Cohesion, Solidarity, Fairness, Reciprocity

Clarifying the Concepts in the EU Context

HEUREC Discussion Paper 1

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ABSTRACT

The question of what holds a community together is more current than ever, not least in the European Union as well as for those who study it. A series of challenging political trends and recent crises have underlined both the political and political science relevance of cohesion, from Euro- to migration crises, 'Brexit' and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is against this backdrop that the HEUREC project sets out to explore cohesion in the EU in general and how fairness and reciprocity can contribute to its achievement in particular. Accordingly, this Discussion Paper aims to provide a clarification of these guiding concepts for our collaborative research endeavor.

Following an introduction to main issues and research questions, the second section provides a compact overview of the EU as multilevel polity. This allows for contextualizing the particular challenges for cohesion in an ambivalent Union connecting multiple states and peoples. The third and main section is dedicated to clarifying the guiding concepts. Cohesion, on the one hand, and reciprocity and fairness, on the other, each on its own can entail multiple meanings and dimensions, and relate in various ways to each other as well as to other concepts, foremost here namely solidarity. Thus, this paper seeks first to 'untangle this conceptual knot', elaborating on each concept individually for one and in their specifically *political* senses for another. Building on this, it provides fourthly a more systemic overview of each concept's meanings in various dimensions, and address their multifaceted interlinkage, with a particular view to how fairness and reciprocity and related expectations and perceptions connect to cohesion and solidarity in a political community. Finally, the paper concludes with a summary and an outlook for applying these concepts in the research project.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

The question of what holds a community together has confronted political thinkers for ages. Yet it is more current than ever, not least in the European Union as well as for those who study it. A series of challenging political trends and recent crises have underlined both the political and political science relevance of cohesion: from Euro- to migration crises and 'Brexit' (see e.g. Krunke, Petersen & Manners 2020; Lahusen 2020), to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs 2021), the latter indicating already in name that it affects 'all people'. These crises have coincided with, and even intensified, ongoing challenges to established politics and polities. They include declining political trust and waves of populism in numerous countries, or growing 'Euroscepticism' vis-à-vis the EU (see e.g. Armingeon & Guthmann 2014; Hooghe & Okolikj 2020; Kriesi & Pappas 2015; Mair 2013), to name just several examples.

The European integration project has often been regarded as enjoying a general 'permissive consensus' among member state citizenries during its first several decades. Until the establishment of European Union in the early 1990s though, the European Communities had rather limited authority and exercised regulatory powers in a substantially more limited scope of areas than is currently the case. With the expansion in both powers and membership in the course of several treaty revisions and enlargements, the EU has come to witness not only increased politicization but also contestation. The palpable shift from loose consensus to a "constraining dissensus" (Hooghe and Marks 2009) is directed at various European policies as well as the EU *polity* itself. In the wake of recent crises moreover, these challenges are reflected for instance in growing attention among EU scholars to potential *disintegration* (see e.g. Jones 2018; Lefkofridi & Schmitter 2015; Vollard 2014) for one, and possible reforms of the EU political system, or 'constitution', to cope with looming fragmentation for another (see e.g. Bellamy 2019; Fabbrini 2019a; Schmidt 2019). The factors contributing to these developments are of course manifold. It is against this backdrop that the HEUREC project sets out to explore cohesion in the EU in general, and how fairness and reciprocity can contribute to its achievement in particular. This renders it likewise necessary to address the enabling and constraining factors particularly confronting the EU in this context. Accordingly, this Discussion Paper aima to provide a clarification of these guiding concepts for our collaborative research endeavor.

To this end, the following provides in the next section a compact overview of the EU as multilevel polity in the context of recent crises. This allows for 'setting the stage' for the particular challenges for cohesion in an ambiguous Union connecting multiple states and peoples. The third and main section is dedicated to clarifying the guiding concepts. Cohesion, on the one hand, and reciprocity and fairness, on the other, each on its own can entail multiple meanings and dimensions (e.g. horizontal, vertical, temporal), and relate in various ways to each other, as well as to further cross-cutting concepts, and solidarity in particular. Thus, it is necessary first to untangle this conceptual knot, elaborating on each concept individually for one and in their specifically *political* senses for another. Building on this conceptualization, the fourth section provides a more systematic overview of the concept's meanings in their multiple dimension as well as their multifaceted interlinkage, with a special view to how fairness and reciprocity and related expectations and perceptions connect to cohesion and solidarity in a political community, particularly the European Union, and ties the prior conceptualization into the current state of affairs and challenges confronting the EU. The paper concludes with a summary and an outlook for applying these concepts in the research project.

2. The EU Multilevel Polity in the Wake of Recent Crises

The European Union constitutes a complex and ambivalent system. The EU differs fundamentally from other regional integration organizations in the world, given, for one, the high degree of institutionalization of its own supranational institutions (Sbragia 2008), and its structural and functional interconnection with variegate governmental actors at multiple levels of its member states (Benz 2000; 2010; Piattoni 2009) for another. Further complexity applies in that the EU institutions as well as decision-making and regulatory processes encompass both *supranational* and *intergovernmental* elements to various degrees. This variety is reflected not only in polity and politics, but also in diverse policy-making patterns (Heinelt & Knodt 2011; Heinelt & Münch 2018; Wallace, Pollack & Young 2015). Widely considered *sui generis* or in a league of its own, the EU has been framed from various disciplinary and theoretical-conceptual perspectives. The concepts of the EU span from international organization, to unique arrangement of multilevel governance, or rather a political system (see e.g. ibid; Pollack 2005). Viewed from latter perspective, the EU, despite its distinctiveness, exhibits many governmental

features akin to other polities constituted as states, given its scope and trajectory of powers, 'checks and balances', and electoral linkages including a popularly elected parliament (see e.g. Hix & Høyland 2011: 2-16; Sonnicksen 2017: 509-517). At the same time, which dimension or policy area is considered affects whether or to which extent the EU resembles a system of government and multilevel, even (quasi)-federal, system (for overview, see Kreppel 2011). Accordingly, we can proceed on the premise that the EU warrants analysis on the basis of differentiated comparison.

The idiosyncratic character of the EU by comparison with other political systems represents nevertheless an, perhaps the, overarching factor linked to multiple political, societal, as well as scholarly debates. One especially well-known, long-standing and ongoing debate pertains to the democratic dilemma or 'deficit' of the EU (already e.g. Abromeit 1998; Weiler, Halpern & Mayer 1995). Without expounding on various normative perspectives on limits and possibilities of, opposition to and support for EU democratization (cf. e.g. Grimm 2015 vs. Habermas 2015; also Føllesdal & Hix 2006), the widely attested challenges for democracy in the EU are rather of particular cross-over relevance to the context at hand. They relate to the difficulties not only in fulfilling democratic legitimacy, but even in determining the appropriate standards in the first place vis-à-vis an unconventional Union: i.e. not a state, but 'much more' than an international organization, which combines states and peoples under the linchpin of a common, albeit nationally derivative, Union citizenship[1] with rights to free movement of goods, capital, services and persons in an internal market with extensively integrated policy areas, among others (see e.g. Beetz, Corrias & Crum 2017; Hurrelmann & DeBardleben 2009; Ronzoni 2017). With the different conceptions of the EU come, moreover, different concepts of state and popular sovereignty, and with that, diverse understandings, preferences and contestation on what the EU *is* and *should be* and *do* respectively (for overview, see Beetz 2019). In addition to complicating standards of legitimacy (see e.g. Steffek 2019), these ambivalent circumstances pose, in turn, immediately relevant and fundamental implications for solidarity in the EU multilevel polity (Bolleyer & Reh 2012), and the institutional, political, economic and societal conditions for its achievement.

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[1] See Art. 9 TEU: "Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be *additional* to and not replace national citizenship", (emphasis added); reiterated in Art. 20 TEU.

Beyond the broader vision of an 'ever closer union', solidarity and cohesion are among the chief self-proclaimed aims of the integration project. According to the Treaties, the EU explicitly commits itself to "offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and *justice*" as well as "*social justice* and protection", and to "promote economic, social and territorial *cohesion, and solidarity* among Member States", (Art. 3(3) TEU; emphasis added). Among others things, these provisions would appear to imply the prospects of redistributive socio-economic measures to supplement the – already far advanced – integration of the internal market. However, the realization of a European 'Social Union' trails far behind its counterparts on the side of market and currency unions (see e.g. Obinger, Leibfried & Castles 2005; Fabbrini 2013; Prosser 2016). This asymmetry between market and welfare integration has developed for complex reasons, many connected to those above-mentioned particularities of the EU.

European integration, as notably framed by Scharpf, has slanted heavily toward 'negative' integration and market liberalization, predominating over a limited extent of 'positive' integration, evident especially in the persistent dearth of social welfare policies at EU level, but also multiple restrictions on national welfare and certain labor-market protective measures imposed by EU market-liberalizing rules, regulations and judicial review (Scharpf 1999: 29-40; also e.g. 2015; 2017). Summarized in similar vein by Laffan, this lag in integration stems already from the circumstances that in the EU, "redistributive politics are inherently more difficult for political actors than regulation" (Laffan 2015: 929). Member States seemed more wary of forfeiting their control over many national economic and social policies, at least during times of stability. While the Euro- and financial crises required an even "stronger capacity for redistribution" (ibid.), these "critical junctures" (Capoccia & Keleman 2007) failed to bring about corresponding institutional and policy changes. To be sure, several institutional innovations were achieved, chiefly through the modus of a "new intergovernmentalism" (Bickerton, Hodson & Puetter 2015) spearheaded by member state governments in coordination with EU institutions, to manage the Euro- and sovereign debt crises (e.g. European Stability Mechanism, Fiscal Pact, Banking Union). However, they entailed bailouts for beleaguered member states coupled with conditionality and austerity measures, or predominantly aimed at harmonizing banking standards and restoring national budget consolidation, not stimulus or social welfare support measures (see e.g. Crum 2013; Graziano & Hartlapp

2019; Matthijs 2017; Verdun 2015; Vilpišauskas 2013; Wenz-Temming and Sonnicksen 2020; Woolfson & Sommers 2016).

Precisely this scarcity of adequate institutions and mechanisms to cope with distributive justice in benefit and burden sharing were laid bare by the Euro- and wider economic, but also the refugee crises, and this moreover in stark contrast to many federal systems that face principally similar challenges on account of territorial and authority multiplicity (Benz 2021; Trein 2020). Indeed this multiplicity linked to the organization of any (con)federal system[2] poses from the outset particular challenges to managing social welfare and other redistributive issues. Irrespective of whether the EU is conceived as federative or not, the EU multilevel polity has long faced this constitutively underlying dilemma. The EU encompasses sovereign member states with diverse and often contradicting 'national' interests, meaning that high thresholds to reaching redistributive decisions, let alone introducing such policy regimes, "are often considered necessary for ensuring the cohesion of the polity" (Scharpf 2017: 327f.). While there are surely also federal unions with diverse societal makeups (e.g. multi-ethnic, -linguistic, and/or – national, such as Belgium, Canada, India or Switzerland), the EU case is unequivocally singular in multiple regards, be they quantitative (e.g. number of nationalities and languages) or qualitative (e.g. intensity of national and regional identities, respective interests and preferences, including vis-à-vis EU polity and policies). Nevertheless, the nearly utter absence of European social funds and safety nets to absorb fiscal and economic shocks in an otherwise profoundly integrated common market with a common currency can place serious "strains on commitment" of EU member states (Vrousalis 2006), and no less their citizens.

In the wake of recent crises, such frictions became poignantly salient. The withdrawal of the UK from the EU, or "Brexit", represented perhaps the most extreme manifestation of these strains. More generally, the crisis responses magnified the tensions between integration in multiple policy areas and even 'core state powers' on the one hand, and coordination, solidarity and burden sharing on the other hand, or rather the impediments so far to the latter (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs 2018). In addition to the lack of achieving new social policies as mentioned above, a (re-)nationalization appears to have

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[2] And, as has been asserted from early on, the EU may comprise a de facto federative union given its extent of authority and integration of constituent member states; see already e.g. Abromeit (2002); Börzel and Hosli (2003); Sbragia (1993); Scharpf (1988); Warleigh (1998).

become reinforced in political debates revolving around those recent crises, including in such instances as bailouts for Eurozone countries in crisis, but where national interests served more as justification than solidarity (see e.g. Closa & Maatsch 2014; Fabbrini 2019b). In short, the prior and ongoing imbalance in the EU system may have imposed further deleterious effects for legitimacy of the EU and for political and social cohesion (see e.g. Jones, Keleman & Meunier 2016; Scicluna 2014).

At the same time, intense political and scholarly discussion has transpired following these crises, and with renewed impetus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The various strands of this wider discourse address, for instance, consequences and causes, as well as potential corrections regarding solidarity and cohesion in the EU (e.g. Lahusen 2020; Vandenbroucke, Barnard & De Baere 2017), or on striking a balance between economic growth and stability with "social solidarity" (Fererra 2017). In addition, the convening of a "Conference on the Future of Europe"[3] expresses the return of reform discussions to the political agenda to counteract disintegrative tendencies and improve not only democratic legitimacy and governance efficiency, but also social cohesion. This figures into the context of the research project at hand in general as well as this discussion paper in particular, which sets out to elaborate on the key concepts.

3.   Unpacking the Concepts: Solidarity, Cohesion, Fairness and Reciprocity

Solidarity has overarching relevance to, and extensive overlaps with, the main concepts at hand, namely cohesion, fairness and reciprocity. The term itself conveys at most basic level a notion of 'wholeness' (lat. *solidum*). In elementary semantic sense, it may even be taken as synonymous with cohesion in general, but also linked with union, communality, mutuality, or support, among others. Hence, multiple associative overlaps to cohesion (as a kind of 'togetherness'), reciprocity (as 'give and take'), and even integration (as bringing parts together toward a whole) become immediately recognizable. At the same time, solidarity touches upon further fundamental concepts, principles and phenomena related to the very human nature of social *binds* or *ties*. They, in turn, have been conceived in the context of solidarity from various theoretical and disciplinary perspectives, e.g. philosophical, theological, sociological, psychological, or political. Cross-cutting the latter

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[3] See e.g. Conference on the Future of Europe. Franco-German non-paper on key questions and guidelines' (27 Nov. 2019); available at: https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Conference-on-the-Future-of-Europe.pdf.

variety of perspectives are also different analytical approaches to and understandings of solidarity such as rather descriptive or rather normative ones. For the most part though, they share a general attribution of an interpersonal/-relational and of an ethical quality to solidarity, not least in its juxtaposition with competition or 'fending for one's self'. Without expounding in detail on its manifold dimensions in historical and ideational development as well as facets and associations (see e.g. Banting & Kymlicka 2017; Fetchenhauer et al. 2006; Große Kracht 2017; Stjernø 2005), the following provides a compact preliminary review of solidarity, as preface to the delineation of the main concepts underlying the research project at hand.

Solidarity may, in short, signify a condition or outcome (something achieved), a norm or value toward which individual and especially collective action is directed (something pursued), and a respective set of attitudes or orientations (something thought, felt and/or perceived). It may be *institutionalized* in various informal (e.g., and most traditionally, kinship and friendship) or formal settings (e.g. farmers' cooperatives, trade unions, or regimes of social insurance). These represent but a few familiar manifestations of solidarity. In the grand scheme of things, solidarity has only relatively recently been defined as explicit concept, i.e. early to mid-19th century and initially in France in particular (Große Kracht 2017; Hayward 1959). Within a short period of time, the concept would come to proliferate across a wide spectrum of community-oriented ideas and ideologies, from Catholicism to Communism. However, as phenomenon, it had of course long "existed before the idea was formulated" (Stjernø 2005: 25), i.e. essentially as long as humans have been around. Accordingly, what drives humans to follow not only individual, but also both group 'selfishness' *and* 'altruism', has been explored by evolutionary biology (see e.g. Dawkins 1976). However, beyond species survival, precisely this evolved or 'natural' disposition to pursue "mutual aid" (Kropotkin 1902) has also proved elemental to the theorization of cooperation and especially *continuous reciprocal* cooperation in political settings (Axelrod 1984). Also for solidarity, 'institutions matter', which points to rule-based behavior in communities and the maintenance of mutual cooperative action, such as for regulating and sharing common resources and this as part of "covenants with or without swords", i.e. in the presence or absence of hierarchic coercion (Ostrom, Walker & Gardner 1992). Hence, with or without the proverbial 'social contract', solidarity unfolds in diverse economic, social and political orders.

Consequently, solidarity is neither explainable by micro-level individual preferences alone, nor solely by macro-level structural conditions, but rather transcends persons and polities and serves a pivotal part in relations within groups as well as the social order (see e.g. Hechter 1987). Solidarity reveals the limits of strictly 'rational-choice' type premises, in that the pursuit of corresponding cooperation is not merely individual, but rather group-oriented, while further motives like commitments, norms and roles also tend to be at play (Smith & Sorrell 2014). However, the (social-)psychological *in-group* factors of solidarity suggest on the one hand its universality among humans (i.e. found throughout human time and space), yet equally the constraints in orientations and practices of solidarity on the other, as it – akin to other prosocial biases – tends to be higher within groups sharing commonality and similarity (Billig & Tajfel 1973; Tajfel & Turner 1979; Yamagishi & Mifune 2009). In short, solidarity or mutual cooperation and support are at once inherently human as are demarcations of in- and out-groups along the lines of belongingness and favoritism of own groups, which may take variegate forms (e.g. age, gender, culture, territory, profession, status or class related).

Yet how belongingness, its *internal* membership and *external* boundaries are defined, varies enormously. To make a long story short, this in turn connects to the evolution of solidarity in the European context. In addition to multiple facets of 'WEIRD'-ness[4] of Europe (Heinrich, Heine & Norenzayan 2010) like the establishment of modern statehood, along with the extended abstraction and corresponding organization of rule, society and peoplehood (see also e.g. Anderson 1983), a critical antecedent involved the comparatively early (i.e. several centuries ago) disbanding of predominantly kinship-based social institutions, fostering not only the emergence and spread of individualism, but also of rather *impersonal* prosocial orientations (Schulz et al. 2019). These dimensions of political development – of course among many other 'disruptions' and changes in societal order like industrialization, mass employment and poverty, mass literacy, mass enfranchisement – factor into the rise and consolidation of the modern warfare but also latter welfare state by the mid-20th century in Europe (Obinger & Petersen 2017). It is a simplification, but hardly a stretch to surmise that European statehood and nationalism culminated in nearly previously unfathomable violence in two 'Great Wars' *and* much further-reaching extents of community ties, citizenship and respective institutionalizations of solidarity. Moreover, the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*

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[4] I.e. Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Developed.

(Bloch 1935), the tremendous boons and banes of modern nation- and statehood in Europe tie into a complexly bounded legacy of immediate and profound relevance precisely for the onset of European integration and European solidarity.

With a more specific view to political systems, solidarity can be differentiated for instance by types as well as levels (see e.g. Gould 2020: 26-32; Starke 2021: 21-25). This bears relevance for concepts of political communities, which can likewise be defined at different levels, and bears implications for notions of solidarity, its extension and limits (see e.g. Mason 2000). The re-scaling of solidarity in Europe transpired – again, in the grand schemes of things, quite rapidly – with manifold internal differentiation of societal groups and cleavages as well as multiple levels (e.g. local, regional, national and even inter- and supranational),[5] as well as democratization, though primarily *within* national political systems for much of the 20th century. Solidarity becomes underpinned by political and socio-economic institutions as well as ideas and ideologies of civic, democratic, and especially redistributive solidarity linked with further notions such as equality and justice (Banting & Kymlicka 2017b: 4; Laitinen & Pessi 2015). At the same time, the aforementioned motives and limits of solidarity at micro- and meso-level may be writ large for the macro-level. Not only the increased internal diversity of European societies (see e.g. ibid.), but also its cross-border commitments in a European Union pose particular challenges for achieving and maintaining solidarity. The latter in turn represented one of the main motives of European integration in the first place, given the overarching goal of overcoming the deleterious and disastrous effects of interstate animosity and conflict.

Solidarity in modern polities is already multidimensional – e.g. horizontal, vertical, temporal (from current to cross-generational), related to individuals, groups, demos or *demoi*, regions, states, intergovernmental, supranational, policy-specific, among others. However this multidimensionality becomes magnified in the EU (see e.g. Knodt & Tews 2014), which has experienced, moreover, deepened integration and widened membership over time, while its complex nature raises fundamental questions – akin to the 'democratic dilemma' – of which standards for solidarity should apply (see e.g.

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[5] Incidentally, it is precisely these processes of differentiation and stratification that elicited Durkheim's seminal analyses on solidarity and challenges to its realization in modern societies, and the delineation of a shift from 'mechanical' to 'organic' solidarity based on division of labor, new forms of interdependence but also comparatively weaker and yet much more diverse social ties; see on the origins of the concept e.g. Prainsack & Buyx (2017: 1-16) as well as Große Kracht 2017, Schmale 2017, Stjernø 2005.

Sangiovanni 2013). The fourth section of this paper will return to this nexus of challenges. The preceding has provided a dense overview of solidarity, as precursor to the following treatment of cohesion, reciprocity and fairness. The latter represent, in turn, principles and phenomena that are not so much as subsumed under, but rather entangled with solidarity in various regards and extents. As cohesion perhaps most approximates solidarity, especially in its modern conceived sense of 'binding together' (see already again Durkheim, elaborated e.g. in Berger & Luckmann 1966: 191ff., 223), the following section addresses first the proverbial 'glue' of cohesion, proceeded by a delineation of fairness and reciprocity.

Cohesion

Akin to solidarity, cohesion represents itself a multifaceted term that can also be linked with various types and correspondingly variable definitions (see e.g. Fonesca, Lukosch & Barzier 2019). In the context of the EU alone, already the Treaties refer to cohesion as a main principle of integration for one, and as goal in multiple respects, again e.g. the promotion of "economic, social and territorial cohesion (…) among Member States" (Art. 3(3) TEU). At basic semantic level, cohesion implies 'binding together', as opposed to for instance diffusion, fragmentation or atomization. It may also imply unity and accord, as opposed to discord and conflict. Accordingly, with regard to its societal relevance in general, cohesion has been commonly referred to as the "glue" of a society (see e.g. for overview Bertelsmann 2017), an inference likewise commonly attributed to societal *institutions* (see e.g. Searle 2005) or to *social capital* (see e.g. Putnam 2000).[6] However, while various institutions and social capital are undoubtedly important factors and can bear substantial terminological as well as phenomenal overlap, cohesion in a society – or a political community for that matter – extends further. Indeed, the range and intensity of networks and links between individuals and variegate groups may be indicative of cohesion, but it also involves for instance patterns of attitudes, memberships and behavior (Friedkin 2004). This points to the relevance of micro- or individual-level factors on the one hand, and the complexity – and ambivalence – of capturing cohesion in larger populations or at country-wide scale, not to mention with regard to a multilevel polity like

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[6] For an analysis on the conceptual development of "social capital" toward its association with a 'public good' for one (to which Putnam (2000) contributed significantly), and its divergence from original sociological meanings for another, see e.g. Portes 1998.

the EU. As another case in point regarding ambiguity but also tensions, cohesion – like solidarity – may pose an outcome, for instance of integration, or rather a prerequisite to the achievement of the latter. It may constitute thus a property, a product or a pattern.

One approach to gauging cohesion focusses on rather structural cohesion of inter-personal relations, typically construed as *dyadic*, in groups and networks, by which the respective attachments and connectivity (e.g. nodes and interactions within a group or network) are assessed (see e.g. Moody & White 2003). While this relation-centered subtype and respective approaches allow for capturing cohesion in groups or even in local communities, it also reveals several limits. For one, even with regard to relational cohesion, the strength of cohesion, the 'stickiness' of social bonds – e.g. the holding together, willingness to cooperate or assist others – may seemingly relate to the intensity and frequency of interconnectivity, but this is not necessarily the case, as for instance Granovetter's seminal "the strength of weak ties" (1973) illustrated. For another, and more fundamentally, cohesion also entails an *ideational* dimension, which in turn comprises a variety of referents – e.g. attitudes, beliefs, a feeling of belongingness, among others. Beyond externalized actions and interactions, what holds people together in a community – not least a polity – includes common norms and principles, "shared beliefs" (Bar-Tal 2000), as well as accounts and narratives (see e.g. Heinelt & Egner Discussion Paper 2021) about the common past, present and future. What is more, these features take on special relevance for larger-scale cohesion.

With a view to a particular community or polity, cohesion may be conceived as the corresponding capacity for achieving unity, integration and common welfare (broadly understood) as well as conversely for reducing exclusion and counteracting disintegration, all of which are underpinned by an ideational dimension (see e.g. Fonesca, Lukosch & Barzier 2019), including the aforementioned referents as well as common identity(-ies). Cohesiveness then may be assessed for example by various indicators like particular policies (e.g. anti-discrimination legislation and measures, social welfare and other redistributive instruments like fiscal equalization), as well as patterns of attitudes (e.g. most typically through surveys measuring trust and support in various 'others'). Consequently, cohesiveness could – and often seems to – imply a rather high degree and/or extent of *unity* and *equality* and rather low degree and/or extent of *differences* and *asymmetries*. While admittedly simplified, this dualism points indeed to a widely discussed profound and manifold challenge to cohesion with diversity (see e.g. Hooghe

2007; Portes & Vickstrom 2018). There is much research and debate on e.g. causes vs. consequences of cohesion in changing democratic systems. Rather than delve into this nexus, let alone address correlation or direction of causation, suffice to point out here that societal changes internally like individualization, growing cultural and socio-economic diversity (as well as inequality) and externally through globalization and, here especially, Europeanization have coincided with changing patterns of, though also declines in cohesion, social and political support and trust (see e.g. Armingeon & Schädel 2015; Diskin, Diskin & Hazan 2005; Newton & Zmerli 2011). For another, at bottom line, one may surmise that manifold diversity poses a challenge, perhaps even a dilemma for social and political cohesion, but one that must be coped with, particularly in a democratic polity. This applies furthermore and especially given the generally (positive) normative premises and expectations attributed to cohesion – whether in form of 'civic' attitudes of commitment, mutual recognition and tolerance, participation, and/or trust and support in institutions and other people, among others. Whether for empirical or normative reasons, cohesion and the above-related facets are widely deemed necessary for a democratic polity. In short, this also underlines all the more so the relevance of cohesion against the backdrop of multiple challenges confronting the EU.

Finally, cohesion in a polity relates to social ties among citizens, respective supporting institutions, and a range of ideational and attitudinal orientations linking people together in a community. Identities, it almost goest without saying, surely play a pivotal role (see e.g. Tyler & Blader 2001). However, because cohesion, like solidarity, entails commitments, specific notions and perspectives are generally essential for cohesion like fairness and reciprocity. Their prevalence or deficiency may relate to whether e.g. institutions, laws, other groups or people are deemed trustworthy, just and reliable, and thus to the extent to which various political actors, groups and individuals are prepared to work as well as 'hold' together.

Fairness

With fairness, we face, yet again, a term with multiple meanings and associations. At the same time, it represents the perhaps most challenging concept to address as it finds quite different counterparts in other languages (see e.g. Appendix below) and contexts. Most fundamental among them is *justice*, which is not the exact same as fairness, though it

corresponds with a number of dimensions or aspects related to justice. Fair in its etymological origins – which, incidentally unlike cohesion, solidarity, reciprocity or justice, does not derive from Greek or Latin, but rather Old Norse and Old English – actually referred to beauty, light, and/or agreeableness (one think of e.g. 'fair weather') (Hacket Fischer 2012). From this basis, it was not a far step toward its further evolved sense of 'decency' (see also e.g. *eerlijkheid* or honesty in Dutch) and the rather common-knowledge referent in competitions of 'fair play', as opposed to 'foul play', which emerged already several hundred years ago. Moreover in English common law, many principles of which become adopted in the US Constitution of the late 18th century (see e.g. 6th Amendment), fairness became a principle or standard for conducting 'unblemished' or 'unbiased' trials, and thus a fundamental part of *due process* (Langford 2009) – the right to a fair trial with e.g. impartiality of judges, the presumption of innocence, the burden of proof laid upon the state, meanwhile being recognized as a universal right, as reflected in the International as well as European Conventions on Human Rights. Here, the notions of 'fair trial' and 'fair play' reveal a fundamentally common *procedural* denominator. Fairness in competition or trials does not require certain *outcomes*, but rather implies *limitations* on *processes* that follow *rules* which apply *equally*. Accordingly, fairness involves protection against *undue* bias or preferences. Perceptions and understandings of fairness thus also serve as 'constraints', even in otherwise competitive settings (see e.g. Kahnemann, Knetsch & Thaler 1986). This in turn reveals a major dimension of fairness as not only the equality of opportunity but also *procedural justice*.

However, fairness, even if so construed, must still entail some further substantive and moral facets than just the consistent application of the rules, for instance since 'bad' rules – again even if applied reliably – would hardly be deemed fair (Hooker 2005). Fairness implies a grounding in morality and necessity of justifications of actions, decisions, judgements and even arguments or ways of thinking, which may or may not be preferable to all but at least comprehensible and *reasonable* (see e.g. Scanlon 1998). Furthermore, fairness may also be conceived as pertinent to some form of distribution. The seminal theory by Rawls of justice "as fairness" (1958, 1971) underlines the need for social institutions to serve equality and liberty which guarantee not only equality of opportunity but also a certain degree of *distributive justice*. The fairness of allocations, not only of material ressources, but also powers – e.g. among levels and branches of government – and of rights takes on a particular relevance for political communities.

What is fair in (re-)distributive matters may open further-reaching questions and theories of solidarity and social justice. But focussing on the fairness of justice, fairness in distribution would still not only pertain to the procedure leading to their allocation (e.g. of power, wealth, other ressources) following legitimate rules, but also the limitation or conformity of the actually achieved distribution within certain limits or bounds. That this is the case relates to the – even ordinary and everyday, conscious or unconscious – application of ethical standards in human interactions, by which again the morality and indeed *fairness* of actions and interactions as well as the contributions of others are assessed, from personal or more proximate arrangements of mutual cooperation to vis-à-vis the broader societal context (Baumard 2016; Baumard, André & Sperber 2013; Fiske 2011). Consequently, fairness in communities also links to notions, norms and institutions and practices of reciprocity.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity represents a key element or dimension of manifold interpersonal and societal relationships in general and may link with solidarity, cohesion and fairness in particular. Under the Common Provisions of the EU Treaty, reciprocity comes up explicity only in the context of "*reciprocal* rights and obligations" between the EU and "neighbouring countries" and other states (Art. 8 (2) TEU; reiterated in Art. 217 TFEU pertaining to third countries and international organizations). However, reciprocity applies much more broadly and principally to the EU treaties, already given that treaties in international law represent an expression of 'reciprocal', mutual recognition, obligations and bindingness between contractual parties, from reducing conflict (e.g. arms reductions) to facilitating cooperation (e.g. trade agreements) (Keohane 1986). Reciprocity in these legal senses has characterized the legal foundations of European integration among EU member states and its development from the outset as well (see e.g. Hallström 2000).

In most basic semantic terms, *reciprocal* indicates for instance a 'back and forth' in movement, or the inverse of something like a number in mathematics. Transferred to relationships, it implies further mutuality, most typically in contracts, exchanges and similar. Accordingly, in addition to actual actions, reciprocity involves *expectation* – be it underpinned by codification in law or contract or otherwise formally, but also informally regulated and/or institutionalized – as in the senses of 'do ut des', 'quid pro quo', or 'give

and take'. Reciprocity thus involves giving things or providing services in expectation of gifts, services or other things in return. Moreover, these elements of *anticipation* as well as *comparison* are fundamental to reciprocity (see e.g. Gächter, Nosenzo & Sefton 2012). It may take furthmore quite various forms, also depending on relationships and contexts: such as in terms of temporality (e.g. proximate or distant future, gauged against the past), types (e.g. what kinds of goods, services, etc.), or obligations (e.g. more or less binding, more conrete or abstract and possibilistic).

Against this backdrop, reciprocity can immediately appear rather economic and transactional in character and easily invite an equation with rational, utility-oriented premises (e.g. mutual benefits of gains or reduced risks) regarding interactions and exchanges (see e.g. Falk & Fischbacher 2006). Extending further, reciprocity though may said to be at the heart of social exchange theories (see e.g. Blau 1964) and of pivotal interest to the evolution of cooperation spanning from social groups to complex socities (see e.g. Gintis 2000). For instance the approach of 'tit-for-tat', i.e. taking similar responses to others such as to cooperate or defect, has proved a defining part of Axelrod's theory of the evolution of cooperation (Axelrod 1984). On that note, and in general, reciprocity may also be positive (e.g. reward, return a favor) as well as negative (e.g. revenge, 'eye for an eye'). Though reciprocity can surely be framed and examined based on rational-actor and other *instrumentalist* type theories and perspectives, in addition to "exchanges of gratification", reciprocity likewise commonly entails a moral dimension and is a veritably timeless and universal norm (Gouldner 1960; see also e.g. Elster 1989; Lister 2011). The notion of 'return in kind' in general transcends myriad interpersonal, social and societal contexts, but its particular manifestations and understandings may vary.

Thus, reciprocity should also be conceived finally as embedded in complex contexts and structures, which can encompass for instance different dimensions and levels as well as intensity of interlinkage (see e.g. Molm 2010). The types of relations of reciprocity bear moreover relevance for not only interpersonal, but also intergroup and wider society and institutional trust (see e.g. ibid; Eschweiler et al. 2019). While obviously not synonymous with trust, reciprocity – as expectations and reliability or mutual support, cooperation, and similar, whether in specific or more diffuse forms and understandings – appear to also make up an important dimension of trust in political communities as well (e.g. ibid; Rothstein 2013). How these relations of reciprocity are structured, institutionalized, and perceived are thus also pivotal to fairness and overall

cohesion and solidarity in a conventional political system, and become more complex, indeed complicated, in the case of the European Union.

4.   Cohesion in a Political Community: Fairness, Reciprocity and Solidarity

Cohesion, both as social phenomenon and concept, certainly has different meanings and manifestations in different contexts. Nevertheless, it can be inferred in general summary that it relates to a range of normative and empirical facets regarding the unity, 'togetherness' as well as interconnections of myriad kinds of social groups. In a political community, it bears particular connotations and implications related to government as well as the citizenry, with special relevance but also challenges for a democratic one such as a modern state (see e.g. Dahl 1983; Lorwin 1971), and not least a large-scale, multilevel and multi-member-state union as with the EU (see e.g. Zuleeg 1997). What is more, numerous aspects of transitions in democratic polities and societies have spurred much renewed political and social debate on, as well as social science attention to political cohesion. Regarding limits and possiblities of coheshion, of particular concern appear to be the factors related to its decline, maintenance as well as potentials for its (re-)strengthening (see e.g. Bellamy et al. 2019), for instance as to whether these lie with the respective societies (e.g. patterns of trust, social capital, civic engagement), rather more with political institutions (e.g. governmental bodies, party and voting systems, channels of participation) or policies (e.g. means and ways of (re-)distribution, a social safety net).

In the context of the European Union, cohesion, on the one hand, actually has long comprised a specific policy area. It is dedicated to reducing structural and especially regional discrepancies, while related measures and programs have also contributed signifcantly to the development of EU multilevel governance (see e.g. Hooghe 1996; Heinelt & Petzold 2018; Molle 2007). On the other hand, cohesion is also expressed more generally and saliently by the EU treaties as part of the wider goals of European integration (see again e.g. Art. 3(3) TEU). Both the specfic cohesion policy instruments like regional funds and the more general cohesion goals of the EU reflect multiple relevant dimensions of cohesion, the former e.g. to concrete measures geared toward supporting convergence and reducing disparities among member states, the latter e.g. to several wider senses of social, economic, territorial and political unity. Cohesion in these latter

regards constitutes, in turn, the key concern of the research project at hand and the prior delineation of its key terms in particular.

Cohesion carries many normative, but also widely positive connotations, given that it is typcially deemed a desirable, if not necessary quality for the viability of a political community. Normative considerations admittedly motivate this project too – e.g. the interest in exploring cohesion takes its importance for the effectiveness and legitimacy of modern governance essentially as granted. However, and in stark contrast to the notions and principles of fairness, reciprocity and solidarity, cohesion fails to suggest an individual-based charge or duty. Fairness, reciprocity and solidarity may stand for qualities that can be attributed more or less to a particular populace, rule arrangement, institution or even entire system, as is the case with cohesion. Yet, they each may also dictate certain kinds of individual and/or collective behavior as well as its respective expectation – e.g. to act or 'play' fairly, to reciprocate a deed or contribution, to have or show solidarity with others etc. –, while the same cannot really be said of 'cohering'.

Moving forward for our purposes, cohesion should thus be understood primarily as a *descriptive* concept. Furthermore, cohesion can be conceived here as the overarching phenomenon of interest, i.e. perceptions and mediation of cohesion in the EU for one, and as an umbrella term for several concepts, each with several dimensions and various points of reference for another. Surely cohesion, again, encompasses more than types of (inter-)actions and institutions, as the 'glue' of a political community includes for instance many other diffuse or intangible and ideational components like identities. Nevertheless, the focus lies with fairness, reciprocity and solidarity for several reasons, for one on account of their crucial relevance for *political* cohesion, for another in turn given the relative lack of their assessment in connection with EU cohesion.[7] Accordingly, and building on the prior conceptual elaboration, the following provides a more systematic overview (see also Figure 'Key Concepts' below) of these key concepts, their respective dimensions and points of reference. This serves to provide a common definitional and conceptual basis, or at least preliminary groundwork, for the research partners and the subsequent operationlization in their country case studies (*On operationalization, see further discussion paper by Hubert Heinelt & Björn Egner*).

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[7] In contrast though, Sangiovanni (2007) has notably contributed normative analyses of the potential of reciprocity as normative standard for justice in the EU (though also in international politics).

The concepts of fairness, reciprocity and solidarity each represent not only multivalent, but also multidimensional concepts. The dimensions refer to interactions, interconnections and interrelations, which can be structured by governmental, administrative and other public institutions, formal and informal rules, policies, among other things. Their multidimensionality applies for the context of any political system, but becomes more complex in a democratic, and all the more so a multilevel one. In short, these dimensions of the respective socio-political relationships can be summarized first and foremost as *vertical* and *horizontal*, the former between the state and citizenry, the latter among the population, between citizens and between (civic) groups. Cross-cutting the two dimensions is temporality; for instance, varions relations, orientations and expectations of fairness, reciprocity and solidarity may be based on past, present, and/or future behavior and actions. Moreover, the supranational and intergovernmental character of the EU extend the vertical and horizontal dimensions, to the relationship between the EU and the member states (to an extent, also their sub-units and potentially citizens directly), and between the member states (potentially also their citizenries) respectively. Secondly, fairness, reciprocity and solidarity share a fundmental sense of commitment, while each imply different kinds of duties or obligations. They can be summarized as more *formal* (e.g. procedural based) or rather more *substantive* (e.g. outcome based) ones. Thirdly, in addition to duties, these concepts are grounded in *rights*, particulary in a modern democratic, rule-of-law polity as well in the intergovernmental arena of relations between (semi-)sovereign states. These rights can be surmised as based on or emanating from *equality* (e.g. of citizens or of states) or rather from a norm of *differentiation* (e.g. adaptation to or accommodation of differences, inequalities in particular). At the same time, there a number or principles and other normative or ideational referents that overlap or cross-cut the concepts of fairness, reciprocity and solidarity, i.e. ones that serve as common points of reference, norms appealed to, and similar in the context of these key concepts, such as equality, justice, or constituency, to name a few. Finally, these remarks and concrete examples for the key concepts are summarized in the following figure:

Figure: Key Concepts, their dimensions and points of reference

Concept dimension	Fairness	Reciprocity	Solidarity
nature of social relationship		*vertical*	
	state & citizens (e.g. as in rule of law, due process)	state & citizens (e.g. taxes in return for services)	state & citizens
		horizontal	
	citizen to citizen (e.g. as in 'fair play')	between citizens, groups (e.g. mutual support)	among citizens, groups
	among states (e.g. rules, regulated competition)	between states (e.g. mutual recognition)	among states; (potential btw. citizenries / demoi?)
type of duty		*formal*	
	consistent, unbiased rule usage & compliance; equal opportunity	mutual recognition of status and rights, restrict 'own' special privilege	commitments (e.g. legal, contractual) to loyalty, mutual support
		substantive	
	reasonableness (of e.g. arguments, rules); leveling the playing field	returns 'in kind' (of equal or similar value, worth; reward vs. retaliation)	securing to all community members minimum standards of living
basis of rights and duties		*equality*	
	states treat citizens alike; citizens owe each other (e.g. respect & decency)	give-and-take between states or citizens/groups; entitlements for all (contributing) members	states & citizens, in both cases: acceptance of each other's equal value & mutual interdependence
		differentiation	
	all provide own 'fair shares'; those with less may get more support	contributions & returns vary by scope & capacity (also from the past)	redistribution to those (more) in need and/or from those better-off
cross-cutting, overlapping principles & referents	*equality* (e.g. opportunity vs. outcome); *justice* (e.g. what is 'right' vs. 'deserved'); *sharing* (e.g. benefits vs. burdens); *expectation & anticipation* (e.g. reliability, trust); *relations to others* (e.g. in- vs. out-groups; cooperators vs. defectors); *levels and constituencies* (e.g. territorial, political, functional units; within and beyond the state, etc.)		

Source: Own depiction & further elaboration of synopsis by Jens Steffek

5.   Conclusion and Outlook

The HEUREC project is concerned with cohesion in the European Union, a topic of not only political, but also far-reaching relevance for political science analysis. The related state of the art encompasses copious studies investigating patterns of European-political attitudes (e.g. pro-, sceptic- vs. anti-integration), support and trust as well as identities, in order to gauge European cohesion, its levels in general and differences in different member states or variably definied socio-economic groups. While the project at hand can build upon this wealth of insights, it departs from previous research in several ways. For one, the focus lies on several concepts pivotal to cohesion, namely fairness, reciprocity and solidarity, and how they are perceived and mediated in the EU. For another, these understandings are to be explored through a novel approach, especially in political science, namely focus group discussions, to be conducted in different EU member states. To this end though, it has been especially necessary to delineate these key concepts and provide for a systematic overview, not least given their multivalence and complexity. This in turn should provide a fruitful basis for operationalizing the concepts for the focus group discussions (*see further discussion paper by Hubert Heinelt & Björn Egner*).

The key concepts vary in connotations in different disciplinary contexts, but also different languages. Moreover, it has become evident that the European Union as polity poses challenges, indeed complications to the assessment – and even more so the realization – of fairness, reciprocity and solidarity on account of the particular character of this multilevel, multi-member state polity. Accordingly, this discussion paper has attempted to explore, condense and outline first briefly the EU polity and then more elaborately these key terms. The purpose is to provide for meaninful conceptualizations as well as potential for application and 'travel' across the different country cases. At the same time, the preceding analysis lays no claim to be exhaustive or definitive. In the true sense of the term, this discussion paper aspires precisely to stimulate further exchange.

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HEUREC Key Terms in European langauges

Country	Cohesion	as in EU-Cohesion Policy	Fairness (*if also justice)	Reciprocity
HEUREC-cases				
Finnland	yhteenkuuluvuus	koheesio	oikeudenmukaisuus*	vastavuoroisuus
Germany	Zusammenhalt	Kohäsion	Fairness	Gegenseitigkeit
Greece	συνοχή (*synochí*)	–	δικαιοσύνη * (*dikaiosýni*)	αμοιβαιότητα (*amoivaiótita*)
Latvia	kohēzija	–	taisnīgums *	savstarpīgums
Lithuania	sanglauda	–	teisingumas *	abipusiškumas
Netherlands	samenhang	cohesie	eerlijkheid (cf. honesty)	wederkerigheid
Portugal	coesão	–	justiça* (or equidade)	reciprocidade
Slovakia	súdržnosť	–	spravodlivosť *	reciprocita
Spain	cohesión	–	justicia * (or equidad)	reciprocidad
Other EU-MS				
Austria			*[see DE]*	
Belgium			*[see F, NL & DE]*	
Bulgaria	сплотеност (*splotenost*)	сближаване (*sblizhavane*)	справедливост* (*spravedlivost*)	реципрочност (*retsiprochnost*)
Croatia	kohezija	–	poštenje	reciprocitet
Cyprus			*[see GR]*	
Czech Republic	soudržnost	–	spravedlnost *	vzájemnost
Denmark	Samhørighed	–	retfærdighed*	gensidighed
Estonia	ühtekuuluvus	–	õiglus *	vastastikkus
France	cohésion	–	equité (or justice *)	reciprocité
Hungary	kohésió	–	méltányosság	kölcsönösség
Ireland	comhtháthú	–	cothroime	cómhalartacht
Italy	coesione	–	equitá (or correttezza)	reciprocità
Luxembourg			*[see DE & F]*	
Malta	koeżjoni	–	ġustizzja *	reċiproċità
Poland	spójnośc	–	uczciwość (cf. honesty)	wzajemność
Romania	coeziune	–	echitate (or corectitudine)	reciprocitate
Slovenia	kohezija	–	pravičnost *	recipročnost
Sweden	sammanhållning	–	rättvisa *	ömsesidighet