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EU POLITICAL SYSTEM'S RESILIENCE IN THE AGE OF POLITICIZATION: LESSONS FROM THE 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

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The democratic deficit problem in the EU polity is becoming more relevant in the context of the multifaceted crisis and the politicization of European integration. Taking into account that the category of resilience is actively used in the official EU discourse as a system's ability to reform and to counter threats, it is interesting, from a research point of view, to consider the use of resilience as an analytical optics to view the current EU internal political development. This article analyzes, in terms of resilience, the attempts of the EU's mainstream actors to improve the democratic elements of the EU's institutional structure during the European Parliament (EP) elections 2019 and their relationships with the agents of EU politicization – right-wing populist actors. The main findings suggest that (1) EU politicization exacerbates the problem of the democratic deficit and forces mainstream actors to seek strategies to increase the resilience of the whole system; (2) in order to preserve their own subjectness in the face of growing populism and the politicization of European integration, mainstream actors choose a strategy of depoliticization, which has decreased the EU resilience; (3) right-wing populist actors are agents of politicization, they play an ambivalent role in relation to EU resilience, being a resource and a threat.

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Introduction

In his address to the leaders of EU members in 2018, the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said that he would like "the next European election to become a guideline for democracy" and recommend "strengthening the pan-European nature of the European Parliament (EP) elections in 2019" (European Commission…). However, attempts to do this with the help of the "principle of the leading candidate" (Spitzenkandidat) during the election of the head of the European Commission, and the introduction of the transnational lists in the European parliament (EP) elections, failed.

The failure of institutional changes during the EP elections 2019 demonstrated two connected challenges in the EU political space. First, the growing gap between European voters and traditional political actors and institutions inevitably leads to the discussion about the ability to overcome the EU democratic deficit. In general, it means that the political process in the EU does not meet the standards of openness and accountability that are characteristic of democracy at the national level (Hix and Hoyland, 2011). As a consequence, the EU is "far from its citizens", in the sense that citizens do not understand or identify with it and therefore feel that they have no power over European democratic politics (Tsakatika, 2007, 877). Second, the current stage of the EU integration project is characterized by politicization (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Hutter et al., 2016; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019), which means the mobilization of public mass opinion with regard to the EU policy and institutions.

I suggest looking at the EP election 2019 and its results through new analytical optics. The concept "resilience", which helps the EU conceptually re-equip its external relations by suggesting the creation of conditions in its relationships with partners for "democracy, confidence in institutions, sustainable development and the ability to reform" in the terms of "existential crisis in EU and beyond" (GSES, 2016), is applicable as an analytical tool to consider the internal development of the EU as a political system with a high level of decentralization (Hiz and Hoyland, 2011, 15) or a multi-level polity (Sinardet 2014; Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

In this article, I investigate resilience as a property of the EU system under the conditions of the democratic deficit and politicization. A postfunctionalist approach (Schimmelfennig, 2019; Hooghe and Marks, 2009) was selected as a theoretical framework allowing the combination of the democratic deficit, politicization and resilience as characteristics of the contemporary EU political process. Postfunctionalism also probes the domestic sources of illiberalism and suggests that transnational actors can make the greatest difference when they can leverage domestic opposition (Marks and Hooghe, 2019). According to this, the main actors in the process of increasing/decreasing the EU system's resilience are not member states (intergovernmentalism) or EU institutions (supranationalism), but national political parties and its transnational bodies. This

is true for several reasons: (1) national governments are party governments and parties are the main (not the only one, of course) institutes connecting the elites and the European public; (2) parties function on all levels of the EU political system (the vertical dimension of the European political space) and are able to create networks through national borders (the horizontal dimension) functionalizing as transnational actors; (3) in terms of the postfunctionalist approach, societal actors, like political parties, are involved in EU politics in the process of politicization.

The hypothesis is that the inability of mainstream transnational actors to pursue political innovation to strengthen the democratic element of EU institutional construction and the chosen strategy for continuing depoliticization decreases the resilience of the EU political system. This is especially important in the context of EU's politicization and the growth of populism, which, however, are ambivalent to resilience.

The article is divided into three main parts. The first part is devoted to the relations between the EU democratic deficit and the EU's politicization. The second part is devoted to the application of resilience in attempts to introduce political innovations during the EP elections 2019 – the Spitzenkandidat system and transnational lists. The third part analyzes the role of rising populism as a domestic factor in EU resilience.

The democratic deficit and EU's politicization

The academic discussion about the democratic deficit in the EU is polarized and depends on the understanding of the nature of EU democracy. Starting with the Moravcsik's position that there cannot be a democractic deficit in the EU as an international organization of democratic states (Moravcsik, 2002), to a state-based approach, which, in its variations, suggests the European Commission's responsibility must be similar to the government's responsibility in the Westminster system in the UK (Bogdanor, 2008).

The long debate about this topic has included different understandings of the primary elements of "the democratic deficit": accountability, deliberation, or direct participation (Vesnic-Alujevic and Nacarino, 2012) and the "input/output" sides of the manifestation of democracy's legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999; Lindgren and Persson, 2010; Sindardet and Bursens, 2014). Using Schattschneider's definition of democracy as a "competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process" (cit. in Sindardet and Bursens, 2014: 249), I will focus mostly on the "input side" of the EU's democratic deficit, which suggests including people in the process of decision-making. In this manner, the EU's democratic deficit has centered on the role of unelected executive agents (e.g., European Commissioners) and indirectly elected EU parliamentarians in EU policymaking (Murdoch et al., 390). As Hix and Hoyland argued, attempts

to increase the democratic component in the functioning of the EP have been the basis for the discussion about the democratic deficit in the last few decades (2011). The EP evolved from a consultative and in many ways symbolic role to an important institution of the EU political system and a source of the EU's "dual legitimacy" (Stoll, 2017), but it never developed a more coherent profile to shape European policies, and incorporate the preferences and priorities of the EU electorate (Neuhold, 2000:10).

The democratic deficit has a controversial, but strong, connection with the process of politicization – transporting issues into the field of politics and making previously apolitical matters political (De Wilde and Zurn, 2012:139). If we proceed from the fact that the solution to the democratic deficit is more politics involving an active citizenry (Magnette, 2003), politicization could strengthen the resilience of the EU political system regardless of whether the outcomes are congruent with citizens' desires, insofar as they ensure that the leadership and policy direction are contestable (Zeitlin, 2019:969).

However, politicization goes further than just involving citizens in EU decision-making. The politicization of European integration has been accompanied by an increase in the polarization of opinions, interests and values, and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards policy formulation within the EU (De Wilde, 2011). This process is ascribed three different functions: crystalizing the dimensions of conflict in the EU polity, raising the question of the legitimacy of the EU polity, and altering the course of European integration (De Wilde, 2010). The first two functions, directly related to "input" legitimacy, mean that politicization exacerbates the problem of the democratic deficit as a part of the more general problem of EU legitimacy and moves it to a new dimension of conflict, which structures the political competition in the EU political space. Hooghe and Marks (2009) claim that transnational cleavage, which has at its core a political reaction against European integration and immigration (p.109), is determining contemporary EU politics and underlines politicization as a process.

The conflict dimension of politicization leads to political polarization at the national and supranational levels of EU politics. The move of "the question of Europe" to the center of domestic political debates is a central process that has changed public opinion concerning European integration from a permissive consensus (Best et al., 2012) to a constraining dissensus (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). As Schmidt argued, the EU has become increasingly politicized not only at the bottom, due to polarized debates, divided electorates, declining mainstream parties, and rising Eurosceptic populism; but also from the bottom up, as national politics permeate the positions of the leaders of member-state in the Council (Schmidt, 2019). As a consequence, politicization creates challenges to both sources of the EU's "dual legitimacy" (Peter-Tobias Stoll, 2017) – the European Council and the EP.

From the point of view of this research, politicization requires active political entrepreneurs who successfully mobilize the public on salient constitutive issues, and polarized public opinion (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Hutter et al., 2016). In this context, domestic political parties, especially the Eurosceptic extreme left and right, now explicitly profile on EU issues (Meijers, 2017; Meijers and Rauh, 2016, van der Veer, Haverland, 2018). Anti-EU parties are argued to be the main drivers of the politization of European integration, whereas pro-European parties are trying to depoliticize European integration in many ways (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019).

Taking into account that politicization is both a chance and a risk for further European integration (van der Veer and Haverland, 2018) and has different impacts on different levels of the EU political system, I will look at how politicization is connected with resilience as a characteristic of democratic systems.

The Concept of Resilience: Application Possibilities towards the EP Elections 2019

In the literature, there are about 300 definitions of resilience (White paper…) in the fields of ecology, urban development, catastrophe theory, organizational management, psychology, as well as its meanings in world politics. First, resilience is associated with the category of neoliberalism "as the global axis of the world order" (Joseph, 2013). In the context of world politics, resilience implies the social sustainability necessary after the introduction of neoliberal reforms as a deep challenge to the usual way of life of communities and individuals, because as market competition intensifies, the distribution of resources and the logic of the market penetrate into every aspect of life (Hall, 2012). It is interesting that the financial crisis of 2008, as the culmination of the era of neoliberalism, or rather, its consequences, strengthened the support of parties and groups of right and left radicals, some of which explicitly oppose neoliberal politics (Hall, 2012).

Second, resilience took center stage when considering issues of international security and development. International organizations tried to integrate this concept as a strategic element of their security or cooperation policy. In 2016, The Heads of State and Government of NATO, published their commitment to enhance resilience and reaffirm their unwavering commitment to defend their populations and territories against any threat, and to uphold values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (Commitment to…). The OECD announced that with the concept of resilience, it would be helping societies to better manage risks and shocks to ensure that their investments in development are not undermined or destroyed by crises (Understanding…).

In 2012, as a result of rethinking the Development policy and the food security problems of the poorest countries of the world, resilience in the meaning "the ability of an individual, economy, or community to resist, adapt and quickly recover from stress and shocks" became part of the EU's

official discourse. The 2016 EU Global Strategy (GSES) used resilience as the core of the EU's security strategy. This requires a multifaceted strategy and a broad systemic perspective, aimed at reducing the multiple risks of a crisis and improving the mechanisms for quickly overcoming a crisis and adapting at local, national and regional levels. In 2019, the EU reported on increasing the resilience of the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Costa, 2019) and the African continent in matters of infrastructure, cybersecurity, energy, etc. The report emphasized that resilience is "a condition that can help states and societies undergo change, prevent crises, respond to them and recover from shocks" (GSES 2019).

It is important that the concepts of politicization and resilience have a strong connection. The appeal to resilience as a conceptual tool of EU foreign policy in the academic discussion was noted as a turn to a more pragmatic approach to its implementation (Wagner and Anholt, 2016; Juncos, 2017) and as a consequence of the changing contours of political conflict at the international, EU and national levels, in other words – politicization. Considering the instrumental nature of the EU's official discourse during the multifaceted crisis (see Romanova 2017), the logic of resilience in academic terms assumes a relationship between the ability of a system to respond to (not avoid) external and internal challenges, such as EU politicization, or the "properties of a political system to cope, survive and recover from complex challenges and crises that represent stresses or pressures that can lead to a systemic failure" (Sisk, 2011).

According to this, resilience in this research is used as a characteristic of a system, and not in the sense in which it is used in official EU discourse. As Sisk argued, chief among the properties of resilient systems are: (1) flexibility: the ability to absorb stress or pressure; (2) recovery: the ability to overcome challenges or crises; (3) adaptation: the ability to change in response to a stress to the system; (4) innovation: the ability to change in a way that more efficiently or effectively addresses the challenge or crisis (Sisk, 2011).

The above acts as criteria or indicators of resilience, which we can apply to various aspects of the functioning of the EU, including its internal development. How, then, to understand whether the EU as a political system preserves resilience in its internal dimension in the context of politicizing the EU project and, as a result, the emergence and growth of politicization agents – right-wing populist parties? I suggest doing so by analyzing the attempts of transnational actors in the EU political system to strengthen the democratic component of the political system during the EP elections 2019.

In the electoral campaign, large pro-European parties actively used the discourse "changes in EU decision-making" in the context of politicization, expectedly since in the last few decades discussion about the democratic deficit primarily focused on expanding the role of EP in the legislative process (Hix and Hoyland, 2011). The pan-European party of European socialists

followed the slogans of developing cross-border democracy and introduced a leading candidate system "as a symbol of faith in the need for the politicization of the EU" (Fair Free…). The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats stated that it was necessary to restore the democratic nature of the EU by expanding the participation of the EP in the decision-making process, expanding the law of primary legislation and having greater transparency during the negotiations and voting of the European Council (Freedom, opportunity…) This was a demonstration of the willingness to implement political innovation in the decision-making system, based on the previous discussion, the role of the EP and, as a consequence, the democratic nature of the whole system.

The Spitzenkandidat process was applauded by many experts and politicians as a step forward in the democratization and politicization of the EU decision-making process. "A dose of democracy" implied that the principle largely copied democratic practices from the national level, when the head of the executive body was determined by the victorious party. Based on the definition of the EU democratic deficit by Hix and Hoyland, the principle of the leading candidate worked precisely by increasing the role of the EP in the EU institutional triangle and increasing the accountability of the European Commission. One could suggest that the Spitzenkandidat process resulted in a shift in the institutional balance of the EU, from a model run by and built around the European Council to a more parliamentary system (Fotopoulus 2019).

There was a wide consensus among all pan-European political parties that the leading candidate system would increase voter turnout (seeing that the average turnout in the 2014 elections was only 42% with certain Member States registering only a 20–30% turnout), and enjoy broad public support, as it was seen by EU citizens to increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Spitzenkandidat…). In a Eurobarometer survey conducted before the 2019 European elections, more than 60% of the respondents agreed that the Spitzenkandidat process would bring more transparency and increase the European Commission's legitimacy (European Parliament 2018). It looks logical that the Spitzenkandidat process had a small, but mobilizing, effect during the electoral campaign (Schmitt et al, 2015).

Despite these facts, the lead candidate system has been criticized by many heads of governments (Why…), claiming that the Treaties entrust the European Council, and not the EP, with the nomination of the candidate for Commission President, and arguing that the loss of control over the nomination process undermines Treaty provisions. It would be, in other words, a too "creative" or "expansive" Treaty interpretation by the EP (Tilindyte, 2019). Opponents of this appointment of the head of the Commission argue that the Spitzenkandidat system is intended only to strengthen the alliance between the Commission and Parliament, even at the expense of the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Thus, according to Tusk, the automatic appointment of the leading candidate will deprive the Commission chairman of the traditional "double legitimacy": it

was always believed that the candidacy would be first proposed by democratically elected national leaders – members of the European Council – and then MEPs would approve this choice. In the case of the Spitzenkandidat principle, the European Council is forced to approve a candidate who has already been selected previously by pan-European political parties. Thus, one of the sources of legitimacy will be cut off, which will reduce the democratic component of the process of electing the head of the Commission. Such an impasse is reminiscent of the contentious aspects of the process itself, sometimes seen as creating an institutional imbalance to the advantage of the European Parliament, or even a power grab.

Spitzenkandidat, first implemented in the EP elections 2014, when the head of the European People's Party list, Jean-Claude Juncker, was elected the Commission President, did not become the rule in 2019. This process reached an impasse after the 2019 elections. These results demonstrated a failure of the majority of mainstream parties in the parliament (Ripoll Sevent, 2019) and the so-called "split screen", when voters showed the most varied demands, but not to maintain the status quo: the greens advocated investment in the climate, and right-wing populists demanded the restoration of sovereignty (How to govern…). The European Council's reluctance to embrace the Spitzenkandidat process is a testament to this, making clear it does not consider the process binding and therefore not automatic. The 2019 Spitzenkandidat process in fact did not lead to the candidate of the European political party who gained the most votes being nominated for the Presidency of the European Commission, nor to the nomination of the Spitzenkandidat of one of the other European political parties, but instead to an outsider, Ursula von der Leyen (Kotanidis, 2019).

The election of a compromise figure shows the "collective killing" of the principle of the leading candidate (Why…). Not only the heads of state and government, but also the political elites of European parties and members of the EP were involved in this "killing" (Who killed…). An influential politician, the head of the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee, Elmar Brock, warned MPs about Macron's intention to "weaken" the EP, opposing the appointment of the Spitzenkandidat, since his "La République En Marche" did not belong to any of the party families.

The inability to reach consensus in the post-election battle, and unforeseen concerns about the institutional status quo for major political groups led to the refusal of European elites to implement leading candidate system.

Another political innovation was transnational lists. The introduction of transnational lists, aimed at forming a "European demos" and represented an attempt to overcome the idea of European elections as "second-order elections" (Reif and Schmitt, 1980), ended in failure. This innovation met with a mixed reaction from the European People's Party (EPP), which is the largest party in the EP, at the 2014–2019 convocation. Paradoxically, the deputies from EPP stated that

such an initiative would lead to the emergence of an anti-democratic relationship between the deputy and the voter. "We support the distribution, but we are also very concerned about transnational lists", said Paulo Rangel (EPP) during the debate in the EP. "If we are not a federation, why would we need such lists?", he asked (Barbiere, 2018). The extreme right and extreme left in the EP also opposed the introduction of lists. According to Brock, "transnational lists" would only widen the gap between EU citizens and their deputies (Barbiere, 2018).

National elites supported the existing functioning of the EU political system in response to politicization, without taking steps to solve the problem of the democratic deficit. As a result, the inability to find a compromise and to carry out institutional changes was confirmed by the thesis of predominantly mainstream depoliticization strategies (Schmidt, 2019). These steps deepen the problem of the democratic deficit, and if they work to depoliticize the decision-making process in the EU, they have the opposite effect. It gave an argument for the inability of right-wing populists, who successfully articulate problems that are related to the EU, to overcome the problem of the democratic deficit.

Correlating the EP elections 2019 with the indicators of the political system's resilience, it should be noted that in the case of Spitzenkandidat and transnational lists in general, the EU political system is not characterized as resilient. A resilient democracy is one that is sufficiently flexible to absorb and respond to new social demands, actors or movements, for example through an electoral or party system that allows new parties or voices to emerge and be heard (Sisk, 2011). According to this, the actions of the political elites of EU member-states did the opposite; they chose a course towards depoliticization, despite the desire of European citizens to change the status quo (as the EP election results showed), which also proves their lack of adaptive ability. The elites were unable to pursue a course towards institutional innovation, changing how to appoint the European Commission's President and overcoming the "second order nature" of the EP.

However, the situation with the EP elections 2019 showed the system's ability to recover. As democracies can recover from a particularly costly, contentious or violent electoral process through post-election political settlements (Sisk, 2011), the national elites in the European Council were able to come to an agreement on the compromise candidacy of Urusula Von Der Leyen, and then got her approved the EP, although violating the principle of Spitzenkandidat.

Populism: A Threat to or Resource for Resilience?

In the analysis of EU resilience, it is important to take into account the role of populism as an internal challenge to the EU political system. The current challenge of populism, especially in its right-wing variation, or in other words "the illiberal challenge" is not a sudden or temporary appearance, but a stable phenomenon in European political life. Marks and Hooghe consider that

the electoral growth of parties and movements which promote illiberalism, most clearly existing in Eastern Europe, is perhaps the greatest contemporary challenge to the legitimacy of the EU (2019). In order to trace the effects of the electoral growth of populism on the EU political system's resilience, we need to understand the meaning of populism and its role in the EU political process.

Taking into account the multifaceted character of populism and, as a consequence, different approaches to its conceptualization, we use the ideational approach to define right-wing populist parties (RPP), which is dominant among party scholars (March, 2017: 284). This approach means that populism is a "thin-centered" ideology "that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde, 2004: 543). Hence, populism in its right-wing variation, uses nationalism (Rydgren, 2007), or nativism (Mudde, 2007) to defend the "pure people".

RPP have become the most successful new party family in Europe over the last quarter of a century (Painter, 2013: 9). The conceptual core of right-wing populism includes not only anti-elitism and nativism, but Euroscepticism (Pirro et al., 2018; Vasilopoulou, 2018; Szöcsik and Polyakova, 2018) and anti-pluralism (Taggart, 2012), which threaten the results of the European integration project and the institutions of EU multilevel political construction.

The genesis and political development of RPP in the EU political space depend on the national context, but they have the same social roots. The emergence of new parties (Alternative for Germany (AfD), Vox in Spain, the Brexit Party in the UK); the transformation of anti-European or extreme right-wing parties into populist ones (UKIP in United Kingdom, National Rally in France, The Freedom Party in Austria) and the drift of the mainstream center-right parties towards populism (the Swiss National Party, the League in Italy and, to some extent, the Conservative Party in the UK during Brexit and the general elections 2019), are a political reaction to the request of social groups, described as "the losers of globalization", who "have lost confidence in the future, in a deep transformation of the socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of advanced Western democracies" (Betz, 1994: 35), and, evidence of the creation of a new cleavage.

RPP engage "the losers of globalization" in the political process, which may have a positive impact on the resilience of the whole system. Hartleb cites AfD as an example which successfully consolidated anti-elitist voices and mobilized people who did not vote in 2013 in the 2017 elections (Hartleb, 2017).

RPP do this by politicizing the ripening problems that the European establishment is ignoring. The situation with right-wing parties is similar to the way the electoral growth of green parties in the 1980s-1990s led to the active promotion of environmental issues on the political agenda, and their implementation in the programs of the traditional center-left and center-right

parties. RPP speaking as agents of politicization have updated the political debate regarding the balance between the "global" and the "national" in the process of European integration, as well as the socio-cultural aspects of migration policies.

Populist actors are not looking for an opportunity to replace democracy; they are looking for ways to change it (Painter, 2013). One tool to do this is expanding the practice of using plebiscite instruments in the framework of representative democracy. The use of referenda to appeal to the electoral corps of decision-making at various levels of government can reduce the democratic deficit. The Swiss model is largely indicative, where a petition signed by 50,000 citizens leads to a national referendum on a law to be considered in parliament (Representative…: 404). AfD, before the 2017 elections, stated "the introduction of national referendum based on the Swiss model is an integral component of any coalition agreement signed by the AfD" (Manifesto for Germany, 8). The leader of National Rally, Marine Le Pen, went into the 2017 presidential election not only with a demand for a referendum on the country's membership in the EU, but also with a demand to allow the referendum's procedure on issues collecting the signatures of 500,000 citizens (France…).

Involving "the losers of globalization" in the political process, politicizing urgent problems and proposing new ways to solve them, populism has characteristics that pose a threat to resilience. First, there is the "populist infection" of systemic politics through the penetration of the "elite–people" dichotomy (Mudde, 2014) into the political discourse of the traditional political elites, which is more noticeable in the countries of Eastern Europe. A paradoxical situation in which RPP in practice, accepts the "rules of the game" of liberal democracy, and "gives a voice to groups that do not feel represented by the political establishment" (Populism…: 21), for example, in the EP. It legitimizes itself through its institutions, but at the conceptual level, they demonstrate "antagonism to its forms and practices" (Taggart, 2012).

Populists claim to implement policies in the interests of the "pure people", first, EU policy. Besides the strong and stable link between RPP and Euroscepticism (Pirro et al., 2018: Vasilopoulouand, 2009; 2018), the dynamics of the relationship between RPP and Euroscepticism vary nationally, and are based on "a careful balance between interest representation, electoral politics and party competition" (Vasilopoulouand, 2009: 4). The Eurosceptics are more evenly spread across the left-right divide in the party systems of EU member-states (Taggart, Szczerbiak, 2002:10). As Mudde argued, almost every populist is a Eurosceptic but not every Eurosceptic is a populist (The European…). The Eurosceptic agenda is set by the mainstream center-right parties (e.g. the Conservative party in UK), by the radical right (e.g. British National Party in UK, Golden Dawn in Greece), and by left populists (e.g. SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain).

As for plebiscite instruments in European development, the "will of the people" on large-scale constitutional issues leads to the choice of unpredictable institutional trajectories and the use of referenda as an instrument of electoral struggle. As the American theorist Moravcsik wrote after the failure of the EU constitution in 2005 at a referendum in France, "to put the constitution to a popular referendum [is] to make the idea of Europe fodder for extremist ideologies of populists, who put their national discontent and fears on the opaque and bureaucratic prose of the constitution" (Financial Times). All of the above was fully confirmed by the referendum on Britain's EU membership in 2016. It is also important that the majority nature of referenda ignores the rights of the minority. The referendum in 2009, held by the Swiss People's Party, approved a constitutional ban on the construction of minarets, although 42.5% of voters were against the ban (Kriesi et al., 2011, p. 405).

Summing up, the electoral growth of populist actors (as "agents of politicization") in the EU in the short term can have positive effects on the resilience in terms of system's adaptation, by answering the demands of European voters and including "the losers of globalization" in the political process. However, in the long term, due to its anti-systemic, anti-pluralistic and Eurosceptic nature, it is more likely to regard populist actors as a threat to resilience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I return to the applicability of the concept of resilience to the EU's internal political development. Resilience is needed by the EU as a new conceptual innovation in its external relations and as a characteristic of the EU as a political system. The existence of the problem of the democratic deficit, which was reinforced during the politicization of the European integration project, the question of EU resilience as a characteristic of the political system, and the "resilience thinking" of transnational actors within this system seems to be significant.

Post-functionalism emphasizes the relationship among resilience, the democratic deficit and politicization, as characteristics of the contemporary EU political process. The basic assumption of post-functionalism is that European integration becomes more politicized during elections and referendums. As a result, the preferences of the general public and national political parties have become decisive for jurisdictional outcomes (Marks and Hooghe, 2019). That is why the 2019 European elections are a good indicator of the process of politicization and system's resilience possibilities.

Initial attempts of transnational actors to increase the resilience of the EU polity by strengthening the legitimacy of decision-making in the EU changed in the opposite way: improving actors' political subjectivity itself by the depoliticization of decision-making and keeping the inter-institutional balance. Political actors try to maintain their own positions in the

system, but at the same time refuse to increase the adaptability of the system by answering the social demands of EU citizens. Depoliticization (Schmidt, 2019) and the inability to introduce reforms lead to the further politicization of issues related to the EU.

Right-wing populist actors represent at the same time a resource and a threat to EU resilience. The ambivalent nature of populism shows that populism can increase political participation as a way to solve the democratic deficit (the "input" dimension) but can stimulate the unpredictability of the decisions taken by European institutions, by politicizing them (the "output" dimension of legitimacy). It is important that the positive populist influence, as shown by the EP elections, is not used by mainstream actors as a resource for resilience, especially taking into account the logic of resilience as a quality of a political system which can regard the challenges as a threat and a resource at the same time.

These findings need further development and concretizing, especially in redefining the asymmetric role of the transnational cleavage in the European space in different national and regional political subsystems, as well as the role of other societal actors (groups of interests, NGOs) and their networks. According to this, the concepts of resilience, politicization, and the democratic deficit require further analysis of their interdependence on different dimensions of the multilevel EU system.

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