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For or Against the EU? Ambivalent Attitudes and Varied Arguments Towards Europe

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five | attitudes and varied arguments
towards europe
Dorota Dakowska and Nicolas Hubé

In this chapter the intention is to question the commonly accepted claims that attitudes towards Europe are ideologically coherent. From this perspective, representations of Europe are thought to be part of an organised system of ideas and beliefs, and are based on a clear opinion of the political process of European construction. A few scholars have sought to understand what 'Europe' means for individuals and to find out what cognitive instruments they use to grasp it (Belot 2002; Diez Medrano 2003). However, for most authors, citizens' attitudes usually fall into one of two binary categories: support or rejection of European integration in general (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Szczerbiak 2001; Bielasiak 2002) or of specific European institutions and policies (Hooghe 2003; Schoen 2008). One of the essential political and scientific questions involves trying to solve the enigma of negative opinions towards the EU. Numerous studies have attempted to find out 'what part of public opinion [...] refuses the historical evolution' (Cautrès and Denni 2000: 324) of European integration. Others have asked to what extent these opinions are linked to the electoral success of 'populist' or 'extremist' parties (Kitschelt 1995; Taggart 1998). The gap between European debates and the national political game is most often assumed to lead to a divide between 'integrationists' and 'sovereignists', to a polarisation of voters on European questions (Schmidt 2006; Conti 2007), as well as to a politicisation of European issues (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

Generally, the authors test and compare the 'weight' of a number of arguments from which they deduce reasons to be for or against European integration, without trying to establish if they are 'significantly adequate' (Passeron 2006: 159). Yet, for at least three reasons, this quest for singular and unilateral explicative arguments is heuristically weak. First, social agents use different types of arguments. Secondly, the justifications do not have the same degree of salience. Lastly, not all the arguments have the same status; they can be developed, informed and structured in different ways.

In this chapter, the thesis of a homogenous and uniformly structured orientation of attitudes towards European integration and EU public policies is questioned. Our ambition is to account for the diversity of arguments and the ambivalence of attitudes towards Europe. We argue that not all attitudes are politically structured. In the process, we will question the widespread academic interpretation of a division of citizens into two clearly identifiable groups: Euroenthusiasts and Eurosceptics – a categorisation that is more normative than explanatory. Conceived as a political label used to refer to party games in the British context

during the 1980s (Harmsen and Spiering 2004), the notion of Euroscepticism appealed to academics looking for a means to classify European parties (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008) and its use prevailed among political actors (Lacroix and Coman 2007).¹ Studies of Euroscepticism analyse the criticisms of the EU as an essentially political opposition. Our research questions the validity of this assumption, showing that not all attitudes are politically (related to political issues and games), or ideologically structured (based on a set of coherent values). In some cases, the opinions collected may reflect a more general judgement on politics, whereas in other cases they may reveal the interviewee's feeling of incompetence. Despite the assumptions formulated in most of the academic literature on a cut-and-dried line of demarcation between sceptics and enthusiasts, attitudes towards Europe are often ambivalent, of varying intensity and based on diverse elements of appreciation.

First, we will see that social agents interviewed on Europe express themselves on different issues, which can refer to European integration, but by all means not always and exclusively. Attitudes towards Europe appear as polymorphic and diverse. They are ambivalent with regard to the general appreciation of Europe, and diverse in terms of the identification of what Europe represents. The arguments, which are of an unequal intensity, can be scattered, limited or panoptic. Secondly, we will focus on the ambivalence of attitudes, and the resulting difficulty in definitively categorising citizens as either for or against European integration. The arguments that can be identified to systematise the construction of structured judgements on Europe do not obey a privileged mode of justification to the detriment of others. By shedding light on the content and the social conditions of the production of this discourse, we reveal the difficulty in classifying these attitudes along a politically structured line or according to an exclusive explanatory logic.

BEYOND FALSE ASSUMPTIONS: A MULTIFORM EUROPE

The starting point of the analysis of attitudes towards the EU often consists in analysing the answers to binary questions such as 'Are you for or against European integration?' 'Is EU membership a good thing for your country?'. Whether the interviewees understand these complex, esoteric terms and give meaning to them is not considered. In the first section of this chapter, we will investigate how attitudes are structured and according to which elements of appreciation. More precisely, we will see that interviewees attribute varied realities to Europe that they do not necessarily associate with the European Union. Depending on their personal situation, they invest their answer with a varying degree of intensity. In order to better grasp the mechanisms of construction of the meaning given to European issues, it is necessary to study the cognitive short cuts that are mobilised as well as the available individual experiences or discourses on which interviewees can rely.

1. There is a long list of studies on Eurosceptic parties; for a critical synthesis of this research see Crespy and Verschuere, 2008 or Fuchs, Magni-Berton and Roger 2009.

Distinguishing judgements on Europe from attitudes towards European integration

Europe and European integration are not always the same thing in the minds of ordinary citizens.² This is firstly due to the ambivalence of the term ‘Europe’ itself, deliberately retained in the Concorde study in order to observe the interviewees’ universe of representations.² The terms ‘European Union’ and ‘Europe’ are not synonymous in all contexts. Some interviewees do not make a difference between the two terms; for others Europe is associated with a geographical continent or the ‘birthplace of civilisation’, whereas the European Union is associated with public policies and Community institutions. Asked whether the EU suggests negative associations to him, a Polish shop owner replies: ‘The Union, no. Europe, yes.’

Confusing attitudes towards Europe and attitudes towards the EU is ignoring the fact that the interviewees understand the very terms of the ‘European integration’ process very differently. Academic and Eurobarometer surveys usually assume that these terms are self-evident (Diez Medrano 2008), which is far from being the case. In the French context, for instance, a common term of the political debate and academic studies is assumed to be known by all: ‘European construction’. When we include this term, largely used by Eurobarometer questionnaires, in our qualitative, open-ended survey, the results are often striking. Although many interviewees express their incomprehension or remain silent when this term is mentioned, several French interviewees attempt to produce an artificial response to a question that is unfamiliar to them. A number of interviewees rely on exercises in style to try and define the term. Some use a metaphor – ‘Ah...construction [sighs] that sounds arduous, like construction, actually. Brick by brick – Yes... why arduous? – Well because there are always discussions... tweaking... tweaking...’ (France, F, 70, housewife, married to an engineer) – or acknowledge the limits of such an analogy – ‘Well, that’s got nothing to do with building! [Silence] If I’m for Europe, then I’m for European construction... when it comes down to it [sighs] what is European construction? Well it’s constructing Europe, making it better than it is now’ (France, M, 55, plumber); ‘I am against it. In the same sentence, “construction” and “European”, I can’t have them; they don’t fit together. In my opinion Europe does not construct anything. But anyway, I don’t know any of the positive sides of Europe’ (France, F, 22, café manager). For others, European construction is linked to a divide between ‘them’, the elites/European institutions, and ‘us’, the population – ‘Well they should organise themselves a bit you know. Yeah, I don’t know, not just several countries getting together, they should organise themselves...’ (France, F, 24, nurse). The term can also be interpreted in geopolitical terms, as this retired magistrate does:

To me, it’s a big whole, to weigh in the balance against the United States or the Soviet countries, all of those big countries... or even China which is emerging [...] Because France alone, it’s just a small country. This is where you see that European construction is interesting.

2. From a political and historiographical point of view, the process itself is a source of confusion and controversy even for those who are directly involved (Gillingham 2003).

European construction is thus the subject of all sorts of interpretations and reinterpretations (Joignant 2007), onto which personal expectations, elements of knowledge on European institutions or relationships to politics in general are projected. The cognitive short cuts used by the interviewees to answer this type of question have little to do with the concrete institutional or political manifestations of European integration.

More generally, Europe – like other political objects – is related to a feeling of ‘political competence’ (Gaxie 2007). Questions on the EU, often perceived as esoteric, produce an effect of symbolic violence on the more socially and politically disadvantaged persons. To them, the EU appears as an undifferentiated reality, which exists outside of the realm of their preoccupations. ‘The EU is remote, it’s not real’, claims a 45-year-old Polish cleaning lady.

About the Union, well in general it is a subject I don’t know much about, I don’t understand it, I don’t know it. I know one thing: that the Union is a group. A group with a few poor and rich States in it. And I only know that nobody has ever given anything out for free and to me, the Union in the physical sense, the Union, it hasn’t given me a thing [...] To me, the Union, it’s simply nothing.

(Poland, F, 60, nurse)

More complex than national politics, the EU appears as remote and elicits incomprehension among lower class respondents. This distancing effect can also be observed in individuals with high educational attainment and social status, who often quickly run out of arguments during the interview. A French designer for instance told us: ‘Each time you ask me a question, I don’t understand it’ (France, F, 47, graphic designer in an advertising agency).

Europe (or the European Union) is a complex subject, with few cognitive short cuts available for most interviewees. Even those who have an everyday experience of the EU – for example those who deal with European funds – may express a feeling of distance from European realities. A young graduate working for the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture in the east of Poland, who manages paperwork related to agricultural funds, expresses a feeling of incompetence throughout the interview. Responding to a question on upcoming EU enlargements, she exclaims: ‘Oh gosh... these questions! Sure the EU has to grow. I think that it’s also a chance for other countries, including the smallest ones.’ On Turkey, she gives up: ‘Oh my God, I’m not the one you should be asking about this, I don’t know much about it. Sure, let Turkey join!’ This distant relationship, linked with a general lack of interest in politics, is not compensated by a technical familiarity with her Europeanised sector. Such an example, among others, questions Inglehart’s cognitive hypothesis (1970), which posits that the general trend of longer schooling creates a capacity for abstraction conducive to a positive reception of the European integration project.

Contingent and context-related attitudes

The results of our qualitative survey show that ‘Europe’ is a flexible notion. It can suggest references to precise EU directives as well as realities that are remote from Community policies. Interviewees use extremely diverse arguments. Moreover, their attitudes are not necessarily lastingly structured. On the contrary, the arguments put forward by the interviewees – who express themselves on subjects that are often distant from their everyday preoccupations – often depend on the salience of an argument circulating in the public debate at the time of the study. Because of the polarisation of public debates in the accession period, numerous better-educated Polish interviewees holding intermediate or high social positions, are capable of retracing the evolution of their opinions on the EU. Due to the high level of media and political attention on the accession issue at the time of the study, European standards and regulations are mentioned – not necessarily in a technical manner, but with a personal investment by wider fractions of the population than in France or Germany. For instance, many pensioners, even though they are not directly concerned by industrial policy, mention the production quotas that lead some factories to close down. The ways a farmer or a pensioner criticised the closing of a sugar refinery are quite similar even though neither was personally affected by this decision. However, for one farmer, this event is an isolated criticism which does not dent his overall positive attitude towards accession, whereas for the latter, the factory closure confirms his negative vision of the EU. An 80-year-old nun criticises the quotas imposed upon Polish fishermen. This type of opinion expresses a more general worry towards what is perceived as a diktat of the European Union, more than an informed opinion or a reflection related to her own situation. The fact that older interviewees are sensitive to the impact of the EU’s regulating pressures undoubtedly shows that these pressures are added to the perceived effects of the systemic transformations of the country, which may be judged negatively. Furthermore, citizens in Poland can mobilise such examples on EU regulations because the national media (and particular TV news) devote space and time to covering the ‘absurdity’ of certain European standards, such as the EU regulations on the size and shape of carrots. The same phenomenon can also be observed in Germany, when the tabloid newspaper *Bild* (12 million readers), denounced in 2007 an ‘absurd’ European directive on cable cars, which is mentioned in some interviews conducted at the time.

The terms ‘Europe’ and/or ‘European Union’ elicit associations that may be heterogeneous, but still identifiable, as well as specific ascriptions. For some interviewees, the image of the founding myth of the EEC (peace) spontaneously comes to mind. This is the case for a young Spanish teacher in the Paris area, of Greek origin, for whom Europe ‘is about roots, let’s say. It’s the idea of finding a way to unite countries to prevent them from beating each other up. So that’s really it: how Europe was born’. This argument is put forward more often by the older generations. It may be related to the Franco-German ‘couple’ and to the former rivalry between the two countries: for a parish priest in a small village in Brittany, who lived through World War Two, Europe ‘is Germany’. Several other interviewees refer to the idea of unity, of ‘getting together’, or even of ‘solidarity’. Europe is

thus basically related to an idea of living together, and to a place or a territory.

Because Europe affects the everyday experiences of individuals, virtually no ‘non-attitudes’ (Converse 1964) towards Europe can be observed. It appears possible to identify a limited set of supporting practical elements which contribute to structuring attitudes, and on which almost everyone has something to say: the Euro, peace or free movement in Europe. In Poland, where the Schengen Area was well identified at the time of the study, the possibility of freely crossing borders is frequently brought up as a justification for positive attitudes towards Europe. In Germany, free movement elicits negative judgements towards workers or ‘cheap bad quality products from the East’ (M, 40, bike salesman), even if the latter judgement comes more systematically from small businessmen. Conversely, some Polish interviewees associate the free market with a flood of cheap products (because they are ‘subsidised’) of mediocre quality ‘from the West’. The development of low-cost air travel offers a new element of appreciation of Europe for those who have enough purchasing power to experience free movement easily. This is what a 32-year-old German working in the public communication sector conveys: ‘Ryan Air or Air Berlin have certainly achieved more for the common construction of Europe than most of the European institutions; because ultimately, we are the first generation who can really experience Europe by travelling cheaply and quickly.’

Everyday or anecdotal experiences are mobilised to support judgements of Europe for those who have few opinions on these matters. Hence, this 24-year-old French nurse working in Versailles:

- In what areas of your everyday life can you see Europe’s influence?
- Mmm...I don’t know if this is included in your question. But you see, Versailles is really touristy, lots of tourists come to visit the castle and unfortunately there are a lot of them who have heart attacks, it’s stupid, huh? So we have a lot of European patients who are hospitalised with us. And then you realise that we don’t have the same methods to deal with them, things like that [...] There are lots of countries where, actually, even if the patient has health coverage and they have insurance in their country, they still have to pay all the hospital fees upfront and, then they’re reimbursed afterwards. [...] So when they get in, we’re careful about them, we don’t keep them hospitalised for a long time. There are ways. They get out really early compared to the other patients.

Europe can also be related to family history. To an East German office worker, Europe is a great opportunity to experience otherness. She does so by proxy, through her son’s participation in sports competitions throughout Europe, as she already did at the time of the GDR, when her father, a pastor, used to welcome foreign colleagues to their home.

Some interviewees who have run out of arguments to justify their answers may redirect the conversation towards precise aspects around which they build their entire argument. The positive attitude of a 58-year-old French farmer does not concern European integration, but only the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Other

aspects of the integration process do not elicit a comparable response from him.

- When you think of Europe, would you say, spontaneously, that it is something rather positive or rather negative?
- I see it as rather positive. [...] With regard to the markets, on a global level. [...] To face the United States, well America, I think that Europe needs to be strong... to stand up to them [...] Having said that, not everything is positive. There are good things, but there are also, well...
- Are there things that you...?
- Well on an agricultural level, yes. I'm going to talk to you about agriculture a lot because it's what I know best, it's my field.

There are very disparate visions of Europe: for politicised citizens, the representation of the EU is a political and institutional one. For others, Europe is above all about the Euro, opening the borders, and bringing people and cultures together. For those who are more distanced from European debates, things such as bird flu or the presence of two lines (for EU nationals and non-EU nationals) in airports for immigration checks are 'evidence' of a European reality. An open-ended question on attitudes towards Europe can thus elicit complex answers, relying on different registers. This diversity of arguments encountered in the countries of the study and the low number of elements shared by all social classes within the same country invalidate the culturalist interpretation. This interpretation posits that the attitude of citizens in a given country is structured around the place occupied by that country in the European construction process and the representation of national identity which results from it (Marcussen *et al.* 1999; Diez Medrano 2003; Harmsen 2007; Risse 2004; Schmidt 2007; see also Chapter 6).

BEYOND A BINARY CLASSIFICATION: AMBIVALENT ATTITUDES

In order to develop our analysis of the diversity of arguments on Europe, it is important to go beyond the classification of attitudes as pro- and anti-European. Someone who claims to have a globally positive perception of the EU – or has voted 'yes' in the accession referendum in Poland or the ECT referendum in France – can maintain this support on principle, without it being necessarily very structured. Others, who are less convinced, can change their minds, for instance under family pressure. This is the case of this 48-year-old Polish early retiree, who when asked his opinion about the EU, acknowledges that 'for the referendum, under pressure, sort of, from my family, I voted yes, even if I had another opinion. [...] I have a slightly less negative attitude now, but nevertheless I am still not the Union's biggest supporter.' For many, Europe can be the object of an unenthusiastic support without explicit 'motives' (Percheron 1991). This result questions the methodology of closed-ended questions, because of the difficulty for some interviewees to clearly position themselves in the pro- or anti-integration debate. In spite of this ambivalence, however, most citizens manage to express their expectations towards Europe or to attribute a number of things to Europe. We now have to find out whether these attitudes are based on patterns identified in the academic literature (utilitarian calculation or values-based judgement).

For or against? The difficulty of replying to a question one has never considered before

Our interviewees – and in particular those from the lower social categories – have trouble justifying their declared support for the EU, not knowing how to answer a question which is visibly too abstract to them. A French plumber wonders: ‘what can be good about Europe? It’s a good question... [Silence] I say it’s positive but I don’t really know why’. The manager of a hotel in small town in West Germany states that:

[Europe] is quite simply important. What is good? Well, ask me questions! For example, is this or that, good or not good... simply... with time... we’re no longer alone on Earth. So, ask me your questions so I can give you some answers.

For these categories, the negative opinions expressed in general answers on Europe reveals their feeling of distance from politics (and incompetence) more than a structured opinion on Community policies. A young Polish mother, a victim of domestic violence who resides in a centre for homeless women in a small town, spontaneously responds negatively, before adding ‘the Union, the Union, let it exist, but at least there should be solidarity between people, and yet there is no solidarity.’ Beyond the idea of an expression of support or refusal, this interviewee, like other working class interviewees, claims that the EU does not have anything to do with her (see Chapter 4). Her call for solidarity reveals less a desire for Europe than a wish related to her own personal situation.

More generally, Europe is almost never unilaterally positively or negatively perceived, including by the most politicised social agents, for instance when going from general topics to more specific ones. The Euro is a good example of the presence of a shift from positive to negative, as this woman working as an executive in the ‘Europe’ department of a French multinational company says: ‘Well as a concept the Euro is positive, but it’s negative in our everyday lives because I think that it’s resulted in an increase in the cost of living’. A café owner in Germany finds it very good that ‘Europe’ has allowed the opening of borders and common laws, or has established ‘a currency. You don’t have to think about that stuff any more.’ But in the same breath, she regrets that ‘nothing has changed... on the contrary. [...] The currency doesn’t belong to us any more. It comes, and it goes... it doesn’t have any value any more’. If the Euro is a tangible reality for consumers, it can also be the subject of subjective projections which are very remote from economic reality and the European monetary system: ‘In every country the Euro is still not at the same price for everyone [...] for us one Euro is 6.55, for them it might be 5.80, 5.40...’ (France, M, 35, blue-collar worker). Yet, the interviewees formulate expectations about Europe. Instead of ascribing ‘subjective intentions’ to them based on statistical correlations, it is necessary to study the argumentative chains they use in the extent of their diversity.

A Europe of outputs? A vision in practice

In his book, Fritz Scharpf (1999) put forward the idea of an ‘output-oriented legitimacy’ of the European Union, which completes, or even partly replaces, the insufficient democratic ‘input legitimacy’. Indeed, many scholars consider that individuals support the EU or fail to do so based on their practical experience or the anticipation of the costs and benefits of EU public policies that are relevant to them (Binnema and Crum 2007; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Hooghe and Marks 2004), or on the economic transformations which affect them (Christin 2005). While Europe often is credited or blamed for a number of things, we can question the intensity of these ascriptions – according to categories and personal situations – and the link between their occurrence and the legitimisation of the Community edifice.

Initially, it seems possible to make out forms of crediting or blaming Europe which attest to a vague but nevertheless identifiable perception of European policies and regulations. A question on competition policy suggests mostly positive associations in Poland, where it is linked with quality and choice (with an implicit reference to the shortages experienced during the Communist period). This is the case of this 29-year-old salesman, living in a big city, who praises:

... the opening of markets to foreign companies, which have been operating for many years, and have higher standards of service than our companies. Other companies get into our markets and take them over, so it's the strength of competition. The cost of living becomes lower, life becomes better; the consumer has more and more rights. This struggle for the customer helps us, it lowers the prices, it helps the customers, the services are better, better and less expensive...

Likewise, the liberalisation of public services is quite widely supported, despite the fears expressed by working class members on the idea of privatising the health sector, envisioned by Donald Tusk's liberal government. This arguably supports the theory which posits that the ‘winners’ of European economic integration are those who are the most likely to support it (Tucker, Pacek and Berinsky 2002; Jarosz 2005). In our study, some of the most favourable attitudes towards the EU were effectively found in interviewees involved in transnational economic activities. These ‘winners’ of the common market may reduce the integration process to its mere economic dimension, like this 49-year-old French businessman, who manages a small company specialised in the Indian market. ‘Europe’ is his ‘bread and butter’: he has offices in London, Portugal, and Paris. The borders of his activity go beyond France:

- When you think about Europe, do you see something positive or negative?
- It's very positive for me [...] Because at a time when with one plane ride you can go as far as 2000 or 3000 miles, and with the train as far as 600 miles, thinking only within the borders of France is very narrow-minded. Also, I really love languages, different cultures. I was a European well before Europe. London for me is just the suburbs of Paris. It's not another country. Spain is our home. [...] Europe is self-evident to me.

Based on these few interviewees expressing favourable attitudes justified by the benefits drawn from European construction, it would be hasty to establish a mechanical link between a high social position and support for the European integration process. Although certain analyses classify them amongst the ‘winners’ of integration, independent workers and business owners may be rather lukewarm. They mention complex and restricting regulations and standards as well as workforce shortages. This is the case of two German interviewees, the first being the production manager of the second. The first interviewee is very positive about Europe, says he enjoys it during his holidays, but adds: ‘to be more specific, I don’t really have any precise examples. [...] But it’s just a feeling, when you travel abroad, I have this feeling that things grow together’. The second interviewee is also in favour of Europe, especially as he ‘benefits’ from free movement, living in France and working in Germany. But as soon as the interview begins, he adds:

Right now, too many countries are involved in Europe and each one of them pursues their own financial interests. [...] I see where the problems begin... one of them is simply the problem of taxation. There, you can immediately see that positions diverge greatly.

His opinions on European construction went into great detail and were highly critical during the interview, although he repeatedly pointed out his fundamental Europhilia.

In order to understand these hesitant or ambivalent attitudes of citizens who can objectively be considered as ‘winners’ of the transformations and EU membership, it is necessary to look at their life paths, their position in the social structure and their perceptions. Polish businessmen, for example, mention competition pressures within the common market. Thus, the 49-year-old owner of a mid-size factory in Lower Silesia has to face, on the one hand, competition from German companies, and on the other, pressure from German customers who expect quality products at low prices from him. Additionally, he is pressured by his employees on wages; they do not hesitate to ‘vote with their feet’ and are tempted by emigration to the West. Although he used to have one hundred employees, he now only has seventy and relies on non-EU labourers from the Ukraine or Moldavia. His opinion on the EU appears lukewarm at first: ‘I used to think it was a positive thing, now I’m not sure’. He develops economic explanations relating to his company’s sector of activity:

Western businesses have come in [...], dictating their conditions. [...] We are so often told that in the West – we are of course talking about Western Europe – they don’t take bribes, there is no corruption, but all of that isn’t true [...]. Let’s say that...to get into a retail chain, you have to give someone a provision, a percentage, only just to be able to sell your merchandise there, so there is no difference. At the time of communism... under the commies, it was easier...

This mode of justification is admittedly here based on arguments that might be described as utilitarian ones. However, at the same time this interviewee does not see himself as a ‘loser’ of integration. He spontaneously mentions that it is

more a temporary effect – the increase of the Zloty – that has made exporting difficult, rather than the EU as such. He is part of the wealthiest class, owns several properties and admits to continually investing in his business. He is proud to be able to finance his son's education in an English-speaking international school in Spain. Merely observing his objective interest in the development of economic exchanges is not sufficient to explain his support for integration, even if it is associated with a general view of the social world that is specific to those who hold positions of economic power.

In order to explain the structure of attitudes, other instruments of evaluation must also be taken into account, such as world view and perception of one's own future. This businessman's criticisms are not limited to his personal situation; they are largely based on a vision of the single market where the most powerful economies prevail, even though he admits that the single market is a benefit to him. The interviewee would like to change careers, to become less involved and to move to the countryside. His weariness is less of a direct effect of European construction on his work than that of an increasingly heavy workload in an ever more competitive environment. Here, the critique of economic liberalism is not expressed by a low-income European citizen, with difficulties in accessing the job market and dependence on the State's social expenditure (Gabel 1998a; Gabel and Palmer 1995) but rather by someone, who, in terms of the approaches in terms 'winners' and 'losers' should be an unequivocal Euroenthusiast.

Conversely, interviewees who are 'losers' of the transformations in Poland express hope that community standards and policies will 'bring some order' and make public transportation or the environment 'clean'.

And the ecology... as far as our country is concerned I think a positive thing is that we are forced to act about the environment. Because we produce too much waste, too many chemicals, those plastic bags.

(Poland, F, 64, home helper)

Although she had practically nothing to say about the EU during the interview, a 60-year-old nurse spontaneously mentions towards the end:

Maybe this Union is going to teach us how to manage things, order, I mean, it's going to force us to do it. With its laws, it's going to force us to worry about the environment, and bless it for that, caring about order, about cleanliness. It's the only positive thing I can see, really.

The EU sometimes appears as a remedy for the shortcomings of national policies in Poland, which could seemingly confirm the thesis that purports that level of support for the EU is directly linked with the level of dissatisfaction with the national government (Tanasoiu and Colonescu 2008). However, such reasoning prevails among citizens with little political investment and cannot be generalised to the entire sample. Also, the interviewees in question do not elaborate a privative reasoning in terms of immediate benefits – they mention broad values (ecology, order or others).

Other citizens express diverging points of view on European standards and

regulations when they discuss the EU. Farmers refer to the Common Agricultural Policy to judge Europe positively, or conversely, to complain about European standards and bureaucracy. Fishermen criticise Europe based on the fishing quotas. Hotel and restaurant owners fault Europe for not lowering the VAT, and the loss of income this entails. To them, Europe is a machine that produces standards that are often perceived as excessive and pernicious, on hygiene, invoicing, hotel ratings, service, etc. The French manager of a mid-size hotel-restaurant thus declares: 'I hate technocrats and bureaucrats because they have the power of life and death over independent workers'. However, only members of a small fraction of the social space directly refer to the costs or the benefits of European standards and regulations to support their judgement on European integration: they are those who directly and regularly have first-hand experience of European standards and regulations. Also, their judgement is not on the EU in general but concentrates itself on their particular sector of activity. They often do not have a lot to say on other European political issues (Common Foreign and Security Policy, the enlargement, the EU's democratic deficit). When they do have an opinion, they tend to dismiss it as unimportant. These results question the potency of the utilitarian hypothesis as an explanatory factor.

Clearly, there is a significant difference between the subjective perception of the consequences of European integration and the direct and objective effects of it. For some, prices have increased with the Euro, but for others, prices have increased for other reasons, whereas for certain people the prices have not increased at all, or they have not paid attention to it. Hence, people with similar levels of education, income or social positions can hold quite varied judgements on causal relationships linked to Europe. They do not all make a connection between the economic situation and the common market. Rather than explaining attitudes in terms of costs and benefits of the consequences of European integration, we need to consider the ways in which certain outcomes are perceived and directly credited to EU public policies or blamed on the EU.

A Europe of values? Beyond Euroscepticism

Some interviewees' judgement of Europe is 'values-based'. They refer to their identification with a community or even religious or political values that they support. Elements of this have already been highlighted in many places (McLaren 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2004; Cautrès and Grunberg 2007). In Poland, young executives in private foreign or multinational companies, living in major cities, experiencing upward social mobility, generally assert their liberal opinions by identifying themselves with the main freedoms of movement of the single market. These interviewees are most often supporters of the Civic Platform (PO), have academic degrees, have travelled abroad and are satisfied with their situation. However, their ideological point of view often relies on utilitarian arguments, as in the case of this 29-year-old salesman:

As a consumer, it doesn't matter if I'm going to travel on a Polish or German train. If I'm going to pay less for the ticket than I do now, if I'm going to

travel in the best conditions, as a user it doesn't matter whether it's a Polish or a foreign company. If I get a better service, it might as well be a Chinese company, for me there's no difference.

The image of the influence of the EU on civil rights can be observed with this 41-year-old Italian citizen, who manages European projects:

[Europe is] an opportunity to allow certain countries that might have a less emancipated vision on certain key issues, like gender equality, non-discrimination, certain social rights [...]. Europe is [...] an opportunity to force certain States whose position is closed on specific subjects to open up if they want to enjoy the economic opportunities.

The power struggle that is visibly brought about by the European Union in the eyes of many citizens can thus be perceived as an opportunity in certain areas. On the other hand, a number of individuals surveyed expressed values thought to be incompatible with the European project, but their discourse makes it difficult to peg them as politically motivated Eurosceptics. They may assert an exclusive national identification, but not necessarily in opposition with the EU, contrary to the claims made in some of the existing literature (De Master and Le Roy 2000; Citrin and Sides 2004). This is the case of a retired Berlin coal merchant, socialised in the GDR, who declares that he lives 'in Europe. It's part of my country, but I am a Berliner or a German. I am not European'. This exclusive feeling of national or local membership does not lead him to support negative positions on the EU, nor does he make any xenophobic comments. 'The most exemplary thing I can think of, the best example I have is the opening of the Polish border, and that we can go there by car and that they can come here'. Some individuals might feel French, German, Polish or Italian because 'Europe' does not mean anything significant to them (Diez Medrano 2010). As a former police officer from the GDR who was forced to retire in 1990 says, 'I feel 100 per cent German. Am I European? I have nothing to do with them. I never go on holiday in other European countries'. His very critical point of view on Europe does not attest to a nationalist point of view, but to the suffering resulting from his social downfall. Nationalism and negative judgement of Europe can be present as arguments among others in the positioning of social agents, but in the latter case, the entire discourse revolves around his perception of German politics since 1990.

Even in the case of individuals identified as close to extreme or radical right-wing parties, their strong feeling of national membership does not necessarily lead them to reject the idea of cooperation between European States. This is expressed by a French butcher and National Front (FN) voter, who voted 'no' in 2005 and who does not feel 'European at all'. Yet, he adds that 'it's a shame because being European, that would be good, it's nice to get together and all that but before we do that everyone should be on the same wavelength, that's all.' Although he has a rather positive point of view on European construction, he rejects the EU as an element of identification and as an institution that produces rigid standards in consumer safety. In Poland, a retired 63-year-old technician, supporter of the League

of Polish Families (LPR), reproduces a very radical right-wing discourse with an ethno-centric vision, the glorification of national history, and even conspiracy theories. For him, the rejection of the EU is associated with the fear of German domination and the return to 'totalitarian' structures. His position is constructed around a political nationalism.

We have fought against each other at the terrible cost of many victims. So this is why we cannot adapt to this creature univocally. And [...] these tendencies of the European Union to unify everything, to create a super-State that we have experimented since '44, from 1945 to the 1990s. We have been through all that, we have behind us this unification and a historical experience is transformed into another with a similar objective and a similar effect.

More generally, according to one of the interpretations put forward in the literature, national identity is linked to xenophobic, authoritarian, rigoristic, anti-universalist, materialistic and pessimistic attitudes, that can be measured on the basis of citizens' opinions on the death penalty or on norms in educating the youth (Cautrès and Denni 2000; Cautrès and Grunberg, 2007). Yet, none of our interviewees directly associates their opposition to European integration with these values. Let us analyse a somewhat telling case; that of a German accountant. His opinions first appear as xenophobic and ethno-centric, in particular when he complains about immigration from Eastern countries, and expresses fears about 'Muslim Turkey' joining the EU. However, he does not criticise European construction, which he is actually inclined to support: 'I would spontaneously say that Europe, in terms of its founding ideas, is a positive thing. [...] The founding ideas of Europe, the common market, common currency, the unified legal system, that was good'. But he claims that 'its evolution, the enlargement, all that has gone too far'. The analysis of his arguments suggests that the effects of European law on his activity as a tax advisor particularly bother him. He does not criticise immigrants in general, but the fact that their presence is, according to him, the result of the liberalisation of the common market. He does not criticise the Euro in general, but the increase in the cost of living. He is in favour of a fiscal harmonisation in the founding countries, as that would facilitate his work. He complains about globalisation increasing competition between European countries, but this is also because of his personal situation and currently decreasing purchasing power. While he uses various arguments, the most frequent ones are not based on xenophobic views, but the concrete consequences of European construction on his personal professional situation:

It's become impossible to counsel somebody following national law. I am constantly looking at what is happening at the European level. And if I read German law, then I have to look at international law, European rulings. All these elements have to be controlled. It has become impossible to do counselling. When I tell someone that according to German law their situation is like this, it's possible that according to European law their situation is completely different. And European laws come before our national laws. It has therefore become extremely difficult for me to do my job.

He also says that he talks about Europe with his friends who share this negative image. But he adds: ‘with my work, I’m much more aware of what’s going on in Europe’. He mentions a litany of professional examples (VAT, paying transporters, the tax system...) where ‘two years later, the European court comes and tells us that what we did wasn’t right’. This interviewee expresses a cultural pessimism that applies to politics in general, not just to Europe. After having been a Christian Democratic Union (CDU) supporter, he no longer votes because of his ‘disgust’ with politics. His case is an interesting one, because while it does tend to support his value judgements, his opposition to Europe to a lesser extent also matches the utilitarian theory. His opposition is however not generalised; he also praises certain aspects of European construction, such as the federal system.

This example shows the complexity of the arguments put forward by interviewees. It is very difficult to determine if xenophobia alone determines an attitude. Although the argument is present, it is neither the main one, nor the most developed one. Also, these reactions do not necessarily lead the individuals to identify with a populist or extremist political movement. In other words, their feeling of national membership or their authoritarian attitudes do not necessarily lead them to oppose the EU on a political basis. The arguments are rather cumulative. A judgement in terms of values can acquire greater importance for politicised individuals or activists or sympathisers of a specific political movement or in people who are strongly religious, especially amongst Polish interviewees.

CONCLUSION

Often complex and ambivalent, attitudes towards Europe are not limited to merely judging the European integration process. We argued that they cannot be reduced to structured political attitudes, whether Eurosceptic or Euroenthusiastic. While these political positions can be found in some interviewees, they are not generalised. Even if the literature puts this categorisation into perspective by distinguishing a ‘hard’ and a ‘soft’ Euroscepticism (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008), this notion turns out to be a weakly heuristic in light of our interviews. The idea of cross-analysing the level of support for European integration in general and the opinion on the EU’s concrete achievements (Kopecky 2004), even if it was initially meant to apply to political parties, presupposes the existence of a structured relationship between these two political dimensions. However, it is difficult in practice to allot individuals to one category or another. Positive appreciations may be restricted, contingent or hesitant. When negative attitudes are observed, they tend to be the expression of a ‘latent or obvious [resistance] towards one (or several) aspect(s) of European integration’ (Crespy and Vershueren 2008: 20). In order to understand these attitudes, it is necessary to analyse the arguments put forward by the interviewees as well as to assess the intensity of conviction that they invest in them.

The starting point and the final observation of this contribution is that ordinary attitudes towards Europe are ambivalent and that the arguments used are very diverse. Modest as they might appear, these observations are nonetheless a step forward. They provide us with arguments and elements of demonstration

that allows us to dismiss certain preconceptions: the idea that opinions on Europe are necessarily opinions on European integration, that these opinions are politically structured, and that they are based on either 'support' or on 'rejection' of the Community edifice. Once these preconceptions have been left behind, the ambivalence of the attitudes we have observed explains diverse forms of crediting or blaming Europe as well as unequally structured discourses. Thus, the picture of a multiform Europe emerges, with very unequal investments, according to the degree of politicisation and the individuals' personal experience, informed by complex logics of intelligibility, which cannot be reduced to a single explanatory principle.