

# RESPONDING TO CRISES – DEMOCRATIC AND EPISTEMIC WORRIES ABOUT EXPERTISE<sup>1</sup>

*Cathrine Holst*

*Department of Sociology and Human Geography and ARENA Centre for European Studies,  
University of Oslo*

*Anders Molander*

*Centre for the Study of Professions, Oslo Metropolitan University*

## **I. Introduction**

Commentators do not agree on the true features of the recent crises of the European Union (EU). Where some analyze the eurozone crisis, EU's troubles following the 2015 migration pressures, Brexit, etc., as largely separate incidents, spurred by relatively independent events, others see interrelated dysfunctionalities across social spheres and policy areas, and a more deep-seated crisis underlying what seems to be scattered problems and crises tendencies.

Another controversy concerns the relationship between EU's crises, however fundamental, and the role of experts and expert knowledge. Here you find, roughly speaking, two main narratives, seemingly contradicting one another. According to the first narrative, expert bodies and communities are key to solving the Union's problems. A main claim, and hope, is that Europe's economic, social, political, and other crises can be overcome by more effective institutional coordination and through the formulation and implementation of knowledge-based policies. On the contrary, according to the second narrative, a larger role for experts and an expanded scope for expert judgment is rather one of the main sources of EU's legitimation problems. To address the different crises would thus require a rolling back of expert power and a shrinking of EU's expert institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> This book chapter builds on three other co-authored articles by Holst and Molander (2018, 2019, forthcoming). Some sub-sections overlap across these pieces. The list and discussions of democratic worries over expertise are, however, unique to this chapter. The chapter is moreover framed specifically to address the role of experts in EU's recent crises, and includes a novel section that proposes reforms to address both democratic and epistemic worries, and with examples drawn from the EU context.

Clearly, both narratives are limited. On the one hand, the significant political power granted to expert communities and bodies in the EU, and experts' role in the decision-making leading up to the Union's recent crises, calls for critical scrutiny, and raises serious concerns. For one thing, there are democratic worries. If policy formulation are largely, and maybe increasingly, left in the hands of experts, will it not increase EU's democratic deficit increase? In addition, come concerns from an epistemic perspective. Generally, the involvement of experts in policy-making is justified with reference to outcome improvements: expertise is supposed to be the "filter" that ensures "truth-sensitive" policies and legislation (Christiano, 2012). Yet, critics take this to reflect a naive view of the reliability of expert knowledge and impartiality of experts, and experts are even accused of having made decisions and policies worse, and to the triggering of recent crises. Consequently, the narrative pointing to better guidance from EU's expert institutions and knowledge-based policy-making and implementation as a solution to crises underplays the democratic problems facing the EU currently, but also potentially severe epistemic challenges.

On the other hand, the alternative story line that is almost dismissive of expertise is equally unhelpful. For one thing, both the democratic and the epistemic about over the role of EU experts tend to be embedded in a rather sweeping critical discourse that does not distinguish between the different concerns involved. Secondly, it is often assumed – misleadingly – that the problems connected to the use of expertise in EU policy-making and approach to crisis cannot be addressed effectively through institutional measures. The implication seems to be that we have either to make public policies without expertise, or live with its supposed dysfunctional effects on policy and democracy, hoping that the benefits of our reliance on the decisions and advice of experts will outweigh the costs, and that crises when they occur, will pass, and institutions recover.

In what follows, we show that the substantive involvement of experts in policy-making does raise real concerns. Yet, we move beyond the general uneasiness that many critics articulate, and list ten discrete objections of each type: ten epistemic and ten democratic worries about "expertization" (Turner, 2003). These two ten point lists make visible the considerable complexity of the challenge that arises from the use and reliance on expertise in policy-making. It is showed, moreover, drawing on examples from EU governance, that many of the problems that occur unfortunately are not marginal. However, the fact that the listed worries are genuine, or at least not unreasonable, does not imply that the reliance on expertise in policy-making is ultimately misguided, or that it is impossible to institutionalise expert

bodies in better ways. The chapter suggests both mechanisms tailored to tackle the epistemic uneasiness that the involvement of experts in policy-making has spurred, and ways to address the democratic challenge.

We proceed in the following two sections with a presentation of the different epistemic and democratic challenges with examples from EU governance. Section II on the epistemic worries focuses its examples specifically on economic expertise, and the role of economists in EU's latter years economic and social crises; section III relates the democratic worries to recent and ongoing debates on EU democracy. Section IV outlines the proposed reform approach.

## **II. Ten epistemic worries**

### **(1) We cannot know who the experts are**

Generally, experts are persons who have substantially more knowledge than other people within a specific domain.<sup>2</sup> Due to this epistemic asymmetry, non-experts or lay people are often not in a position to know who among the putative experts are the “real” or the “best” experts, or to judge between competing claims when these experts disagree (for example, Hardwig 1985, 1991; Walton, 1997; Goldman, 2011).

It is not hard to detect cases from the EU economic governance context where epistemic asymmetries are salient. Not seldom the expert knowledge provided is technically complex. We see this, for example, in European Commission expert group reports in policy areas such as economic and monetary affairs, internal market, competition, external trade, and taxation,<sup>3</sup> or in the working paper series of the European Central Bank (ECB),<sup>4</sup> where recent published papers have titles such as “Sources of Borrowing and Fiscal Multipliers”, “Trading ahead of Treasury Auctions”, “Fiscal Equalization and the Tax Structure”, and “The New Area-Wide Model II: An Extended Version of the ECB’s Micro-founded Model for Forecasting and Policy Analysis with a Financial Sector”. It is no doubt hard for non-experts to evaluate the quality and soundness of the discussions and analyses of several of these reports and papers, and to make direct judgements of whether the experts involved are truly knowledgeable in the

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<sup>2</sup> See Alvin I. Goldman’s (2011: 14) influential definition.

<sup>3</sup> The reports can be found in the Register of Commission Expert Groups, see <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/research/working-papers/html/index.en.html>.

relevant domains. Similarly, were putative economic experts to disagree on some of the conclusions made it would require considerable expertise on the topics in question to formulate an informed and independent opinion on which of the competing claims to support.

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## **(2) There are no moral experts**

However, we should take into account how factual and technical considerations in policy-making are intertwined with norms and values. Experts may tell us something about is-questions, for example about economic relationships and mechanisms, and the effects of different economic policies, and on the basis of this knowledge give recommendation about the choice of means to achieve certain predefined end. But what about questions of a non-instrumental kind concerning what we *ought* to will?

This raises the question of whether there is at all such a thing as a moral expertise. Arguably, all accounts of normative judgments that consider also non-instrumental ought-questions to be possible objects of rational discourse open up, in principle, to the existence of moral expertise: if some moral arguments are more qualified than others, then some persons may be more able to make qualified moral arguments than others. On this premise, one could think of moral expertise, for example, in the following way (see, also, Gesang, 2010):

“Someone familiar with moral concepts and with moral arguments, who has ample time to gather information and think about it, may reasonably be expected to reach a soundly based conclusion more often than someone who is unfamiliar with moral concepts and moral arguments and has little time.”

(Singer, 1972: 117)

To talk about moral experts along these lines make it possible to identify some persons as more competent in answering moral questions than others. This make the problem of epistemic asymmetry even more profound since it goes beyond the domain of factual and technical questions.

If we return to the expert bodies of EU economic governance, a key observation is how several of them have as a part of their mandate to address not only questions of facts and the technical efficiency of policies, but also questions about norms and values. We see this on several occasions in the European Central Bank and Eurosystem mission statements, and

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<sup>5</sup> On disagreement among economists, see Machlup 1965 and Fuchs *et al.*, 1997).

elaborating statements on “strategic intents” and “organisational principles”.<sup>6</sup> For example, to ensure the “main objective” of the ECB and the Eurosystem – “the maintenance of price stability” – the ECB is mandated discretionary space to define “price stability for the common good”, distinguished from price stability that is less “sound”, and to interpret what it implies to show “due regard” to principles such as “independence”, “decentralisation”, “accountability” and “equal treatment”. Similarly, we see in European Commission expert group mandates how economic and other experts are called upon to make judgements on distributive and other value-laden issues, The result is often discussions and recommendations that deal not only with issues which are technically complex, but which also include complicated normative considerations, relying, for example, on arguments from welfare, environmental or development economics. We can add to this the many papers and reports produced by EU economic experts responding to mandates that are seemingly purely technical, asking for “evidence”, “mappings”, “descriptions”, “comparisons”, “explanations” and/or “forecasts”, but that will frequently involve deliberations on aims and goals, and on the interpretation and ranking of standards and parameters, since the latter, as they occur, for example, in the EU treaties and regulations, will typically be under-specified and under-determined. In all these cases, it can be hard for the untrained to grasp and assess the technical and non-instrumental normative claims involved, and even harder to review the relative merits of competing claims when putative experts disagree.

### **(3) Proper expertise requires “normal science” and political “well orderedness”**

One could argue that there are ways to identify relatively credible epistemic communities. Could we not soundly trust experts based on proxies such as academic credentials and past records, even if we cannot as non-experts directly assess experts’ explanations and judgments? If so, there is however the additional worry that this only would apply under “normal” circumstances, and not in times of crisis. Generally, we often see how fields or disciplines are characterised by competing paradigms or research programmes, and how, after periods of production of expert knowledge within the parameters of a certain cognitive framework, they undergo epistemic shifts that change the notions of what qualifies as expert knowledge. The sources of such shifts can be internal to the epistemic community, spurred by theoretical or conceptual innovation, methodological breakthroughs or new technologies, but

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/orga/escb/html/index.en.html>.

they can also be external and related to social and cultural changes, economic crisis or political ruptures.

In the EU economic governance context, the 2008 crisis spurred opposed accounts within expert communities both of what caused the crisis, the role of the advice, models and predictions of economists, and of the viable ways ahead. On the one hand, some analyses connected the euro crisis to a shift in EU economic policy discourse “from pragmatism to dogmatism” rooted in “regulatory liberalism” and “monetary orthodoxy” (Mügge, 2011: 201; see, also, Jabko, 1999; McKay, 2005; Posner and Véron, 2010; Broome, 2013; and Heipertz and Verdun, 2004: 772), and to institutional asymmetries and dysfunctional fiscal, monetary and finance regulation policies resulting from this orthodoxy (Jabko, 2010, Blankenburg *et al.*, 2013; Mügge, 2013), rooted in deep trends and flaws in economic thinking (for general arguments on the latter, see Reiss, 2008; Quiggin, 2008; Palley, 2012; and Schlefer, 2012). In short, according to this approach, economists and economic expertise were hugely responsible for the economic, social and political problems that Europe faced in the aftermath of the crisis. On the other hand, competing accounts emphasized how EU economic expertise, institutions and governance adapted and re-adapted in a relatively functional way before, during, and in the aftermath of the euro crisis (for example, Salines *et al.*, 2012). Others focused more generally, arguing that it was not economics and economic expertise as such that were to blame for the bad policy choices which preceded the 2008 crisis, but possibly certain flawed economic models (on the pluralism of perspectives and positions among contemporary economists, see, for example, Stiglitz *et al.*, 2008; Blanchard *et al.*, 2012), and particular epistemic communities of economists, powerful stakeholders and politicians dogmatically relying on these models, or on sound models that were, however, applied selectively or mechanically, without a proper understanding of the models’ assumptions and conditions (see, for example, Schlefer, 2012). Adding to the complexity, economic experts differed in their policy recommendation, where some spoke in favour of the austerity approach and “market conforming” measures, whereas others criticised austerity and emphasised the need for more “market shaping” measures (Jabko, 2010). In such situations, which of the reputable experts and economists should the non-expert trust? How can the novice assess directly and independently which camp to side with? In times of crises, when competing epistemic cultures and approaches typically occur, and expert standards and constellations shift, the question of who the “real” experts are, becomes, arguably, even harder.

#### **(4) Experts make cognitive errors**

To the extent that proper experts can be identified, it is generally reasonable to assume that they, when they are using well-established scientific methods and follow the rules of scientific reasoning, are less prone to making errors than laypeople. Nonetheless, the fact that experts do make errors is well-known, and research in cognitive psychology has shown that expert judgements are more exposed to elementary fallacies than we would like to think (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Tetlock, 2005; Kahneman, 2012). Experts have for example a dubious reputation as forecasters. In *Expert Political Judgment*, Philip Tetlock (2005) presents results from studies of the ability of experts to make economic and political predictions: Many turned out to be overconfident and scored badly on accuracy.

The problem of bad forecasting is generally a challenge for the many economic experts who develop and use models to produce predictions about economic trends and the effects of economic policy. Controversies surrounding the EU's economic forecasting endeavours, for example, the European Commission Economic Forecasts<sup>7</sup> or the ECB's Macroeconomic Projections<sup>8</sup> are illustrative, and we see them occurring repeatedly, for example, in European news media. Forecasts and projections of the EU economic area and the Eurozone are criticised for being based upon uncertain, unlikely, or even random estimates, resulting in poorly founded scenarios and recommendations, and, in the end, failed policies (REF). This criticism can be directed directly against economics and the economists who deliver "bad" advice, but it can also be more multi-layered: The problem coming to the fore is maybe not so much that expert predictions are decisively false or flawed, but that economic experts tend to operate too confidently and exaggerate the certainty of estimates that are key to their problem framing and recommendations.

#### **(5) Experts are one-eyed**

Experts are no doubt often too confident of their own competence (Angner, 2006); they identify with their disciplines and are prone to frame problems so that they fall within their disciplinary matrices, paradigms or epistemic cultures (Buchanan, 2004). For example, studies of environmental policy show how engineers, lawyers and economists tend to approach this policy area differently, focusing on technology, regulation, and taxes/dues, respectively (Tellmann, 2016). Not least in the aftermath of the 2008 euro crisis, this line of

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<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-forecasts\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-forecasts_en).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/projections/html/index.en.html>.

critique against disciplinary bias has been frequently raised against economists in particular. Critics argue that what they see as key features of “orthodox” economics – model building based upon idealised assumptions, over-simplified modelling of economic actors, etc., – unduly coloured the economic experts’ advice before, during, and after the crisis. This, for example, is a central line of argument among the self-declared “anti-econocrats” (see, in particular, Earle, Moran and Ward-Perkins, 2017), who list the narrow problem framing, along with the methodological rules and tool box of economics as one of several problems with this discipline’s hold on policy advice. It was also one of the concerns for critics in the European Parliament and civil society when they in 2013 and 2014 accused the European Commission for composing its expert groups with biased and “unbalanced” expertise (Holst and Moodie, 2015).

#### **(6) Experts operate out of self-interest**

Another objection is that experts may be more or less biased by their self-interests. Researchers in a field may have particular interests for example increasing prestige of their research fields and possibilities of research funding. They may also have more private career-related interests. In a well-functioning political system, conflicting interests are normally taken care of by the procedures for the selection of experts. However, suspicions that the EU has not properly safeguarded against conflict of interests have fuelled public demands for more transparency and better guidelines for expert selection.

#### **(7) Experts are ideologically biased**

A related and frequent charge about bias is that economic and other experts have ideological commitments or other deeper normative orientations that influence their judgements. We see this when experts explicitly embed their decisions or advice in a particular ideological or moral outlook. In addition, there are the not so easily detectable cases. Numerous examiners of economics from Gunnar Myrdal’s classical examination of the value impregnation of classical and neoclassical economics theory ([1930] 1953) onward have noted how theoretical approaches may frame the problem at hand in such a way that some value options are tacitly favoured. For example, neoclassical economics is said to frame problems in a way that favours market solutions. In the EU economic governance context, we see this when EU expert bodies and economic advisors are repeatedly accused of introducing market-conforming measures and “neoliberalism” with their recommendations and interventions.



### **(8) Experts fail to speak truth to power**

Yet another worry is that experts belong and identify with the societal or power élite, and that their elite position and frame of reference compromise their independence: Experts are supposed to “speak truth to power” (Wildavsky, 1979), but their connections to the “establishment” tend to make them more affirmative than critical of the powers that be. This suspicion is a common ingredient in populist politics – debates over Brexit provide several examples – but is also fuelled by sober sociological scholarship on elite recruitment, formation and networks.

Also this worry is, no doubt, part of the criticism against EU “technocracy” and “expertocracy”, for example, in the critique of the biased composition of the European Commission expert group system. Behind this criticism lies not only a democratic concern, but also a worry that élites of economists and other experts will reproduce convenient élite conceptions and prejudices ultimately in line with “corporate interests” (Holst and Moodie, 2015: 39).

### **(9) Experts are bad at communicating their knowledge**

In addition, experts are often bad at stating arguments in a comprehensible way, or may be unwilling to communicate in ways that reach out more broadly to stakeholders and those affected, for example due to elitist attitudes. Such translation problems add to the already troublesome situation of epistemic asymmetry between experts and non-experts. Due to cognitive inequalities, it is hard for non-experts to hold experts to account. The situation worsens if experts are also bad communicators. This is also an issue in the EU economic governance context where economic policy expert reports are accused of being unnecessarily technical, and framed in ways that exclude the average citizen from their readership.

### **(10) Experts lack political judgement**

The last epistemic objection is that experts lack an understanding of political processes and the ability to make political judgements, since they tend to view political questions as if they were questions of facts and logic. On the one hand, this may result in recommendations that are “right”, in the sense that they are supported by solid evidence, but lack political feasibility, at least in the here and now. A variant of this is when experts give unfeasible recommendations because they ignore the institutional political conditions for their implementation (Swift and White, 2008). On the other hand, experts may exaggerate the extent to which the space for political action is constrained by *Sachzwang*, by given circumstances and parameters. The result in the first case is some kind of utopian

intervention; in the other, the result is adaptive, technocratic engineering that considers revisable facts and questionable concerns as “necessities”. In the contexts of economists and EU economic governance, technocracy, in the latter sense, represents a rather persuasive problem. In particular, we often see how considerations that necessarily involve normative interpretation and ranking, for example, when an expert group recommends one policy over others, are presented as if they were purely technical or scientific questions.

### **III. Ten democratic worries**

To the epistemic worries, we can add different democratic concerns. We list first ten such concerns, before relating them to debates on EU democracy and legitimacy.

#### **(1) Self-determination under fire**

The maybe most basic democratic objection to experts’ political role originates from theories of democracy that consider democracy to be – not about “knowledge”, “problem solving” or “truth” at all – but about the self-governance of free and equal citizens (Urbinati, 2014). From this perspective, democratic decision procedures are regarded as better irrespective of their epistemic credentials: There is a right to political self-determination even at the price that decisions may be wrong or bad in the sense of not being based on the best available reasons.

#### **(2) Less collective wisdom**

The opposite camp in democratic theory, the so-called epistemic democrats, turns the previous objection upside down: Their contention is exactly that democracy’s legitimacy as a form of rule depends on the truth-tracking qualities of its procedures. They argue also that democracy tends to deliver well from an epistemic point of view. The problem with expertization then is that it may lead to poorer decisions, since there is a “wisdom of the many” that make the many wiser than the most knowledgeable (Landemore, 2012).

#### **(3) A non-majoritarian source of political influence**

Beyond these fundamental democratic concerns, coming from the non-epistemic (1) or epistemic (2) camp of democratic theory, there are democratic worries concerning the legitimate scope for expertise in democracies. The need for expert advice and some delegation to expert bodies is generally recognized. Yet, the fear is that expertization goes too far; that expert authority intrudes on and eventually replaces democratic political authority based on majoritarian procedures in certain areas– that there is a shift from elected to unelected power (Vibert, 2007).

#### **(4) Expert versus public deliberation**

For democrats who emphasize the importance of public deliberation, there is furthermore a worry that deliberation over political issues becomes dominated by experts, and so less public, in the sense that expert knowledge narrows the space of viable reasons and devalues the contributions of ordinary citizens. Once more, this worry is compatible with recognizing the need to defer to expert authority in many questions. The concern is about what Jürgen Habermas (1963) once called a “scientization of public opinion”, not about the need for expertise in politics, and the hope is for a balanced interplay of expert knowledge and opinion formation in the public sphere (Christiano 2012).

#### **(5) Unfair negotiation of social interests**

A range of other democratic concerns are also not necessarily *anti* expert, but take up problematic effects if expertization goes too far or takes the wrong track. Apart from voting and deliberation, bargaining is a central mechanism of political decision-making (Elster 1998), and for those who emphasize the importance of bargaining in the political process, there is the additional worry that the political role of experts interfere with a fair negotiation of social interests. The problem is in part that some interest groups in society are more capable of utilizing experts’ cognitive resources than others, and that expertization will tend to come with increased and potentially undue influence for these groups. In addition, experts or particular expert communities will constitute powerful interest groups of their own. More fundamentally, the familiar grammar of politics comes under pressure: Expertization facilitates talk about political outcomes and policies as more or less “knowledge based”, “rational”, etc., and not as reflecting some groups’ values and interests. Experts’ extra influence in political processes is worrisome then, not only because it serves some social interests better than others, but also because interest promotion becomes harder to detect and challenge when it is disguised as “superior knowledge”, “the best available expertise”, “evidence”, etc.

#### **(6) Political alienation**

A democracy should express the will of the people, and an additional worry is that expertization may increase the feeling among large shares of the citizenry that they live under a rule rather expressing the will of experts and elites. This is what concerned Robert Dahl (1985), who argued that too much power to experts can come to produce “political alienation” among ordinary citizens: Many will not feel themselves responsible for, and thus

see themselves as “alien” to, the collective decisions they are required to obey. Such feelings of alienation may have negative effects on public trust, and democratic attitudes.

### **(7) Expert arrogance**

There is a tendency among experts to regard ordinary people as ill-informed, and to define “good policies” as those that are based on “knowledge” and “evidence”, irrespective of public opinion. On this basis, some criticize self-proclaimed knowledge elites for underestimating the cognitive abilities, information levels and common sense of ordinary people, and fear that such expert arrogance can spur non-democratic sentiments as well as reduce policy quality. Others concede that political ignorance may be widespread, but still worry over overconfident and arrogant experts. Such experts tend to overlook their own biases and cognitive limitations, but a minimal level of respect is also inherently valuable as part of a democratic ethos. Disrespectful attitudes can furthermore result in a popular disdain for experts and elites that pave the way for authoritarian populism and the erosion of democratic institutions over time.

### **(8) Free-floating experts**

Experts qua experts are moreover – or at least see themselves as – “freischwebende”, to use Karl Mannheim’s (1936) term, in the sense that their primary loyalties are often to epistemic communities or to their professions, and they tend to overlook the political context and the power relations in which their expert activities are embedded. This makes experts less capable of understanding the *modus operandi* of democratic politics and the motives of their fellow citizens: Most people who engage in politics have particular attachments and identities, and seek communities of like-minded (Mutz, 2008).

### **(9) Depolitization of politics**

Expertization may also distort other features of democratic politics many will consider essential, such as the role of opinion in contrast to truth or evidence (Arendt 1968) or of contestation and conflict (Fawcett et al. 2017). Delegation to expert bodies implies to insulate policy-making from political debate and strife – to depoliticize it –and to convert political issues into questions that can be handled by “neutral” experts. An extensive role in governments for delegated expertise, critics worry, will take the “politics” out of politics, and distort our ideas of what democracy is, and of what experts can deliver.

### **(10) Damaged elite selection and circulation**

Finally, even if one grants a role for elites in democracy (for a classical statement, see Schumpeter [1942]1985), there is the worry that expertization may hamper processes of elite selection and circulation vital to good democratic governance. The problem can be that academic experts and professionals lack a social constituency and that the circulation in and out of governing epistemic communities is comparably low. Whereas leaders of political parties and interest groups in democracies will shift as a result of political mobilization or elections, expert groups and bodies will tend to be sheltered from political pressures. There can be good reasons for such sheltering, but an unfortunate side effect can be static and insensitive political leadership, to the extent that experts take on a political role.

With these ten democratic worries in mind, we can return to the EU context and the different controversies over the democratic qualities and deficits of the Union. Among these, we will limit our universe to three sets of debates, all central to the recent “crisis” discourse: those on the role and competences of the European Parliament relative to other EU institutions; those on the organization of EU’s expert bodies (EU agencies, the European Central Bank, the European Commission expert group, etc.); and those surrounding national referendums on EU relations and policies, including the ongoing Brexit debate. A first observation is how fundamental democratic concerns are raised regularly in all of these debates, and fuel claims about a “political”, “institutional” or even “constitutional” crisis in the Union, that needs to be urgently addressed. We find arguments about how a broader and more committed inclusion of “the people” – be it citizens’ representatives in the European Parliament, lay or interest group representatives in agency boards or expert groups, or the voters of national referendums – can contribute to give the EU better and more anchored policies and a sounder and less crisis-ridden direction (2). We also see repeated appeals to the intrinsic value of democratic norms of inclusion and equal participation (1), and justifications on this basis for a vastly reformed EU, with a larger role for citizens, stakeholders and elected assemblies, and a more substantive curtailment of executives, courts and expert bodies (for general analyses, see Nikolaïdis, 2013, Fossum, 2015, Bellamy, 2019).

As for the remaining worries, several of them come to fore in referendum debates, most recently in the quarrels over Brexit, where supporters of the Leave campaign express feelings of alienation (6) and distrust in arrogant EU experts (7) crowding in non-elected EU bodies (3), and without a proper understanding of ordinary people’s identities and national sentiments (8). However, we see some of the similar concerns raised in the other debates, for example when the democratic credentials of the European Parliament as elected body is highlighted in contrast

to the Central Bank, the Commission and other non-elected, bodies or when measures for a larger inclusion of lay perspectives are called for in EU agencies, to increase popular credibility. A potential conflict between a fair negotiation of social interests and EU's expert-driven problem-solving procedures tends to be assumed both in national referendum debates and by proponents of more stakeholder involvement in EU's executive branch (5), whereas an important argument both for a more pluralist composition of Commission expert groups and for increasing the European Central Bank's accountability commitments vis-à-vis the Parliament, is that this will ensure more public concerns to be included and so increase deliberative quality (4). Both the different measures taken to democratize EU agency boards and advisory fora, and to strengthen the European Parliament, can be interpreted as ways to counter an exaggerated depolitization of politics (9), whereas the Brexit debate and similar national level debates are also debates about the relative power of national versus supranational elites and about who are best qualified for democratic leadership (10).

#### **IV. Reforming EU's expert arrangements**

Overall then, the above listed worries about expertization, the epistemic as well as the democratic ones, are all worthy our attention. Some concerns may be exaggerated, and concrete accusations can be more or less warranted. To be sure, not all that is said about "experts in Brussels" and "EU expert rule" hold water. Yet, none of the worries we have outlined seem generally unreasonable. Rather, scrutinizing EU governance and the discourse on European integration surrounding EU's recent crises, we find several of the listed concerns raised over and over again, and for quite sensible reasons. At the same time, it is hard to make rational policies in technologically advanced, complex societies like ours, and in a multi-level polity such as the EU, without expert knowledge, guidance and decisions. Consequently, the proper answer is not to debunk expertise, but to organize and institutionalize expert arrangements more in accordance with democratic requirements, and in ways that ensure that experts operate like proper experts (Holst and Molander, 2019).

To better address the epistemic worries, we believe at least three groups of mechanisms should be in place: those that target expert *behaviour*; those that target the *judgements* of experts, and a third group that addresses the *conditions* for expert inquiry and judgement. To the first category belong the "dos and don'ts" of scientific communities. Arguably, the adherence to such epistemic norms (Merton, 1973, Tranøy 1976), is pre-supposed when

political authorities and citizens appeal to expert opinion, and in the end, non-experts have to rely on experts to behave in accordance with such norms – this is the predicament of epistemic asymmetry. Yet, governments can have an influence on the conditions for their own trust in the expertise used. Decisions taken about the external organisation of science and research can have considerable effects on the internal functioning of scientific communities. This is central in an EU context. The Union is a large-scale funder of research, and whether funding policies emphasize academic independence and norm sets is key to the quality of knowledge production. The way expert bodies and expert groups are organised are also important for making the scientific ethos effective. In this connection, specific measures can be taken, such as checking scientific merit and past records, but also experts' vested interests and political affiliations, in order to exclude unsuitable persons from assignments. Once more, EU-level policies are decisive. Here the problem is sometimes lack of regulations and guidelines. In other cases expert arrangements are comparatively well-regulated on paper – European Commission expert groups can serve as an example (Holst and Moodie, 2017), and the problem is rather that the high standards of EU regulatory discourse may be betrayed on the ground.

The second group of mechanisms aims at holding experts accountable by putting their judgements under review in different fora (Reiss, 2008: 38 ff). The primary forum for testing judgements and detecting fallacies and biases is the forum of peers; competent economic experts, for example, should review and control what other economic experts are doing. However, the testing of judgements and arguments can also be extended from this forum to experts in other relevant disciplines and to other relevant fora, such as administrative fora of regulators, elected assemblies, stakeholder fora, or publics of engaged citizens. Epistemic asymmetry will be an unavoidable challenge. Still, mechanisms that contribute to holding experts to account in different fora will influence to what extent experts are considered trustworthy, but in the best of cases they will also counteract expert failures, for example, when experts fall victim to overconfidence or are insensitive to the evaluative, non-scientific dimensions of a problem. Yet, overall, fora-based accountability mechanisms are underdeveloped both in the EU and other polities, despite what we know of their importance for ensuring the quality of expert judgments.

The third group of mechanisms targets the conditions for expert inquiry and judgement. It is for example vital to ensure that experts work in pluralist groups. Experts who reason alone are exposed to “confirmation bias” (the tendency to look only for arguments that confirm

their own ideas), and to “reason-based choice” (the tendency to pick the option for which reasons can be most easily gathered), whereas deliberating groups are known to be less prone to such fallacies, typically work with a larger pool of ideas and information, and more often weed out bad arguments (Mercier, 2011). However, the positive epistemic effects of deliberation are dependent on diversity. Without diversity deliberation may work in the opposite direction and create groupthink (Sunstein and Hastie, 2015). Hence, organising expert work along team and deliberative lines, and providing for the necessary diversity and exposure to criticism from the wider epistemic community is crucial. This insight should also guide EU institutional reform much more systematically. Even in EU contexts where pluralism in policy- and decision-making is high on the agenda, the reference is most often to member-state or stakeholder pluralism, and less to cognitive diversity and disciplinary pluralism.

Finally, EU would need to respond to the recent crises with reforms that address the democratic worries about expertization. Here there are two main paths to follow. First, there are different ways to “democratize expertise” (Wagner, 2005, 53-54): taking relevant lay knowledge more into account in knowledge production, giving laypeople better access to expert knowledge and experts, allowing laypeople to have more influence on the selection of experts, and taking political-representative concerns more into account in the selection of experts (through gender and national quotas, the balancing of ideological views, etc.). Reforms along these lines can sometimes go well together with reforms to better ensure the quality of expertise, but democratic and epistemic concerns can also draw in different directions (for examples, see Holst and Molander, 2017). The second path is to democratize not only “expertise”, but the relationship between institutions in the larger political system. Some of the democratic worries over experts’ political power point towards more fundamental reform of EU’s constitutional set-up, including a larger role and more and firmer competencies for European parliaments.

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