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Republican Europe in a Liberal Milieu

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Abstract

With republican theory emerging as a form of scholarly inquiry on Europe's puzzling transformations, a variety of civic conceptions of the European Union (EU) bring into focus the uses of normative theory. This paper, drawing from a rich intellectual tradition, argues that a challenge central to EU constitutionalism is to utilize Europe's republican tradition for its emerging polity. But we also need a new way of theorizing European diversity, as the latter transcends national differences by embracing a variety of cultural and spatial dimensions. But how are we to combine a robust (republican) grounding for constitutionalism and a celebratory affirmation of differences? We suggest that, by tackling the question of democracy in the EU from a liberal republican angle that endorses a new form of civic polyculturalism, one can assign meaning to Europe's envisaged transformation into a *res publica composita*. The theoretical challenge is thus set: to go beyond what is evident in Europe's novel experimentations with democracy so as to embrace latent but crucial potentialities.

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Normative premises

Aiming to combine a robust republican grounding for constitutionalism and a celebratory affirmation of differences, including those emanating from multicultural coexistence, this paper argues that theorizing the EU as a composite polity is as much about explaining the causality of multiple interactions among its state/citizen parts as it is about developing feelings for the play of collective governance and the normative questions these processes give rise to. Integration scholars should venture for a more profound understanding of the conditions of regional association and the possibilities of improving the quality of debate about such self-inquiring questions as ‘where we are now and to where we might go’. We shall endeavor to utilise insights from Europe’s traditions of civic thought, while recognizing that defining traditions of discourse implies making (quality) choices that are informed by present political and normative concerns. Questions of liberty, polity, democracy, and diversity are currently shaping the academic agenda, giving rise to new understandings of the challenges facing the future of the EU and, crucially, its theorizing.

After half a century of uninterrupted theorizing about Europe, it seems that little remains to be said. This is not simply to imply that theorists should start looking for new regional experiments of a comparable potential; the idea is that the study of the EU as a polity-building exercise should not take place in a theoretical vacuum, but rather should strive at a balancing act between explanation and understanding – or, between ‘first’ and ‘second order theorizing’. Indeed, *theory matters*, for familiarity with theory helps to test our analytical tools and appreciate their relevance in real-life situations, leading ‘to unique insights which are valid starting points for the purpose of comparison and evaluation’ (Taylor, 1971:i). A view shared by the likes of Church (1996:8), in that ‘awareness of theory is a necessary ground-clearing measure’; Rosamond (2000:5), in the sense that ‘theorizing intellectualizes perceptions’; Groom (1990:3), in his notion of theory as ‘an intellectual mapping exercise which tells us where we are now, from where we have come and to where we might go’; and Unger (1975:12), in arguing that theorizing links together ‘the order of ideas’ (as conceptual entities) with ‘the order of events’ (as actual occurrences). The aim here is to transcend purely descriptive forms of theory in order

to tackle fundamental ontological issues facing a discipline that has become subject to diverse interpretation. This, in turn, requires ‘structured ways of understanding changing patterns of interaction’ (Church, 1996:8), free from the fragmented boundaries of microanalysis: to project a macroscopic view of integration based on systematic conceptual explanation. Church (1996:8) explains: ‘We need to be aware of the conceptions we use since they determine our perception of things’. The *locus classicus* for this thesis is that ‘different conceptual lenses lead analysts to different judgements about what is relevant and important’ (Allison, 1971:253). Or, as Hamlyn (1995:31) asserts, ‘one cannot get at reality except from within some system of concepts’.

This methodological pathway allows a higher access to reality, by offering the basis from which ‘a hierarchy of realities’ might emerge (Taylor, 1971:149). The hypothesis here is that a continuum of accessible knowledge domains might bridge the distance from the study of specialized issue-areas to the understanding of collective conduct. As a result, links will be established between knowledge acquisition and knowledge evaluation. Integration theory may thus be seen as a system of relationships between concepts and practices, and links between wholes and parts, universals (totalities) and particulars (substructures). But there is considerable variation in studying complex realities: there are those who are interested mainly in the larger picture (the hierarchy); others who aim at capturing part of the overall image (a particular reality); others who stress the relationship among different realities; and others who focus on the process of theorizing, itself. The validity of the above is justified further when identifying the common values of distinct polities and the breaking of new ones; when throwing light on the dialectical union between a highly institutionalized society of states and the emergence of new sources of legitimacy; and when assessing the allegedly *sui generis* nature of a polity based on intersecting public spheres and authority structures. But theory also helps to assess the changing norms of sovereignty and its implications for the parts: sovereignty has not been ceded to a superordinate regional centre; rather the delegation of competences to common institutions passes through the capacity of states to control the depth and range of the common working arrangements. Hence

the need to place sovereignty within a context that accounts for the consensus-seeking norms embodied in joint decisions that in turn affect state behaviour. These norms promote neither the retreat of the state nor do they enhance its capacities at the expense of a federalizing centre. Instead, a symbiotic relationship has emerged between the whole and the parts, where the growth of commonly shared competences is not seen as a direct challenge to sovereign statehood: 'Any assertion of the former was likely, in the pattern of the historical evolution of the latter, to be accompanied by its countervailing force' (Taylor, 1996:97).

Emergent qualities in an emerging polity

Whatever lessons are to be drawn from the current state of EU theorizing, this paper argues that the ordering of relations among the constituent units amounts to a politics of co-determination and co-constitution. The question is whether the EU strikes a balance between its becoming the main locus of joint decisions and the dominant focus of citizen identification within a transnational civic space. Arguably, it takes no specialist to reach the point that, more than any other international institution, the EU has installed a co-operative ethos in the workings of the participating entities, amounting to a complex but enduring learning process of peaceful social and political change. Elements of this offer the intellectual and cognitive capital needed for capturing the dynamics of change 'from a diplomatic to a domestic arena', 'from policy to polity', or 'from democracies to democracy'. Although no shortage of available theory exists that might be used to guide EU scholarship, the field is embroiled in theoretical controversy compounded by conceptual complexity and a propensity to adopting the logic of methodological individualism. In some interpretations, the EU is called complex, not because it is seen as a polity composed of multiple actors and institutions, but because it defies any easy notions as to how it is organized in relation to other systems of governance. Hence, the question arises whether or not theories are in a position to reconcile two apparently contradictory principles: preserving the segmental autonomy within a multilevel regional order. Here, the challenge is to capture the dynamics of two complementary objectives: strengthening the viability of separate domestic orders (as opposed to idealized

notions of the Westphalian sovereignty regime) through the institutionalization of joint sovereignty.

The problem associated with this ambitious task rests in the different treatment of such general concepts as sovereignty and integration, policy and polity, government and governance, order and fragmentation, unity and diversity, and so on. But which of the many interpretations these concepts entail ought we to utilize for deepening our understanding of the EU? All the more so, given its capacity for institutional self-renewal, which is of importance when employing different lines of theoretical inquiry. Whatever the mixture of evidence and method embedded in the existing models of integration, whether their emphasis is on conflict or equilibrium, and irrespective of their preference for the familiar (concrete) or the unique (unidentified) in prescribing an end-point, their systematic examination becomes a prime theoretical requisite for the crossing of a qualitative research threshold. Many discourses on the evolving properties of the EU lead 'to an unhelpful focus on the formal characteristics of the actors at the expense of the processes which characterize, and flow from, their interactions, making the latter entirely dependent on the former' (Branch and Øhgaard, 1999:124). Also, competing approaches tend to disagree on background conditions and process variables, the need for more or less integration, the impact of informal structures on policy outcomes, and the feasibility of ascribing a political or constitutional *telos* to an otherwise open-ended process. This 'battle' of theories has led to zero-sum notions of EU politics coupled with unjustified confidence on how the system actually works and towards what it is developing.

Almost axiologically, the EU in its transformations remains an unresolved social scientific puzzle. It represents a form of regionalism that, 'more than any other form of deep regionalism ... has displaced the potential to alter the relative congruence between territory, identity and function which characterised the nation state' (Laffan, 1998:238). All known properties of statehood are subjected to change (Laffan *et al.*, 1999). These issues are compounded further by the fact that, although the EU is taken to imply something more than the aggregate of its parts, sovereignty has not yet moved toward a new regional centre, thus becoming a systemic property

of the general system. The EU is neither an international organization proper, nor is it becoming an ordinary state with a monopoly (or a delegated panoply) of law-making and law-enforcing powers. All that we know with some certainty is that the EU's final vocation –presuming there will be one– is yet to become discernible. But despite the series of neologisms invented to capture its elusive ontology, to simply argue that the EU is a formation *sui generis* which should thus be examined through the lens of new conceptual paradigms often runs the danger of complying with undisciplined formulations. Yet, there is the danger of perpetuating its present stance in the gray area of 'normal interstate' and 'normal intrastate relations' as the two extremes of a continuum on which polities are conventionally located (Forsyth, 1981). Herein lies a major scholarly challenge: to focus on the study of more likely intermediate outcomes, whose format may differ from 'the forms of political domination that we are used to dealing with' (Schmitter, 1996a:14). The aim is to conceptualize 'the transient results of an ongoing process, rather than the [imagined] definitive product of a [presumed] stable equilibrium' (Schmitter, 1996a:106). For what is more likely to emerge from this unprecedented exercise in polity-building will differ markedly both from the properties attributed to a federal state and the type of competences delegated to an average international organization. As Wessels (1997:292) notes, 'we may be in a situation similar to how de Tocqueville described the United States of the nineteenth century: [...] a form of government has been found which is neither precisely national or federal; ... and the new word to express this new thing does not yet exist'.

Where does the present EU fit in the range of (pre)existing forms of polity? Sbragia (1993:24) asserts that it is more useful to think of the EU as 'an ongoing experiment in fashioning a new structure of governance ... incorporating politics based on the state-society model *and* politics based on relations between governments'. Behind this lies the notion of symbiosis and Taylor's (1993) understanding of its implications for the changing conditions of sovereignty. Moravcsik's (1993:507) new statecentrism views the EU as a liberal international regime facilitating interstate bargaining, while enhancing the autonomy of national leaders. Another approach is Scharpf's (1988:242) view of the EU as becoming 'that

“middle ground between cooperation among nations and the breaking of a new one”. Yet, progress toward a transnational demos should not be equated with the possibility of a new form of regional nationhood. Three further conceptions merit attention, for they reveal the difficulties in projecting alternative integration outcomes. The first draws on the theory and analysis of Europeanization, where the interlinking of domestic and EU-level politics and institutions perceives change as a series of adaptations in the development of co-evolving institutions (e.g., Ladrech, 1994; Wessels, 1997; Lavdas, 1997; Olsen, 2002). In particular, Wessels (1997:273) projects a macropolitical view of the EU system: an ‘ever closer fusion’ of ‘public instruments from several levels linked with the respective Europeanization of national actors and institutions’. He makes the EU project part of the evolution of West European statehood: ‘it is a crucial factor and dynamic engine of the fundamental changes in the statehood of western Europe’ (Wessels, 1997:274). By ‘fusion’ is meant more than a pooling of sovereignties: ‘a “merger” of public resources located at several “state”-levels for which the “outside world” ... cannot trace the accountability, as responsibilities for specific policies are diffused’ (Wessels, 1997:274). But the result, Church (1996) notes, is ‘a fusion of internal and external affairs into a messy federalism’.

In a macro-institutional analysis that fits a ‘post-ontological’ stage of EU studies, Caporaso (1996) throws light on the character of the EU from the perspective of different ‘forms of state’. He develops an understanding of the common system as an ‘international state’, which he defines as ‘an international structure of governance based on the extrusion of certain political activities of its constituent units’ (Caporaso, 1996:33). Being critical of equating EU authority with a direct loss of national autonomy, Caporaso draws on three stylized state forms –Westphalian, regulatory and postmodern– arguing that each captures part of an evolving reality. The first ideal state form takes regional integration as ‘a re-enactment of the traditional processes of state-building from the seventeenth through to the twentieth centuries’; the second perceives the EU as ‘a supranational state specializing in the control and management of international externalities’; the third takes the EU as a ‘polymorphic structure’ that lacks a strong institutional core, is fragmented, has no a

clear public sphere, and where ‘process and activity become more important than structure and fixed institutions’ (Caporaso, 1996:35, 39, 45). His ‘post-ontological’ account of the EU brings it closer to the regulatory and postnational forms of state.

Moreover, by rejecting the idea that the EU will be ‘a “re-run” of the processes and policies that earlier made the nation state the predominant political institution of Europe’, Schmitter (1996b:26) argues that the EU, presently lacking a locus of clearly defined authority, a central hierarchy of public offices, a distinct sphere of competence, a fixed territory, an exclusive recognition by other polities, an overarching identity, a monopoly over legitimate coercion and a unique capacity to impose its decisions, ‘is well on its way of becoming something new’. What might this ‘new’ entity be? He offers two possible suggestions (1996b:30-31). The first is the idea of ‘consortio’ defined as ‘a form of collective action ... where national authorities of fixed number and identity agree to co-operate in the performance of functional tasks that are variable, dispersed and overlapping’. In it, the segments retain their territorial identities but ‘pool their capacities to act autonomously in domains they can no longer control at their own level of aggregation’ (Schmitter, 1996:31). A less imaginative but more probable trajectory for the EU is the idea of ‘condominio’, a variation in both territorial and functional terms involving multiple institutions entangled in complex, competitive or conflictual decision-making (Schmitter, 1996b:31). Haas (1970:635) reached a similar idea of regional order: an ‘asymmetrical authority overlap’, as opposed to any state-like possible outcomes.

In attempting to capture the complexity of the EU polity, Bellamy and Castiglione (1999:11) have employed a theory of democratic liberalism: ‘a pre-liberal conception of constitutionalism that identified the constitution with the social composition and form of government of the polity’. This theory aims ‘to disperse power so as to encourage a process of controlled political conflict and deliberation [as a way of filtering and channeling preferences] ... moving them thereby to construct and pursue the public good rather than narrow sectional interests’ (Bellamy and Castiglione, 1999:11). In this neo-Roman interpretation, the EU takes the form of a ‘mixed commonwealth’ as suggested by MacCormick (1997), whereby the subjects of the constitution are not homogeneous, but a mixture of political agents

that share in the sovereignty of the composite polity. Bellamy and Castiglione (1997:443) explain: 'The polycentric polity that is therefore emerging is a definite departure from the nation state, mainly because it implies a dissociation of the traditional elements that come with state sovereignty: a unified system of authority and representation controlling all functions of governance over a given territory'. This pluralist view of the EU as a heterarchical order, where sovereignty is dispersed across and between a variety of actors and public domains, and where a 'balanced constitution' acts as a mechanism against the danger of domination, is fully in line with Tarrow's (1998:1) definition of the EU as a 'composite polity': 'a system of shared sovereignty, partial and uncertain policy autonomy between levels of governance, and patterns of contention combining territorial with substantive issues'. It also resembles Brake's (1998:278) idea of the formation of 'composite states' in early modern Europe, where people 'acted in the context of overlapping, intersecting, and changing political spaces'.

Recapturing a diverse language

Reflecting on the differentiated character of the EU, Schmitter (1996b:2) offers a general conceptual justification for applying such a terminology to its study: 'We are familiar with the properties of states and intergovernmental organizations ... but we would have to go far back in European history to recapture a more diverse language about political units'. Indeed, scholars often turn to the past for insights and categories of analysis to get their bearings in a present that is in flux. Rethinking the present in light of the past not only is a productive way of sparking scholarly imagination, but also of searching for intriguing questions. This is especially true when the question of 'time' is addressed in a creative manner, as in the logic of 'analogical reasoning' for the study of processes that evolve through different phases not dissimilar to those that other processes have previously undergone (Helman, 1988). Analogical reasoning permits the transfer of assumptions from a familiar phenomenon to a less familiar one, providing the cognitive resources for theoretically informed comparisons (Novick, 1998:125) and a hypothesis to be tested (Landau, 1961). Past experiences can thus be taken as functional analogies of more recent

developments. Although this may lead to some approximation of EU reality with images of pre-existing political organization, it is instructive to recall King, Keohane and Verba's (1994:82) advice that scholars would learn a lot if they could rerun history with everything constant, save for an 'investigator-controlled explanatory variable'.

Other terms to be found in –an ever expanding– *acquis académique* include, *inter alia*: proto-federation, confederance, concordance system, quasi-state, meta-state, market polity, sympolity, confederal consociation and, more recently, organized synarchy (Chrysochoou, 2009). In any event, a conceptual consensus is yet to emerge due to the fact that conceptualizing the EU rests on contending normative orders which account for different 'structures of meaning' (Jachtenfuchs *et al.*, 1998:411). This is compounded even further by the very 'betweenness' of the EU polity, in that it hovers 'between politics and diplomacy, between states and markets, and between government and governance' (Laffan, 1998:236); a condition which might well stimulate political scientists within unitary and federal states, national and transnational settings, polycultural or monocultural polities, to rethink, in Sbragia's words (1993), what they have so far taken as givens. But Puchala (1999:330) is less inclined to share the optimism, noting instead that 'European integration will for the foreseeable future continue to be an ongoing social scientific puzzle'. Let us then pose the obvious question: 'where do we go from here?' These complications are also compounded by the increasing realization of dimensions of diversity which go beyond national and even regional identities. *Pace* the comparativist along with the new governance 'turn' in EU studies (Hix, 1994, 1998), modified schemes of statecentrism, drawing from the likes of 'confederance' (Church, 1996), 'co-operative confederalism' (Bulmer, 1996) or 'confederal consociation' (Chrysochoou, 1998), have survived the tides of regional centralization. An important implication of this is that the EU has not developed its own sphere of sovereignty, contrary to earlier neofunctionalist predictions. The dynamic interplay between co-ordinated interdependencies and diffused political authority suggests that the EU is not part of a linear process toward a federal end. Rather, it is about the preservation of those state qualities that allow the uniting parts to survive as distinct

polities, while engaging in a polity-building exercise that transforms their traditional patterns of interaction. This amounts to the qualitative transformation of a community of states into the most advanced scheme of voluntary regional integration the world has ever witnessed; a scheme, however, which entails considerable democratic implications for the constitutional culture of the subunits. Weiler (2003:20-21) explains:

Normally in a democracy, we demand democratic discipline, that is, accepting the authority of the majority over the minority only within a polity which understands itself as being constituted of one people, however defined. A majority demanding obedience from a minority, which does not regard itself as belonging to the same people, is usually regarded as subjugation ... And yet, in the Community, we subject the European peoples to constitutional discipline even though the European polity is composed of distinct peoples. It is a remarkable insistence of civic tolerance to accept being bound by precepts articulated not by "my people" but by a community composed of distinct political communities: a people, if you wish, of others. I compromise my self-determination in this fashion as an expression of this kind of internal –towards myself– and external –towards others– tolerance.

None of the above, however, should lead to the assumption of the end of the European nation-state. For the joining together of distinct historically constituted polities through a politics of accommodation that accords with the EU's *modus consociandi* is part of an evolution that poses no direct challenge to state sovereignty – the latter has acquired a new co-operative dynamic within highly institutionalized frameworks. What Weiler's point suggests though, is that Europe's multilevel constitutional order rests on a philosophy of constitutional tolerance which chimes well with an understanding of the EU polity as an ordered multiplicity of autonomies: a legally constituted 'union of others' or, in Nikolaidis's (2004) terms, a 'community of others'. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that we are witnessing the reversal of the Mitranian logic to integration: instead of 'form follows function', the structural properties of the general system dictate the pace and range of the regional process: the extension of the 'scope' and 'level' of integration do not necessarily coincide. Its functional scope and territorial scale have been extended, if not at the expense of its level, without altering the locus of sovereignty. Thus the EU has not taken us beyond the nation-state. Whether or not its logic of power-sharing is explained best through a theory of institutional delegation, a compelling evidence for

the lack of a European sovereignty is that European citizens are considered as sovereign only within their domestic political arenas and not in relation to the larger polity.

As the formative theories of integration focused on questions of ‘who governs?’ and ‘how?’, they failed to ask an equally crucial question: ‘who is governed?’. This has prompted a normative turn in EU studies, inaugurating a series of debates following the development of constructivist discourses in international relations theory (Adler, 1997; Checkel, 1998; Christiansen *et al.*, 1999). A ‘second-order discourse’ has thus emerged, investigating the impact of constitutive norms; the role of ideas and communicative action; the uses of language and deliberative processes; the interplay of routinized practices, socialization, and symbolism; and the relationship between agent identity and interests. The exercise was meant to herald a constructivist turn: ‘to go beyond explaining variation [in politics and policy] within a fixed setting’ and to stress ‘the impact of “intersubjectivity” and “social context” on the continuing process of European integration ... [to call attention to] the constructive force of the process itself’ (Christiansen *et al.*, 1999:528-529). The starting point is an aspect of change: integration’s transformative impact on the state, coupled by an attempt at incorporating into the process of understanding social reality ‘human consciousness’ and ‘ideational factors’ in a normative and instrumental fashion (Christiansen *et al.*, 1999:529). In short, there exists ‘a socially constructed reality’, what Ruggie (1998:33, quoted in Christiansen *et al.*, 1999:529) calls ‘collective intentionality’. Constructivism purports ‘to track norms from “the social” to “the legal” ... [and] trace the empirically observable process of norm construction and change ... with a view to examining aspects of “European” constitutionalism [and citizenship practice]’ (Shaw and Wiener, 2000:67-68). EU ‘meta-constitutional rule-making’ –‘day-to-day practices in the legal and political realm as well as the high dramas of IGCs and new Treaties’– is about ‘fundamental ordering principles which have a validity outwith the formal setting of the nation state’ (Shaw and Wiener, 2000:87). The question is ‘to what extent, and in which ways, a new polity is being constructed in Europe’ (Christiansen *et al.*, 1999:537). Middle-range constructivism is well suited to the task, focusing on ‘the juridification

and institutionalization of politics through rules and norms; the formation of identities and the making of political communities; the role of language and discourse' (Christiansen *et al.*, 1999:538). The whole metatheoretical exercise has thus created 'an arena in which ontological shifts and meta-theoretical moves can be debated' (Shaw and Wiener, 2000:68).

From a combined neo-constitutionalist and post-statecentric perspective – namely, from a normativist 'meta-discourse' – the EU is portrayed as a 'heterarchical space' that combines unity and multiplicity, transcends pre-existing boundaries and projects a multifocal configuration of political authority (Walker, 1988:357). This metatheoretical trend directs research towards the understanding of a striking paradox: although the EU is projected as a form of polity where traditional notions of representative and responsible government are losing their once powerful appeal, it also exhibits a notable potential for democratic self-development. Since the mid-1990s, the EU tends to transcend issues of market integration and touches upon 'sensitive areas of state authority', becoming 'the only regionalism in the international system where there is an attempt to democratize politics above the level of the state, to mark a decisive shift from diplomacy to politics' (Laffan, 1998:247, 249). Different phases of integration suggest that the formation of a European polity resembles an asymmetrical synthesis of academic (sub)disciplines. Puchala (1999:318) notes that EU theorizing 'has recently evolved into a full-scale, hard-fought debate ... with contenders jumping upon one another's attributed weaknesses while disregarding one another's insights'. Lindberg's comment (1967:345) on the student of integration, feeling as if s/he 'were excavating a small, isolated portion of a large, dimly perceived mass' while others are digging there too in similar isolation, is reflective of the kind of tribalism depicted by Knudsen (1996:8) in his portrait of 'the parochial scholar'. Bulmer (1997:1) has expressed a similar concern: 'We may end up with a bewildering set of policy cases explained by a further array of analytical frameworks so that the "big picture" of integration is lost from view'. The section below aims to reverse this trend, by offering a suggestion of a possible end state of the process.

A synarchy of co-sovereigns

This section assesses the transformations of state sovereignty in today's Europe. It aims to make sense of the totality that has been achieved so far, by shifting the emphasis to the grand question of what the big picture of integration might look like in the early 21st century. This critical 'turn' 'from process to product' projects a general image of the whole as a reflection of a particular kind of reality, captured best by the term 'synarchy': a joint sovereignty regime composed of highly interdependent polities. This conception rests on the idea of political co-determination, the development of mutually reinforcing norms of co-governance, and the dialectical fusion of segmental autonomy and collective polity-formation. It thus advances the case for a post-statist reading of the EU order, bringing together a set of useful conclusions on what the EU 'actually' is: a) the regional entity forms a polyarchical type of ordering, not beyond but alongside its component parts, b) the function of the general system rests on the practice of sovereignty-sharing, and c) integration signals a departure from a system of horizontally co-ordinated polities and towards a post-statist regional synarchy based on co-determining state sovereignties. The point is that the EU defies any absolutist interpretation of the Westphalian doctrine, through which the state was recognized as the supreme and unchallenged authority within a territory – bestowed with a grant of the right to unfettered freedom of action. The EU experience shows that, through voluntary sovereignty-sharing, states can achieve more together than they possibly can either by acting alone or by seeking more conventional frameworks for collective action. Although abstract and at times idealized notions of sovereignty-sharing have partly caused the confusion that laces the debate on the 'true' meaning of sovereignty, the EU constitutes the most innovative example of organized synarchy in the history of international organization. More than that, the study of Europe as a 'multiperspectival' polity (Ruggie, 1993) calls attention to the changing norms and conditions of state sovereignty. Notwithstanding the continuing relevance of its symbolic status or the fact that it has not been irretrievably ceded to a higher-level authority, state sovereignty has now become all the more contested, dispersed, divisible, and shared.

Synarchy offers the possibility to think about the constitution of a novel form of polity that is called upon to reconcile the quest for segmental autonomy (and diversity) with a sense of political unity for the whole. It chimes well with the idea of extending the sharing of authority in new areas of collective symbiosis, but does not imply a process of regional state-building towards an integrated and self-regulated polity, superimposed over the pre-existing ones. This is accords with Kontogiorgis's (in Quermonne, 2005:10) view of the EU as a system that 'does not invalidate the capacity of the member-states to operate, at the same time, as independent political entities'. Despite the absence of a common European public culture, the EU has developed a polysemous 'polityhood' which may bring about the transcendence of statecentrism and the construction of a post-statist condition. This view refers to a kind of sympolity which is indicative of the conceptual synergies normative theory allows in a post-statist direction. The synarchical model advocates a system of co-determination for composite, mixed and polycentric forms of union based on the idea that the partners to it co-constitute the larger polity: the critical element here is not an attempt at building organic links between synarchy and the composite demos –as a self-regulated political system–, but the ability of the former to perform functions based on an extensive sharing of sovereignty. Synarchy, as a post-statecentric quality, does not invalidate the constituent sovereignties, nor does it threaten their legitimizing role at the level of the national public spheres. Similarly, it does not threaten the civic culture of the segments with the view to creating a single locus of authority. Rather, it refers to a form of co-governance that advances a commonly shared perception of the member polities as discrete yet constituent units. It does not replace or substitute their sovereignties, but recomposes them politically, by extending the scope and level of collective symbiosis, and legally, through a commonly formulated law.

The term 'synarchy' derives from the Greek verb *συνάρχω* which refers to a form of 'co-governance'. In the discussion for the contemporary transmutations of sovereignty, synarchy sketches out a transition from the classical example of interstate relations to a post-statist system operating within the structural logic of co-governance: the joint exercise of sovereign competences at multiple territorial and

functional areas, and at multiple levels of social and political organization. This view is in harmony with Aalbert's account of the future of sovereignty in Europe's multilevel ordering in that, however resilient the concept of sovereignty is 'despite its empirical decline' –signifying, in classical Westphalian terms, 'an international "living-apart-together" of states'– the EU has shifted the locus of control away from the exclusive domain of states, influencing the status of sovereign statehood in terms of 'actual authority' (Aalberts, 2004:32):

To date, national state sovereignty has not disappeared to make way for a European sovereign state ... Yet, with the advance of institutional features way beyond the original design, and the development of a huge and extensive body of shared norms and commonly accepted rules and decision-making procedures, the EU is more than just a regime. It is at the very least a "saturated regime", founded on the core institution of the "embedded *aquis communautaire*".

Synarchical Europe does not form a new type of *stato* beyond (or to the detriment of) the nation-state, and capable of transcending the historic reality of nation-building. It does not point at the emergence of a new sovereignty as in the process of creating a federal state, not does it sweep away the constituent demoi in the trajectory of imposed homogenization, thus building a new political subject devoted to a new hierarchy. On the contrary, it rests on the ascent of a co-operative culture, being developed within an institutionalized framework of shared competences and of convergent perceptions about the organization of collective life. This allows the member units to acknowledge the idea of co-sovereignty as the basic principle around which a new form of unity is being built: a co-operative culture that is not only the expression of an institutional partnership, but also of a sense of political co-ownership, allowing for the development of a non-territorially defined political space. What is being carried out within such a system is the search for higher levels of symbiosis and co-determination among the co-sovereigns.

The idea of synarchy presents a challenge to the future of integration theory in relation to the study of emerging categories of post-statist politics. The EU resembles the pre-sovereign concept of *respublica symbioticum* developed by Althusius in his *Politica*—as it precedes the Westphalian arrangement— but which is post-sovereign as to the sharing of authority. According to Hueglin (1999:5), Althusius's complex form

is a ‘confederal commonwealth’ –a *consociatio consociatorum*– made of autonomous units operating on the basis of mutual recognition within a legally-constituted collectivity (Elazar, 1995:xli). The relation between the synarchical model and that elaborated by Althusius becomes apparent at two levels. First, in the emphasis attributed to sovereignty-sharing between politically-linked communities – through a ‘double contract’ among the member polities and among them and their populations (Hueglin, 1999:4)– referring to an advanced at that time view of *communicatio* (sharing). Second, in the Althusian type of commonwealth, whereby the interactions among the segments, as well as between them and the common institutions guarantee the actors’ access to multiple governance arenas (Hueglin, 1999:1):

For Althusius, the ownership of sovereignty is shared by the narrower and wider political communities constituting the universal commonwealth. It is, in other words, a kind of co-sovereignty shared among partially autonomous collectivities consenting to its exercise on their behalf and within the general confines of this consent requirement. The only modern political system coming somewhat close to this notion of confederal sovereignty may be the European Union, the supranational powers of which ultimately rest on negotiated agreement ...

Today, one could perceive the constitution of the European synarchy as an expression of political co-determination, paving new paths in debating the transmutations of sovereign statehood. To the extent that co-determination offers an instrumental approach to understanding the nature of co-governance in the EU, synarchy indicates a wider frame which preserves a dynamic equilibrium between the whole and the parts. In this light, the changing conditions of sovereignty can now be interpreted as the right of states to be involved in the process of co-exercising a set of common competences and to claim an active role in the representation of their interests in the general system, while retaining ultimate responsibility in critical decision-taking (Taylor, 2003:47):

Something remarkable had happened: sovereignty was now a condition, even a form, of participation in the larger entity. What was stressed in the role taken on by being sovereign was the right to be involved, to participate in the mechanisms of international society and to represent there the interests of the state. It was even

possible to imagine states which were sovereign but which normally exercised no exclusive competences.

Keeping in mind that every discussion on sovereignty should take into account the actual conditions of a given historical moment, the point made by Taylor (2003:27, 28, 53) is that, as in the classical sovereignty doctrine a higher normative order was said to exist and legitimized the terms of sovereignty in the secular power structures of the day, so states are recognized as sovereign, not on the basis of what they can actually do on their own, but on the basis of their ability to participate in the mechanisms of the international community and to abide to the demands of a higher value system: a set of principles, rules and norms that constitute the international culture of the community of states. The critical factor that relates to the idea of a 'political society of states', whereby states can now be taken as 'citizens' of a world community (Taylor, 2003:53). Only to the extent that a state *qua* citizen fulfills its international obligations is it possible to be considered as sovereign: as a full and equal member of a rule-governed society of states –or of a 'cosmopolitan moral community'– to which the state is accountable for its actions. Hence a new participatory quality in sovereignty relations, confirming the capacity of international institutions to produce binding rules, to manage complex interdependencies, to offer institutionalized forms of co-determination, and to take authoritative decisions.

A typical expression of this dialectical quality is the EU, in that it transcends any pre-existing category of interstate organization, projecting the image of a composite polity. The latter consolidates the ability of the parts to safeguard their autonomy, without negating the ability of the general system to reach higher levels of collective symbiosis: 'it came to seem persuasive that the survival of the state as completely compatible with the strengthening of the common arrangements' (Taylor, 2008:103). Even though sovereignty is still being made by the subsystems, the latter are also constituted by the general system to which they also belong: their sovereignty becomes an expression of their participation in the working arrangements of the collectivity, whose operations may well exceed the state framework, but whose governance requires the consent of states: 'The EU's arrangements were a unique way of managing a system of sovereign states ...

Membership in the European Project had always been sought in order to restore the nation states of Europe ... It was necessary to understand this to see that further integration need not lead to the creation of an overweening superstate' (Taylor, 2008:7). In sum, state sovereignty can be seen as a reflection of the constitutive role of the collectivity as well as an acknowledgement of the need of the member publics for self-determination (Taylor, 2003:52). As a synarchy of co-sovereigns, the EU gives rise to a complex system of co-determination that reconciles the political tradition of Europe –as the cradle of state sovereignty– with its transcendence. This dialectical relationship rests on a common learning process which depends heavily on mutual trust, 'in which', as Wallace (2000:523) notes, 'ideas as well as interests shape the search for consensus'.

These dynamic properties make the EU the most advanced application of the principle of 'consonance': neither the institutional components of the general system exist independent of the member units, nor do the latter operate, as equal parties to the regional synarchy, independently from the institutional arrangements of the whole (Taylor, 2003:213). The sovereignty of states makes the latter follow a set of systemic and behavioural norms that they themselves have established in the first place and have applied to a considerable range of policy domains within a collective governance system, courtesy of their sovereign statehood. In a word, the sovereignty of states has taken on new shapes and has come to serve more and increasingly complex functions that were once at the core of domestic politics. Thus emerges a post-Westphalian understanding of the EU order. This finding, termed by Taylor (2003:54) as a 'grand underlying dialectic' –in that it is 'less useful to see states as having exclusive domestic jurisdiction and more useful to see them as having reserved the right to limit the effects of legislation made elsewhere'– constitutes a profound structural change from the Westphalian paradigm. This shift from a classical imaging of sovereignty as the right to exclusive internal jurisdiction to 'a grant of the right to extend competence to act to other entities ... within its territory or on its own behalf in international society' (Taylor, 2003:53), even to take part in highly integrated systems of shared-rule, constitutes, in Philpott's (2001:3) words, a revolutionary quality, altering the basic rules of power that determine international

relations. Historically, this shift reflects the transition from the medieval world (whereby God was sovereign) to the Protestant Reformation (and its secularization effects), to the conflicting order of the Thirty Years' War (followed by the emergence of Westphalian sovereignty), then to the appearance of the modern international system (conferring solely upon states the right to act beyond borders), from there to the collapse of empires and the transition to postwar bipolarism (with sovereignty adjusting to pressures from complex interdependence) and then to the *annus mirabilis* of 1989 and the 'return' to a liberal world order (legitimizing the delegation of authority to international institutions).

Each one of these critical 'moments' in the evolution of international relations has brought, with the power of new ideas, a revolution in the existing international orders. As Philpott (2001:4) notes, 'it takes a revolution in ideas to bring a revolution in sovereignty'. This view links together the different stages of sovereignty's historical journey with the role of ideas in the consolidation of new forms and patterns of shared rule, explaining how 'crises of pluralism' were settled after such radical changes. Focusing on the most recent of these revolutions, that is, the transformation of Europe from 'sovereignty to synarchy', the theory of synarchy does not refer to an undisputed political centre, nor to an obsolete and inflexible interpretation of state sovereignty, but to a new category of collective governing, as well as to an exercise in conceptual innovation regarding the search for a novel political terminology. Beyond, however, the causal order of its content as a post-statist union, synarchy is a transcendental quality, impacting on the status of sovereignty, and even emancipating its exercise from the rigidities of legal coercion, political domination and cultural homogeneity that served nation-building. This normative discourse, by referring to a post-sovereign *modus operandi* between the traditional statutory mission of the state –as the sole determinant of its affairs– and the prospects for post-statist forms of polity, seeks to transcend the classical attributes of sovereign statehood. In that sense, the EU becomes an 'equilibrium polity' (Schmitter, 1996a) linked with its ability to achieve multiple dynamic equilibria between centrifugal and centripetal forces.

Further to the above, it is worth placing the contribution of synarchical theory within the evolution of EU studies. A first note would be that synarchy is interested in the totality of what has been achieved so far. It is concerned with the development of a wider image of integration and not with the haphazard imaging of only certain of its (functional or policy) aspects, as well as with the extent to which the present state of union can be taken as a possible end-state: a final destination of a fascinating journey ‘from sovereignty to synarchy’ where states, as empirical rather than idealized political units, no longer assert their sovereign authority on the grounds of jurisdictional exclusivity over bounded territories, but rather decide to share it with partner-states for commonly agreed purposes. Even though it is difficult to foresee whether or not this line of reasoning may result in a consensual consensus over the finality of integration, it may reveal new possibilities for directing future research on the EU as a post-statist synarchy. What this theory aims at is the systematic study of the EU as a union that encourages novel forms of co-governance, as well as a general view of integration that would allow for a clearer understanding of the end condition or of a process leading to it.

Rediscovering the civic

Linking the question of EU polity-building with different democratic perspectives helps us confront some of the central puzzles of integration theory today. Of recent, new republican understandings have sought not only to revive, but also to nurture a paradigm of social and political organisation for the EU, founded upon novel forms of civicness or even ‘demos-hood’. In its basic conception, a *res publica* aims at achieving three primary objectives: justice through the rule of law; the common good through a mixed and balanced constitution; and liberty through active citizenship. Thus *omnia reliquit servare rempublicam* captures the republican imagination of a virtue-centred life. More than 2500 years since the founding of the Roman republic, an anniversary that passed largely unnoticed by present-day Europeans, the above features still constitute the *raison d’être* of a *res publica*, marking their impact in the interminable search for ‘the good polity’ (Schwarzmantel, 2003). But reviving a republican tradition is a complicated enterprise.

Mouritsen (2006) argues that there *were* no such things back there as ‘liberalism’ and ‘republicanism’; what we are dealing with is clusters of internally coherent arguments, values, and employments of concepts. Tracing the genealogy of these clusters facilitates reflection on the historicity of our own present concepts and political arrangements (Skinner, 1998:101-20). In the very act of defining and delineating traditions of discourse we make choices, informed by present political and normative concerns. Liberty and civic engagement have been interpreted and combined in a number of ways. Ultimately, the challenge for contemporary republicans such as Skinner and Pettit is to develop a pluralist, rather than a populist republicanism, in which tolerance would be guaranteed in diverse, multicultural societies (Lavdas, 2001; Schwarzmantel, 2003; Mouritsen, 2006). This refurbishment of republicanism reflects a concern with the making of a political ordering founded upon the notion of ‘balanced government’ and ‘undominated’ (or quality) choice. But it is not the latter that causes liberty, as liberty is constituted by the legal institutions of the republican state (Pettit, 1997:106-9). Brugger explains (1999:7): ‘whereas the liberal sees liberty as essentially pre-social, the republican sees liberty as constituted by the law which transforms customs and creates citizens’. Participation in the affairs of the polity is not taken as a democratic end-in-itself, but rather as a means of ensuring a dispensation of non-domination by others (non-arbitrary rule). To cut a long story short, the rule of law, opposition of arbitrariness and the existence of a republican constitution are constitutive of civic freedom.

The notion of ‘balanced government’ is also central to republican forms of polity. It is forged in two related ways: negatively, by associating the constitution of ‘a proper institutional balance’ with the prevention of tyranny; and positively, by ensuring a deliberative mode of civic rule, whereby ‘the different “constituencies” which made up civil society would be encouraged to treat their preferences not simply as givens, but rather as choices which were open to debate and alteration’ (Craig, 1997:114). Liberty was expected to be best preserved under a mixed form of polity through certain constitutional guarantees, with no single branch of government being privileged over the others. Here, republicanism strikes a balance between civic participation and the attainment of the public good, by allowing for ‘a stable form of

political ordering for a society within which there are different interests or constituencies' (Craig, 1997:116). Transferring the debate at the EU-level, a republican form of European governance refers to the range of normative qualities embodying the construction of a transnational civic space, where citizens share among themselves a sense of a 'sphere of spheres' (a civic virtue element that is a valuable resource for the polity) and a regard for good governance (a training ground for civic learning), at the same time as they take part in different public spheres. Republican accounts of both liberty and of mixed government can contribute to the debates on the construction of a European polity. With reference to the debate on the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Treaty, it has been shown that the discussion is pregnant with frustrated potentialities, indicating the need for a more extensive, if thin, institutional public space through which to expand civic competence and engage citizens in a European demos (Lavdas and Chrysochoou, 2006).

Given the absence of an engaging European civic demos –assuming of course that an economic or a legal demos already exist– republican thinking helps to disentangle 'the issue of participation in an emerging polity from the cultural and emotional dimensions of citizenship as pre-existing affinity and a confirmation of belonging' (Lavdas, 2001:4). The point is that 'some elements of the real and symbolic *res publica*, may sustain a degree of political motivation *vis-à-vis* the EU and its relevance for peoples' lives while also allowing for other and more intense forms of motivation and involvement at other levels of participation' (Lavdas, 2001:5). But given the lack of organic unity among the member demoi, the republican challenge, in line with that of multiculturalism, is one of institutionalising respect for difference and group rights, while sustaining 'a shared sense of the public good' (Bellamy, 1999:190). This is more likely to emerge through Pettit's third concept of freedom, as it combines the recognition of the pluralism of cultural possibilities for access to meaningful choices and a framework based on a minimal set of shared political values. As Europe fails to motivate action by engaging with emotions and sentiments of community, the idea of a shared European civicness calls for a different approach. Eriksen (2000:51) prompts us to 'decouple citizenship and

nationhood' from the prism of the discourse-theoretical concept of deliberative democracy and to view the constitution as 'a system for accommodating difference'. But since most aspects of active citizenship can be reduced to either 'emotional citizenship' or the expression of rational and deliberative capacities, the question is how to strengthen the latter in a context where the weakness of the former presents opportunities (people are more likely to adopt detached positions) and constraints (people are less likely to take an interest in participation in the first place). This is an attempt to identify and endorse a core of shared civic values, even as they have to be minimal and to recognize the constitutive role of diversity in today's Europe – a core 'constitutional morality' based on moral principles of cooperation: principles that we can discover in the process of EU constitutionalization, unfolding through real-world politics, disagreements, debates and compromises (Müller, 2007: 119-139). Arguably, in real-world politics, one expects various asymmetries to have developed between member polities with different state traditions and diverse historical patterns of multicultural or monocultural legitimations of rule (Lavdas, 1997).

Moreover, in today's Europe, the very fact of increased immigration often leads to conceptions of market citizenship, with foreigners empowered as economic actors. From a different perspective, it has been argued that a 'transnational citizenship' would imply the acceptance of dual nationality (in the receiving and in the sending country) (Baubock, 1994). However, established models of national citizenship become problematized when the roles of immigrants with long-term presence in the land converge with the issues and the grievances of other (often pre-existing) groupings in societies. Even if 'state thinking' continues to dominate debates on citizenship and identity, approaches to European citizenship need increasingly to come to terms with the rich and complex realities of multiple cultural allegiances (Bellamy *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, under certain conditions, the challenge of multiculturalism represents also a certain promise for the European polity. The reading which associates the value of multiculturalism with its ability to enhance possibilities for meaningful choices (Kymlicka, 1995), rather than uncritical (relativist) commitment to inherited group values, can help us avoid the traps of naïve relativism, while focusing on arrangements and institutions that help citizens

increase control over aspects of their own lives. Within this framework, a multitude of commitments may develop emotional engagement and enhance opportunities for meaningful choices. The fundamentally pluralist condition of *civic polyculturalism* aims to capture the realities of multiculturalism without denying the basic adherence to certain minimal political values. From this view, a shared civic space emerges as an answer to Europe's current concerns about the centrifugal and socially exclusionary reflexes of embedded heterogeneity. At the same time, the latter is set to increase, as processes of 'unfreezing' and fragmentation taking place in Central and Eastern Europe add to the complexity of the overall picture.

The multitude of commitments can be understood as developing in different contexts within which infrastructures of communication and political criteria develop and reach a degree of temporary consolidation. In present-day EU politics, such discursive contexts constitute different public spheres with points of partial overlap (Lavdas and Chrysochoou, 2006). This accords with the view that, in today's liberal pluralist setting, participation and political engagement depend on the issues at stake: citizens select issues in relation to which they choose to involve themselves (Ackerman, 1991). The juxtaposition of domestic pluralism and EU governance result in a complex set of issues in relation to which political engagement patterns may or may not converge. This renders EU polity-building both more difficult as well as more consequential. The multiple and partially overlapping public spheres indicate that the EU order possesses the modalities for achieving a single deliberative polity with multiple *demoi*. But Europe has been unable thus far to realize the civic potential of this polyspheric and polyphonic condition. In practical terms, we may trace the implications of Europe's composite order in several instances in recent EU politics and policies. To give an example, it has been shown that the debate on the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the formal Treaty framework is pregnant with frustrated potentialities, indicating the need for a more extensive, if thin, institutional public space through which to engage citizens in a European demos. Or, to turn to recent enlargement processes, the political parameters of 'conditionality' imposed on applicant states manifest a core of strong political values, operating as filters alongside economic and technocratic yardsticks. To use,

finally, an altogether different example, the attempt to ‘shame’ Austrians for the inclusion of the Freedom Party in the government of Austria, an attempt that ultimately backfired, was an example in the mobilization of a form of supranational militancy legitimized through reference to both political morality and political memory (Müller, 2007: 113).

A liberal republican conception contributes to the making of an EU order, whose distinguishing characteristics combine liberal-democratic norms and the continuous search for an inclusive civic space; the latter defined as common points of reference – or common democratic ‘grounds’– that are able to complement the diversity of people’s commitments and aspirations. Such an order will be facilitated by appropriate practices at the national level (through policy inclusiveness and civic education) which will equip citizens to be actively involved in the processes of European and, at the macro-level, global governance. A republican education for citizenship is, however, a complex project in today’s conditions of diversity and intense interaction (Honohan, 2006). There is a transcendental human dimension involved in this aspect of educating citizens which escapes the narrow confines of any political community. Education aiming at enhancing the capacity for independent moral judgment (Ackerman, 1980) is at the heart of any serious attempt to link political education and a just political system. Accordingly, a European *res publica* rests on citizens capable of reaching deliberative decisions to promote certain public goods, whose relevance extends beyond the sphere of electoral politics. It is not just any kind of union set up ‘for narrowly instrumental purposes’, but a civic association based on virtue-centred practices to serve the common good, where freedom and the acceptance of diverse viewpoints come first. This conception of a *res publica* recognises the value of diversity for the enrichment of the possibilities for self-government. At a more fundamental level, it recognises that the idea of self-government requires a balance of both the procedural right to participate in politics and a concern to protect substantive rights (Brettschneider, 2005).

Concluding thoughts

What conclusions might we draw from the above? To start with, given the remarkable profusion of theories and approaches to the study of the EU as a polity in its own right, integration scholarship should aim at discovering a new sense of process (and purpose) for the EU so as to appreciate the relevance of the theoretical *acquis*, and to rethink the archetypal ‘laboratory’ of concepts upon which subsequent theories were allowed to draw and expand. Normative political theory, drawing from a liberal republicanist conception of the polity, becomes an appropriate point of departure for new and perhaps far-reaching intellectual beginnings. In that regard, the study of the EU as a polity-building exercise has to associate itself more closely with the pursuit of a new vision of democratic politics that embraces the virtues of civic freedom, by inventing and, wherever necessary, re-inventing a sense of *res publica*, while re-theorizing about Europe’s diversity. It might be queried why this particular version of neo-(or liberal) republicanism, rather than a form of liberalism which is concerned with civic virtues (Macedo, 1990), should be the focus of such an approach. After all, it would be misleading to gloss over the main differences that Western liberalism incorporates and which can be viewed today as ‘contending rival liberalisms’ (Richardson, 1997). Although we cannot give a more detailed account here, it is appropriate to note that the general value of a republican vision for Europe is that it keeps alive and encourages the notion that institutional development should always be examined also from the perspective of the delegation of authority in some form.

This paper put forward a liberal republican approach which, unlike earlier forms of republican theorizing that focused on an essentially homogenous political community, can accommodate and even embrace a certain version of multiculturalism and group rights. It has suggested that political debate in today’s Europe bears the marks of multiple and partially overlapping public spheres. Despite the absence of a single European public sphere, let alone of a single and undifferentiated demos or sense of demos-hood, the partially overlapping operations of the constitutive public spheres indicate that Europe possesses the modalities for achieving what is perhaps another addition to the history of political sensibility: a

single deliberative polity of multiple demoi. Moreover, the idea of a European civic space emerges as a plausible answer to Europe's current (and mounting) concerns with embedded heterogeneity. The latter becomes an integral part of Europe's distinctive nature as a 'synarchy' of distinct culturally defined and politically organized, yet highly interrelated, states and demoi: a 'polities' polity' or a mixed commonwealth of entwined sovereignties and political communities. This should not lead to the assumption that heterogeneity necessarily results in a segmented European citizenry. Rather, it should become a condition for uniting the member publics and their respective public spheres into a multicultural and polycentric 'Republic of Europeans' – a *res publica composita*.

'Many peoples, one demos', rather than 'many demoi, one people', captures the republican imagination of a Europe based on a certain notion of democratic *civitas* that stems from a rich intellectual tradition of republican thought. In this civic conception, however, the emphasis is not on the crystallization of liberal-democratic norms in Europe's political constitution, but rather on the search for an inclusive civic space and the belief that democratic reform is not the cause but rather the consequence of popular aspirations to democratic shared-rule: a desire to participate in a socially legitimized polity. Such a *res publica* should rest on virtue-centred practices to serve the common good, where freedom comes first. Pointing at a mixed sovereignty regime, a 'sympolity' in Tsatsos's (2009) sense of the term, republican theory makes the point that the EU favours a pluralist notion of demos-hood that can respond to whether or not Europe can be seen as 'a community united in a common argument about the meaning, extent and scope of liberty' (Ignatieff, 2000: 265). As Europe seeks to discover development patterns amidst internal (European) heterogeneity and international liberalism, normative theorizing helps to investigate the conditions for uniting diverse publics and their public spheres into a polity that embraces a condition of civic polyculturalism, in which multiple allegiances and identities co-exist, without in any way denying the basic adherence to certain minimal shared political values. Thus emerges a new vision of democratic politics that celebrates the emerging forms of civic pluralism and multiculturalism inhabiting

today's Europe; a vision that still remains part of a great European (republican) tradition.

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