EU member state flags outside the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. (Credit: travelview/Bigstockphoto.com)

Civil society and the future of Europe

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Introduction

Troubled by growing Euroscepticism, by the populist upsurge, and by the reconfiguration of parties and party systems across many EU member states, the Union has started to launch a major initiative to strengthen the involvement of citizens in the deliberations of its various institutions. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has called for a "new push for European democracy" by organising a Conference on the Future of Europe in which European citizens would "play a leading and active part". This new European Democracy Action Plan opens new opportunities for democratic innovation and experimentation. Yet, at the same time, when not implemented in an appropriate manner, this heroic initiative may also result in further losses of trust and faith in democratic norms, at levels even lower than before. It may just lead to the opening of yet another lobbying channel essentially dominated by attempts to influence public opinion from the top-down. Members of civil society organisations have already warned the Commission on several occasions not to restrict the conference procedures to the mere consultation of individual citizens but, rather, to include the collective voice of civil society as brought forward by its most significant and representative CSOs. Representatives of civil society organisations tend to be side-lined to the preparatory and agora debates and do not seem to be included in the main Conference

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plenary. More noteworthy is the fact that even the very term 'civil society' does not seem to show up in the existing deliberations.

This is not very comforting, especially in view of how similar endeavours have been handled in the past. Although the EU Commission's previous attempts to listen to and to include the concerns of civil society have been noteworthy and clearly went beyond of what most national governments were prepared to do in that respect, a glance at the history of such activities is disillusioning. This contribution will try to shed light on the past 35 years of the relationship between the EU and civil society. A wide definition of civil society will be used, namely the one suggested by the EU itself, which includes all sorts of private collectives from producer groups, trade unions, care and common cause organisations, NGOs, to social and protest movements. Distinguishing between a structural (governance) and an actor-centred perspective (collective action) and, orthogonally, two levels of territorial complexity (the sub-, and the supranational), this fourfold matrix will be used to give a balanced account of that period. It turns out that despite enormous efforts invested in the relationship from the part of both sides, and of many heroic declamations aimed at pathbreaking reform, the outcome tends to be relatively meagre and disenchanting both in institutional and organisational terms.

Soon after the historical defeat inflicted upon the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) by the Thatcher government in the mid-1980s, the Secretary General of the British Trade Union Congress, Ron Todd, did not hesitate to exclaim that "the only card game in town is in Brussels." For a British trade unionist, this must have seemed outrageous. Yet, considering what had happened in Britain and what was going on in Brussels at about the same time, Todd's wake-up call may not have been too far-fetched.[i] While trade union power at home diminished across the board, the European Community, as it was called at that time, had set in motion a whole range of recommendations, regulations, directives and decisions supporting organised labour – and its counterpart, organized business – on a

Europe-wide scale. Sometime later, with concerted forms of policymaking in steady decline, civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, and social movements entered the scene and substantially enhanced their standing in EU affairs. Considering that the space available for civil society activities in the member states is notably shrinking (Grote, 2019), CSOs have every reason to reiterate Ron Todd's early cry of despair. We shall see whether the Union is able and prepared to respond to that in a manner like thirty years ago.

This contribution tries to describe the relationship between the European Union (authorities) and civil society (organisations).[ii] There are at least four aspects worth being considered. A distinction is made between two dimensions, namely a structural one (governance and governance arrangements) and an actor-centred one (collective action by CSOs). They may be approached from different perspectives. One may envisage structural and at actor-centred developments as unfolding at the level of the EU. The issue may just as well be approached from the bottom-up, i.e. from the subnational or the regional level. This would create a rectangular matrix with four quadrants. Although all of them are of importance, the following remarks will consider some of them more explicitly while paying less attention to others. Just as with the bulk of the existing literature, they essentially turn to the two "governance quadrants" and are less concerned with collective action.

Partnership and subsidiarity

After years of political and institutional stalemate – *eurosclerosis* was the term used at that time - the period between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s saw far-reaching reforms initiated by European Community authorities. There were several reasons for that turning point. A decisive one was certainly the election of Jacques Delors to the position of president of the Commission in 1985.[iii]

The Delors Commission envisaged the completion of the internal market, laid the foundations for the single European currency, and signed the Single European Act (SEA) in

February 1986 and the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. The Union also witnessed a large degree of expansion: Spain and Portugal in 1985; the Reunification of Germany; and, in 1995, the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. It is no exaggeration to say that Delors heralded 20 years of euphoria at all territorial levels and across different societal groups.

Most significant for the present argument were the social and structural policy reforms, the creation of the Committee of the Regions in 1992, and Delors' idea to establish a cohesion policy aimed at diminishing territorial and social discrepancies across the Member States of the EU. The Single European Act of 1987 laid the ground for a radical re-orientation of structural funds. The Commission now had the power to directly establish relations with subnational actors, thus partly bypassing national governments and their respective agencies for social and regional policy. This has very much been to the taste of both regional and local authorities as much as private actors and associations who sought to increase their room of manoeuvre vis-à-vis their national capitals. The key words here were partnership and subsidiarity – two interconnected strategies of which the functionality on the ground had already been tested successfully in a couple of far-reaching pilot projects such as, for instance, the so-called Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs; see Grote and Bianchi, 1991; Grote, Bianchi, and Pieracci, 1995).[iv]

The new Directorate General XXII set up on initiative of the President of the Commission and responsible for the design of structural policies[v] operated from the start in accordance with an extended version of partnership and subsidiarity. Some have even distinguished between a functional dimension (horizontal inclusion of private and civil society actors) and a territorial dimension (vertical partnerships between EU, national, and local authorities) in that respect (see Grote, 1993a; 1995). In the IMPs and later in the entire arc of structural interventions, civil society associations were firmly involved in the design and the management of the policy. On the one hand, this triggered a process that later became known under the acronym MLG (multilevel governance). Policies were not implemented by

decree, downwards from the top, but elaborated by way of joint policymaking involving different layers of government. On the other hand, this simultaneously led to the inclusion of a whole range of private actors and organizations into both policy deliberations and implementation (Grote, 1993a; 1993b; 1996; 2007).

With the network metaphor gaining increasing attention, relationships both in the territorial and the functional dimension were now conceived to be of reciprocal nature: Commission officials monitored the composition of regional management committees set up for the distribution of funds for specific projects and looked out for an appropriate balance between public and private actors. Conversely, these actors gained additional opportunities to directly connect with EU institutions and organizations with a view to promote their concerns. This has not been equally successful everywhere. Historically long-established state-society relations are difficult to break or modify (see Grote, 1998a; 1998b). Yet, overall, the process led to much enthusiasm among regional policy makers and CSOs as much as academics who adopted MLG as a new mode of societal guidance, if not as an entirely new theory of EU integration.

The "Europe of the Regions" hype accompanying the whole process came to be embraced by Venetians, the Scottish, Bavarians, Welsh and, not least, the Catalans alike. Unfortunately, it not only evaporated soon after but, as we know today, led to the criminalization of an entire regional government whose members are now facing severe punishment. The fact that an institution which had helped setting that process in motion is today turning away from the events by pursuing a politics of non-intervention is scandalous, if not appalling.

Social dialogue and tripartite concertation

The reform of regional politics apart, Delors must be credited with yet another achievement, namely the promulgation of the concept of Social Europe and the institutionalization of social

dialogue.[vi] Without overstretching the importance of "the men behind the decisions" (Rosenthal, 1975), Delors' insistence on subsidiarity and social dialogue resonate well with his roots in a Catholic and Socialist cosmology.[vii] Long before the term social dialogue became part of official EU rhetoric, the Commission started experimenting with a form of concerted action that involved representatives of capital and labour and became known as the "Val Duchesse process".

Following a couple of relatively unsuccessful attempts at institutionalizing proper tripartite agreements between social partners and European authorities, in 1985, Delors took over from the then French President of the Council of Ministers, Pierre Bérégovoy, thereby initiating a more autonomous, informal, and bipartite form of meetings (see: Grote, 1985; Welz, 2008). Only General Secretaries of capital (UNICE; today BusinessEurope) and labour (ETUC) were invited, the public was excluded right from the start, and everything was done to avoid the conclusion of formal agreements. The meetings took place without a postal address, a secretariat, or a telephone number to be dialled for receipt of further information. Altogether, this very much resembled the type of fireside talks, suggested by the then mushrooming literature on neo-corporatism, to be the most promising recipe for overcoming controversies and arriving at tricky social and economic decisions by way of antagonistic cooperation.

Throughout that social democratic era of EU integration, European labour was able to substantially improve its status, while the organisations' power reached far into the key positions of European institutions anyway.[viii] Together with the transient success of this more firmly organized faction of civil society came a change of melody. While the background music accompanying the Europe of the Regions activists had been locally coloured with folklorist undertones, labour introduced a more disciplined type of marching music while waving the banner of Social Europe.

In the academic field, the enthusiasm for the cause of workers interests was soon reflected in a wave of literature on what later became known as Euro corporatism. The repercussions of the kick-off on organized interests and the European Community (Greenwood, Grote, Ronit, 1992) had a long-lasting effect and opened an intense debate on forms of interest intermediation in the European Union including ever wider parts of civil society. Initially, in their attempts to identify instances of corporatist policymaking in even the most bizarre environments, scholars seem to have been blinded by the speed with which respective arrangements made their way into several key policy fields in Brussels – something unlikely to happen in the more pluralistically organized political economies of some of these authors' home countries.[ix]

Over time, the significance of producer groups in such joint policy circuits came to decrease while, simultaneously, other civil society actors (NGOs, social movements, environmental groups, etc.) gained more and more attention and access. With hindsight, it could today be argued that both the structural policy initiatives at the bottom (inclusion of CSOs into regional policy networks) and the social policy initiatives at the top (incorporation of social partners in key policy decisions in Brussels) somehow converged around the early 2000s, albeit in a quite unexpected and contradictory fashion. On the one hand, experiences made with functional and territorial subsidiarity materialized in a public policy document on new forms of governance that had no equivalent elsewhere worldwide. At the same time, driven by the "*Lisbonization*" of cohesion and of social policies, and by the investiture of a conservative Commission headed by José Manuel Barroso, real existing developments increasingly turned towards competitiveness rather than solidarity, to innovation rather than participation, and to effectiveness rather than inclusion.

Governance, the de-mystification of participatory democracy, and the polycrisis

The White Paper on European Governance published by the EU Commission (2001) hit the very core of the nexus linking European civil society to participatory democracy. More than at any time in the past, and most likely as a response to the alleged dominance of business interests in the institutions' ventricles of power in Brussels, it was now NGOs, social movements, charities, etc. being put in the forefront. Taking over from the interim President Jacques Santer, but essentially following Delors in that respect, the new President of the Commission Romano Prodi argued that there is a need to "(…) radically rethink the way we do Europe [and] to devise a completely new form of governance for the world of tomorrow" (Prodi, 2000). "People want a much more participatory, 'hands-on' democracy. They will not support the European project unless they are fully involved in setting goals, making policy and evaluating progress" (ibid.). In order to achieve that goal, Prodi asked the Forward Studies Unit (FSU), originally installed within the President's office under Delors' presidency, to come up with appropriate suggestions in that respect.

Although quite far-reaching in its inventiveness and visions, at least by comparison with what had been achieved before, it was not actually the White Paper itself which made the event so noteworthy but, rather, the preparatory work leading to its final draft. In the latter, several elements that directly addressed the core of the EU/civil society interface had to be sacrificed to internal and external critique.[x] As it turned out, the now curtailed version was hardly more than an exercise in window dressing appearing precisely at a time when the overall system of the EU turned increasingly neoliberal. The original drafts submitted by the FSU (see Lebessis and Paterson, 1997) contained a number of recommendations that might have brought about radical change not only with respect to participation. To get an idea of the difference, just compare the building blocks of good governance as listed by the FSU with those contained in the White Paper. Among the eight principles of the former have been: (1) guaranteeing the participation of stakeholders; (2) better organized actors should not unduly be advantaged; (3) implementing solutions is an ongoing, not a one-off exercise;

(4) public authorities must encourage both collective representation and reflexivity; (5) guaranteeing the development of active collective learning; (6) the need for systemic coherence for the mutual coordination of policies; (7) governmental control needs to be redirected from substantive outcomes to participatory programmes; (8) the need to adopt procedural modes of governance (ibid.: 21-22; see also Grote and Gbikpi, 2002). Conversely, in the final version of the White Paper, participation (1) is merely one of other four points anticipating what has come to be called the *Lisbonization* of EU politics, namely (2) coherence; (3) openness; (4) accountability; and (5) effectiveness (EU Commission 2001: 10). Reacting to this latter, somehow decontaminated version of governance, the EESC insisted on including territorial and functional subsidiarity as a sixth point thus making it "the most important principle of good governance"

The reluctance to fully embrace the suggestions made by the FSU had several reasons. Firstly, throughout the initial deliberations, the document was under critical if not hostile, scrutiny from the part of contending actors such as the EP, the CoR, and the EESC.[xi] Each of them claimed to possess a unique role in matters concerning the relations between the Union and civil society. Accordingly, the document was viewed with much suspicion. Even the trade unions shared that critical attitude. Too excessive an involvement of CSOs by the EU might have endangered their status as sole representatives of the working population. Secondly, in the ambit of national governments, the very term of governance itself appeared to be a misnomer. Accordingly, their representatives in the Council took an equally critical stance. Finally, the preliminary versions by the FSU touched upon thorny issues of democratic theory thereby going far beyond of what a public institution was accorded to do. For instance, elaborating on representative democracy and participatory governance, the FSU concludes that the former of these two may be "(…) increasingly inadequate to cope with both the scale of the problems (…) and with the emergence of new governance arrangements" (Lebessis and Paterson, 1997, p. 17). It is underlined that,

nevertheless, "(…) the rhetoric of national policies frequently continues to insist on the form and concept of representative democracy" (ibid.: 18). This must have been too daring a statement for a unit positioned in the midst of the President's office.

Today, there is not much left of what has once been thought to represent good governance. Rather, governance is in a state of crisis and this crisis is likely to be an organic one. The accumulation of several partial crises commencing immediately after the appearance of the White Paper was further exacerbated by the events following 2008. It is quite unlikely that the development has reached its peak yet. Although not concerned with the potential causes at the root of that process, even leading figures of the EU have described the current situation in terms of an "existential crisis" (Juncker, 2016; Mogherini, 2016; Prodi, 2016). A slightly more analytical report presented by a group of leading European think tanks (EPC 2017) speaks of a *polycrisis* (see also Blockmans and Russack, 2019)[xii], whereas the author of this present contribution rather prefers the notion of a *threefold crisis of neoliberal governance* which embraces the market, the state, and society alike (Grote, 2019). The hijacking of the latter two systems of societal order by market forces has come to trigger a process whereby relations formally resting on mutual understanding, on trust, on political exchange, and on balanced coordination have come to be increasingly commodified. In such a situation, there is not much space left for deliberation and inputs from the part of civil society.

The two decades in between the dusk and the dawn of governance rhetoric were characterized by disenchantment on the part of civil society and by a steady decline of hopes that things may turn to the better. Analytical attempts to de-mystify the assumed increase of participation in local and regional governance arrangements (Grote, 2007) were soon followed by similar endeavours aimed at unmasking the participatory rhetoric of EU authorities. Kohler-Koch and Quittkat dedicated an entire book to the topic (Kohler-Koch and Quittkat, 2013). Meticulously scrutinizing the inner organs of the Commission's consultation

regime across different policy domains including the institution's complex devices for online consultation, the authors come to the conclusion that the overall exercise primarily benefited the Commission which had instrumentalised CSOs to shelter itself from increasing accusations of a democracy deficit. Overall, the experience with the White Paper has been a one-off exercise and civil society participation added up to hardly more than a further pluralization of the European lobby.

Collective action and the Europeanisation of protest

Thus far, only two quadrants of the initially introduced matrix have been filled - those addressing structural and institutional properties and issues of governance at both the sub- and the supranational level. The other two containing developments in the field of collective action by civil society have been left out. The question to be addressed is how governance related activities by the EU impact the presence and the strength of CSOs both regionally and in Brussels.

At the regional level, the inclusion of civil society organizations in structural and social policy networks had a remarkable impact especially in parts of those areas where such organizations could lean on a consolidated history of their own. The participation of trade unions, business associations, and NGOs in the various management and surveillance committees dealing with the design and implementation of development plans substantially improved these organizations' expertise, their reputation, and their organizational clout. It was a direct effect of the Union's insistence on partnership and subsidiarity. This could be verified for several regions in Europe's South where pilot projects such as the IMPs (see above) had prepared the ground for subsequent actions formalized by successive reforms of the structural funds (Grote, 1996). In some of these regions, where CSOs had before been marginalized, they even came to occupy central positions in territorial governance networks outcompeting political authorities and public administration (Grote, 1995, 1997,

1998a, 1998b)[xiii]. In other parts of Europe, especially in some of the Visegrad Four (see: Petrova and Tarrow, 2007), the presence of CSOs had been much less pronounced.[xiv] Even if the EU helped with some seed money to support the creation of appropriate structures, this often did not go beyond the setting up of letterbox associations staffed with only a couple of "representatives" in the absence of any grassroot activism from below.[xv] Accordingly, the positioning of such organizations in the respective policy networks turned out to be quite insignificant (Grote, 2008, 2009; Kutter and Trappmann, 2007).

More recent information on locally and regionally based CSOs and on their relation to the European Union has mostly been provided by labour relations and social movement research. Yet, again, it is the crisis ridden Mediterranean area of countries suffering most from austerity policies where scholars have detected relevant EU-related activities and protests[xvi]. Leaving aside those who focus on the subnational dimension of collective action and turning to literature touching upon the social movement/EU nexus at least to some extent, the number of contributions from this part of the social sciences is legion (Bernburg, 2016; Chabanet and Royall, 2014; Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014; Giugni and Grasso, 2015; Montana and Perugorria, 2017; Seferiades and Johnston, 2012).

Considering the claim of a "Europeanization of conflict" first advanced by Tarrow, Rucht (2000) has argued that much of this expectation may have been wishful thinking. He presents own original data and does not find any consistent picture. His conclusion is that the number of transnational EU-related protests does not increase and that the debate on a presumed Europeanization of conflict might just add yet another piece to the many hypes swamping the social sciences every second year or so. Some two decades later, Della Porta (2019) fully subscribes to this view. According to her, the financial crisis and the EU's response to austerity have largely frustrated hopes for a social Europe. The management of the crisis has even increased the power of the least transparent and accountable institutions thus reducing the role of civil society and of parliaments both in Brussels and in

the national capitals. While the European project, especially with a view to its social dimension (Della Porta, 2006), has originally been shared and embraced by social and protest movements for quite some time (see: Della Porta, 2006), civil society organizations today would be less and less prepared to come up with alternative frames for Europe, "or even to talk about Europe" (Della Porta, 2019) altogether. Accepting the claim that "a crucial precondition for the emergence of a European public sphere" is contestation and conflict (see: Risse, 2003), the prospects for such a scenario appear to be quite meager.

This is not to say that CSOs and civil society-related groups active in Brussels would not count. An impressive ecology of such organizations has developed over time that is well documented and analyzed by the literature on European interest intermediation and by research on lobbyism (see Ruzza, 2011; Saurugger, 2006; Smismans, 2009). Organisations such as, for instance, Civil Society Europe (CSE, 2013) have a broad constituency and are present in many working groups and committees run by the Commission, the CoR, and the EESC. CSE has recently addressed the incoming president of the Commission asking for more participatory rights at both the European and the national level and to strengthen the role of civil society in all directorates of the Commission (CES, 2019). Group III of the EESC (Diversity Europe) has been very active in promoting the concerns of local and national CSOs, of combatting "shrinking spaces" and the threat of right-wing populism. Following similar activities of that type, Diversity Europe has recently launched an own initiative opinion on "Populism and fundamental rights - suburban and rural areas" (EESC 2019) which is currently in the process of being adopted by the Committee's Plenary. All this, however, does not solve the latent tension mentioned by Kohler-Koch and Quittkat (2013), namely to overcome the dilemma of mediating between the "logic of influence" and the "logic of membership". Albeit EU-level CSOs have been quite successful in voicing civil society concerns in Brussels, many of them have developed an exclusionary club mentality. They are regarded as elitist and out of touch by many of their constituent members.

Concluding remarks

There is hardly any public authority worldwide that has promoted civil society participation and new modes of governance as much as the Commission of the European Union in its joint efforts with the CoR (Committee of the Regions) and the EESC (Economic and Social Committee). These activities have triggered far-reaching institutional reforms and have activated civil society organizations at the subnational and the supranational level alike. The academic world has equally been shaken up and has produced myriads of books and articles on the role of civil society in regional and supranational governance, on participatory democracy, and on Euro-corporatism and social dialogue. Yet, with hindsight, and separating the wheat of substantial change from the chaff of rhetorical performance, much less is left than originally expected.

The relationship between the European Union and civil society has seen many ups and downs. It started with quite some enthusiasm, lasting until far into the new millennium, but subsequently lost much of its appeal and led to disenchantment, especially among those being most concerned, i.e., civil society organisations at all levels of territorial complexity. It has not entirely been a story of rhetoric and declamatory statements though. Institutional reforms led to experiments with new forms of governance at the subnational and the supranational levels and CSOs were clearly able to enhance their standing within these arrangements. Yet the early invitations made by EU authorities to join the project of European integration soon collided with the inverse path taken in favour of a quite different project, namely, to make Europe fit for a neoliberal reconstruction based on competitiveness, innovation, liberalisation, deinstitutionalisation, and privatisation. Much of the social objectives originally envisaged by the White Paper then got finally lost in the turmoil of the threefold crisis of governance. Some advancements have nevertheless been achieved with respect to the consolidation of a robust ecology of transnational CSOs at the

European level and, secondly, to an increasingly tougher engagement of bodies such as the EESC to struck stronger ties with its constituent groups and associations at the local and the national levels.

The EU is now externally squeezed in between quite unfriendly contenders from the US, China, Russia, and Eurasia. Internally, it is drawn apart by drives towards exit, by populist nationalism, and by *retrotopian* (Bauman, 2017) visions of different sorts. Civil society organizations have by now become an indispensable part of the enterprise. They are better endowed with expertise and with personal, organizational, and logistic resources than at any time during the thirty-year process described in this brief synthesis. If there is any advice to be given to them, then it is (1) to capitalise on the crisis; (2) to take advantage of the relative decline affecting institutions practically everywhere; (3) to develop *real-utopian* (Wright 2010) strategies; (4) to struck alliances with likeminded actors and institutions at the national and the European level (Grote, 2019; Wagemann and Grote, 2018); and (5) to place themselves in the forefront of the fight for "another Europe". It is a false expectation that bottom-up initiatives by civil society may "empower citizens to take *back* (emphasis added by author) control of their Union" (Blockmans and Russack, 2019). Citizens never ever had that control. Yet, the crisis may stimulate a collective response – singular and initial in character - by a broad-based countermovement from below, that helps to design, implement, and supervise radical reforms across the entire range of European Union institutions.

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[i] In 1988, the then president of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors, addressed the British Trade Union Congress; his speech about a *Social Europe* was pivotal in turning British Labour pro-European and the British Conservatives against it (see: Mann, N. 2007. How Europe splits the Tories. BBC News. 7 June 2007).

ii Use will be made of a broad notion of CSO. Included are the traditional social partners (trade unions and business associations), nongovernmental organizations, social movements, and protest groups. We will see that, over time, at least when measured against the relevance of the latter, the importance of the former has tended to decrease in EU politics.

iii Delors presided over the European Commission for three terms, from 1985 to 1988, from 1989 to 1992, and from 1993 to 1994, making him its longest serving president up to that point. His Commission is also seen as the most successful in advancing European integration.

iv The IMPs involved a total of 29 Mediterranean areas and triggered a sequence of reforms in administration and in the civil society sector which were felt to be revolutionary and often even went beyond what had been standard in the wealthier centre-north regions of the EU.

v DG XXII was a spin-off from DG XVI and, albeit in operation for only a couple of years, for the first time institutionalized the system of multilevel governance in Europe.

vi It is this, not least, which explains the sudden decision by Ron Todd to suggest Brussels as a place of last resort. In 1988, Delors addressed the British Trade Union Congress. His speech about a Social Europe was pivotal in turning British Labour pro-European and the British Conservatives against it (see: Mann, N. 2007).

vii Subsidiarity is among the most characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine. See: Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*: *Acta Leonis XIII;* 11, 1892: 101-103. Interestingly, *Rerum Novarum* does not only elaborate on the relation between authorities and individuals but also emphasizes the importance of intermediary actors or, in modern parlance, of civil society organizations.

viii The President of the ETUC, Heinz-Oskar Vetter, was at the same time President of Germany's powerful peak associations of labour, the DGB. Delors himself had a union background in the French CFDT, and the same applied to his social affairs adviser, Patrick Venturini as much as to Francois Staedelin, the later President of the European Economic and Social Committee. Jean Degimbe, Director General of DG Employment had a strong affiliation to the Belgian Christian trade union. Not to forget, with substantial help from the part of the EU, the ETUC could set up a well-staffed research institute, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

ix The attempt by some (Grote and Schmitter 2003) to link the failure of Euro-corporatism to a resurgence of corporatism at the national level proved to be quite unsuccessful in the long term.

x For what follows see Grote and Gbikpi (2002: 265-74); Armstrong (2002); Kohler-Koch (2013: 22-28). Heidbreder (2012) has produced the most comprehensive literature review on the problem.

xi For example, the Economic and Social Committee criticized the focus on social dialogue contained in the White Paper. Rather, it suggested to include an explicit reference to civic dialogue as "the key instrument for participation in the European democratic model" (ESC Opinion on Organised Civil Society and European Governance; Brussels 2000; Official Journal of the European Communities C 193/21; 10.07.2001). Contrary to the White Paper proposal, the Committee also insisted to make subsidiarity in both its territorial and functional versions become the sixth principle of European governance.

xii According to the authors, the *polycrisis* rests on two pillars – on the one hand, increased fragmentation and divergence both across the Member States and within the Member States and, at the same time, the assault from the part of authoritarian populism (EPC 2017: 3).

xiii Interestingly, in full-fledged federal systems like Germany, with a highly developed tissue of local and regional associationism and CSOs, EU policies had a much less visible impact on these organizations' positioning in networks or on their expertise and reputation (Grote 2012).

xiv For other countries and other policy fields, see: Heinelt and Meinke-Brandmeyer (2006).

xv For a slightly more encouraging view, see Parau's (2009) analysis of the Romanian case.

xvi See the contributions on Spain (Köhler and Calleja Jiménez), Italy (Mattoni), Portugal (Costa and Estanque) and Greece (Vogiatzoglou) assembled in Grote and Wagemann (2018).