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Galpin, Charlotte; Brandle, Verena K.; Trenz, Hans-Jörg

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Marching for Europe? Enacting European citizenship as justice during Brexit

Verena K. Brändle, University of Copenhagen, Charlotte Galpin, University of Birmingham
Hans-Jörg Trezz, University of Copenhagen

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Abstract

This paper examines pro-European mobilisation in the UK following the EU referendum. It develops a framework that combines Isin's 'acts of citizenship' with Nancy Fraser's three dimensions of justice – redistribution, recognition and representation – to examine the way in which Brexit has served as a mobilisation trigger for claims about European citizenship.

Drawing on data from a survey of participants of an anti-Brexit march in London, it argues that Brexit can be seen as a process that makes people aware of the 'right to have rights' as EU citizens. While some protesters experience Brexit as a struggle over the substance of justice within the UK, many of the '48%' experience Brexit as a serious injustice that results from what Fraser calls 'misframing' in the context of struggles over the boundaries of the political community. In this sense, economic, cultural as well as political forms of injustice amount to a sense of personal grief over being 'misframed' in a UK outside the EU.

Keywords: Brexit; EU citizenship; acts of citizenship; justice; mobilisation; protest analysis

Introduction

On 25th March 2017, an anti-Brexit march - the March for Europe - took place in London, with crowd estimates ranging from 25,000 to 100,000 participants (Morrison, 2017). Similar, smaller-scale marches took place in other cities across the UK such as Edinburgh and Newcastle (Johnston, 2017). The march was organised by 'Unite for Europe', one of a number of pro-European campaigns that emerged immediately following the referendum in order to defend the so-called "48%" – the percentage of those who voted for the UK to remain in the EU. Initially, these campaigns emerged on social media, primarily Facebook. Pages such as 'The 48 and Beyond' were set up on 24th of June to campaign to keep Britain in the EU and to represent the voices of those who voted to remain (48 and Beyond, 2016). This online mobilisation was accompanied by the emergence of many pro-EU groups in towns and cities across the UK, many of them under the banner of the umbrella organisation 'Britain for Europe'. The march was called to coincide with both the government's announcement to trigger Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty prior to the end of the month as well as the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

Although pro-European groups have existed in the UK for some time, mass pro-EU mobilisation is a new phenomenon. The European Movement has had a continual presence in the UK since its foundation in 1948 and mobilised for a Yes vote in the 1975 referendum in collaboration with the Britain in Europe campaign (Butler & Kitzinger, 1976, p. 70). While the European Movement has had local groups of activists throughout the UK, the country had not witnessed the kind of mass mobilisation on the streets as seen after the 2016 referendum. Elite supporters of European integration have primarily utilised economic arguments for the

UK's EU membership (Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998; Schmidt, 2006) and political parties generally considered pro-European have largely avoided speaking about the EU or framed their support in terms of EU reform (Hertner & Keith, 2016). The official Remain campaign also largely avoided identity- or values-based arguments, focusing instead on the likely economic costs of Brexit. British people have also reported the lowest levels of European identity in the EU (Fligstein, 2008, p. 143). Yet, at the same time that the UK has been viewed as the EU's 'outlier' in terms of public and elite attitudes, it has also been considered the 'most integrated EU member state' in terms of the integration of non-UK EU citizens into its labour market (Favell, 2014). The number of people identifying as both British and European has also increased since the referendum, reaching 48% in 2017 – the highest level since 1992 (EB, 05/2017). Developments since the referendum suggest that Brexit has acted as a kind of mobilisation trigger for those who identify as EU citizens or depend on their freedom of movement. In this sense, observers speak of Brexit as making visible social divisions between 'winners' and 'losers' of European integration (see e.g. Clark et al., 2017).

In this article, we explain this mass pro-EU mobilisation in large part in relation to the shattering of life expectations and identities of those who feel personally affected by the decision to leave the EU. We expect Brexit to be experienced as injustice for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Shaw notes, those groups likely to be most seriously affected by a vote to leave the EU were excluded from the franchise, including UK citizens who had been living outside the UK for more than 15 years, EU-27 citizens living in the UK, and 16 and 17 year olds whose future plans may have been disrupted (2017, p. 9). Secondly, a discourse of the "will of the people" was widely adopted in order to implement the referendum result. In her speech to the Conservative Party conference in September 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May argued that 'the referendum result was clear...Parliament put the decision to leave or remain inside the EU in the hands of the people. And the people gave their answer with emphatic

clarity' (2016). Excluding Remain voters from public conceptions of the 'British people' imagines, according to Shaw, a 'singular national level authentic voice which ought to control the process of implementing the referendum result, with minimal regard to other voices (e.g. societal or territorial minorities)' (2017, p. 3).

Thirdly, British citizens and the approximately three million EU-27 citizens in the UK faced the immediate prospect of losing the rights associated with EU citizenship. As the UK government refused to unilaterally guarantee EU-27 citizens' rights, they had no idea what their future status would be at the time of the march. In this sense, Brexit can be understood as a test case for EU citizenship since it results in the revocation of people's rights – en masse – from those living in the UK as well as in other parts of the EU. Brexit highlights a status of EU citizenship that is not covered by national citizenship and that embraces a number of exclusive rights for EU citizens, namely, the right to move and reside freely in the EU, the right to non-discrimination on the basis of nationality (such as when accessing health care and social welfare in another member state), and the right to vote in European Parliament (EP) and local elections. The fact that citizens are deprived of these concrete rights and that these rights cannot be replaced by a return to 'national citizenship' raises crucial normative questions about political representation beyond national boundaries.

We argue that Brexit can be seen as a process that makes people aware of the 'right to have rights' as EU citizens that becomes mobilised when citizenship is under threat (see Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin & Saward, 2013). The deprivation of rights is crucial in the personal experiences of EU citizens who have become socialised in practising or holding these rights, many of them building their own life histories of mobility. Brexit is thus experienced by the '48%' as a serious injustice that results from what Nancy Fraser calls 'misframing', a second level misrepresentation concerning the 'boundary-setting aspect of the political' (Fraser, 2008, p. 22). In this sense, economic, cultural as well as political forms of injustice amount to

a sense of personal grief over being ‘misframed’ in a UK outside the EU. We shall argue that the 48% do not simply protest against Brexit but contest the political framing of Brexit as an expression of the ‘will of the people’. In this article we therefore explore the question of how participants of the anti-Brexit march subjectively experience EU citizenship in the post-referendum context through a survey of almost 1000 march participants. Our article provides original empirical material on a completely new social movement in a context that has so far seen little mass pro-EU mobilisation. By emphasising a subjective dimension of Brexit among Remainers, we also contribute to literature on citizenship that focuses on the ways in which people themselves enact citizenship when citizenship rights and statuses come under threat.

Citizenship as Justice: ‘Remainers’ Enacting European Citizenship

Acts of citizenship

We draw on the concept of acts of citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2008; Isin & Saward, 2013), alongside Fraser’s three dimensions of justice – redistribution, recognition and representation – to investigate the ways in which Brexit triggers ‘acts of citizenship’ by the ‘48%’. Acts of citizenship constitute ‘claims to multiple legal and political forms of access to rights, or recognition, made by a myriad of actors, be they formal EU citizens or not’ (Isin & Saward, 2013, p. 2). Enacting citizenship, according to Isin, means that ‘people perform their right to have rights by asking questions about justice and injustice’ (Isin, 2013, p. 22). We perform these rights, he argues, precisely at moments when ‘we are deprived of our citizenship, or when we discover that we do not have the right we thought we did or we are not the subjects we thought we were’ (Isin, 2013, p. 22). In the case of Brexit, the rights hitherto enjoyed by UK citizens and non-UK EU citizens resident in the UK enter a long period of uncertainty. Such changes in formal citizenship are therefore intrinsically linked to

contestation that triggers acts of citizenship and are therefore to be distinguished from formalised citizenship as a status enshrined in law or a practice of existing rights, such as voting and paying taxes, which are part of our everyday routines (Aradau et al., 2010, p. 955). Acts of citizenship involve a rupture to people's everyday practices and constitute creative acts.

Citizenship here is therefore understood as subjectivity, as 'performed subject positions' (Isin, 2013, p. 26). Acts of citizenship constitute subjects who perform their identities and claims to citizenship. As such "activist citizens" are not defined in advance but emerge as political subjects through acts of citizenship' (Isin, 2013, p. 41). Such claims to European citizenship may be made by, for example, refugees not formally recognised as EU or European citizens or by citizens of a country that has applied for EU membership (see e.g. Nyers, 2008; Rumelili & Keyman, 2013). In the case of Brexit, the "48%" perform an act of citizenship by mobilising as 'Remainers', articulating 'a speech that demands to be heard and a political subjectivity that demands to be recognised' (Isin, 2013, p. 33). As we will show below, protesters constitute themselves as European citizens at the very moment they face losing this legal status. Understanding citizenship as subjectivity, however, also requires a conception of citizenship as relational, as it involves the establishment of political boundaries 'constituting both members and non-members in a single stroke' (Fraser, 2008, p. 19). However, by setting up the political frame for in- and exclusion, the relational element by necessity introduces a struggle over justice regarding who is included, on what grounds and decided by which authority.

Three dimensions of justice

Understanding anti-Brexit protests as acts of citizenship that raise ‘questions of injustice and justice’ among Remainers (see Isin, 2013, p. 22) requires us to elaborate how disputes about justice increasingly reach beyond rights that can be granted exclusively by the nation-state framework, such as in the case of Brexit and the freedom of movement of EU citizens. In order to capture these aspects of disputes about justice, we draw here from Fraser's (2008, p. 16) ‘theory of post-westphalian democratic justice’. In the case of Brexit these disputes not only encompass the ‘what’ but also the ‘who’ of justice, that is, the question of how people understand themselves and others to be governed (and to be political subjects).. Fraser proposes that justice concerns institutional frameworks and social structures that respond to three dimensions of justice: the cultural dimension regarding recognition, the economic dimension regarding redistribution and the political dimension regarding representation (2008, pp. 16-17).

Firstly, redistribution refers to questions of socio-economic equality among people within a community for individuals as well as for collectives. Concerning Brexit, we relate this particularly to the context of welfare and social services, especially healthcare in the UK as well as abroad, and general concerns about the impact of Brexit on redistributive measures. Secondly, recognition touches upon issues of cultural status of and differences between social groups and the valuing of particular legal, cultural or social identities (Fraser, 2003). Recognition in the context of Brexit relates to the articulation of European and national identity, the expression of cosmopolitan value systems, and the relations between different legal, cultural or social groups that become salient – for example, ‘nationals’ vs. migrants, ‘British’ vs. ‘EU-27’ citizens’, ‘Remainers’ vs. ‘Leavers’. Thirdly, we address representation by relating it to both domestic democratic processes as well as questions regarding the EU level. Within a community, issues of political representation refer to questions of democratic procedures and political decision-making processes (Fraser, 2008).

As we will show, injustice in the realm of the political is experienced and given expression as misrepresentation. This is of course interwoven with redistribution and recognition in the sense that those 48% affected by Brexit feel misrepresented because their interests and identities are not taken into consideration. In particular, the analysis focuses on the incongruencies between ‘the will of the people’ and ‘the 48%’ against Brexit. Representation in the context of Brexit, as we suggest, needs to be seen as a ‘mismatch’ between the democratic rights of all in opposition to the loss of rights of a minority.

Crucially, in times when the boundaries of nation-state have become a site of social struggle, as in the case of Brexit, it is also the boundaries of the political community themselves that are in dispute. For example, the lack of representation does not only concern domestic democratic procedures of representation, but also refers to the misrepresentation experienced when people are unable to lead the lives they want within the UK and, importantly, also transnationally in the EU. Consequently, citizenship as justice concerns not only the agreement on the ‘*substance*’ (‘the What’) of justice (Fraser, 2008, p. 2) but more and more on the ‘*frame of justice*’ (Fraser, 2008, p. 5) i.e. the question of who is a legitimate subject of justice. We argue that Brexit is a particular case for such a dispute over the ‘frame of justice’ as it raises crucial questions about whether the EU is the legitimate frame within which EU citizens (both foreign and national) agree on the ‘substance of justice’. Brexit refers to a situation in which the justice claims of particular groups are no longer taken into consideration. Either these categories of people are excluded from participation and membership (as in the case of EU citizens living in the UK) or, although they continue to be full members of the political community, the system of political representation has changed in a way that it no longer provides a framework for their political struggle or excludes the articulation of their concerns (as in the case of the 48%).

Brexit as a case of political misrepresentation does therefore not simply comprise procedural malfunctions or performance deficits in terms of how political actors represent the members of the community. Brexit also refers to the deeper character of political misrepresentation as ‘misframing’ in the way it deprives the 48% of the possibility of articulating first-order justice claims and addressing them to the political community(ies) they feel they belong (Fraser, 2008, p. 15). Brexit stands for the injustices that result from the attempts to restore national sovereignty and to disentangle citizenship rights in a globalised world. It is through this attempt of frame-shifting from a previously inclusive notion of EU citizenship to a more exclusive notion of national citizenship that serious injustices arise. Through misframing, the 48% are excluded in the most fundamental way from being a subject of justice.

Method

We carried out a survey of participants on the anti-Brexit march in London on 25th March 2017. The march was organised by *Unite for Europe*, described as an ‘umbrella group of remain campaigners’ that mobilised primarily on social media, particularly Facebook. Originally, the march was advertised as a ‘stop Brexit’ march, but the slogan and branding were changed last minute to become the ‘Make Your Voice Heard March’ (Roberts, 2017). In the week before, the event page described the purpose of the march: ‘We’re marching because fundamentally we never wanted Brexit in the aftermath of the referendum we want our voice to be heard [sic].’ They then called for their voices to be heard, for the people (or Parliament) to be consulted on a final deal, to remain a member of the single market and to guarantee the benefits of EU membership and rights of EU citizens. The march was officially supported by the *New Europeans*, *Britain for Europe*, *Healthier in the EU*, *Scientists for EU*, and the *European Movement* (the latter withdrew its support the week of the march in the

wake of the terrorist attack in Westminster). It was further advertised by *Open Britain* and the *3million*. The march began at Hyde Park corner and ended in Parliament Square with a rally featuring a range of speakers including MPs and MEPs, civil society campaigners and representatives of the various pro-EU groups.

Drawing on studies of other protest movements such as the Iraq War (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010) and Pegida (Daphi et al., 2015), we created a short survey using the online questionnaire website SurveyMonkey. In addition to closed demographic questions, we asked participants about their previous experience of political participation, including whether they had been to a demonstration before. Finally, we asked them how they felt affected by Brexit in an open-ended question. With the help of a team of seven academic colleagues, we distributed approximately 1,200 leaflets to participants on the day, which included a description of the project alongside a link and QR code to the survey. The survey could be completed on the spot using a smartphone or later using a computer. We asked the team to distribute as widely as they could within the crowd, and to be mindful of the need for a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. Leaflets were distributed both prior to the start of the march at Hyde Park Corner, during the march itself, and later during speeches in Parliament Square. Altogether, we received 953 responses, of which 767 indicated that they had attended the march in London. Based on the crowd estimates of 25,000-100,000 participants, this constitutes 0.76-3.07% of all protesters, which is a larger sample than that of the major Iraq War protest analysis and Pegida demonstrations but smaller than surveys of smaller, local protests in Germany such as Stuttgart 21 (Daphi et al., 2015). The 186 respondents who did not attend were filtered out of the results prior to analysis. Assuming randomness of distribution, the margin of error is 3.61%. In the following, we present demographic findings before presenting the qualitative analysis of the open-ended question.

All responses were coded inductively using the qualitative data analysis software QSR NVivo.

Findings

Demographics

For an analysis of protesters' subjective experiences of citizenship through the lens of justice, it is therefore crucial to know who the protesters at the march are. Firstly, we find that the vast majority of protesters held British citizenship as their first or only citizenship, with the rest mostly coming from other EU or EEA countries. Compared with the UK population, there were slightly fewer UK-born protesters and understandably more EU-born participants (see Table 1). At the same time, just under 15% of respondents held dual citizenship (see Table 2). The percentage of UK-born protesters holding dual citizenship is much higher than in the population as a whole, demonstrating that UK-born citizens with dual nationality were motivated to protest.

[Insert Table 1 here]

[Insert Table 2 here]

Secondly, the public debates after the referendum involved a narrative that the older generation had 'betrayed' the younger generation by voting for Leave. A number of polls have indeed shown that under 25s were much more likely to vote for Remain than over 65s (Ashcroft, 2016; YouGov, 2016). Our findings show, however, that it was primarily older people who turned out to protest against Brexit (see Figure 1). This finding also contrasts with other protest studies which have found much higher proportions of younger people amongst participants (Aelst & Walgrave, 2001).

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Thirdly, we also had more female respondents than male respondents (Figure 2), which contrasts with polling data that shows little difference in voting choice between genders. We find no

significant difference between gender and age but find that over 4 in 5 EU/EEA citizens on the march were women - a statistically significant difference (see Table 3).

[Insert Figure 2 here]

[Insert Table 3 here]

Finally, the public debate has also described an education divide reflected in the referendum, with university educated people much more likely to have voted Remain than school leavers (Ashcroft, 2016). Our survey very much reflects this, with over 4 in 5 protesters holding a university degree (almost half held a postgraduate qualification or higher degree) (see Table 4). We therefore show that protesters reflect a more privileged group in the UK with high levels of education. While this fits with the profile of a typical Remain voter, it also conforms with expectations derived from social movement literature that participants in protests are of a higher socio-economic background and education level than the general population (Aelst & Walgrave, 2001), most likely because they have the time and resources to allow them to take part.

[Insert Table 4 here]

Finally, we find that over 40% of participants had been mobilised for the first time by Brexit, with around a third of protesters never having been to a demonstration before at all (see Table 5). We can therefore consider Brexit as a mobilisation trigger for a significant number of protesters. This finding can be explained with the final part of the survey which asked people how they felt affected by Brexit.

[Insert Table 5 here]

Subjective experiences of injustice

The open-ended responses reveal a wide variety of claims about injustice that can be understood according to Fraser's three dimensions of justice – redistribution, recognition and

representation – and their relation to the ‘frame’ of justice. As we argue, Brexit can be considered a case of misframing in disputes over justice that encompass the classical dimensions of redistribution and recognition (identity), and a third dimension of political representation. More precisely, for many protesters, their everyday experience of European integration clashes with the exclusive national community constructed by the UK government post-referendum. The protest might also take on multiple meanings for those people driven to protest against Brexit. It is precisely this plurality of possible claims for economic, cultural and political justice, i.e. for redistribution, recognition and representation, which is taken away by the framing of the unitary claim of the expression of popular sovereignty of the majority.

Table 6 below summarises the main overlapping categories that emerged from our inductive coding of the open responses. We find that subjective experiences of Brexit converge but that quite different categories of concerns are made salient. Protest can be partly driven by experiences of personal injustice, and partly by concerns for others: a younger generation, foreigners, and a liberal and multicultural British society as a whole. Brexit as a case of misframing therefore triggers people’s political responses that go beyond immediate affectedness and personal impact, making visible a deep concern with the impact of Brexit on British society, democracy and on future generations of British citizens. There is, in other words, a deep concern with injustice that, according to Fraser, can cover cultural dimensions as recognition, economic dimensions as redistribution as well as political dimensions as representation. The categories are not mutually exclusive but serve as an illustration how subjective personal and societal concerns of Brexit can be related to Fraser’s three dimensions of justice.

[Insert Table 6 here]

Redistribution

Concerns with the redistributive dimension of justice figure prominently among the protesters in terms of both fear of personal losses and general losses for the economy. Here, we can differentiate between those who make redistributive claims to justice with a transnational frame – particularly those who have transnational lives, and those whose redistributive claims relate to the national community. For the former, the frame of reference for justice is in dispute. For the latter, the question in dispute is not the community to which justice frames refer, but the substance of justice, i.e. how is redistribution organised within the UK. In all these different responses, it is interesting to note how far respondents acknowledge the transnational or EU-level dimension of redistributive justice claims. The substantive dimension of justice and the question of how resources will be distributed fairly in post-Brexit UK is thus closely related to the underlying frame of justice (see Fraser 2008, p. 25). Respondents search for guarantees of justice beyond the national frame of reference, highlighting the UK's economic interdependence in the EU.

On the one hand, protesters with transnational lives fear the increased cost of travelling, often to visit their families or the higher cost of holidays, and others worry about the loss of the EHIC when they travel. Many of them also suffered from the currency devaluation. For example, one person explains that they live in France but receive their income from the UK. Retirees note that their savings have devalued. The concerns of those with transnational lives also relate to healthcare, the welfare state and pensions, with a number of people living in France and Spain expressing their fears. One protester explains that 'I may have to leave the country I have lived and worked in for almost 30 years if I lose access to healthcare/pensions etc.' The loss of their rights to have rights within the EU therefore raises questions of redistributive justice for the protesters (see Isin, 2013, p. 22).

Other protesters explain that they are already personally affected by an increase in the cost of living due to the fall in the value of the pound or expect prices to rise once trade with the EU becomes more difficult. Others explained that their businesses have already suffered due to economic uncertainty, rising prices and the likelihood of trade tariffs and other barriers. As one small business owner explains, ‘there is a great deal less confidence in the buying public, prices are increasing considerably and Brexit hasn't even actually started’. One of the most tragic responses comes from someone who explains that their husband works in cancer research, and that ‘Brexit affects funding and recruitment, possibly threatening our livelihood. I have incurable cancer and my only hope is advances in immunotherapy, but Brexit threatens medical research.’ Specific professional groups, like scientists, academics, people working in arts and cultural industries and the charity sector explain that Brexit will have a negative impact on access to (international) funding which could impact on their own positions or job security. As one scientist explains, ‘Brexit will be an unmitigated disaster for me and my peers.’ These respondents thus connect redistributive justice in the UK with economic interdependence at the EU level.

On the other hand, for many people, Brexit does not appear to bring into question the frame of justice, but rather the substantive dimension— how economic resources will be distributed in a post-Brexit UK. Individually expressed concerns often relate to collective concerns about the fate of the National Health Service (NHS) which became a key issue during the campaign. This was encapsulated in Vote Leave’s discredited claim – painted on the side of the campaign bus – that leaving the EU would allow an additional £350 million per week to be spent on the NHS (Usherwood & Wright, 2017). The NHS was an important issue for Remain as well as Leave voters debating the prospects for a just economic model post-Brexit. In response to Vote Leave’s £350 million claims, the Stronger In campaign warned of the impact an economic downturn would have for the NHS as well as its reliance

on medical staff from other EU member states (Clarke et al., 2017, p. 51). Some protesters express concern that they will suffer when Brexit starts to hit home due to the impact on public services. For example, one protester explains that ‘I’m worried that as my husband and I near the age of potentially needing social care this country will be even less able to afford it.’ Others worry about the impact of a likely loss of EU workers in public services, as one says, ‘the best people will leave. There will be nobody to take care of the elderly or the sick.’ Such responses suggest a utilitarian understanding of EU migration, as respondents oppose the loss of EU staff because they expect it to hurt public services and their family’s access to care. For many, the concern relates not just to their own access to public services but the kind of country that will be inherited by their children or grandchildren.

It is, however, the years of austerity preceding the EU referendum that inform many protesters’ experiences of Brexit. Here maldistribution overlaps with the political dimension of misrepresentation. One respondent expects that the country ‘will be hijacked by right wingers to make the UK into a tax haven with minimal welfare and public services. It will result in the privatisation of the National Health Service’. Protesters relate the feared loss of the NHS to previous reforms implemented by the Conservative Party, seeing Brexit as driven by and for the benefit of the rich. One protester explains that they ‘work in the NHS, which is being dismantled by the Tory government already. Coming out of the EU gives them and their rich friends carte blanche to destroy our healthcare system, making the country's health, social, and economic problems far worse, so that they can make money out of it.’

We therefore find that, rather than clearly delimiting the national and the European/transnational dimension of redistributive justice, Brexit amplifies social and economic interdependencies. This concerns both questions of redistribution within as well as beyond the national frame, i.e. what Fraser (2008, p. 25) refers to ‘misframing’ as ‘meta-level’ injustice.

Recognition

The relationship between the substance and frame of justice is also visible in its cultural dimension. The recognition dimension reveals evidence of misframing through the misrecognition of protesters' identities as both European and British citizens: With Brexit, the possibility of recognition as a European citizen is being taken away while, at the same time, recognition as British citizens is reframed. Protesters experience this as a fundamental threat to their personal identification. Respondents' demands for recognition of their multiple identities as European Brits suggests for them that recognition has shifted to the EU level. Yet, the EU level, to which these multi-layered identities are attached, has been taken away as frame of justice. The consequence of Brexit is thus misframing through the exclusion of multi-layered identities. In this way, Brexit imposes upon them a singular British identity by taking away the EU as frame of reference for European identities. For these protesters, identities are not a zero-sum game, but nested (as one respondent says, Brexit 'turns UK nationals into second class Europeans'). Strikingly many people describe the loss of identity as bereavement, death, heartbreak or something akin to a physical injury. One respondent explains that 'I feel personally bereaved by Brexit. I feel like it is a death. I am European, I love Europe, I am part of Europe. [...] I feel it is an evil, wicked thing being forced on us.' These protesters are experiencing a severe emotional reaction to leaving the EU that they explain removes their 'core' or 'essential' identity. Others also defend not just their own but their children's European futures: 'Brexit will rob me of my European identity and it will rob my daughters of their future in a united Europe we could all be proud of.' Through words such as 'ripped away', 'stolen' and 'robbed', protesters present themselves almost as victims of violent acts, feeling a complete loss of agency.

Misrecognition is, however, also related to the substance of 'Britishness', demonstrating that – contrary to public claims that Remainers are 'unpatriotic' – the '48%'

strongly identify with Britain – often referring to ‘my country’, ‘my nation’ or ‘my adopted country’. For many respondents, Brexit has constructed a narrow conception of Britishness with which they cannot identify. Brexit results for them in a net loss of identity and thus needs to be understood as a challenge for people’s national identities without a European frame of reference. Many say that they can no longer be proud or that they feel ashamed of being British or English (‘Profound shame and loss of identity. I don't feel I can identify as British any more. Our country is about to miss out on at least a decade of social progress’); as evidenced further in the conduct of the referendum (‘It is a disastrous decision based on lies and exaggeration and has made me ashamed to be British’) or in the perceived shift towards racism (‘I still feel heart broken – I have not only lost my EU citizenship I feel I have also lost my love for my country as I have learned of the intolerant and racist views held by so many’). The latter is a particularly common theme, as respondents express concern about Britain becoming an ‘isolationist and less tolerant society’ and criticise the ‘Little Britain mindset’. Likewise, those who identify themselves as foreigners say that they feel excluded from British society. For example, one explains that ‘the UK has been my home for over 15 years and thought I was going to be here forever. Now racists and populists are trying to suggest to the British public that I have no right to be here. The change of mood is just so sad.’

As Isin notes, acts of citizenship are relational and can have exclusionary counter-effects (Isin, 2013, p. 39). Through constructing the ‘others’ - the “Brexiters” – they construct their own inclusive, cosmopolitan British identity based on openness to others and tolerance of difference but paradoxically excludes Leave voters who they perceive to be racist or ignorant. In opposing the ‘Brexiters’ they also construct identities as ‘Remainers’ or the ‘48%’. It is therefore clear that, contrary to many claims of the right-wing press, anti-Brexit protesters

strongly identify as British and want to hold a British identity, but see this as a fundamentally European or cosmopolitan identity.

Representation

Finally, the dimensions of redistribution and recognition in our survey are often linked closely to the political dimension of misrepresentation. On the one hand, this reveals what Fraser refers to as ‘ordinary-political misrepresentation’ (2008, p. 19) in which citizens experience misrepresentation by domestic political actors. On the other hand, misrepresentation as misframing refers to political decisions over who is considered a legitimate member of the community – i.e. decisions over the ‘right to have rights’ as EU citizens. This ‘meta-level’ of injustice results from restricting the boundaries of the political community to the exclusive national level, which impacts on those who depend on and demand rights beyond the nation-state (Fraser, 2008, p. 25). Both forms of misrepresentation reveal a highly emotional experience.

On the one hand, many respondents experience national-democratic misrepresentation by British politicians and express disillusionment with British democracy which they see as fundamentally challenged by Brexit. Some explicitly explain their feelings of being politically misrepresented by both the government and opposition, for example: ‘I feel utterly powerless and my attempts to resist pointless. My MP is useless and the opposition party has crumbled [...] I am very worried for the future.’ Many explain that the ‘right-wing government is ignoring them or that the government only listens to the views of the racists.’ Others express concern about the erosion of democracy, as a multitude of respondents argue that Britain has become a dictatorship, that there has been a ‘far right coup’ or that fascism is on the rise. For example, one respondent states that ‘If Brexit happens I will leave my country - I do not intend to live in an undemocratic and racist dictatorship where my voice will never count’, while others link Brexit directly to the election of Donald Trump as US

President. Some respondents declare their intention to move out of country or, if they are living abroad, to renounce their British citizenship or apply for citizenship elsewhere. Many protesters, therefore, experience Brexit as an injustice in ordinary-political representation, highlighting a flawed or failing democratic system.

On the other hand, however, for a large number of our respondents the primary concern is the loss of rights, as they make claims to their right to have rights. This is especially the case for EU citizens residing in the UK or British citizens residing in another EU country, who risk losing their rights connected to EU citizenship. Some express opposition to being used as ‘bargaining chips’ in Brexit negotiations, referring to the slogan of the campaign group the *3million*. Many have been living in their country of residence for a long time and are distraught that they no longer feel welcome. Some reference their families and children who they have raised in the UK, for example, ‘I’ve lived in the UK for 25 years, 17 of which were spent raising my son, and I will probably have to leave.’ Respondents paint a picture of devastation as their futures are thrown into the air. This form of setting new boundaries and establishing lines between members and non-members in the UK also takes a psychological toll, triggering existential anxiety for a small number of respondents.

Mentioning their depression and suicidal thoughts, one worries that ‘if I get kicked out, after more than half of my life in the UK, I will not have anywhere to go. the UK is my home. I have no work experience in the country I was born in’. A British respondent with an EU-27 partner explains that ‘if he has to leave, then I will also have leave to be with him [...] My rights of movement will be restricted if the UK leaves the EU, unless I can get dual citizenship - it is outrageous the government may separate us’. These protesters make it clear that they and their families have made the UK their home and experience injustice as they face being excluded from membership of the community. Same-sex couples face additional barriers, as one protester with a Polish partner explains, ‘moving to Poland isn't a choice for

us as they don't recognise same-sex relationships. But she doesn't want to stay due to all this - we are screwed!' For these respondents, citizenship as justice cannot be guaranteed by one nation-state. Misrepresentation of certain groups within one state is therefore related to the way rights are granted and citizens are represented at the EU level.. Brexit indicates in this sense the case of a mismatch between the 'substance' and the 'frame' of justice, what Fraser specifies as misframing (Fraser, 2008, p. 5).

People who are not necessarily exercising their treaty rights currently also experience Brexit as a loss of rights, either in terms of their future plans that have been thrown up in the air or for their children or grandchildren's future opportunities. The abstract experience of Brexit as a loss of representation is thus translated into the more concrete fears of a loss of opportunity. In this sense, misrepresentation also affects the dimension of social rights, as carriers of these rights are reframed in exclusive terms by being represented by one single community and government, which limits life choices. One respondent explains that 'I am saddened, depressed, fearful, anxious [...] I had planned to retire to France to be near my daughter who lives there, but without reciprocal healthcare and with the falling pound, my plans have been stripped by the ignorance and xenophobia of others, and by the political game-playing of government'. As the age demographic of the march is relatively old, protesters are not all claiming rights for themselves, but for younger people who they consider to be facing the loss of a right to have rights. We therefore find strong evidence of a generational solidarity where older protesters claim injustices on behalf of future generations. One notes that 'I personally am probably too old to be affected long term but my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren most definitely will be likely to lose a sense of belonging that has developed over the last 40 years'.

Finally, some protesters cite the expected loss of a wider set of rights guaranteed by the EU. The multiple political identities expressed by respondents also relate to other forms of identity, for example, LGBT identities. One respondent explains that:

I identify as LGBT and have been Pro-EU and identified as European since the age of 15. I respect the Lisbon Treaty and respect the core values that are enshrined in the treaty. I fear that the UK is becoming a profoundly intolerant society and the government are very open in their wish to withdraw us from the ECHR and the UN International Bill of Human Rights.

Some participants express concern that the UK will withdraw from the European Court of Human Rights, something that Theresa May has previously advocated¹, and they see Brexit as a first step along this path. Another respondent references her gender identity and employment rights: 'I fear my rights as a woman, a worker, a human being; freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom to protest as well as the UK's current environmental rights are ALL at risk'. For some respondents, then, the EU represents a form of constitution which guarantees a comprehensive set of rights. In addition to EU citizenship rights such as freedom of movement, protesters enact their European citizenship by demanding justice as a wider set of rights guaranteed through the EU.

We therefore find that people are deeply concerned about the possibility that their right to have rights, which is based on the EU frame, will be taken away from them. While many protesters experience Brexit as ordinary-political misrepresentation, Brexit also constitutes as a case of misrepresentation as misframing which is experienced as a personal tragedy that threatens people's family ties and future plans. These protesters lives are based upon a set of rights guaranteed by the EU level, jeopardised by Brexit which excludes them from the European political community.

¹ The Conservative Party has longed pledged to replace the Human Rights Act – which incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into British law – with a “British Bill of Rights”, but in early 2017 this was put on hold until after Brexit.

Conclusion

Our findings explore a completely new phenomenon in the UK, that of pro-EU mobilisation. While they are not representative of the ‘Remain’ population as a whole, they do shed light on an as yet under-researched movement – people driven to actively protest Brexit on the streets. The demonstration in March 2017 was not a one off, with the most recent one taking place in London on the two-year anniversary of the referendum, which saw an estimated 100,000 people descend on central London. Our findings demonstrate that many protesters experience Brexit as an injustice relating to redistribution, recognition and representation within the UK. Concerns about economic downturn and an erosion of the NHS, a misrecognition of their British identities away from tolerance and internationalism, and ordinary-political misrepresentation in the form of distrust in the government and opposition parties, who are seen as ignoring the concerns of ‘the 48%’ or pandering to xenophobia, are visible.

However, many protesters suffer injustice as ‘misframing’. For these respondents, their conception of justice as redistribution, recognition and representation extends beyond the nation-state. The EU becomes a crucial political frame from which they might be excluded in the future, economically, culturally and politically, which triggers existential fears stemming from a lack of agency. They recognise the economic interdependence of the UK in Europe and have concerns for both their personal economic situation which spans currencies or national welfare systems, and for the collective redistributive measures such as EU funding for science. Many experience misrecognition of their European identities, often describing the feeling as akin to bereavement. Finally, many protesters experience misrepresentation as misframing, claiming their right to have rights as EU citizens – particularly freedom of movement, but also a wider set of more universal principles such as

human rights, inclusiveness and diversity. Through their act of citizenship in marching against Brexit, these injustices are claimed collectively not just for themselves but also for their children and future generations. Overall, protesters experiencing misframing have transnational lives, identities and economic needs that are dependent upon a European political community from which they face exclusion. As such, this research points to the need to gain more representative data on how Brexit affects people's lives and who will be most vulnerable in the aftermath of Brexit.

This study raises questions about democratic legitimacy both within the UK and in the EU. Firstly, the findings raise questions about a new democratic responsibility of the EU in relation to political subjects that will likely become 'former EU citizens'. Brexit poses an opportunity for the EU to take responsibility for these self-constituting political subjects by representing them. The EU-27, and particularly the European Parliament, have pushed hard to ensure that the rights of EU citizens currently exercising their treaty rights are guaranteed basic rights to access 'settled status', although many outstanding issues remain. It is not yet clear, for example, whether British citizens living in the EU will retain their freedom of movement within the EU-27, meaning that frontier workers or the most highly mobile will have restricted rights. Very little attention has also been paid to political rights after Brexit, such as the right to vote in local and European Parliament elections. The agreements also do not represent those who are not currently exercising their treaty rights but had plans to do so in future or experience the loss of EU citizenship as a kind of bereavement. Twenty-five years after EU citizenship was introduced at Maastricht, Brexit brings into question the status of EU-level political rights.

Our findings also suggest that Brexit is representative of wider issues with UK democracy. The referendum itself raised questions about democratic legitimacy, as many of the groups most deeply affected by the decision to leave could not vote, nor was there any

'lock' on the referendum result, such as a minimum percentage requirement for the result or a requirement that all nations of the UK must vote to leave (Shaw, 2017, pp. 9-10). With no constitutional requirements regarding the conditions under which referendums may be held, Brexit is perceived by anti-Brexit protesters as democratically illegitimate. In large part, 'Remainers' protest against the framing of popular sovereignty as the 'will of the people', experienced as a 'tyranny of the majority' which excludes the recognition of the legitimate concerns of the minority. While claims of 'the will of the people' are raised by the government with the intention to 'unify' the people, the paradoxical effect is that substantial parts of the population do not feel recognised and even feel marginalised as their claims for justice are excluded from future consideration. What 'unites' the anti-Brexiters is a shared sense of being misrepresented with regard to their diverse concerns, interests and identities. At the same time, the referendum has exposed bigger social divisions between 'Remainers' and 'Leavers' that transforms into an educational divide and a conflict of values. These problems are unlikely to disappear regardless of the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

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