0,7*	23	-0,08
Union affiliate	43	-0,08*	91	-0,62	77	-0,69
N	14		57		79*	

\*coefficient values are based on small sample sizes.

There are notable aspects to address in Table 4.1. The findings show a strong, negative position on the trade union affiliates claims on the EEA Agreement (-0,62). When this is compared to the position of the peak organisation on the same issue, the positive evaluation is at the other end of the scale (0,7). Taken at face value, this indicates that the EEA Agreement acts as a dividing line within the Norwegian trade union movement, where the issue splits the LO leadership from its rank-and-file members. However, some points of clarification are in order. Although there is a divide between the elite and sectoral positions on the agreement, a large majority of the EEA claims came within the last two periods. This suggests a

<sup>1</sup> While the affiliates are strongly opposed to the EEA Agreement, positions on the membership issue shows a mean closer to neutral (-0,08). It is a nonsensical position to be strongly opposed the current EU association agreement (demanding a reduction of EU influence on domestic policy), and yet be *less strongly* opposed to the option of a full EU membership. It should be noted that this category – affiliate claims on the issue of EU membership – has the smallest sample of the outlined categories and thus, should be viewed with some uncertainty.

progressively evolving negative position, or even opposition, but it does not necessarily show a tendency that stretches across the entire ten-year period.

Furthermore, the strong supportive position of the peak organisation on EEA claims is blighted by the fact that peak actors are noticeably less present in the public contestation of the EEA Agreement. The findings confirm the assumption that there is a split between peak and sectoral union members. However, the breadth of distance between the two are likely influenced by varying *presence*; the two actors do not participate equally in contesting EU issues. Some factions of the LO affiliates strongly dominate, in sheer numbers, the two latter periods. This can be viewed in relation to the specific mobilisation against the EEA Agreement over these years, in which a specific group of unionists make recurring appearances, contributing to the inflation of the *negative* position. This might extend beyond what could be taken to be the “actual” mean position of the LO grassroots. Conversely, in the instances where the officials in the leadership or Secretariat<sup>2</sup> answers these calls, they must specifically respond to the anti-EEA mobilisation in a politicised context. As this almost requires a clear defence of the Agreement, not least since it remains the official policy of LO, it is likely also inflating the *positive* stance of the peak organisation.

Nevertheless, across the issue dimensions, LO's leadership embraces an overall positive position on the outlined EU issues. However, they are also notably less present in the debates, compared to the sectoral unions. Viewed in relation to the issues of the previous section (section 4.1), it is possible to draw out some central patterns. LO's discourse on the EU shows a clear shift from a debate based on a conflict over EU membership in 2003, to a clash over the EEA Agreement from 2009 to 2013. Whereas the central causes and drivers of the shift remain unexplored at this stage, the actors' positions suggest that the shift is strongly driven by the LO's many affiliate unions, which exhibit a growing opposition to the EEA association.

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<sup>2</sup> LO is comprised of the decision-making bodies: The Congress, the Board of Representatives and the Secretariat. The former is the highest body and is held every four years, while the latter oversees the daily administration of the confederation.



### 4.3 Changing views on the EU

How, then, does the Norwegian trade union movement frame the EU? As it was established in previous chapters, the framing perspective allows for insight into which arguments and themes LO members use most extensively, or what the movement's "central organizing idea or story line" of the EU is (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 143). Frames can be associated with particular actors. As a corollary, these justifications tell us *why* trade unionists support or oppose specific aspects of the European project. In the following sections, the Norwegian trade union movement's framing of the EU is analysed with a view to map and explore their patterns of contestation. The analysis is illustrated in slightly different ways. This is based on the same underlying data, and primarily done to show *when* certain frames are used the most, as well as *who* most notably draw on *which* frames.

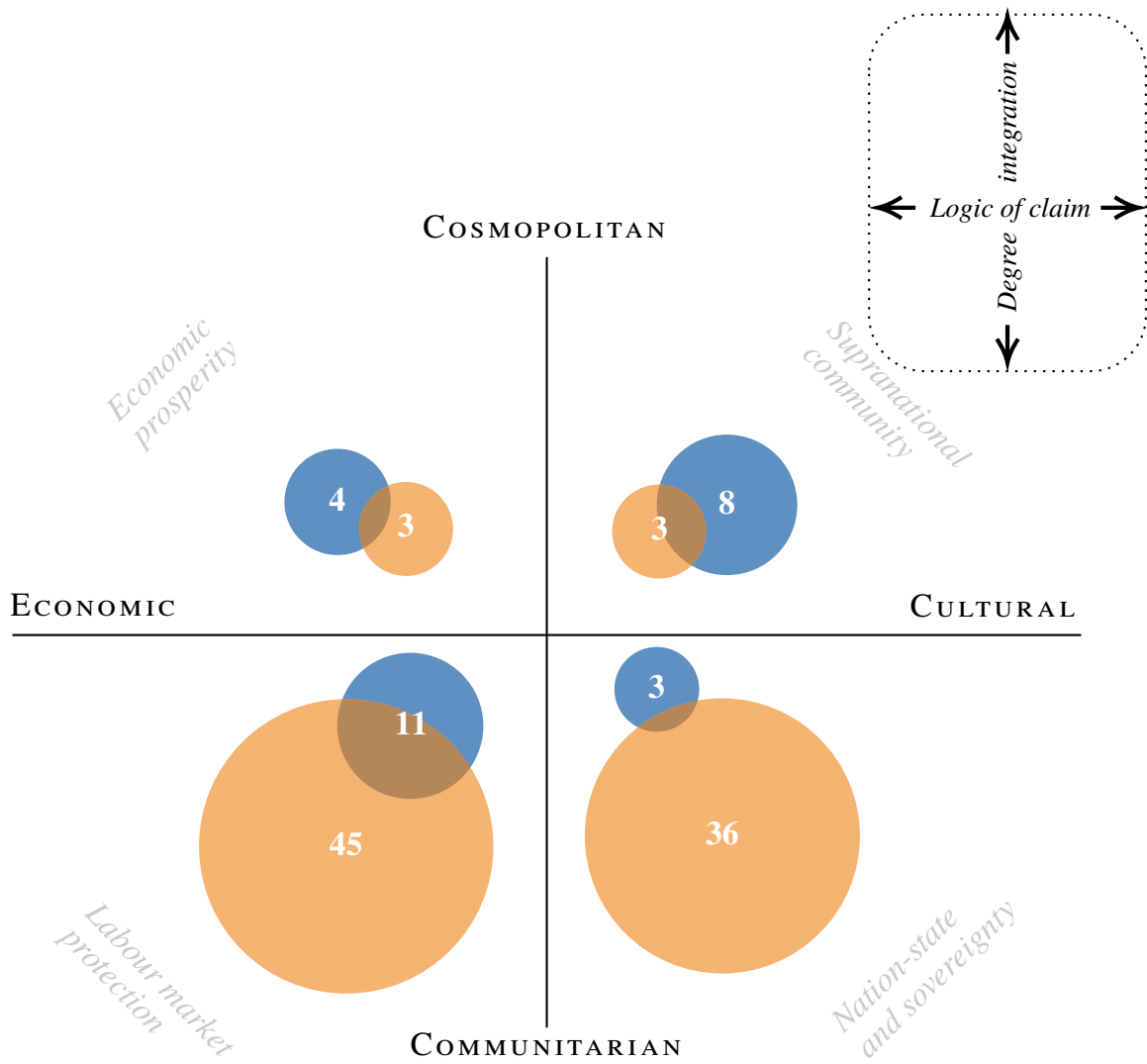
#### 4.3.1 Categorical distribution of frames

At the outset, it is useful to refer to an overview of the frames used. The typology of possible actor claims from Chapter 2, Figure 2.1, serves this purpose. By superimposing the results of the frame analysis onto the model, this produces an overview of which frames the trade unions used on EU issues, as well as the frequency with which each frame was invoked by union actors. This overview is illustrated by Figure 4.3.

Some features of Figure 4.3 call for closer inspection. First, the justification on the EU that is most commonly used by Norwegian trade unionists, are variations on the argument of labour market protection. That is, LO's members invoke a frame that covers arguments about decreasing wages, fear of unemployment, the need to regulate domestic markets for the benefits of workers and other claims pertaining to the utility of the welfare state, located in the bottom left quadrant of the model. This finding is unsurprising. Trade unions originally served as the corporate arm of a broader labour movement. Borne out of the historical class cleavage, often manifesting in conjunction with the democratisation of the nation-state, they assumed a role as the "collective voice" of labour, in the struggle of labour versus capital. As is shown in Figure 4.3, Norwegian trade unions still strongly rely on arguments where the EU is conceived in light of class politics. Affiliate unions (46 claims), as well as the LO leadership (11 claims), have mostly drawn on labour market protection frames.

#### 4 Norwegian unions' contestation of the European Union

Figure 4.3: Total distribution of frames used by LO actors



Subsequently, there is a certain prevalence of sovereignty frames in the trade unions' discourse. These arguments are, in total, invoked less than claims about labour market utility. However, sector trade unions have justified a position on the EU using arguments about the (symbolic) need for sovereignty and national independence with the second highest frequency (at 36 claims). When viewed in combination, the trade union affiliates have made a large majority of their claims on the communitarian end of the model. The communitarian-cosmopolitan categories were answers to the question of where political authority should reside. Granted, a communitarian position is not necessarily the same as being "anti-EU", or necessarily negatively positioned towards European integration. However, working on the established assumptions of the thesis, it does suggest that the "grassroots" of LO view the nation-state as the primary vehicle for exercising political authority. Conversely, this can

be interpreted as scepticism towards transferring decision-making competencies from the national to the EU level.

Economics were assumed to be a central concern for trade unions. The trade unions' main function is closely tied to prosperity and economic output. They can be seen to rely on the industries where their members are employed, to remain competitive in the global economy. Trade unions also perform markets functions on a day-to-day basis, seeking to influence markets in goods, services or employment, which could suggest that they would frame the EU in terms of its utility in providing economic growth or prosperity. The recurring calls about the need for EEA market access for Norwegian industry in the wider EU debate, supports this assumption (Archer, 2004; Gstöhl, 2015). However, when contesting EU issues, the distribution of claims suggest that this argument is not used frequently by the union movement, least of all by the union affiliates. For the final argument category, located in the upper-right quadrant, arguments about the value of European and supranational community are used sparingly (11 claims in total). Yet, when this frame is used, it is mostly members of the LO peak organisation that justify claims on the EU using arguments about supranational community.

#### 4.3.2 Longitudinal evolution of framing

While the categorical distribution of frames presents how the trade union members justified their arguments overall, it does not disclose how framing evolved over the course of the period, i.e. the longitudinal development in framing. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the framing in each period.

Table 4.2 shows the evolution of frames over the years in question. The figure presents the same findings as Figure 4.3, however, the table provides a complete overview of framing by LO actors in each time period. First, attention can be directed towards the cultural frame category. As noted in earlier chapters, claims that drew on “sovereignty arguments” or the nation-state, were crucially separated into two, different categories (*exclusive nationalism* and *institutional sovereignty*). As the outline clearly shows, all trade unionist who invoked sovereignty (without explicit utilitarian logic) use the justification of institutional sovereignty. This was typically arguments that appealed to reassert national sovereignty vis-à-vis the EU

#### 4 Norwegian unions' contestation of the European Union

Table 4.2: Detailed frames by LO actors by year and issue (percentages)

		2003-2004		2008-2009		2012-2013	
		LO-peak	Union	LO-peak	Union	LO-peak	Union
<i>Economic</i>	Economic prosperity	2,8	2,8	-	-	6,4	4,3
	Labour market protection	16,7	36,1	9,5	40,5	2,1	31,9
<i>Cultural</i>	Exclusive nationalism	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Institutional sovereignty	2,8	11,1	4,8	23,8	-	46,8
	Supranational community	16,7	5,6	2,4	2,4	2,1	-
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	Domestic politics	2,8	-	4,8	7,1	2,1	2,1
	Other frames	-	2,8	-	2,4	2,1	-
Total percentage		100		100		100	
N		36		42		47	

\*Cells with - means that there were no claims that justified a position using this particular frame category.

or deemed the EEA Agreement a threat to a “Norwegian model”. Table 4.2 also shows how there were no LO actors who contested the EU using an exclusive nationalist frame. Organised labour might, nevertheless, draw on such frames. For instance, a trade unionist may interpret free labour mobility as posing a cultural threat to the nation-state, and thus use national-exclusive frames. Yet, in this case, no member of the Norwegian union confederation invoked exclusionary frames.

When it comes to the two frame categories that trade unionist drew on most frequently, which were *labour market protection* and *institutional sovereignty*, the former justification is used consistently throughout the years under scrutiny (above 30 percent of the claims in each period). The latter frame, on the other hand, rises in salience from 2003 to 2013. Though LO members did not use this frame very frequently in 2003, most of the trade unionists' arguments in 2013, are made with reference to institutional sovereignty (around 47 percent). This finding suggests that there is an evolution in what kinds of arguments are used on EU issues within LO. As it is already determined that the debate in the final period predominantly concerns the EEA Agreement, the findings suggest that members from the trade union affiliates perceive the need to retain or reassert some degree of national independence. This potential shift, from 2003 to 2013, deserves more attention. Whereas the tendency is shown in Table 4.2, a clearer total overview is a presentation of the frames used by the LO actors,

by year and positional mean. This rearrangement of the data is illustrated in Figure 4.4.<sup>3</sup>

The final figure from the content analysis shows the LO peak organisation and the trade union affiliates illustrated according to the most used frame in each of the periods, combined with the positional coefficient. Each actor from each time period is represented in a bubble, with the size of the bubble corresponding to the amount of times the actor used the frame in question. This illustration allows the analysis to chart a tendency in the underlying data. As per the previous illustrations, the peak organisation and union affiliates, combined, have mostly employed frames of labour market protection. This is also illustrated by Figure 4.4, where the actor bubbles amass around this frame category.

However, in the previous illustrations there was an ambiguity with the extent to which the dominant frame of labour market protection necessarily implied a negative position towards the EU. It is possible for arguments invoking labour market security to do so from the vantage point of both a “pro” and “anti” EU position. Take this example. Say the LO Secretariat makes a claim in the media, which makes the case for the EEA Agreement to be a prerequisite for the continued protection of Norwegian organised labour. They might consider a close EU association as necessary to secure the competitiveness of the companies that employ workers they organise, or as necessary to avoid an unfavourable opening of sheltered markets to global competition.

In this scenario, “Europe” is framed as the only option through which the aim of worker protection can be met – thus arguing that the alignment of Norway with the EU constitutional framework is a matter of securing labour market protection, rather than diminishing it. While this may not be a popular argument in LO, it is indeed a common argument among many on the European social-democratic left (Hyman, 2005; Mathers et al., 2017). This argument represents a nuance that it was difficult to capture in previous illustrations. However, using Figure 4.4 the inclusion of the actor mean would indicate, overall, whether the actor predominantly drew on a frame with taking a negative or positive stance on the EU. This

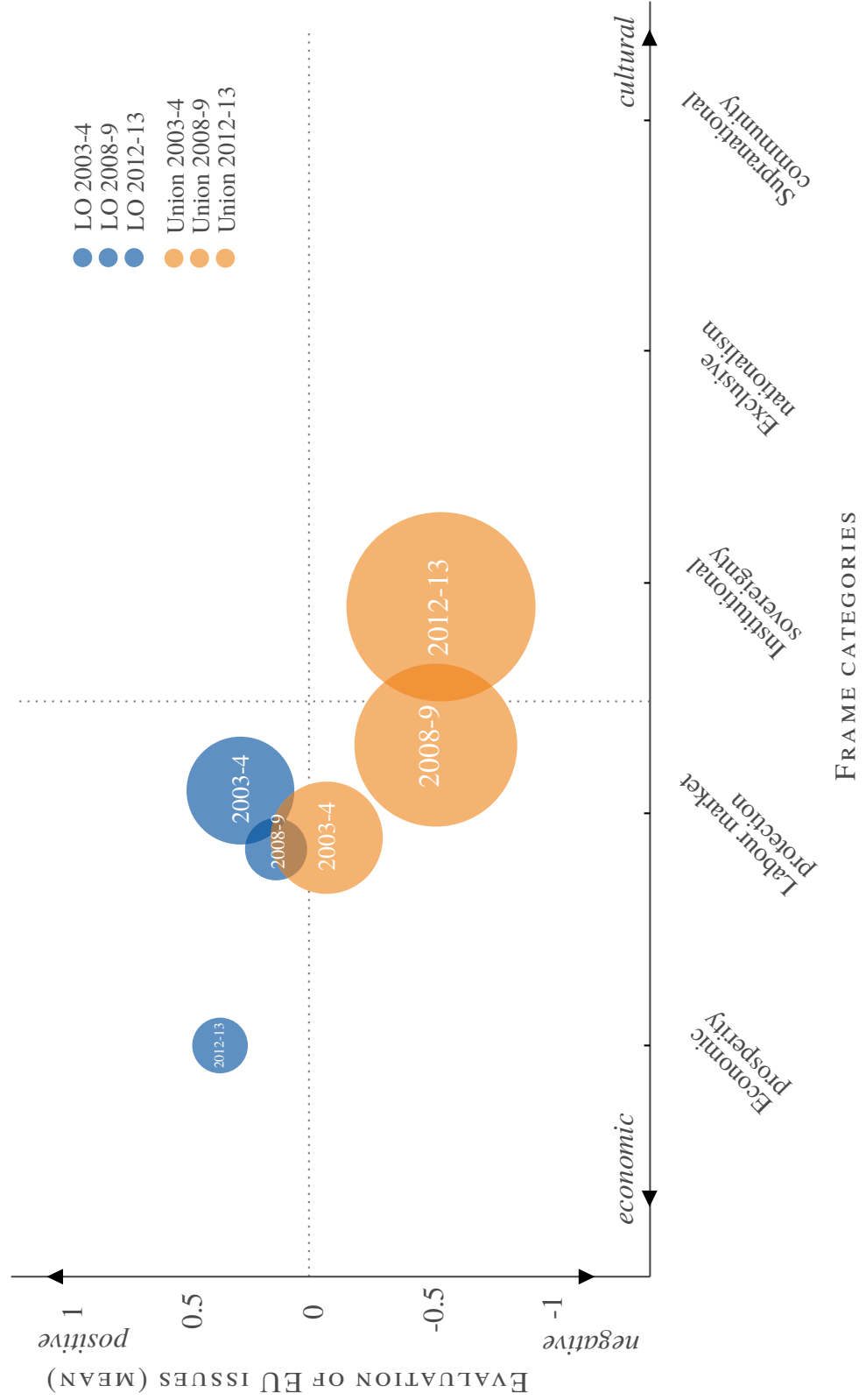
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<sup>3</sup> Figure 4.4 uses a categorical variable on the x-axis. This means that there is no intrinsic ordering to frame types on this axis, i.e. *supranational community* should not be interpreted as “more cultural” than *exclusive nationalism*.

allows not only for a mapping of the most commonly used frames, but also shows what type of arguments that the EU-critical factions of LO use, versus the kinds of arguments that members more positively inclined tend to draw on.

What can be gathered from Figure 4.4. is a clear tendency of the content and evolution of LO's claims from 2003 to 2013. Whereas the union affiliates and the peak organisation are fairly similar in how they frame the EU in 2003, over time there is a divergence between the two actors. The affiliated unions slowly adopt a more critical position, while also gradually turning to more sovereignty-based arguments. This sees them end the 2013 period with their most negative positional value and using sovereignty arguments to oppose the EEA Agreement. Conversely, the peak organisation moves in the opposite direction. The LO leadership begins 2003 using mostly frames on the labour market and a stance on the EU which is between neutral and somewhat positive. However, coming to 2013, the LO leadership has also shifted their dominant argument frame (although on a small sample), now portraying the EU issues using arguments about economic prosperity. Given that it was the EEA Agreement that was the source of contention in 2012 and 2013, this suggests that the peak organisation now defends the Agreement on the grounds that they see it as central for market access and material wealth.

Figure 4.4: Most used frame on the EU by actor and position mean



## TOWARDS A NEW FRAME OF SOVEREIGNTY?

*Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun*

— MAX WEBER

**I**N THE SPIRIT of this quote, attention to the meanings that steer and underlie social behaviour is required to understand an organisation's actions in the political world. The act of contesting the EU is no exception. As the trade unions' patterns of support and opposition provide a basis from which these meanings – or webs of significance – can be analysed, they also prompt the question of how to interpret organised labour's contestation of the EU. This chapter discusses the significance of the findings from the previous chapter with a view to explore the causes, themes and interactions that constitute the setting in which the EU was contested. Whereas the findings provided a necessary overview, these say little about why certain frames were central and what caused these arguments to shift or be reasserted. In other words, the chapter discusses the conflicts within the union movement in relation to developments in Norwegian and EU politics that were central at the time. This is achieved by reconstructing historical narratives over what the EU conflict was substantially about.



### 5.1 2003: Project of solidarity

The beginning stages of the century sees the European Union prosper in what is a markedly different era than today. As the Norwegian trade union movement debates the possibilities of a new membership referendum which is believed to be on the cards, this debate unfolds against the backdrop of an EU polity with a radically different design than today. This is the case with regards to its size, as the Union of 2003 was comprised of a mere fifteen member-states, but also in scope, as the constitutional framework at the time, the Treaty of Nice, was ratified only a year prior. There is a certain air of enthusiasm surrounding European integration (Dinan, 2014). In January of 2002, the first euro coins were introduced into circulation. This was also the year when the abolished passport controls in the EU as specified by the Schengen Treaty. The former, in particular, is widely regarded as a milestone in the history of European integration (Risse, 2014). At the time, it was one of the clearest symbols of the EU as a “polity in the making”; the Union now managed its own currency, a characteristic which throughout history has been closely associated with autonomous nation-states.

While this year of substantive political transformation in Europe spawned much debate on the continent, the Norwegian trade union movement were preparing for another major event in the EU’s evolution. In 2004, the stage was set for the accession of eight Central and Eastern European countries (and two Mediterranean states) into the EU/EEA area. The noticeably large discrepancies in price and wage levels in the new members states, compared to Western Europe, prompted concerns from organised labour over the effects of the accession of new member states on labour markets. Trade union affiliates in LO were tentatively worried, but ultimately uncertain about “Eastern Enlargement”. In early 2003, a conference hosted by LO is dedicated to a discussion on increased labour migration and “social dumping” (Aftenposten, 2003a; Klassekampen, 2003a).<sup>1</sup> The debate underlines a central theme of the discourse at the time. LO members are quick to state that they welcome migrant workers, but fear what the effects of imported labour from “low-wage” countries will be. Some refer to exploitation by fraudulent employers, while there are also appeals that the government may have use the “emergency break” if migration supersedes estimates (Elstad, 2003; Klassekampen, 2003b).

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<sup>1</sup> Social dumping lacks an agreed-upon definition, but generally refers to the practice of squeezing wage levels in domestic markets, using the cheap supply of labour as leverage for lowering pay or labour standards.

There is a particular debate about whether authorities should introduce legislative tools to combat social dumping and the undercutting of labour standards, such as the general application of collective agreements<sup>2</sup> and the EU's temporary option to limit EEA migration, so-called transitional restrictions (Aftenposten, 2003d).

However, Eastern Enlargement appeared to have a substantial impact on the ideas about the EU within the movement. Namely, there were prominent labour leaders and figures that had previously opposed EU accession, who now openly reconsidered their positions on EU membership. Many Norwegian social-democrats had since the days of the referendums had a rather sceptical, though often pragmatic, relationship to European integration, which saw them want market access, but be “wary of a continental project dominated by “big capital” and Christian democratic parties” (Bieler, 2001, p. 115). One of the central frames for the left of Norwegian politics throughout this era has been of the EU as a “market construction”, or a “capitalist club”. LO's leader at the time, Gerd-Liv Valla, who had been firmly situated on the “no-side” as an opponent of EU membership in 1994, had held a similar perception of the character of the European project. Nonetheless, ahead of the 2004 enlargement, Valla openly reconsidered her stance on Norwegian membership in the press, as she “needs time to reassess the situation” (Aftenposten, 2003b). While in hindsight Valla may never have “officially” changed her position, she reasoned that the fact that the EU's eastward expansion would have to be considered an argument in favour of membership.

*It is no longer possible to refer to the EU as a capitalist club. That argument weighed heavily on my decision to vote no in 1972 and 1994, but the capitalist club disappeared once the EU expanded to the east. Enlargement has become a central argument for Norwegian membership in the EU (Andersen, 2003).*

At the time, the statement by the LO leader was viewed as a sign that the confederation could come to support a Norwegian bid for entry into the EU. The reopening of the membership debate in the union movement, however, can be traced to the largest private sector union in LO, *Fellesforbundet*, in the autumn of 2003. The leadership of the largest private sector union

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<sup>2</sup> Collective agreements can be made statutory nationwide, which commonly secures a minimum wage and often labour standards that are applicable to all workers, regardless of whether they are organised (*allmenngjøring*).

in the country wanted Norway to join the EU and raised the issue ahead of a general election and expected a decision on the matter at the LO Congress in 2005 (Klassekampen, 2003c). Among the central reasons raised was the necessity of market access for Norwegian exports and need for political influence inside the EU's decision-making process. Prominent social democrats in the Labour party came out in support these arguments, most notably Thorbjørn Jagland (Mathismoen, 2003). Opinions inside LO were split, even in the leadership. LO international secretary at the time, Ingunn Yssen, made a push for LO to change its official position, as she remarked that:

*Europe has changed since 1994, when the “no-side” called the EU the “rich man’s club”. From the May 1, 450 million Europeans will have joined the EU. Norway and EFTA have now become the “rich man’s club” (Mathismoen, 2003).*

There are several members of LO's leadership that make claims about the “nature” of the EU as the 2004 Enlargement approaches (Aftenposten, 2003b, 2003c). There is contention over what kind of a project European integration has become. Is it still the project of a corrosive kind of market liberalism from 1972 and 1994 – which is oddly a frame rarely challenged, even by pro-EU supporters – or has the EU become the “continental project of solidarity”? Opinions in LO are split, though as suggested in the content analysis, voices that supported Norwegian accession are almost exclusively associated with the peak organisation. Nevertheless, in more substantial terms, the discourse's most prominent feature is this juxtaposition of nation-state versus Union. There are framing contests within the movement over what the EU *represents*, as it appears to be moving in a more “social” direction in the early stages of the decade. Accordingly, this evolution in Europe reflects poorly upon the “character” of the Norwegian political system, mostly in the eyes of EU supporters, as it thus becomes one of the few countries that does not participate in a continent-wide effort for solidarity.

One of the most notable trade unionist opponents of Norwegian EU membership, *Fellesforbundets* Boye Ullmann, blasts the EU supporters ahead of an LO conference about the future of the EU in 2004, as he deems, they have lost touch with reality (Laukeland-Stai, 2004). Nevertheless, he recognises the push in his own union for membership. In an earlier interview, Ullmann remarks that “the battle over Norwegian EU membership is on the doorstep. It is

only a matter of time before a new referendum will be put to the people, most likely in 2006 or 2007” (Kleiveland, 2003). This argument about the inevitable repeat of the 1972 and 1994 referendums is made before in the Norwegian debate. The inherent ambiguities and unsettled structure of the EEA Agreement, its “halfway-house” quality, has always been seen as a rather unstable societal compromise. While Ullmann’s prediction is therefore appropriate, it does not, ultimately, come true. From 2004 and onwards, as was shown in the previous chapter, the membership question dies down and disappears from the political agenda.

When the membership issue wanes in importance for LO, it is not due to a political shift or seismic event in Europe. On the contrary, it is the forming of a new political alliance on the domestic scene that halts further momentum in LO for a fifth membership application.<sup>3</sup> Through 2003, the Labour Party (AP), the Centre Party (SP) and the Socialist Left Party (SV) found common ground and aimed to contest the 2005 election as a coalition. This was viewed favourably in LO, but the multiparty cooperation had “Europe” as its biggest stumbling block. The social democrats in Labour had historically been strong supporters of EU membership, whereas SV and SP were arguably the fiercest EU critics in Norwegian politics. Both parties had a policy to exit the EEA, which they wanted to replace with a less comprehensive trade deal. Upon agreeing to a centre-left coalition project, headed by Labour’s Jens Stoltenberg, thus the conundrum of the EU had to be solved among the prospective, coalition partners. Prominent trade unionists, in particular Valla, were seen as central driving forces for aligning the three parties causes and urging them to put EU division behind (Hegtun, 2012). For a split LO, there seemed to be a general consensus that domestic influence trumped contesting the EU question. The leader of *Fagforbundet* Jan Davidsen (2013), summed up this position nicely when he wrote that “it is more important to elect Stoltenberg as prime minister, than to get Berlusconi as president”. According to Fossum (2009), the parties agreed to a “suicide clause” being written into the government declaration; Ap would not seek to promote EU membership, as long as the other two agreed to govern on the basis of the EEA association. The “suicide clause”, of course, heavily implies that if any violation of the agreement were to occur the clause, the government would dissolve.

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<sup>3</sup> Norway applied to join the EU twice, in 1962 and 1967, largely following the lead of the UK government.

The trade unions closed ranks around the coalition. Thus, the EU supporters within LO “lost” the option to push for a new referendum round. Many of the debates around the “nature” of the EU and Norway’s place in Europe seized when the expected referendum did not come to pass. This could in part be seen as a sizeable victory for the anti-EU forces on the centre-left, as they succeeded in keeping membership off the agenda. Likely though, this “victory” was bittersweet for sceptical unions and in particular SV and SP, as the coalition project also solidified the EEA Agreement as the centre-left’s preferred solution for the foreseeable future.

## **5.2 2008: Losing faith in political alliances**

After the issue of membership no longer served as an alternative in the Norwegian centre-left’s EU contestation, from 2008 and onwards, the trade unions shift attention to the policy domain. In particular, some controversial EU directives are hotly debated within the union movement. There are less overtly political evaluations of the EU system, and more technical consideration about the regulation of the domestic labour market. Chief among these is the EU Services Directive, which is to be introduced into Norwegian legislation through the EEA Agreement.<sup>4</sup> Debates over the EU Services Directive emerged slowly in early 2008, but more contentious debates over what LO’s policy and action towards policymakers did not come to pass until later in 2009.

The Services Directive was the object of intense debates on the continent some years prior, not least among European trade unions. The “Bolkestein Directive”, named after the Dutch EU Commissioner under whose leadership the legislation was first drafted, was central to the aim of the EU’s Lisbon Strategy of making the internal market flexible and competitive on a global scale (Dølvik & Visser, 2009, p. 492). The EU had been through a few eventful years since 2004, and Bolkestein had played a major role in perhaps the most important event. The the EU’s Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE), referred to as the Constitutional Treaty, was famously defeated in national referenda by Dutch and French voters in May 2005. The TCE was later amended and replaced with the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009. The EU also saw the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2008, two countries with notably different price and wage levels from Western

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<sup>4</sup> This secondary legislation is named Directive 2006/123/EC on services in the internal market.

and Northern European member-states.<sup>5</sup> Both of these central events become linked to the contestation of the Bolkestein Directive. The legislation was an attempt to liberalise services in the common market, but stoked concerns that there would be increased wage competition between Western and Eastern European labour. According to Crespy (2010), the directive became a symbolic struggle over how Europe should balance the concerns of capital versus labour in a new, globalised age, and thus framed in terms of a classic left-right conflict.

Class was also a prominent concern among Norwegian trade unions. They feared that the aim of increasing “services mobility” would entail a deregulation of national labour standards and the collective bargaining system. While most of the debate concerns the Services Directive specifically, there are those who link Bolkestein to the general direction of the EU. Jan Olav Andersen, the bargaining leader of *EL og IT Forbundet*, remarks the negative impact of the EU in general, and this policy in particular, when he claims:

*“the Services directive is one of many efforts to smooth out the highway that is called the EU’s free flow of services. If the objective is to remove all barriers to trade, and you still think it is possible to provide labour protection at the national level, then you are oblivious”* (Klassekampen, 2008).

Thus, for some union members contestation of particular policies is linked to opposition to the EEA Agreement. Granted, this is not stated explicitly in this claim and is not categorised as EEA opposition in the underlying data. However, when taking into account the criticism and the fact that *EL og IT Forbundet*, and Andersen in particular, have been outspoken opponents of the agreement, this point seems clear. *Fellesforbundets* Roy Pedersen is one of the trade unionists that view the directive and the future of Norwegian labour in relation to the ongoing financial crisis, in which he argues that “the EU is at this time the most effective system for promoting unregulated capitalism” (Skjeseth, 2009).

The struggle over the Services Directive shows clear division between the LO leadership and its affiliated unions. Although views on EU membership diverged significantly in 2003 as

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<sup>5</sup> The French political debate, in particular, was characterised by the linkage of the TCE, 2008 Enlargement and the Services Directive. Fears of wage competition prompted the pervading myth of the “Polish plumber” to materialise (Crespy, 2010, p. 1265).

well, this directive sees official positions on the directive split between the peak organisation and some of its trade unions. In the spring of 2009, LO's leadership, now under Roar Flåthen, advises that the upcoming LO Congress should support the implementation of the Services Directive into Norwegian legislation (Hellesnes, 2009). Prior to the 2009 Congress, LO's leadership have sought to gain assurances from AP that "Bolkenstein" would not impact labour standards and collective bargaining in domestic markets, which AP provided.

However, a source of contention leading up to the Congress is whether AP, the Norwegian government or any other domestic actors is able to provide assurances that EEA legislation will not impact labour standards. The critics argue that conflicts over EU directives would be ruled cases of non-compliance by the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA). Thus, ultimately fall under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), over which neither national courts nor political parties have sway (Klassekampen, 2009a, 2009b). This divergence between the peak and affiliates appears to increase in this time span. Leader of *EL og IT Forbundet* Hans Felix is dissatisfied with Flåthen and claims that his federation will push for a vote of no confidence against the LO leader, with an ominous claim that the bow of obedience to AP's wishes "will have consequences at the 2009 Congress" (Hellesnes, 2008).

From 2008 and onwards, LO's debate can be characterised as an intense struggle between the leadership and the rank-and-file over the Services Directive and the feasibility of challenging EEA legislation. There is also a rise in claims connected to the ECJ's ruling in the Laval case, which draw sovereignty arguments.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, a central characteristic of the Norwegian debate is the delay with which it occurred. For while "Bolkenstein" provoked intense debate in EU member states in 2005, before it was ratified in 2006, the Services Directive first became a contentious debate in Norway in mid-2009. The substantial opposition in LO is several years too late to impact the actual formulation of the policy. At that point, the Directive is simply to be adopted into the EEA Agreement. Thus, stopping the implementation of the secondary legislation would have to be done through the EEA's right of reservation, which has never been employed previously.

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<sup>6</sup>Latvian construction company Laval employed "posted workers" in Sweden and claimed that the EU's free movement of services (TFEU art. 49) meant Swedish labour standards did not apply.

### 5.3 2013: An EEA revolt from below

The question of European integration has been a source of contention for more than a decade in the Norwegian trade union movement. Deep divisions over the nature and impact of Europe came to the forefront when LO dealt with the question of membership ahead of the 1994 referendum (Dølvik, 1995; Geyer, 1997). Similar conflicts over Norway's association to the EU have appeared, though in varying scope and intensity, from 2003 and onwards. At the beginning of 2012, another controversial directive is about to be implemented. LO has pulled 10 union affiliates, numerous local associations and several thousands of workers into strike against the EU's Temporary Work Agency Directive (Hellesnes, 2012a; Kagge, 2012).<sup>7</sup>

For a significant part of LO's rank-and-file membership this directive is interpreted as the latest attempt to increase labour mobility and market flexibility, which for Norwegian labour is perceived as liberalisation and deregulation of domestic standards. The Temporary Work Agency Directive is meant to regulate "atypical" and temporary work across the internal market. The EU legislation comes at a time when Norwegian politics are discussing whether temporary staffing agencies should be regulated differently, or even abolished altogether, as parts of the Norwegian left are arguing for (Hellesnes, 2012a; Kagge, 2012). Whereas in the previous case with the Services Directive, the EEA escaped significant opposition from LO unions, in this period the contestation of the EU directive is tied more closely to EEA opposition.

The LO leadership gave its conditional support for the legislation in 2010 but shifted its position after a significant part of the membership voiced concerns (Gedde-Dahl, Kagge, & Melgård, 2012). The Secretariat thus begins the period by recommending that the government initiates the EEA Agreement's right to reservation to deny that the legislation is implemented into Norwegian legislation. Once the divide within the movement it settled on this case, anger turns to the centre-left coalition government for their support for the directive. Roar Abrahamsen from *Fellesforbundet* directs criticism towards the Labour Party, who are accused of breaking both the coalition and the party's traditional base (Hellesnes, 2012a). Several unions stage a demonstration outside of the parliament, primarily directed towards AP<sup>8</sup>, in

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<sup>7</sup> Directive 2008/104/EC on temporary agency work.

<sup>8</sup> EU membership is considered one of the most divisive issues in the post-war era in Norway. Historically, it



January 2012. The Labour party's Anette Trettebergstuen and Hanne Bjørstrøm make it clear that the government has no intention of changing its position on the Temporary Work Agency Directive (Kagge, 2012; Klassekampen, 2009a).

From early 2012, the union debate over the directive turns into a conflict over the EEA Agreement. As the opposition against the EU policies had been sidestepped for a second time, it becomes clearer that those against the EEA will now seek to turn LO's official position at the 2013 Congress (Hellesnes, 2012b). In January 2012 *The Trondheim Conference*, an annual gathering of LO members arranged by a local association, first propose the termination of the EEA Agreement (Hellesnes, 2012b). It is clear that LO factions will contest the agreement at coming 2013 LO Congress. However, the efforts of the EEA-opposition are to no avail in practical terms. The Norwegian Parliament ratifies the Temporary Work Agency Directive in the summer of 2012, as AP breaks out from the centre-left coalition to form a parliamentary majority with non-government parties, thus bypassing the considerable LO opposition.

In the weeks prior to the 2013 Congress, the future of the EEA Agreement is frequently discussed by trade unions. Oppositional voices mobilise in the press, and members of the leadership appear to see a need to support the deal publicly. Several from the LO leadership, and some from the affiliate unions, come out in support of the EEA. Roar Flåthen, in particular, emphasises the utility of market access.

*The EEA Agreement is a blessing for "Norway Incorporated" (AS Norge). It is good for the economy, the employment rate, purchasing power and for recent changes to the national pension scheme – all of which stand out positively compared to the rest of the world. The Norwegian economy depends on unhindered access to the EEA-market* (Hellesnes, 2012c).

This argument by the LO leader has to be viewed in relation to the rise of an opposition

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has split most political parties, shaped coalitions and disbanded governments, in addition to the especially contentious referendums in 1972 and 1994. Despite this nationwide contention, Europe has especially been troublesome for the Labour party. While its leadership has remained strong EU supporters for the most part, the party is split along an elite-grassroots divide – which likely overlaps with a similar divide in LO – as its traditional industrial base and left-wing factions have remained highly sceptical of political integration. The anti-EU forces within AP organised in the groups Social Democrats Against the EU (SME) (Geyer & Swank, 1997; Kallset, 2009).

against the EEA. As previously suggested, the need for market has largely been given in the Norwegian EU debate, and the low levels of references to this argument in the early stages of the 2000s, may suggest that the argument was rarely challenged. However, as the EEA association is challenged more frequently, it forces members of the leadership to come out and *explicitly* make the argument in the press. Furthermore, it seems that the trade unions, in 2013, are less sure about the necessity of the EEA for market access. The most important actor here is *Fellesforbundet*. This union organises workers in traditional manufacturing industries, that export their goods to the European market. Thus, it has always been assumed that its members would remain staunch supporters of EU integration for the market benefits, which was the case when they opted for EU membership in 1994 (Dølvik, 2017). However, in 2013 *Fellesforbundet's* is split down the middle on whether to keep or cancel the EEA (Aftenposten, 2012). The conflicts within the trade union movement reflected through a contentious 2013 Congress, where several unions have policies to renegotiate or terminate the EEA altogether. Even though the 2013 Congress agrees to issue a declaration critical to EU and EEA influence, it is ultimately unclear what the significance of this policy is in practice (Tallaksen & Størdal Vegstein, 2013).

As demonstrated in the periodical analysis, there are conflicting perceptions about how the EU influences most areas of Norwegian, political life. The trade union movement has a propensity for framing EU/EEA policies in terms of their impact on labour market issues. This is certainly both expected and understandable, given these arguments close proximity to the trade unions' core interests in the labour market. However, it is interesting to note *which issues* there is a dominance of either labour market or sovereignty arguments. The classic argument for utilitarian protection is often invoked when the debate revolves around technical regulations or specific and controversial EU directives. The substantial opposition towards the Services and Temporary Agency Work directives usually produced pointed criticism with specific references to the parts of the labour regulations that they are deemed to weaken. However, this tendency is reversed when discussions turn to the contentious ECJ rulings, such as the Laval verdict, or other events that occur on the continent (Hellesnes, 2012a; Klassekampen, 2012). On the ECJ rulings and the claims about the financial crisis in 2008 or the unemployment figures that followed in the wake, albeit these were few in numbers, generally provoke clearer calls to reassert national autonomy against EU supranationalism.

#### 5.4 **Between the domestic and the European**

The analysis of the trade unions' contestation across the three periods largely conforms to the general patterns already established. The high frequency of claims regarding EU-membership around 2003, as shown in the presentation of the results in chapter 4, seems plausibly explained by a changing overarching view of the European project as a system of solidarity, which it seems was primarily based on the imminent Eastern Enlargement. The euro-enthusiasm of certain segments of continental Europe for the completion of the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), with the introduction of the Euro can also – quite possibly – have contributed to this “wind of change”, the importance of which should perhaps not be overstated. The disappearance of claims for or against EU-membership in successive years seems quite clearly explained by the Norwegian centre-left coalition's “suicide clause” from 2005.

However, the move towards more EEA-focused claims from trade union actors in and around 2008, seems to be partly due to very specific EU policies, most notably the EU Services Directive, that was viewed as directly hitting at the core of traditional trade union areas of concern, such as permanent employment being the norm in all work sectors. Additionally, the specific and close relationship between the LO and the AP seemed to somewhat falter in this period due to this very issue. This is significant because AP has a very affirmative pro-EEA line and a partial decoupling from the social democratic party would make active opposition from LO more likely than previously.

Moving beyond domestic explanations, there is also the recurrent concern regarding the EU's democratic accountability to consider when attempting to explain the shift of perspective from the political centre-left towards the EU from 2003 to 2008. The Dutch and French peoples' rejection of the TCE in 2005 and the subsequent elite approval of basically the same treaty – now under the name of the Lisbon Treaty – did little to paint the EU as a more “social union” concerned with the wants and needs of ordinary people of its member countries (Risse, 2014). The change of the French ratification method from public referendum in 2005 to parliamentary approval in 2008 illustrates this issue quite starkly. This whole ordeal is often seen as an illustration of the increasing elite-public divide in European countries in general. It is not likely to sit well with the LO-organisation and the broader segments of their

members, who struggle with their own divide between elite and the rank-and-file – as the data illustrates (see section 4.2).

Furthermore, there could be made a case for the actions of political elites, both at the national and supranational level, in these years contributing to the strengthening of the internationalist-nationalist political cleavage in European politics, with the trade unions and the working class becoming increasingly sceptical of transferring power beyond the borders of the nation-state. This is not because of some inherent nationalist tendency among the traditional working-class, as at times alluded to by various newspaper columnists, but because of what is perceived as concrete real-life consequences of internationalisation and Europeanisation. This is shown by the data and the number of claims categorised as exclusive nationalism versus those concerning institutional sovereignty (See Table 4.2).

A further split between the trade union's regular members, the LO leadership and the AP seems clearly linked to the fight over the Temporary Work Agency Directive in the years leading up to 2013. The result of which might very well partly explain both the decreasing electoral support of LO member for AP in successive years and an increasingly silent LO leadership – viewed by a low number of media claims regarding the issue altogether.

As the LO is an organisation with deep social-democratic roots and is undeniably a centre-left political organisation if viewed as an entity, it is worth noting another point, which supports the trends already outlined, and that is that 2013 is right at the heart of the period of harsh austerity demands levied on several southern European countries by the so-called troika, the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The EU's handling of the Euro-crisis has been widely criticised – especially because the harsh measures demanded of countries like Greece and Spain involved dramatically cutting social welfare spending and disregarding extreme levels of unemployment. This highly public issue would most likely not sit well with any trade union member concerned with either solidarity or nation-state sovereignty, or both. It is therefore not surprising that the data gathered shows a rise in the use of the institutional sovereignty frame from 2003 to 2008 – and a further increase in 2013. These arguments are plausible, though it is more difficult to *demonstrate* the impact of these broader European issues on the

case of LO's conflict over the EU, as the analysis predominantly shows a union movement that responds to political developments at the national level.

At the general level, one might also draw out certain notable features about the political contestation of the EU. As has been shown in this thesis, there is a processual quality to the meanings and dominant frames that actors ascribe to Europe. The main findings indicated that the attitudes and positions towards the EU system can change among certain segments of Norwegian organised labour. Moreover, the form and intensity of contestation appears to be directly influenced by concrete EU action. This should lead us to infer that while some trade unionists are probably staunch, principled opponents to the EU project, this is not the case for all union members. As the dominant frames and arguments about the "nature" of the EU project changes, to some degree, according to the significant events of the period, this might suggest that the trade unionists are not against Europe *per se* – but that they are against the particular policies and the specific direction that the EU is taking concerning central trade and labour policies in the internal market.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

*It is not easy to deal scientifically with feelings*

— SIGMUND FREUD

**T**HIS THESIS SET out to map Norwegian trade unions' support and opposition to Europe with the main research question: how does the Norwegian trade union movement contest the EU? This was supplemented by three sub-questions of (i) *what* issue or object is contested, (ii) *who* in the organisation make which claims and (iii) *why* do they support or oppose certain EU issues. The three sub-questions viewed together will provide the answer to the main research question. This chapter presents these answers, supplemented by comments concerning the limitations of the claims-making analysis. The chapter ends with a brief look at possible implications of this thesis' findings beyond LO and Norway.

### **6.1 Revolt on the left: Overview of the argument**

The claims-making analysis suggests that LO followed a certain set of patterns when contesting the EU. First, as to what is contested, the trade union's approach to the European question in the years 2003 to 2013 is best characterized as primarily a struggle over the EEA Agreement – with the particular question of EU membership only being of considerable importance in the early years of the period in question, most likely specifically related to Eastern enlargement.

This brings us to the second point, the question of who drives contestation. LO's affiliate unions are more often present in the media in the periods 2008 and 2013, which further supports the argument of a vocal minority that has successfully managed to politicize the EEA issue. Notwithstanding, the diverging views of the peak organization and the grassroots members is clear throughout all periods.

The answer to the third sub-question – the reasons for why trade unionists support or oppose the EU – is largely a combination of two types of arguments that runs throughout the thesis. On the one hand, parts of Norwegian organized labour understand the EU system and the impact of their policies as a threat to the interests and values of workers. Especially within the framework of a universal and generous welfare state, the EU offer few immediate, institutional advantages and can quickly be deemed a threat to the national accomplishments of Norwegian social democracy. The EU's advocacy of market liberalism and commitment to its core, liberal freedoms, are by the EU-opposition seen as corrosive to the concept of the Norwegian model and trade union influence, which the consistency of labour market protection claims illustrate.

Nevertheless, there is a clear rise in arguments about maintaining sovereignty from 2008, and most notably in 2013. These arguments are mostly of a symbolic kind, and seem to suggest that some factions of the union movement also view the EU as a threat to a particular national culture and political tradition. Thus, this brings together both rationalist and constructivist – not to say utilitarian and symbolic – reasons for opposing the EU. Similarly, support for the EU and EEA also seem to be explained best by a combination of rationalist and symbolic arguments – namely the importance of market access and supranational community.

## **6.2 The limitations of the claims-making analysis**

The method of claims-making analysis is uniquely positioned to map and explore mobilized political conflict. This assertion is based on an understanding of societal conflicts as being primarily performed in the public arena, through the vast infrastructure of the mass media. The approach cannot capture all contestations by trade unionists, such as internal discussion or their use of the corporate channel. It predominantly measures strategic behavior, but combines this with the actors' own expression of motivation.

While the EEA Agreement is a source of competing views within the trade union movement, the oppositional forces have not succeeded in changing LO's official position as of yet. This is despite the fact that negative claims dominate in the media coverage. This might suggest that a vocal minority, along with the media's conflict-bias, skew the picture of the trade union's opposition to a certain extent, which might somewhat impair the quality of the analysis.

### **6.3 Europe in crisis and the decline of social democracy**

Social democratic and centre-left parties are seeing their political support and influence diminishing across Europe. In some countries, labour parties that were dominant for decades, have almost been reduced to insignificance which, to some extent, also tells the story of trade unions' dwindling influence. The explanations for the crisis of social democracy vary and are the subject of considerable academic and public debate. Nevertheless, a frequent explanation suggested is the perceived turn of social democrats towards market-liberal policies combined with an unwavering support for the EU, regardless of the type of trade, labour or social policies that have been implemented at the European level. This has been seen as a reason for why the traditional base of workers are abandoning the social democratic parties, since, as Thomas Piketty (2018) has argued, the parties abandoned the interests of its base first.

The occasional use of the "Social Europe" frame, even in a country like Norway, appears to be an indication that labour opposition to the EU should not be regarded as some *fait accompli* or political iron law. Rather it, along with other factors mentioned in this thesis, suggests that if the EU were to become more conducive to labour interests, the organization might see their support among trade union members, labour and the traditional working class increase significantly.



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## EXAMPLE OF CLAIMS-ANALYSIS

The claims of actors affiliated with the Norwegian Trade Union Confederation (LO) have been broken down into five separate elements for empirical analysis:

*WHO (actor) – HOW (form) – WHAT (issue) – WHY (frame) – POSITION (value)*

Claims have been gathered from *Aftenposten* and *Klassekampen* and organized in charts for each period, 2003-4, 2008-9, 2012-13. The table below shows examples of claims:

	<b>WHO (actor)</b>	<b>HOW (form)</b>	<b>WHAT (issue)</b>	<b>WHY (frame)</b>	<b>POSITION (value)</b>
1.	LO's deputy chairman Roar Flåthen	calls for	new debate on EU membership	Norway needs equal market access	Pro-EU
2.	Fellesforbundet's leader Arve Bakke	argues	LO must support EEA-agreement	challenges in labour market caused by current, national politicians	Pro-EEA
3.	LO's Knut Arne Sanden		need more transnational trade union cooperation		Evaluation
4.	LO's international secretary Ingunn Yssen	wants	a new debate on EU membership	Enlargement has changed the EU. Norway has taken up role as the "capitalist club"	Pro-EU
5.	Trondheim LO leader Arne Byrkjeflot	reponds	EEA should be terminated	the central reason for social dumping in labour market	Anti-EEA
6.	LO's secretary Ellen Stensrud	speech	on Transitional Agreements (TAs)	must avoid social dumping	Evaluation
7.	Fellesforbundet Boye Ullmann	claims in interview	no-side must prepare for the coming EU membership debate, believed to be in 2006	EU is a colossal, concentration of power that moves decision-making away from the nation-state	Anti-EU
8.	EL og IT Hans Felix		labour out of the EEA, but not complete termination	ECJ-rulings show dangers of transferring power to supranational bodies	Anti-EEA
9.	EL og IT Venke Heimdal		veto on Services Directive	LO must respect 500 000 workers and national democracy	Evaluation
10.	Fellesforbundet Boye Ullmann	writes	Temporary Agency Directive	EEA opposition is needed to uphold "Norwegian model" in labour market	Anti-EEA

The five claim-elements were treated as variables and assigned numerical values. This enabled quantitative analysis of the material. The form-variable had no function in the thesis and was cut. Here are the variables and values used to code the actor claims:

## ACTOR

- 1 – LO peak
- 2 – Union affiliate

## ISSUE & POSITION

- 1 – EU (1, 0.5, 0, -0.5, -1)
- 2 – EEA (1, 0.5, 0, -0.5, -1)
- 3 – EVALUATION (1, 0, -1)

## FRAME

- 1 – ECONOMIC (1, 2)
- 2 – CULTURAL (1, 2, 3)
- 3 – MICELLANEOUS (1, 2)

## EXPANDED TABLES AND FIGURES

Table B.1: Example of the ideal structure of a claim

Who? (Subject actor)	How? (Form)	At whom? (Addressee or target)	What? (Issue)	For/against whom? (Object actor)	Why? (Frame)
A trade union	goes on strike	demanding that the government intervenes	after a squeeze on wages	by employers' organisations in bargaining rounds	arguing that the salary reduction violates the Basic Agreement
The Norwegian Parliament	passes a resolution	giving its approval to the EU Commission	for a proposal to coordinate qualification recognition	for third-country nationals in the EU	noting how high-skilled immigrants are undervalued in the labour market

Table B.2: Differentiation between EU issues

Issue	Definition	Contestation
<i>EU membership</i>	Judgment on the merits of a formal Norwegian membership in the EU	Polity
<i>EEA Agreement</i>	Opinion expressing a position in favour or in opposition to the country's current EEA association	Polity & policy
<i>Policy evaluation</i>	Assessment of the benefits or disadvantages of EU/EEA policies, but without taking a position for or against EU membership or the EEA Agreement	Policy

Table B.3: Detailed frames by LO actors by year and issue (percentages)

	2003-2004		2008-2009		2012-2013	
	LO-peak	Union	LO-peak	Union	LO-peak	Union
<i>Economic</i>						
Economic prosperity	2,8	2,8	-	-	6,4	4,3
Labour market protection	16,7	36,1	9,5	40,5	2,1	31,9
<i>Cultural</i>						
Exclusive nationalism	-	-	-	-	-	-
Institutional sovereignty	2,8	11,1	4,8	23,8	-	46,8
Supranational community	16,7	5,6	2,4	2,4	2,1	-
<i>Miscellaneous</i>						
Domestic politics	2,8	-	4,8	7,1	2,1	2,1
Other frames	-	2,8	-	2,4	2,1	-
Total percentage	100	100	100	100	100	100
N		36		42		47



