Inclusion of People in Decision-Making: The New Challenges

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Summary

Reflecting on the May 2019 European Parliament elections, the EU democratic institutions are in need of efficiently responding to the discrepancies between public agendas and policy-making (as shown in the Macedonia naming dispute), and the threatening dynamics of authoritarian populism, as well as to unpredictable reactions from diverse groups and citizens, especially from the neglected, excluded and marginal ones. These citizens cannot handle complexity and react by voting for protest candidates/movements and supporting radical, yet oversimplified and inadequate, solutions to complex problems. Given the potentiality of crisis cascades and that an over-standardized "one size fits all" approach does not work anymore, the EU policy-making experts should arguably turn their analytic attention to existing drivers of political destabilisation by adopting new knowledge bases and sources. This pertains to a fresh theoretical understanding of nonlinear sociopolitical phenomena (from populist reactions of any kind to social media behaviours), that is, a deeper, complexity-friendly approach drawn from new scientific advancements and coupled with innovative policy designs, aimed to rebalance the system and to defend the European project against further failures.

Keywords: Populism, Social Media, Policy-Making, Cultural Backlash, Complexity, European Union

Introduction

On 14 December 2005, Professor Lee Carroll Bollinger, the President of New York's prestigious Columbia University, gave an inspirational speech where he called our analytic attention to a series of novel and global challenges (quoted in Lettieri, 2016: 1):

The forces affecting societies around the world and creating a global community are powerful and novel. The spread of global market systems, the rise of (and resistance to) various forms of democracy, the emergence of extraordinary opportunities for increased communication and of an increasingly global culture, and the actions of governments and nongovernmental organizations are all reshaping our world and our sense of responsibility for it and, in the process, raising profound questions. These questions call for the kinds of analyses and understandings that academic institutions are uniquely capable of providing. Too many policy failures are fundamentally failures of knowledge...

In this evolving and accelerating setting, the European Union (EU) needs to reflexively situate and theorise itself within a highly networked, hyperconnected and globalised world environment (of 7.7 billion people) in which the strong multiple interdependencies between technological, ecological, economic, social and political subsystems and risks are becoming ever more frequent (and fast) and difficult to predict and to control (Helbing, 2013; WEF, 2018 and 2019).[1] This is vital for the very future of the EU, which is under stress and must rather urgently invest in holistic and meaningful sustainability, political, economic, social and environmental, beyond the current elusive and ever-threatening crisis (see Laurent and Le Cacheux, 2018). It is also in line with articulating an agreed change of paradigm of the European and international policies on development cooperation, as well as a global and interdisciplinary language (or vocabulary) strategically aimed to achieve the so-called Agenda 2030 and the seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs), as set up by the United Nations in 2015 (in specific, 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets).[2]

However, such theorisation is arguably incompatible with the old, received or conventional approaches to policy modelling, which regularly underestimate the profound role of uncertainty and "nonlinear" social and economic dynamics, as well as of the complex interaction between public choices and individual decision-making, thus showing large limitations in terms of efficacy (Squazzoni, 2014;

[1] But although authoritative expert predictions (in science, in economics, in politics) are comically bad, *reliable insight and foresight* may indeed be possible through interdisciplinary openness, generalist thinking, hypothesis testing, and continuous experimentation and learning (Epstein, 2019).

[2] The EU has recently outlined three possible scenarios on how best to progress on the comprehensive and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, an overarching EU SDGs strategy to guide all actions by the European Union and Member States. Second, continued mainstreaming of the SDGs in all relevant EU policies by the Commission, but not enforcing Member States' action. Third, putting enhanced focus on external action while consolidating current sustainability ambition at EU level. See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-towards-sustainable-europe-2030_en (accessed 31 January 2019).

Eppel and Rhodes, 2018). In addition, steering governance mechanisms are outdated and conventional approaches are almost unable to adequately account not only for the increased societal and political complexity, but also for the growing discrepancy between governmental decisions and people's feelings and orientations, as vividly demonstrated in the case of the Macedonia naming dispute.

In the light of these critical considerations, this article argues that for the EU policy-making experts (including both political decision-makers, academics, and think tankers) the main task to successfully cope with the emergent challenges of the contemporary speedy, complex, multipolar and multiconceptual world largely depends on the strategic capacity to generate fresh understanding of how individuals and groups think, decide, interact and react to constant changes and disruptive discontinuities. Such understanding pertains to the cross-fertilisation between different cultures, disciplines and research areas, "from computer and complexity science to law and economics, from sociology to cognitive and behavioral sciences. In the same perspective, it will be necessary to foster an issue-oriented and interdisciplinary approach to research overcoming a cultural resistance that still appears far from being broken down" (Lettieri, 2016: 13; see also Lane et al., 2009; Helbing, 2015; Wiesner et al., 2018).

New conceptual, theoretical and methodological tools, therefore, will allow new practices for dynamic and innovative policy design, able to contain the hidden factors, the complex generative processes and the underlying drivers that constantly feed social unrest and political destabilisation in Europe and beyond. Due to space constraints, our arguments here should only be considered as exploratory.

1. The Case of the Macedonia Naming Dispute

Despite the large efforts made by FYROM's pro-Western Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, as well as the strong Western support to him (for instance, US Defense Secretary James Mattis, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz visited Skopje, while US President Donald Trump sent a written message), the 30 September 2018 name-change referendum results did not bring the much expected happy-end solution to the so-called *Macedonia naming dispute*. Turnout was much below the required 50 per cent threshold, arguably signifying that the "North Macedonia" proposal (linked with the healthy hope of joining the European Union and NATO) contradicts the way in which most citizens in FYROM perceive themselves, their cultural self-identity and national narratives (see Zeri, Tsekeris and Tsekeris, 2018; Daskalovski, 2017; Koneska, 2019).[3]

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[3] On 11 January 2019, however, the country's Parliament completed the required legal implementation of the Prespa Agreement by approving the constitutional changes for renaming the

In crisis-ridden Greece, the restart of the diplomatic negotiations in early February 2018 with FYROM to settle the naming dispute under the auspices of the United Nations and the European Union, within the official framework of the European Security Strategy in the Balkans, triggered a sudden and emotionally charged resistance of a large part of the Greek society against the use of the name "Macedonia" (including its derivatives). As recent polls[4] have demonstrated, the majority of people in Greece (68.3 per cent) are strongly against the Prespa Agreement.

According to an extensive quantitative survey (Armakolas and Siakas, 2018) on Greek public attitudes towards the naming dispute, with nationwide coverage and multi-stage stratified sampling, a large majority of participants (71.5 per cent) totally reject any reference to the term "Macedonia" as a part of any future solution, while only 22.5 per cent responded that they could accept a composite name that would include the term "Macedonia". Most importantly, this recent survey vividly shows that the "non-accommodative/rejectionist" or "un-comprising" camp (i.e. no reference to the term "Macedonia" or a derivative of that word) has had a sharp increase in the last two years.

It is evident that it is the Greek *radical social imaginary*, to use Cornelius Castoriadis's (1991) famous philosophical terminology,[5] as well as its permanent deep attachment to classical antiquity (Zeri, Tsekeris and Tsekeris, 2018; Sofos, 2010), rather than the press, the mass media, the online networks, the digital platforms, or the actual structure of the political party system, that substantially affects and actively shapes the public opinion against FYROM's name claims.[6]

In the meantime, new generations became voters in both Greece and FYROM, who have no substantive access to the near and distant past, as well as to actual historical experiences concerning the disputed issue. Evidently, collective memory is in decay (Candia et al., 2018) and the attraction of the young to political extremes and radical anti-system parties has grown slowly but steadily over time (see Mounk, 2018). To a large degree, these generations are also against any compromise (like the "North Macedonia" proposal) to the decades-old row between Athens and Skopje.

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country to North Macedonia with a two-thirds parliamentary majority, while on 25 January 2019, Greece's Parliament also approved the Prespa agreement with 153 votes in favor and 146 votes against.

[4] See http://en.protothema.gr/new-poll-683-say-no-to-the-tsipras-zaev-agreement/ (accessed 1 April 2019).

[5] Cf. the relational notion of "social unconscious" (Dalal, 2001; Weinberg, 2007; Brown, 2001; Hopper and Weinberg, 2017; Hopper, 2001, 2003).

[6] Understanding how different Greek locales perceive their complex relationship with Balkan history, culture and heritage, is arguably crucial to the systematic study of politics and everyday life in contemporary Greece (Knight, 2018: 195).

Interestingly, the collective belief in the inherent superiority of the Greek culture and national identity is strong. Although 77 per cent of Greeks say representative democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, when it comes to public attitudes on national identity, religion, and the place of religious minorities, Greeks hold more nationalist and less accepting or tolerant views than do Western Europeans, according to a recent Pew Research Center (PRC) analysis of surveys in 34 countries across the continent.[7] In the same line, according to the inaugural World Values Survey (WVS-7) for Greece, one in five respondents does not want a neighbour who follows another religion, while 21 per cent agreed with the idea that when science and religion clash, the latter is always right.[8]

This more or less signifies the deep prevalence of the introverted, traditional "underdog culture" over the extrovert, modern "reformist culture" within the Greek society (Diamandouros, 1994; cf. Demertzis, 1997; Panagiotopoulos and Vamvakas, 2013), as well as the unconscious insecurities of the Greek people (concerning their identity and social life), which are ascribed in an imaginary way to foreigners (Lipowatz, 2014; see also Herzfeld, 1987). In addition, Greece's linking social capital has always been very low, as a result of "the low levels of trust, of a proliferation of free-riding, of the low levels of cooperation and reciprocity, of high levels of corruption and high levels of tolerance toward that corruption... An institutionally immature society that combines institutional sclerosis and institutional atrophy" (Hatzis, 2018: 843). In such context, crony capitalism and rent-seeking networks clearly prevail over civil society (egalitarian) networks, something that further feeds the aforementioned "non-accommodative/rejectionist" or "un-comprising" camp. At the analytical level, both kinds of networks are complex and, therefore, their systematic study requires interpretive emphasis on local context (not necessarily restricted to "real space") and relational interaction processes.

2. Drivers of Destabilisation

Yet, more generally, not much analytic attention has been paid to the sharp and increasing discrepancy between public agendas and policy-making, between ordinary people's tendencies and governments' strategic targets and orientations (including EU government).[9] Arguably, both the European and national policy-making autho-

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[7] See http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/31/greek-attitudes-toward-religion-minorities-align-more-with-central-and-eastern-europe-than-west/ (accessed 1 February 2019).

[8] See http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSNewsShow.jsp?ID=388 (accessed 1 March 2019).

[9] The actual gap between the electorates and the political and cultural elites obviously continues to widen within Europe, particularly pertaining to the fragile balance between what ought to remain national and what ought to become all-European. Although European citizens credit the EU with

rities and experts should not further ignore or downplay a number of crucial overlapping factors and underlying drivers that constantly and nonlinearly feed emergent perplexities and global disorder, reinforce social unrest, and dangerously destabilise the political scene all over Europe.[10]

2.1. Economic Insecurity

First, within the so-called "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2000) and particularly within the global financial crisis (now intensified by the novel coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic), populism and ethnocentric or xenophobic nationalism in the EU become highly attractive political options and have a growing nonlinear impact, especially on all those who desperately search for more secure and meaningful lives, suffer from a strong sense of social deprivation and economic stagnation or economic decline (loss of income, loss of jobs, and loss of economic security), and feel that the political establishment is inefficient and has failed them (see e.g. Mounk, 2018; Mudde, 2017; Magni, 2017; Van Kessel, 2015; Eiermann et al., 2017; Muller, 2016; De Vries and Hoffmann, 2016).[11]

The Eurosceptic populist vote is on the rise in the EU, especially after "the 2017 general elections in Austria, The Netherlands, France and Germany, and the 2018 elections in the Czech Republic and Italy" (Meyer, 2018: 10). In the light of

its capacity to sustain peace, they are still concerned that their needs are not met by the EU policies. See https://www.pewglobal.org/2019/03/19/europeans-credit-eu-with-promoting-peace-and-prosperity-but-say-brussels-is-out-of-touch-with-its-citizens/ (accessed 2 April 2019).

[10] Generally speaking, policy-making authorities and experts must not be arrogant and ignorant of the actual social reality and symbolic meaning-making processes, of how people perceive political agendas and construct needs and identities. Yet, political leadership should sometimes self-responsibly move forward to implement necessary projects of global prosperity and democracy, even though such projects are misperceived or disapproved by social majorities (making however misperception or disapproval visible and explicit). For instance, the referendum in North Macedonia (and the referendum in the UK as well) shows us that people occasionally make decisions that are potentially harmful. Neither majority nor minority should be able to put their preferences above political stability, peace, and the rule of law. We thus need effective structures that can prevent excessive over-reach by *both* intransigent minorities *and* intransigent majorities. Yet, implementing political decisions must be inseparable from processes of understanding collective biases and misconceptions, as well as of maximising information dissemination, consciousness raising, transparency and ethical responsibility-taking. This implies profound democratic changes in the complex European communication system as a whole. Above all, we need a multiscale (rather than an abstract universalist) interpretation of the political.

[11] As Martin Eiermann, Yascha Mounk and Limor Gultchin (2017) rightly put it: "There are two distinct kinds of harms which the rise of populism is already creating: the first is in the realm of policy and threatens to harm the rights of minorities. The second is in the realm of institutions, and threatens to undermine the long-term stability of democracies across the continent."

the 26 May 2019 European Parliament election results, the authoritarian populist threat to democracy in Hungary, Poland, Italy, France, Spain and other parts of Europe remains almost the most significant headline. The far-right populist wave indeed continues, while an interesting debate about the content and character of the social democratic strategy is brewing.

European societies continue to create many outcasts. Excluded, marginal and neglected citizens (or the disaffected "precariat" or the "outsiders") often cannot handle complexity and unpredictably react by voting for Eurosceptic or Europhobic protest candidates/movements and supporting radical, yet oversimplified and inadequate, solutions to complicated or complex (long-standing) problems.[12] Insecurity and inequality, as observed in Ronald Inglehart's most recent book on *Cultural Evolution*, are much likely to become even more severe as contemporary societies quickly "move into a mature phase of the Knowledge Society – that of Artificial Intelligence Society" (Inglehart, 2018: 199).

This calls us to *completely rethink the very conditions of democracy*, something that is even more pressing for Europeans than Americans, according to the French historian, sociologist and political philosopher Marcel Gauchet (2017). It also calls for a *new social contract* between citizens and democratic leaderships, based on society's historical achievements, such as fairness, inclusiveness and participation, as well as freedom, diversity and resilience.

Such innovative political vision can arguably be further nourished and supported by a deep study and analysis of the *fundamental laws* of human complex systems, societal dynamics, and social behaviour and development (Katerelos and Tsekeris, 2012; Bednar and Page, 2016; Smith and Jenks, 2006).

2.2. Echo Chamber Society

Second, the triumphant advent of social media gave rise to self-perpetual digital *echo chambers* (Sunstein, 2017; Del Vicario et al., 2016; Boutyline and Willer, 2017) and *filter bubbles* (Pariser, 2011; Shafer and Doherty, 2017; Geschke, Lorenz and Holtz, 2018). This allowed people to hear only the news, facts, opinions and stereotypes they want to hear, thus reducing the ability to handle or accommodate different perspectives, cultivating *authoritarian notions of democracy* (Welzel and Kirsch, 2017; Kirsch and Welzel, 2018; Kruse, Ravlik and Welzel, 2017), inciting

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[12] Populists' convenient (nostalgic) solution is to retreat to an allegedly simpler and better old world. However, this (idealised) world in practice does not exist anymore (Demertzis, 2020: 155-156). Our strategic suggestion is not to erase complexity, but to try to promote understanding and embrace uncertainty (rather than shy away from it), look forward and adapt democratic institutions, and learn how best to respond collectively to the multiple challenges posed by rapid global changes.

hate and violence, and expanding the reach of reactionist, radical or fringe ideas and conspiracy theories (especially in harsh conditions of austerity and high socioeconomic inequality).[13] Such "heated", toxic and fragmented bubble-like (digital) environment seems to implicitly and steadily amplify the so-called EU's *democratic deficit* and, subsequently, deepen the *crisis of legitimation* within the Union.

The citizenry does not share a similar worldview anymore. Therefore, "gridlock and conflict become a very real possibility" (Nowak and Vallacher, 2018: 19). Social media users often behave as *like-minded believers* who tend to create the virtual equivalent of gated communities, and are seemingly extremely vulnerable to digital demagogy, propaganda, manipulation, and both intentional and accidental misinformation, or *information disorders*, something reinforced by the current planetary health crisis (COVID-19 pandemic).[14] Different kinds of such "disorders" (pertaining to different levels of complexity) will obviously require different tactical responses.

In parallel, the valued profession of print journalism is gradually disappearing, thus "giving way to internet news sources on which it's difficult to distinguish fake news from genuine news, weakening a crucial safeguard of democracy" (Inglehart, 2018: 205).

In general, such negative developments, together with (neoliberal) globalisation, seriously destabilise the post-war foundations of liberal democracy and its collective principles and values.[15] At the analytical level, yet, we need more data

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[13] According to Marcel Gauchet (2017), we are still far from entirely understanding the full impact of the "libertarian" chaotic digital world, especially when it combines with large-scale societal and cultural transformations which it nonlinearly amplifies as it translates them into a radically different, horizontal mode of communication. The activist organisation and campaign group *Avaaz* recently showed that, all across Europe, far-right and anti-EU groups are systematically weaponising social media in order to spread white supremacist and false and hateful content to millions of internet users. See https://avaazimages.avaaz.org/Avaaz%20Report%20 Network%20Deception%2020190522.pdf (accessed 2 August 2019). The study resulted in an unprecedented shut down of Facebook pages just before voters head to the 26 May polls. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/22/far-right-facebook-groups-spreading-hate-to-millions-in-europe (accessed 1 August 2019).

[14] https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation_en

[15] Europeans indeed feel disaffected with the actual performance of democracy in their countries. In six of the ten European countries recently surveyed by Pew Research Center, half or more say they are dissatisfied with how democracy is actually working in their nation. See https://www.pewglobal.org/2019/04/29/dissatisfaction-with-performance-of-democracy-is-common-in-many-nations/ (accessed 4 August 2019). Still, this is less an expression of political cynicism than it is a demand of assertive citizens for more democracy along with emancipative values (Welzel and Moreno Alvarez, 2014).

and more experiments, so that we can better understand how the vastly increased amount of social information actually re-shapes the highly contested, ambivalent, multifaceted and evolving European political public sphere (Margetts, 2017; Bail et al., 2018; Demertzis and Tsekeris, 2018). Access to such information pertains to a great power struggle for supremacy.

2.3. Cultural Backlash

Third, specific demographics seem to slowly revolt and seek revenge for the perceived *crisis of identity* and the loss of continuity, consistency, certainty, predictability and control, the collapse of familiar "retro norms" and dominant collective narratives and ideologies, the questioning of old, received or traditional values, the accelerated pluralism, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, and the uprooting of communities by the constant intensification of globalisation, fragmentation, and postmodern (or neoliberal) individualism (see Gerodimos, 2016; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Norris and Inglehart, 2011; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).[16]

This pertains to the so-called *cultural backlash thesis*, according to which "the surge in votes for populist parties can be explained not as a purely economic phenomenon but in large part as a reaction against progressive cultural change" (Inglehart and Norris, 2016: 2-3). In other words, resentful political behaviours (Capelos and Demertzis, 2018; Capelos and Katsanidou, 2018) and the populist authoritarian vote are arguably caused by a widespread anxiety that pervasive cultural transformations and a constant influx of foreigners "are eroding the way of life one knew since childhood" (Inglehart, 2018: 181).

Understanding voters' hidden incentives, motivations, values, emotions, and choices could substantially improve the democratic processes and their actual implementation. In this regard, one of the most positive challenges for the EU public policy-makers is to further develop and utilise *e-consultation*, an inclusive and empowering democratic activity that is "intrinsically connected with the problem of extracting meaningful knowledge from citizens' contributions. Online discussions and feedback contain valuable opinions about the effects of policy decisions and an essential knowledge about the societal needs that the policy tries to address" (Lettieri, 2016: 9; see also OECD, 2012).[17]

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[16] For details, see http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/ (accessed 5 August 2019).

[17] In addition, e-consultation, as part of deliberative digital democracy, may indeed be able to mitigate the multiple effects of some of the potential biases brought by policy professionals (see Banuri et al., 2019).

2.4. Complex Reaction Patterns: Lessons from Dynamical Systems

Fourth, societies are *complex adaptive systems* (Helbing, 2012; Bednar and Page, 2016; Urry, 2003) that usually tend to resist exogenous attempts to change them at large, from outside or in an arrogant, centralised top-down way, something known as Goodhart's law (1975), or principle of Le Chatelier (1888), or as "illusion of control" (Makridakis and Taleb, 2009; Taleb and Blyth, 2011).[18] Societal rigidity and unresponsiveness to (disruptive) change is also due to the implicit relational functioning of *collective imaginaries* (as shown in the abovementioned Macedonia naming dispute), which can be described as historically produced and deeply rooted flowing networks of values and norms within each society (see Descombes, 2016).[19] These do have a considerably large and nonlinear dynamic impact on the path taken by the people and the system as a whole.

It is thus very difficult to impose symbolic identities, beliefs, mindsets or worldviews (let alone in a non-consensual, violent or authoritarian way) on self-organised communities, which are strongly driven by such radical imaginaries, especially in the turbulent era of identity politics. Instead, *guided self-organisation* is absolutely preferable, that is, "to use, rather than fight, the system-immanent tendency of complex systems to self-organize and thereby create a stable, ordered state. For this, it is important to have the right kinds of interactions, adaptive feedback mechanisms, and institutional settings" (Helbing, 2013: 54-55; see also Saperstein, 1986; Stacey et al., 2000).

In addition, implicit emotional, social and cognitive biases, as nudgers argue (e.g. Sunstein and Thaler, 2016), are powerful dynamic forces that mostly function as systemic "attractors" and heavily influence voters' judgment and behaviour, po-

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[18] According to Dirk Helbing (2017: 315-316), top-down centralised control (social engineering) has three major flaws: "First, its micromanagement overwrites cultural cues, which have guided peoples' decisions in the past. This interferes with the self-organization on lower levels of society (families, companies, non-profit organizations, etc.), and it may destroy the basis of social stability and order. Second, influencing peoples' decisions locally narrows down the variance of choices, which undermines the 'wisdom of the crowd effect', leading to bad decision outcomes. Third, reducing socio-diversity and the pluralistic choice of goal functions is similarly bad as losing bio-diversity. The economy and society should be understood like ecosystems with millions of interdependencies. Thus, if diversity is reduced, the economic development and success of a society are affected. This can lead to systemic malfunction, political instability, collapse, and war." Therefore, the strategic aim nowadays must arguably be to remodel and strengthen the elements of the system from the base, rather than taking classical top-down measures as in the past. In other words, a distributed, information-based management of the system is definitely more efficient and preferable.

[19] Cf. the relational psychodynamic approach adopted by the political scientist John Dreijmanis (2018).

tentially creating *complex vulnerabilities* (Ciampaglia and Menczer, 2018). Propaganda experts know well that it takes much time, energy and strategy for people to change opinions, let alone values. As Inglehart (2018: 78) briefly puts it, "basic cultural norms don't change immediately". Yet, societal conditions can unforeseeably create a bias that leads to reversals of majority opinion and to rapid and profound transformation (Nowak and Vallacher, 2018).

Most importantly, nonlinear dynamical systems always have a potential for *bifurcation* (i.e. the same set of factors can disproportionately trigger the emergence of qualitatively different behavioural outcomes) and sudden, unanticipated changes (Kelso, 1997; Arnold et al., 1999).[20] As Catastrophe Theory describes, "all good things are more fragile than bad things. Stability is more fragile than instability" (Esposito, 2012: 55; Guastello, 2013). Accordingly, *integration is more fragile than disintegration*. Much more interestingly, the scientific and quantitative analysis of the persistent question of *stability of democracy* is nowadays "possible and, indeed, necessary. It requires a concerted effort across the mathematical, natural and social sciences. In particular, the insights and tools from complexity science deserve more attention in this endeavor" (Wiesner et al., 2018: 15).

Conclusions

Given the recent example case of the Macedonia naming dispute, it can be concluded that it is rather sensible that EU policy-making needs to concurrently elaborate on *both* reasonable geopolitical interests *and* actual sociopolitical realities and symbolic identities. Especially in the wake of the so-called *Globalisation 4.0* and the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* (Baldwin, 2019; Pezzuto, 2019; Schwab, 2016; Schäfer, 2018; Floridi, 2014; Tsekeris, 2018, 2019),[21] it seems that EU's existing policy designs and instruments have to be properly informed and updated in order to provide more sustainable outcomes. European economy and society are complex ecologies which are facing on-going systemic changes and acute new problems that should be addressed *collectively and insightfully* for the sake of the European

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[20] More generally, we arguably need to better understand and apply the complexity notions of "tail risk" and "fat tailedness" (random variables in the system can produce multiplicative effects) in the real-world social interaction and politics (see Taleb, 2012, 2016).

[21] See also http://time.com/collection/davos-2019/ (accessed 11 August 2019). On 19 April 2016, the European Commission, under the responsibility of Commissioner Oettinger, launched an ambitious strategy on digitising the European industry. Mariya Gabriel, as current Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, is now responsible for its systematic implementation (to support the shift toward Industry 4.0). This pertains to the first industry-related initiative of the Digital Single Market package, aimed to accelerate responsible and sustainable innovation, to boost productivity and growth, and to improve EU citizens' living standards and job opportunities. See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/digital-single-market_en (accessed 3 August 2019).

project – a project in constant need of updating and re-enchantment. Serious knowledge gaps, deficits and weaknesses of our current theoretical understanding, as well as short-sighted autopoietic bureaucratic subsystems, substantially impede us from making big steps forward.

Despite the plethora of difficulties and the broad-based feeling of sailing in uncharted waters, the EU policy-making experts and political elites urgently need to re-understand, re-theorise and re-codify multiple and complex deep processes, or hidden dynamic patterns (avoiding false dualisms[22]), in order to build new positive narratives and effectively grasp and confront emerging political developments inside and outside the Union. The latter are often manifested as public grievances and dissatisfaction, distrust and mistrust, moral and social intolerance, anti-immigration demands, anti-establishment and anti-elitist sentiment, anti-expert scepticism, cultural authoritarianism, and mass support for populist anti-system parties.

All in all, facing up and tackling these adverse nonlinear (as opposed to incremental and linear) developments necessarily requires from the EU democratic system as a whole to proactively and sustainably overcome the very real shortcomings that have systematically fuelled them, also emphasising what unites rather than what divides European societies. We can thus steer Europe towards a new era of shared prosperity and well-being.

For this urgent task, however, we do need to combine dedicated leadership and long-termist policy design with new scientific (interdisciplinary) advancements and innovative approaches, such as the complex dynamical systems approach,[23] to gain a more adequate (relational) comprehension and management of contemporary social, cultural and political processes. This eventually points to the crucial need for epistemological cautiousness and ontological boldness, as well as for skillful, competent and complexity-minded social and political scientists.

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[22] "Contrary to popular narratives, the choice we face is not between openness and protectionism, technology and jobs, immigration and national identity, or economic growth and social equity. These are false dichotomies; but their prominence in contemporary political discourse illustrates how underprepared we are for Globalization 4.0. [...] We should not wait for another crisis to provide the impetus for adapting governance to a changing world. There are already numerous opportunities for deeper cooperative engagement among stakeholders at all levels. What we need now is a renewed commitment from government, business, and civil society leaders to engage in collective dialogue about our shared challenges."

[23] Of course, such "innovative approaches" include, except from the "meta-sciences" of chaos, complexity, nonlinearity and networks, converging radical technological developments, such as blockchain technology, big data analytics, cloud and quantum computing, cyber physical systems, real and virtual multiprocessors, the Internet of Things (IoT), Internet of Everything (IoE), Internet of Nano Things (IoNT), Internet of Bio-Nano Things (IoBNT) and Internet of Multimedia-Nano Things (IoMNT), which rapidly lead to the so-called *Post-Internet Society* (Mosco, 2017).

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