

## With the benefit of hindsight: what did (and does) political science tell us about the

### Eurozone crisis?

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*The crisis of the Eurozone will be remembered – among other things – as a crisis that dramatically increased public awareness of the European Union. With Grexit or Brexit as plausible options, citizens increasingly link European integration to their individual (economic) well-being.*

*Against this background, we are interested in the question if and how the Eurozone crisis has affected scientific engagement with Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) from a political science perspective. EMU has absorbed considerable academic interest since its inception. Many structural deficiencies of EMU – such as the heterogeneity of the Eurozone, the lack of automatic fiscal transfers or insufficient labour mobility – were already widely debated in the 1990s. But similar to the political discussion, the attention dedicated to potential structural flaws of EMU waned after 1999. At its tenth anniversary, the common currency was still hailed as an unqualified success story by European institutions and many observers. We therefore ask how intensively, and with what focus, have political science journals dealt with the Eurozone? How has the scientific discourse on the topic changed with the outbreak of the crisis?*

*The long-term objective of this research project is a systematic literature review of political science articles dealing with the EMU for a ten year period (2005-2014) in selected refereed political science journals. The present paper provides an overview of the research design. We also discuss some first results from a preliminary content analysis covering the year 2014.*

## 1. Introduction

The Eurozone crisis has exposed major deficiencies of the institutional set-up of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The inconsistent labelling of ‘the crisis’ as a sovereign debt crisis, a competitive crisis, a financial crisis, a banking crisis or a crisis of political legitimacy points to the multifaceted dimensions of this phenomenon. These different labels indicate that there is no single narrative or explanation as to why the EMU is facing an existential crisis that is calling its very survival into question.

The objective of this paper is to assess how intensively, and with what focus, political scientists analysed the monetary union and the Eurozone crisis. The paper is a first draft of an article in which we aim to analyse the engagement of political science literature with the Eurozone and its crisis. We use published articles in high-ranking political science journals as a proxy for academic engagement with the topic. To that end, we plan to conduct an analysis of relevant articles in selected journals for the years 2005-2014. We are particularly interested in answering the following questions: What are patterns of political science engagement with EMU before and during the crisis? Which explanations for the crisis are provided in the literature, which remedies are discussed? Do political scientists explicitly address any root causes of this crisis? Do they identify specific conflict lines that are pivotal for the survival of the common currency?

The present paper provides some first results of an exploratory survey of the year 2014.

In their 2009 literature survey (which can be seen as ‘pre-crisis survey’ from today’s perspective) Sadeh and Verdun identified three conditions for the EMU to survive in the long run (see Sadeh and Verdun 2009): First, the expectation that the Franco-German political deal would hold. Second, the on-going hegemony of the belief in “sound money”. And third, that “losers” from EMU remain underrepresented in national and EU institutions. One aspect of interest is if these conditions are still dominant in the academic discourse concerning the Eurozone crisis.

Furthermore, this article builds on the assumption that different narratives of the Eurozone crisis exist, each of which systematically identifies diverging main causes of and remedies for the crisis. We identify five popular narratives (see below); some of them have long accompanied the construction of the Eurozone, while other readings gained prominence with the aggravation of the crisis in the post-2010 period.

The article proceeds as follows. Part 2 presents the main interpretations of the crisis discussed in the literature. This part serves as the conceptual frame for the analysis. Part 3 provides details on the process of coding and presents the data. Part 4 discusses major characteristics of the debate. Part 5 offers a number of conclusions.

## 2. Theoretical part: Different interpretations of the crisis

Unsurprisingly, there is little consensus in academia about the root causes of the major deficiencies of the Eurozone, but a large range of conflicting interpretations: some commentators blame Germany for its initially reluctant stance to provide financial assistance or its insistence on strict austerity policies (see for instance Pisani-Ferry et al. 2013). Others blame lax fiscal policies in countries like Greece (for a description see Featherstone 2012, p.6) or point to the immense economic heterogeneity of capitalist systems within the Eurozone (see for instance Höpner 2014, Streeck 2014).

None of these interpretations (see for instance Hancké 2013) shed light on all potential root causes of the crisis and can thus not fully explain the situation of all crisis-ridden countries. Why did Portugal and Spain, despite belonging to a similar type of market economy (see for instance Hall and Soskice 2001), face very different economic challenges? Why did Ireland – the only non-Southern crisis country – slip into the crisis at all?

In this section, we develop a conceptual frame consisting of five dominant narratives, covering (i) fiscal and economic policies, (ii) structural deficiencies, (iii) questions of trust, (iv) financial regulation and (v) aspects concerned with the democratic legitimacy of the EMU institutional framework. We will use this framework to assess the dominance of certain crisis interpretations over others in political science articles. Although we develop ideal types, each interpretation systematically focuses on a specific set of instruments to tackle the crisis. Also, each interpretation is strongly associated with a set of causal explanations as to why the Eurozone is in a perilous state.

One widespread reading is that the euro crisis is primarily a *fiscal and economic crisis*, resulting from fiscal profligacy by, especially, Southern European countries as well as growing economic imbalances in the Eurozone. The insufficient compliance with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact (see for instance Eichengreen 2012, p.128) before 2010 is often interpreted as a major factor explaining why countries accumulated unsustainably high sovereign debt levels. The reinforcement of the SGP as well as the creation of the ‘Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance’ (TSCG) would consequently constitute a potential solution (see for instance Seng and Biesenbender 2012). Also, from this perspective, the newly introduced macro-economic imbalance procedure or the European Semester can help reducing economic divergences in the Eurozone. Most of the instruments have been introduced within the current treaty framework, or are reinforcing existing instruments (such

as the TSCG and the SGP). As Hancké and others rightly point out, however, such a reading does not convincingly account for the difficulties of Spain or Ireland (nor does it explain why, for instance, Belgium, was not hit as hard by the crisis as other countries). Spain and Ireland were in a fiscally and economically good shape in the run-off to the crisis, but then experienced major economic and financial setbacks.

A second reading understands the euro crisis as a *structural crisis*, focusing in particular on overly rigid labour markets in Southern Europe and their inflexibility to adjust wages and social benefits. Throughout the 1980s, a consensus emerged that floating exchange rates were themselves a major source of economic instability (see for instance Belke, Gros 2009; for a slightly different argument see Höpner and Spielau 2015). This consensus significantly shaped the actual design of the current EMU (McNamara 1999). Given that exchange rates are fixed, labour mobility is low and automatic fiscal transfers are largely absent, necessary adjustments in a currency union must be derived from labour markets, and thus ultimately wages. In this reading, the huge sovereign aid packages from European and international financiers are ultimately devices to buy time, and adjustments must still take place via internal devaluations (Höing 2016).

Structural narratives also address the heterogeneity of the Eurozone, the lack of automatic fiscal transfers (such as Eurobonds) or they deliberate on exit-options and procedures to handle state insolvencies within a currency zone (all of which are currently absent and thus contributing to the structural deficiencies of EMU). However, also this interpretation falls short of explaining the positive economic performance of countries with relatively rigid labour markets (in their export sectors), such as Germany or Austria; it also has problems explaining why certain countries joined the Eurozone in the first place.

A third popular reading interprets the crisis as a *crisis of trust*. A particular problem in a monetary union derives from the fact that member states can give no guarantee that they will always have cash available to pay out bond-holders when bonds mature. This is different for stand-alone countries, i.e. countries outside a monetary union, and suggests a potentially “destructive dynamic” in monetary unions if no institution acts as a “lender of last resort”. Such a self-fulfilling prophecy was described, among others, by de Grauwe (De Grauwe 2012) who compared the situation of Spain and the UK (with the former becoming vulnerable to self-fulfilling movements of distrust). High inflation rates and negative real interest rates fuelled asset price inflation and bubbles in countries such as Spain. There was arguably also a systematic failure of rating agencies which did not adequately assess the risk of sovereign bonds of periphery countries (see for instance Cordes 2014). In theory, interest rates are



market mechanisms and have an important ‘signalling function’. The strong convergence of interest rates since the creation of the common currency indicates that this market mechanism was largely suspended. The central question is whether this was a systemic failure, i.e. the convergence of interest rates was a natural by-product of the currency union, or (simply) the result of poor risk assessment from private rating agencies and other financial market participants.

In order to break this vicious circle, a credible lender of last resort function becomes indispensable. The promise of the European Central Bank in September 2012 “to do whatever it takes” has – at least for the time being – calmed down financial markets. Also the Eurozone’s initial reaction to the crisis in 2010 was supposed to re-establish trust in the ability of Eurozone Member States to refinance their sovereign debt. Eurozone governments stepped in with bailout funds, first temporary, then permanent. These rescue mechanisms do equally function as lenders of last resort. However, on its own, the trust narrative also fails to convincingly explain the extent to which public debt levels in Greece or Portugal were unsustainable. Poor risk assessment on the side of financial market participants can hardly account for the excessive build-up of debt in these countries.

A fourth narrative explains the outbreak of the crisis primarily by poor *financial regulation*. Ireland and arguably Cyprus attracted risky capital due to lax tax regulations and an oversized banking sector. Immediate policy decisions to tackle the crisis have worsened the economic situation of these countries. In order to break the link between banks and sovereigns, the Banking Union was eventually initiated. Its first pillar, in particular, addresses questions of financial regulation and supervision (although all three pillars are crucial for the functioning of a fully-fledged banking union), accompanied by several measures at the international level to regulate international financial markets. Also this narrative is unable to explain the full picture since financial regulation had been rather strict in Italy or Spain (Hancké 2013).<sup>1</sup>

On numerous occasions, the crisis has also been framed as a crisis of *political legitimacy* (see for instance Laffan 2014; Otero-Iglesias 2015). Various authors have pointed to the political

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<sup>1</sup> Hancké adds a fifth narrative in which he explains the asymmetric development of nominal unit labour costs (NUCL) and inflation rates by the institutional set-up of labour markets. Informed by the varieties of capitalism approach (VoC) (Hall and Soskice 2001), Hancké distinguishes coordinated wage setting systems in the North of Europe and decentrally organized systems in the rest of Europe (with a hybrid type in Ireland). Hancké’s central argument is that, in a monetary union, the Northern wage-setting regimes take the NUCL of other EMU Member States into account. As a result, these settings experience a consistent fall of NULC and ever-depreciating real exchange rates. The picture is reverse for countries with decentralized labour markets. The consequence is a growing gap of competitiveness between Northern and Southern EMU Member States which is particularly hard to overcome. Although Hancké presents some slight optimism at the end of his book, other authors conclude that the “European varieties of capitalism are too heterogeneous to productively fit into a common currency regime” (Höpner 2014, p.664).

and economic constraints resulting from EMU membership (see for instance Scharpf 2012; Crum 2013). The management of the crisis has facilitated the dominance of executive actors which cannot be held accountable to a unitary parliamentary actor at the EU level. Although the lack of democratic legitimacy can hardly explain the outbreak of the crisis, the lack of legitimated political structures has certainly hampered efficient decision-making during the immediate management of the crisis, regularly leading to brinkmanship and tough intergovernmental bargaining (Schimmelfennig 2015; Fabbrini 2013). It might also explain some of the insufficient reactions to the current crisis.

**Table 1: Overview of crisis narratives**

	<b>Cause of the crisis</b>	<b>Potential solutions</b>	<b>Instruments</b>
<b>Fiscal and Economic</b>	Fiscal profligacy, economic imbalances	Tougher fiscal rules, imposition of sanctions, stronger economic surveillance	Stability and Growth Pact, Six Pack, Two Pack, Fiscal Compact, European Semester, Economic imbalance procedure
<b>Structural</b>	(Some) MS fail to adjust (internal devaluation), Eurozone too heterogeneous	Structural (labour) market reforms, financial transfers, reduction of the size of the Eurozone, dissolution	Exit option, Insolvency order, Equalization scheme/EU budget/Euro Bonds
<b>Lack of Trust</b>	No official lender of resort, destructive dynamic within monetary unions	Lender of last resort, ECB or rescue mechanisms	ECB policy measures, Reform of Rating Agencies, EFSM/EFSF, ESM, Common Deposit Guarantee Scheme
<b>Financial Regulation</b>	Lack of financial supervision and regulation	Banking Union with strong oversight component	Harmonization of financial regulation (EU & Int'l), Financial Transaction Tax, ESFS, Single Supervisory Mechanism, Single Resolution Mechanism
<b>Democratic Legitimacy</b>	Lack of political structures to quickly respond to the crisis	Further integration in the Eurozone or dissolution	Common EU budget, Eurozone parliament

Source 1: Own presentation.

These five narratives are partly complementary (see Table 1). Although the classification is not always unambiguous, they all identify different causes for the current crisis and point to different instruments to tackle it.

### 3. Data

#### *Journals and articles*

In order to obtain a meaningful sample of articles, we aim to analyse a small number of peer-reviewed journals in their entirety for a long timeframe (2005-2014). Of course, our sample represents only a tiny snapshot of the political science engagement with the topic. For example, we do not look at other media. In particular, we leave out primary sources, policy papers, non-refereed journals, and the press, to name but a few. At the same time, this approach has the advantage that we deal with high-quality contributions which can be considered to represent the state of the art in political science. The choice of journals is of course somewhat subjective, but in our view nonetheless justified by their rank, thematic focus and dissemination in the academic community. In particular, based on the 2014 *ThomsonReuters Journal Citation Reports ranking* in the category political science, these journals exhibit the highest impact factor for journals focussing explicitly on European politics. The journals included are the *European Journal of Political Research* (Journal Citation Reports five-year impact factor in 2014: 2.225, Rank in category political science: 7/161), the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (1.814, 19/161), the *Journal of European Public Policy* (2.079, 21/161), and *West European Politics* (1.692, 31/161).<sup>2</sup>

In order to establish some kind of benchmark, we also selected two political science journals without a special European focus for the timeframe under consideration: the (German-language) *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* (Journal Citation Reports five-year impact factor in 2013: 0.208, 140/157) and the (US-based) *Journal of Politics* (2.482, 19/157). Interestingly, for our timeframe 2005-2014, we found only a very small number of articles loosely dealing with EMU in the latter two journals (15 articles out of a total of 978). By contrast, a scan of titles and abstracts resulted in 189 articles of potential interest (out of a total of more than 2.200) in the four journals dedicated to European politics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Incites Journal Citation Reports, Thomson Reuters, <https://jcr.incites.thomsonreuters.com/> (23.02.2016).

<sup>3</sup> The number of relevant articles per journal varies greatly between journals, and so does the overall number of articles. There is also much variation over years, caused for example through special issues. However, since we are not interested in intra-journal or yearly comparisons of article numbers this does not pose a problem for our analysis.

*Selection and coding*

In a next step, we looked at each article more closely in order to decide whether to include it in our content analysis or not. The major criterion was that it had to deal with the Eurozone and issues pertaining to it. A focus on the EU or its Member States by itself did not merit inclusion of an article. Neither did an analysis of, say, OECD countries, even if the topic addressed might be relevant for the Eurozone crisis (such as fiscal policy). This reduced the number of articles in our sample to 132 (for the four journals with a European focus) and 4 (for the journals with a more general orientation).

Step three consisted of manually coding the remaining articles. The coding was carried out jointly by the two authors. The code book was drawn up based on the items discussed in Part 2 and slightly refined after coding all 2014 articles from the sample.

**Table 2: Overview of articles**

	<b>Total number of published articles in journals</b>	<b>Articles potentially dealing with Eurozone issues</b>	<b>Number of articles analysed</b>
<i>Journals with EU focus (JCMS, JEPP, WEP, EJPR)</i>			
2005-2014	2,230	189	132
2005-2009	1,027	87	61
2010-2014	1,203	102	71
2014	269	48	29
<i>Journal without explicit EU focus (PVZ, JoP)</i>			
2005-2014	978	10	4
2014	41	5	1

Source 2: Own presentation.

**4. Discussion**

The year 2014 represents only a small part (N = 30) of our sample of articles in the selected six journals dealing with the Eurozone in the timeframe 2005-2014 (136). We are presently working on the years 2005-2013. Consequently, at this stage, we cannot yet offer a comparison between the pre- and post-crisis period. Nonetheless, the sub-sample of articles published in 2014 reveals some first interesting features.

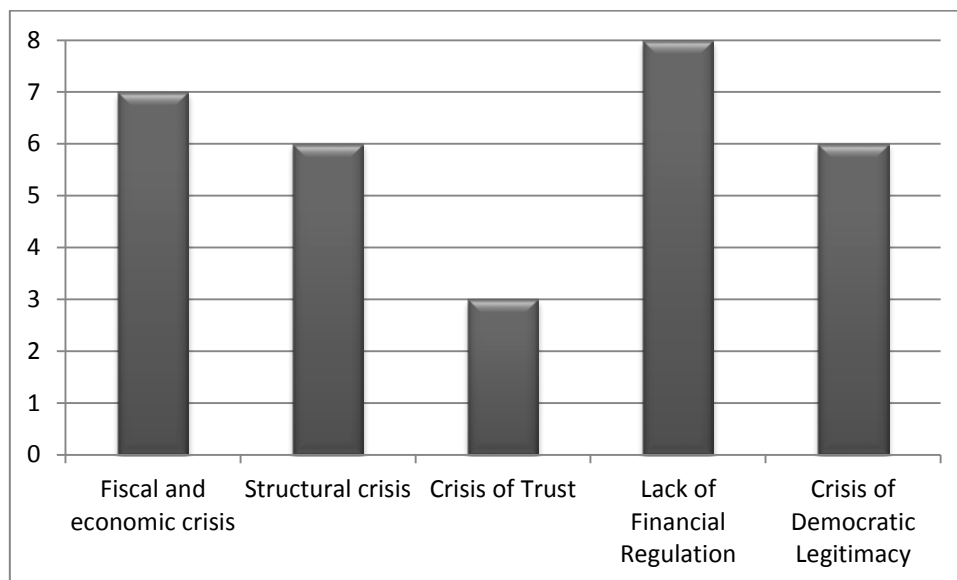
Our conceptual framework identifies five different “crisis narratives”. Applying this framework on our sample of articles, we can associate most of them with one (and in a few



cases two) specific narratives of the crisis. Only three articles could not be associated with any of the crisis narratives outlined above. Another three articles represented two narratives each.

For the year 2014, we find that all five narratives are present. This is not completely surprising given that none of these narratives have been refuted as “wrong” in the literature. On the other hand, it would have been plausible that certain narratives pique the interest of researchers less than others, leading to the absence of a narrative in 2014. In our sample, the lack of financial regulation occupied a prominent place (N = 8), followed by the fiscal and economic crisis (N = 7) and both the structural and democratic legitimacy narrative (N = 6). Solely questions of trust were less frequently addressed (N = 3).

**Figure 1: Crisis narratives in 2014**



Source: Own calculations. An article may be coded more than once.

### *Fiscal and economic narrative*

The fiscal and economic dimension of the crisis is often addressed in case studies, for instance on Germany (Bulmer 2014), Greece (Kosmidis 2014; Vasilopoulou et al. 2014) or Italy (Culpepper 2014). These contributions analyse how crisis-ridden countries undertook reforms to re-balance their budgets, or deal with the dominant position of Germany and its attempt to reinforce the SGP or the Fiscal Compact. The fiscal constraints in crisis ridden countries are also used to explain the constrained political choices of democratically elected decision-makers at the national level.

Other articles in this narrative conduct country comparisons. Crespy and Schmidt address the Franco-German tandem (Crespy and Schmidt 2014) in order to outline the different economic

philosophies (gouvernement économique vs. rule-based Union) which are still present in EMU debates. An article by Tsebelis and Hahm addresses the question how vetoes to implement the Fiscal Compact could have been suspended (Tsebelis and Hahm 2014). Moschella, on the other side, compares the new macro-economic imbalance procedure (MIP) with IMF surveillance programmes (Moschella 2014). She concludes that the MIP performs better than IMF surveillance in terms of clear and practical advice, knowledge of domestic politics as well as the ease of activating sanctions.

These articles seem to indicate that the belief in sound money, as outlined in the literature review by Saleh and Verdun, is no longer uncontested. At least, the academic engagement reflects the difficulties of certain Member States to stick to the strict fiscal rules of EMU governance.

### *Structural narrative*

Six articles addressed structural deficiencies of the Eurozone, each with a slightly different focus. The article by Hall highlights the structural heterogeneity in the institutional set-up of market economies (Hall 2014) in the Eurozone. The one-size-fits-all approach by the ECB and other EU institutions is presented as an explanatory factor for the growing economic divergences in the EMU since 2002. This analysis is rather pessimistic about the prospect of a long-term recovery, diagnosing a deep legitimacy crisis and fundamental differences about the future of the EU. This line of thought is taken up in an article assessing the controversy between Streeck and Habermas (Biebricher and Vogelmann 2014) which emerged in 2013 after the release of Streeck's book "Buying Time". The article summarizes broader questions of democracy and capitalism and two contrasting views on the ability of the EU to be reformed. Also, we find articles addressing a hypothetical demise of the Euro (Papadia 2014). This topic might indeed be rather new on the academic agenda.

In other contributions, Europe's demographic situation is presented as a contributing factor to the aggravation of structural and budgetary deficits (Hansen and Gordon 2014). Historical reflections on the euro, on the other side, stress that some structural deficiencies already existed before the introduction of EMU (for instance the need for adjustment – fiscally or through internal devaluations – or questions of financial supervision and regulation in a common market) (Mourlon-Druol 2014). Some of the current problems are thus not Eurozone-specific, but did already occur in other forms of currency cooperation (such as the EMS in the 1980s/1990s). The lack of fiscal transfers – in particular Eurobonds – is equally

discussed as a structural deficit. Although the article by Hild and others is rather technical (Hild et al. 2014) and describes the potential design of different versions of Eurobonds, the lack of automatic fiscal transfers to cushion economic cycles or asymmetric shocks is considered a structural weakness of the Eurozone.

The articles in our sample thus address a range of issues concerning structural weaknesses, from a hypothetical demise of the common currency to far-reaching reforms that would significantly transform the current institutional set-up of the EMU.

### *Trust narrative*

The trust narrative is the least represented theme in our sample. Three contributions address the creation and the role of rescue mechanisms and therefore show – with regard to content – some proximity to questions of trust in the common currency. The different rescue mechanisms were already established in 2010 and 2012 which might explain why academic interest has waned in the 2014 publications. Maatsch discusses the party motivations to support the EFSF (Maatsch 2014) as well as its subsequent extension in 2011 (Closa and Maatsch 2014) while Jacoby analyses the impact of Euro area membership – and ultimately the access to the diverse rescue mechanisms – in handling the economic downturn from 2007 onwards (Jacoby 2014). He comes to the conclusion that the EU efforts to buffer the economically hard times were far quicker in the Eurozone than in non-Eurozone member states.

It has been somewhat surprising for us that the role of the European Central Bank was not explicitly discussed under the trust narrative. We believe that the omission is a result of the small sample size.

### *Financial regulation narrative*

The fourth narrative deals with the weaknesses of financial markets which emerged in 2007/2008 and formed the initial stage of the crisis. In response to the turmoil, the reform of financial regulation moved centre stage both at the global and the European level. In the later stages of the crisis, when fault lines within the Eurozone surfaced, the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns became a focal point of the debate. In general, “financial supervision has changed dramatically from no EU-wide co-ordination at all (prior to 2008), to soft co-ordination at the EU level (2009), to a banking union based on hard law (2012/13)” (Hennessy 2014: 152).

As far as the number of articles in our exploratory sample is concerned, this is the most frequent frame (8). The majority of relevant articles take a historic approach, aiming to structure the development of various new mechanisms and instruments of Banking Union and discuss possible implications (McPhilemy 2014, Hennessy 2014, Gros and Schoenmaker 2014, Howarth and Quaglia 2014). Two articles from a JEPP special issue on the EU in global financial governance had a sufficient link to the Eurozone to be included (Bieling 2014, Young 2014). Finally, one article deals with the project of a financial transaction tax (Grahl and Lysandrou 2014) and one demonstrates that banking and financial regulation had already been on the political agenda in the early 1960s (Mourlon-Droul 2014). All articles are empirical-qualitative studies.

### *Democratic legitimacy narrative*

Out of our exploratory sample, six articles contained the narrative democratic legitimacy. This group includes theoretical studies as well as empirical ones. Two quantitative articles deal with the support for national democracy in European countries (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014) and the role of national parliaments (Auel und Höing 2014) during the euro crisis.

The theoretical articles focus more on Eurozone developments and what the crisis means for integration in general (Mény 2014) or the politics of governing the Eurozone (Laffan 2014). Other articles revisit the well-known question of a European demos (Risse 2014), and the relation between democracy and capitalism, building on the Streeck-Habermas debate (Biebricher/Vogelmann 2014). A recurrent theme in these contributions is the executive dominance during the management of the crisis and the lack of legitimate political structures to respond to the crisis. The articles also point to the growing asymmetries in the Eurozone, especially between economically strong Member States in Northern Europe and crisis-ridden countries in the South. Laffan, in particular, emphasizes the constrained political choices resulting from this situation.

### *Pre-Crisis literature review*

Our small sample does not yet allow drawing general conclusions regarding the discussion of conditions for the long-term survival of the Eurozone, as identified by Saleh and Verdun in 2009. However, some first cautious statements can be made. First, the Franco-German axis is still emphasized in a couple of contributions. However, this focus seems to be replaced by a larger discussion of a potential North-South divide in the Eurozone, for which Germany and

France are still representative (Hansen and Gordon 2014; Bulmer 2014; Hall 2014). Also, more recent publications outside our sample increasingly highlight a division between Northern export-led and Southern demand-driven economies (Matthijs and McNamara 2015).

As far as the belief in ‘sound money’ is concerned, some academic contributions explicitly address the introduction of Eurobonds (Hild et al. 2014), the various bailout funds (Maatsch 2014; Closa and Maatsch 2014) or the insufficient compliance with the rules of the SGP (Tsebelis and Hahm 2014). This might indicate that the concept of sound money is discussed more controversially than before the crisis, when it represented the orthodoxy. In this respect, academic engagement in 2014 reflects changes of the political discussions within the Eurozone.

Third, the underrepresentation of the so-called ‘losers’ of EMU has not been explicitly addressed in our preliminary review. With regard to the small sample size, this must not be surprising. As outlined above, these are only first cautious interpretations of our data set.

## 5. Conclusions

The exploratory analysis of a 2014 sub-sample has demonstrated that our general methodological approach is viable. One interesting finding is that all theoretically derived narratives are present in the year 2014. This indicates that it is not possible (or at least not yet) to narrow down the different interpretations of the crisis. Put differently, no crisis narrative has been dismissed by political science so far.

Very first conclusions concerning the individual narratives can be summarized as follows: In the fiscal and economic narrative, alternatives to the sound money paradigm of EMU show up increasingly in the discussion. In the structural narrative, steps such as the dissolution of the Eurozone as well as far-reaching reform projects such as Eurobonds are discussed, indicating a very broad debate at that point in time. For the trust narrative, trust is an underlying concept that has been pivotal especially in the heyday of the crisis. That attention for trust wanes in the aftermath is to be expected. It has been somewhat surprising that the ECB was not singled out for analysis, given that it was often mentioned as the only institution capable of taking decisive actions during the management of the crisis. The financial regulation narrative was high on the agenda in 2014, eliciting much attention from scholars. Newly introduced and existing mechanisms in the framework of Banking Union played a major role. Finally, the

democratic legitimacy narrative can be described as a more theoretical narrative.

Executive dominance and growing asymmetries are taken up as raising the need for reforms in this area.

Finally, as far as the comparison of the conclusions of the Verdun and Saleh literature review with our sample of journal articles is concerned, we find marked differences. This is a first indication that the crisis has caused a shift in the way political science frames EMU. Whether this observation will hold true for the remaining years in the analysis remains to be seen.

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