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Diffusion in Referendum Campaigns: The Case of EU Constitutional Referendums

The problem of cross-case influences is crucial in the analysis of social phenomena. Is a referendum held in a state entirely a 'domestic' event? No work has applied diffusion theories to the study of referendum campaigns. In this paper, I show diffusion effects among the 2005 Constitutional Treaty referendums. Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg used the referendum method to ratify the European Constitution. Based on 85 interviews with campaigners in all four countries, I find that campaign arguments and strategies were not always homegrown. However, such diffusion is not automatic and depends on diffusion channels.

In 2005, four European Union (EU) member states held referendums on whether to ratify the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE), in chronological order: Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. While these referendums were seemingly distinct from one another, identical campaign posters and arguments were circulated across Europe. Diffusion is a process wherein new ideas and models of behavior spread geographically from a core site to other sites (Bunce et al., 2006). While referendum campaigns have been studied thoroughly, such cross-case influences remain overlooked (e.g. Glencross et al., 2011; Qvortrup, 2006). I show that campaign arguments were not always homegrown in the 2005 EU referendums. Campaigners could *learn* from the experience of previous campaigns. This was important because strategic arguments blamed the treaty for controversial issues such as degradation of welfare state or loss of national identity. Diffusion across cases was thus crucial in bringing new arguments into the debate. All campaigns were not created equal, and the cases were not independent.

The extant literature has not applied diffusion theories to the study of referendum campaigns. Instead of using diffusion processes as an independent variable and trying to trace their effect on the referendum results quantitatively (e.g. Collingwood et al., 2012), I treat diffusion as the dependent variable and detail social mechanisms that connect referendum campaigns through interview data.

What are the factors that facilitate such diffusion? In line with the expectations of the policy transfer and modular action literatures, I find that diffusion depends on the existence of channels such as collaborative networks, shared language and common media. Furthermore, based on 85 in-depth interviews with campaigners all across the political spectrum in all four countries, I show that collaborative networks lead to 'shallow' diffusion between campaigners. But where these networks are coupled with shared language and media sources, diffusion becomes 'deep', operating among voters as well as campaigners.

Below, I first review the literature on referendums to highlight the importance of referendum campaigns in shaping public opinion, which makes borrowing campaign arguments all the more important. Next, I bring together the policy transfer and modular action literatures and discuss the paths through which diffusion travels. Third, using extensive interview data, I demonstrate how diffusion effects conditioned campaign dynamics in the 2005 EU constitutional referendums.

Existing Literature: Do Referendum Campaigns Matter?

The voting behavior literature suggests that, in most instances, referendum campaigns are more influential than election campaigns (e.g. de Vreese, 2007). When parties line up in a non-traditional way, or the issue is unfamiliar to the mass public, referendum campaigns can be decisive (LeDuc, 2002). This is particularly the case in referendums on international treaties, as voters do not have well-formed opinions. The way an issue is presented can produce dramatic differences in public opinion (e.g. Chong et al., 2007).

Students of EU referendums have recently turned their attention to referendum campaigns. This literature is divided between 'second-order' and 'issue-voting' interpretations, attributing the results to domestic or European factors (Reif et al., 1980; Siune et al., 1994). Recent research looks into campaigns closely to understand the circumstances under which voters rely on EU attitudes rather than second-

order effects and vice versa (e.g. Garry et al., 2005). In the most comprehensive comparative study so far, Hobolt (2009) finds that the *information* provided to voters during the campaigns matters. When the negative consequences of a No-vote/Yes-vote are stressed, more people favor/oppose the proposal. Similarly, De Vreese and Semetko (2004) show that in the Danish referendum on the Euro the No side broadened the issue to enlargement, social welfare and national sovereignty, identifying this as the key winning strategy for the No campaign.

In the case of the 2005 referendums, the European Constitution was a technical document, and a great majority of the public was unfamiliar with its content. Polls show that public opinion in all four countries favored the TCE several months before the votes.¹ Yet the final referendum results varied remarkably, which suggests that the campaigns were important in shaping public opinion. Political actors presented the TCE to their publics strategically by linking it to unpopular themes such as loss of sovereignty or even Turkish membership in the EU. Diffusion facilitated the transfer of such arguments from one campaign to the other.

Diffusion among referendum campaigns is therefore an important but neglected area of research. Closa (2007) shows that the governments were influenced by one another in their *decisions to call* the TCE referendums in 2005. Jahn and Storsved (1995), on the other hand, look into cross-case influences among the 1994 EU membership referendums in Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Norway. They argue that there was a domino strategy, where the most pro-EU countries (Austria and Finland) started the referendum vote, followed by the two unsure cases (Sweden and Norway). But the strategy failed in Norway. The authors suggest that Norway rejected the treaty mainly because the Norwegian Centre Party was able to organize the anti-EU movement, connecting agrarian interests with national

¹ For polls, see:

http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Marginales/2560_2579/2577/Es2577.pdf;

<http://www.csa.eu/dataset/data2004/opi20040915c.htm>;

(Eurobarometer, 2004);

<http://www.tns-ilres.com/cms/Home/Nos-secteurs/Politique---Opinion>.

independence. Moreover in a survey, only 56% of the Finns showed awareness of the positive results in Austria, whereas the Nordic countries were much more interested in each other's decisions. These findings not only point to the importance of interconnectedness among Nordic countries, but also provide evidence for the significance of campaigns in shaping public opinion. Yet the specific mechanisms of cross-case influences remain overlooked.

Applying Diffusion Theories to Referendum Campaigns

Diffusion involves a *transmitter*, an *adopter*, an *innovation* that is being diffused, and a *channel* along which the item may be transmitted (Soule, 2003). My focus is the channels that transmit campaign-related information between campaigners in different countries. Diffusion studies focus on two main fields – policy transfer and modular phenomena.

Policy transfer

The first venue brings together studies on policy transfer and policy diffusion, looking into the temporal and spatial clusters of policy reform (e.g. Dolowitz et al., 2000; Elkins et al., 2005; Kopstein et al., 2000; Rose, 1991). Here, the focus is essentially on 'lesson-drawing', a process by which actors borrow policies developed in one setting to develop policies within another.

The policy transfer literature shows that political entities that are geographically proximate and thus share political networks and economic, social and cultural linkages borrow more from each other (e.g. Ovodenko et al., 2012; Stone, 2004; Weyland, 2005). Similarly, the mass media coverage is important in exchanging information from one government to another (Braun, 2011; Dolowitz, 1997). For instance, Linos (2011) shows that governments are more likely to imitate countries that are geographically, linguistically, and culturally proximate and thereby disproportionately covered in the news.

While campaign strategies is not a conventional focus for this literature, Dolowitz et al. (1999) study why the Labour Party in the United Kingdom borrowed electoral strategies from the Democrats in the United States. The authors emphasize the importance of the common language between the two states, the shared ideology among the parties, the personal relationships between the leaders, and finally the role of policy entrepreneurs. Similarly, Needham (2010) explores the cases where specific aspects of one campaign such as polling or voter targeting has been borrowed by another. She finds that such transfers were among ideologically similar states and facilitated by leaders, staff and consultants.

Modular action

As a second venue to study diffusion, the modular action literature focuses on action that is based significantly on the prior successful example of others (Beissinger, 2007). Four democratic revolutions – the Bulldozer, Rose, Orange, and Tulip Revolutions – which took place in Eastern Europe between 2000 and 2006 are studied as examples of modular political phenomena (Beissinger, 2007; Bunce et al., 2006).

This literature identifies three main channels. First, collaborative networks crossing national boundaries promote diffusion (e.g. Bunce et al., 2006; Tarrow, 2005). These networks can be provided by NGOs, civil society activists or other more established institutional frameworks. Alternatively, they could be based on interpersonal relations. Studying contention in the UK and France between 1730 and 1848, Rudé (1964) found that information about rebellions diffused through communication networks of travelers along transportation routes. Hedström et al. (2000) showed similarly that between 1894 and 1911 the diffusion of the Swedish Social Democratic Party was an unintended by-product of the political agitators' traveling. Second, studies show that a sense of interconnectedness across cases – resulting from common institutional characteristics, histories, cultural affinities and languages – allows agents to make analogies across cases and read relevance into developments in other contexts (Beissinger, 2007; Tarrow, 2005). Another channel of diffusion is the media. Studies on race riots repeatedly found that the

media served as a channel of diffusion by creating a cultural linkage between African Americans in different metropolitan areas (Myers, 2000; Soule, 2003; Spilerman, 1976). Tarrow (2005) suggests that such channels lead to a common 'theorization' across boundaries, where a matter is defined within a cause-effect relationship. Today there is an emerging literature on the impact of social media on collective action, particularly in relation to the Arab Spring (Aday et al., 2012; Pierskalla et al., 2013).

Importantly, these channels parallel the findings of the policy transfer literature. Both literatures emphasize the political, economic, social and cultural linkages, the similarities between the sending and receiving units (including linguistic or ideological closeness), and mass media coverage in enabling such transfers. Yet, neither applied these arguments to referendum campaigns. Below are the three hypotheses drawn from these studies:

H1: The more collaborative networks the campaigners from different states share, the more their campaigns will be influenced by one another.

H2: The more linguistic and cultural similarities the states have, the more their campaigns will be influenced by one another.

H3: The more media channels the states share, the more their campaigns will be influenced by one another.

As such, diffusion is the cooperation among campaigners in different countries and the subsequent adoption of campaign arguments elaborated elsewhere. The channels, in turn, are what determine the existence and level of such diffusion. Operationalizing the dependent variable and demonstrating that borrowing occurred is difficult as similar strategies may emerge in different settings without clear lines of causality (Needham, 2010, p. 610). James and Lodge (2003) criticize the policy transfer approach for not sufficiently distinguishing borrowing from rational policymaking, rendering finding evidence for such transfers problematic. In the literature, cross-national policy transfer is evidenced through three steps; policy-makers searching for a policy, visiting a lender country to examine

the policy, and the essential features of the policy to be present in the borrower country (Dolowitz et al., 1999; Needham, 2010). In this research, *physical contacts* such as participation in each other's campaigns or in joint political events; *discussions among the campaigners on campaign* themes for instance through specific conferences on the treaty; and the *presence of campaign arguments and strategies in borrower campaigns* visible in identical leaflets or in the campaign preparation processes, were studied closely as possible indicators of such transfers.

Data

In 2005, some other EU member states also intended to hold a referendum to ratify the treaty, however they decided not to do so after the French and Dutch rejections. I limit the analysis to the four countries that actually held referendums because the campaign preparations in the other countries did not have the same urgency and thereby were not comparable. I conducted the field research between April-December 2008 and interviewed campaigners from all political parties and civil society groups that were active in the campaign. These interviews were in English, French or Spanish, face-to-face, semi-structured, and based on both opportunity and snowball sampling. I interviewed 85 campaigners: 19 from Spain, 23 from France, 22 from the Netherlands, and 21 from Luxembourg. Overall, 32 of the interviewees were campaigners from civil society, 53 from political parties; 40 were No campaigners, 45 were Yes campaigners. The questionnaire used and a full list of the organizations interviewed are presented at the end of this article.

Diffusion in 2005 TCE Referendums

In 2005, campaigners in the four countries that held referendums on the TCE discussed campaign themes and borrowed arguments from one another. 73 out of 85 mentioned that they met with campaigners from the other countries: 18 in Spain, 17 in France, 19 in the Netherlands, 19 in

Luxembourg. 51 out of 85 said that their campaign was affected by the other campaigns: 11 in Spain, 4 in France, 15 in the Netherlands, 21 in Luxembourg. These figures provide direct evidence for the existence of diffusion.² The left-wing No campaigners were the most connected actors across Europe in this particular debate.

Yet, such diffusion was not automatic and depended on channels. Table 1 presents the findings of this research, showing that all three hypotheses have empirical support.

Table 1

The number of interviewees that mentioned interactions through collaborative networks is considerably higher as this channel is shared by all four states. In contrast, it is primarily French and Luxembourgish interviewees that brought up the transfers through the last two channels. This is not surprising because Luxembourg speaks French, consumes French media channels and receives a substantial number of commuters from France every day. Thus, the interaction between France, Spain and the Netherlands was not as strong as that between France and Luxembourg. This interaction was so dense that the *main* Luxembourgish No campaigner, the left-wing No Committee, took its lead from the French No campaign.

Detailed interview data shows that collaborative networks lead to ‘shallow’ diffusion between campaigners, by connecting them and enabling them to discuss campaign themes. The addition of a shared language and common media channels, however, generates ‘deep’ diffusion among campaigners and voters, by increasing the presence of campaign arguments in borrower states. Furthermore, this research finds that diffusion was not sequential. Because the debate in France started very early, themes of the French debate could be traced even in Spanish campaigners’ arguments, whose referendum preceded France’s. Figure 1 summarizes the connections between campaigns.

Figure 1

² For further empirical evidence showing that French arguments appeared in the Luxembourgish campaign see (Dumont et al., 2007).

Below, I address the indicators of diffusion – physical contacts, discussions among the campaigners on campaign themes, and presence of campaign arguments in borrower campaigns – in the discussion of each channel.

Collaborative Networks

This channel, composed of institutional and personal connections, leads to physical contacts and discussion of campaign themes among campaigners. Nevertheless, the extent to which arguments were borrowed varies across cases. The existence of a shared language deepens such interactions and leads to a greater degree of adoption in the borrower states.

A. Institutional networks

Institutional networks were common to all four cases, and were mentioned in the interviews as important facilitators. These were namely the European Parliament (EP) groups, the European anti-globalization network, and other ad hoc European networks. First, both the Yes and No campaigners pointed to the EP groups and parties as platforms to share ideas with other similar European political parties. This formed a regular meeting opportunity, where most of the campaigners said they discussed campaign themes. Although these networks constituted a platform for political parties, the extent to which they were influential in shaping the campaigns is not uniform across the political spectrum. Interestingly, the far-left and far-right took extreme positions. The far-left mentioned close contacts with other far-left parties in Europe, whereas far-right parties rejected any links to other such parties.

To take an example, in the Netherlands, both the Yes and No campaigners (16 out of 22) mentioned the EP groups as platforms where they discussed their experiences. International Secretary of the Dutch Labor Party (PvdA) Marije Laffeber said: ‘We exchanged a lot of experience, we had two really experienced parties who dealt with these issues before, from Ireland and Denmark. They tried to convince us not to have a referendum ... because it always works against the social democratic parties.’³

³ Interview, 22 October 2008.

The Dutch far-left Socialist Party (SP) mentioned contacts with The Left in Luxembourg and but particularly close contacts with the French Communist Party in setting the agenda. In striking contrast, the Dutch far-right parties refused any such links. In Leader of Livable Rotterdam Marco Pastors' words: 'There is suspicion of racism. It is difficult to align yourself with other countries' movements, they are extreme right'.⁴

Institutional linkages were more visible and prominent in the analysis of the left-wing civil society groups. The strong anti-globalization network in Europe provided an opportunity for these groups to come together, analyze the new developments, and form positions. The left-wing activists frequently referred to the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) network, and the European Social Forum (ESF) as important platforms. The ESF meetings bring together the left-wing social movements with political parties. Particularly, the activists stressed the 2003 ESF meeting in Paris and the 2004 ESF meeting in London as sources, where the TCE was debated intensely. However, they also highlighted the ad hoc nature of these informal networks. Susan George from the leadership of ATTAC France said: 'These relations are messy and based on ad hoc connections, dependent on who knows whom'.⁵ There was no structure apart from the ATTAC network, the annual ESF meetings, and the temporary European No Campaign (ENC) network established by British businessmen at the time.⁶ The ENC was a Europe-wide, independent, cross-party network of political parties and NGOs which brought together both right and left-wing No campaigners. It was set up to coordinate 'anti-EU Constitution' activities, and maximize the No vote in every EU referendum on the TCE.

Importantly, the anti-globalization network circulated the French analysis of the TCE, not the Spanish one, across Europe. The Spanish, Dutch and Luxembourgish left-wing activists stated that in

⁴ Interview, 8 April 2008.

⁵ Interview, 13 September 2008.

⁶ Interview with Thomas Rupp, director of the 'European No Campaign', 18 April 2008.

preparation for the campaign they first read about the discussion in France, and were inspired by the French debate in their argumentation. Through this institutional channel, campaigners borrowed campaign arguments.

In Spain, left-wing No campaigners mentioned strong links to the European anti-globalization network.⁷ They explained that the ATTAC France was especially a reference point as they had developed theoretical questions and arguments regarding the TCE as early as 2003. Specifically, the book by Yves Salessse, a key left-wing campaigner in France, was mentioned as a resource. This book was translated and published in Spanish. These remarks demonstrate that diffusion was not necessarily sequential. The French No campaign debate started early despite the fact that their campaign was held later than the Spanish one.

The French civil society campaigners confirmed that the ATTAC France provided the first and main left-wing analysis of the TCE. At the 2004 ESF meeting, French campaigners distributed their analysis and the 'Appeal of 200', signed by 200 representatives of left-wing groups, to all other European left-wing political and social forces.⁸ Their motivation was to show that it was not only a French resistance. Susan George of ATTAC France said: 'We wanted to show that this was not a Franco-French affair, that we were not alone, and that a lot of people in Europe shared our views'.⁹ As Francine Bavay of The Greens, put it: 'We tried to alert all European ecologists. We wanted to show that we were not nationalists'.¹⁰

In the Netherlands, Willem Bos, president of the left-wing ConstitutionNo, said that in preparation for the campaign, they first read on the topic and that they knew the discussion in France as

⁷ Interviews with Carlos Girbau Costa on 8 October 2008, Marc Giménez Villahoz on 15 October 2008, and Jaime Pastor on 8 October 2008.

⁸ Interview with Maxime Combes, 8 September 2008.

⁹ Interview, 13 September 2008.

¹⁰ Interview, 22 September 2008.

they were reading their work.¹¹ Erik Wesselius, member of the ConstitutionNo, specifically referred to the ESF in Paris in 2003, which discussed the TCE in detail.¹² He added: ‘The whole debate in France was really very important for the other countries’. He stressed the legitimization impact of the French debate for the Netherlands, as it lent credence to their arguments and contributed to their visibility.

In all cases, the French left-wing theoretical analysis of the TCE was a crucial source. But for Luxembourg, diffusion was deeper due to the special cultural and linguistic connection between the two countries. Luxembourg’s *main* No campaigner, the left-wing No Committee, openly acknowledged the support it received from the French left-wing No campaign. They mentioned the difficulty of organizing the campaign without such support, as Luxembourg has a very small community. André Kremer, coordinator of the Luxembourg No Committee stated that in formulation of their arguments, they were inspired by their French contacts’ intellectual work.¹³ Henri Wehenkel of The Left added: ‘The analysis came from France. ... We were influenced by the arguments of the French activists’.¹⁴ Adrien Thomas from the National Union of Luxembourgish Students (UNEL) also explained that the No Committee was heavily influenced by the French debate.¹⁵ He said: ‘We were very much inspired by the French. We were not influenced by the Dutch because of the language’. Another No campaigner, the President of the Railways Trade Union Nico Wennmacher, similarly noted that they used the French trade unionists’ arguments on the subject, not that of the Dutch, as they worked together in the ‘Grande Région’.¹⁶

This support took a material form as well, further deepening the diffusion. Henri Wehenkel of The Left noted: ‘I went to Paris, to bring the propaganda that was unused after the French referendum. I brought 3,000 texts of the Constitution with the explanation and examples, from the French Communist

¹¹ Interview, 8 April 2008.

¹² Interview, 4 November 2008.

¹³ Interview, 12 November 2008.

¹⁴ Interview, 15 April 2008.

¹⁵ Interview, 15 April 2008.

¹⁶ Interview, 10 November 2008.

Party'.¹⁷ Adrien Thomas from the UNEL explained that some ATTAC France members even came to Luxembourg to help distribute flyers in mailboxes.¹⁸ Anne-Marie Berny from the ATTAC-LUX similarly stated that most of the ATTAC-LUX members were in fact French living in Luxembourg.¹⁹ While she mentioned that the ATTAC France, Germany and Belgium helped them, she stressed that that they have been in regular contact with the ATTAC France throughout the campaign. Furthermore, the ATTAC France has financially contributed to the ATTAC Luxembourg's campaign to a small extent.²⁰ Therefore, the shared language between France and Luxembourg intensified the influence of the anti-globalization network between these two cases. Luxembourg's No campaign adopted French arguments to a larger degree than the Spanish or Dutch campaigns.

Luxembourgish Yes campaigners referred to this influence openly. Pierre Gramegna, Director-General of the Chamber of Commerce, noted: 'They had an anti-Europe network that they have benefited from. ... They had all the anti-Europe material, they were pretty informed, most of them probably did not even read the TCE, but they did not need to read it because they got all the prepared literature against it'.²¹ Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP) MP Ben Fayot added: 'I must say that the No campaigners used the French arguments'.²² CSV MP Laurent Mosar agreed: 'The No arguments in Luxembourg were more or less the same as the No arguments in France'.²³

B. Personal connections

Among the states holding referendums on the TCE, France and Luxembourg shared two large mobile communities that facilitated physical contacts and carried the campaign debate across the border: cross-border employees and students.

¹⁷ Interview, 15 April 2008.

¹⁸ Interview, 15 April 2008.

¹⁹ Interview, 17 April 2008.

²⁰ Interview with Pierre Khalfa from ATTAC France, 22 September 2008.

²¹ Interview, 13 November 2008.

²² Interview, 14 November 2008.

²³ Interview, 14 November 2008.

The population of Luxembourg is just below half a million. In the 1970s, the shift from an industrial to a service-oriented economy necessitated foreign labor – both immigrants and cross-border workers (STATEC, 2003). Today, over one-third of the population is non-Luxembourger. 2004 census data shows that among the foreign residents of Luxembourg French forms the second largest group after the Portuguese (Scuto, 2009). Furthermore, regarding cross-border employment, around 118,385 cross-border employees come into Luxembourg on a daily basis from France, Germany and Belgium (EURES, 2005). More than 50% of these cross-border employees come from France. This group of daily commuters imported campaign themes from abroad. Tom Graas, then director of the Luxembourg Television and Radio (RTL) television news, explained that the French commuters had a big influence as the discussions were carried everywhere from offices to restaurants.²⁴

The second community contributing to personal connections is the mobile students. The University of Luxembourg was founded only in 2003. Frédéric Krier from the student union UNEL explained that they had members who studied in the neighboring countries and that specifically, during the 2005 campaign, those in France were very important in organizing the Luxembourgish campaign.²⁵ Adrien Thomas from the UNEL, who was a doctoral student at Sorbonne at the time, took part in both campaigns and stated that most students came back to Luxembourg before the July referendum, after their classes were over.²⁶ Most Luxembourgish students who were actively involved in the French campaign were also involved in the Luxembourgish campaign. Thomas explained that the No Committee was inspired by the French also through the ATTAC Campus network:

The UNEL had its main base in Paris in 2005. ... We attended the ATTAC Campus meetings, where the Constitution was discussed. We took notes. Building on those notes and on the articles we read in the left-leaning newspapers, we wrote articles in Luxembourg. These

²⁴ Interview, 17 November 2008.

²⁵ Interview, 17 November 2008.

²⁶ Interview, 15 April 2008.

articles show clearly that we were very close to the French left's critique of the treaty. We did not take the Constitution and interpret it for ourselves. We were inspired.

This mobile, French-speaking student community thus deepened these connections, contributing to the adoption of campaign arguments.

Shared Language/Culture

Cultural and linguistic similarities primarily help campaigners in inviting each other to participate in their campaigns. These invitations not only reinforce the physical contacts and dialogue on campaign themes among the campaigners but also bring in campaign arguments from the other cases. Participating in another campaign goes beyond networking among the campaigners since it also means communicating with voters. Among the 2005 referendums, France and Luxembourg are closely linked linguistically, as surveys show French as the best known language in Luxembourg (Stell, 2006). For the other cases, the lack of a common language became a barrier for further diffusion.

My Spanish interviewees mentioned the lack of a common language as a problem blocking further cooperation. José Manuel Fernández Fernández of the IU explained that from the other three countries, they only invited a few campaigners who spoke Spanish to contribute to the Spanish campaign.²⁷ Similarly Carlos Girbau Costa, from the Social Forum and the IU, pointed to the different cultures of north and south Europe and mentioned that the Netherlands and Luxembourg were far from Spain, while France shared both cultures.²⁸ Jaime Pastor, member of the IU and the ATTAC also mentioned closer ties to France and said: 'We did not meet with Dutch. France was more important for us, because we were familiar with their debate'.²⁹

²⁷ Interview, 7 October 2008.

²⁸ Interview, 8 October 2008.

²⁹ Interview, 8 October 2008.

Similarly, my Dutch interviewees were aware that the Luxembourgish campaigners and the public followed the French debate more than the Dutch debate. Willem Bos, President of the left-wing civil society group ConstitutionNo, said: 'The French campaign affected Luxembourg, not the Dutch. I was invited to Luxembourg by The Left during their campaign. They invited mainly French speaking politicians from France though'.³⁰ Member of the ConstitutionNo Erik Wesselius, who visited Luxembourg during their campaign, also confirmed this pattern: 'I did not go to France. ... My French is not that good. ... In Luxembourg there were people from France going and leafleting at doors. It is easier, they share the language. It would make no sense to get a Frenchmen here to campaign, there is too much cultural difference.'³¹ International Secretary of the PvdA Marije Laffeber added: 'The relationship between the Netherlands and France is okay ... but we are not having the same debates. France has more of a Latin culture, we have been Protestant for centuries, and they have been Catholic. There is a difference between these cultures in Europe. Our orientation is more towards the UK or Scandinavia'.³² Michiel van Hulten, director of the civil society Yes campaign, the Foundation for a Better Europe, also mentioned that they had relatively more connection with the UK.³³ He added: 'In the EU, they usually discuss with us, it is also the language which makes it easier'.

In France, indeed, the interviewees highlighted this factor as a facilitator of cooperation with Luxembourg. Pierre Khalfa from the ATTAC explained that they had invited people from other countries only if they spoke French.³⁴ Similarly Yves Salesse, the co-President of the Copernic Foundation, mentioned that he was invited to Luxembourg but not to the Netherlands due to the language problem.³⁵

³⁰ Interview, 8 April 2008.

³¹ Interview, 4 November 2008.

³² Interview, 22 October 2008.

³³ Interview, 30 January 2009.

³⁴ Interview, 22 September 2008.

³⁵ Interview, 17 September 2008.

In turn, both the Yes and No campaigners in Luxembourg stated their preference to invite French speakers. The Yes campaigners invited the former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard and the Franco-German Greens MEP Daniel Cohn-Bendit. The left-wing No campaigners similarly invited highly influential French politicians such as Henri Emmanuelli, José Bové, Yves Salesses, Raoul-Marc Jennar, and Francine Bavay. Henri Wehenkel of The Left said: 'The Netherlands is far, we don't know what happens there. We only look at France and Germany.... The No Committee brought many famous French speakers. ... May be from the Netherlands too but there is the problem of language. French politicians are well known here'.³⁶ In fact, the LSAP protested the invitation of these French No campaigners. Party Chairman Alex Bodry stated that it was 'inadmissible for a leader from the French Socialist Party to come to Luxembourg to defend a position that was contrary to that democratically adopted by the Luxembourg Socialists'.³⁷ The invited campaigners were therefore highly visible in the campaign, both helping Luxembourgish campaigners in shaping their debate and interacting directly with voters.

Common Media Channels

This channel contributes to transfer of campaign themes across borders, thereby leading to an increased presence of campaign arguments from the other states. Once again, these transfers go beyond the campaigners and reach voters as well. Among the 2005 TCE referendums, only Luxembourg and France shared media channels. Luxembourgers receive French television channels and newspapers on a daily basis. Regarding television, the local broadcaster RTL operates six channels, but only one in Lëtzebuergesch (Stell, 2006). The national television channel airs only from 6pm to 8pm, while the rest of the channels are received directly from France and Germany. Tom Graas, then director of the RTL television news, stressed that not only the results and aftermath of the French referendum but also the

³⁶ Interview, 15 April 2008.

³⁷ Quoted in (Deloy, 2005).

French referendum campaign itself was covered remarkably in the media: 'I think that if we had had another referendum before the French, we would have seen a Yes of 80%.'³⁸

Both the Yes and No campaigners (18 out of 21) in Luxembourg mentioned that Luxembourgers received most of the discussion on the subject from other countries because of the limited airtime of the RTL. Abbes Jacoby, Secretary General of The Greens' Parliamentary Group, said: 'In Luxembourg people get informed not only from national news but also from TV stations of France, Germany and Belgium. ... We also get French newspapers. ... The background information they get is not from Luxembourg, but from other places'.³⁹ François Biltgen, Chairman of the Christian Social People's Party (CSV) and the Minister of Labor and Employment, similarly stated that the referendum debate in Luxembourg became largely run by foreign press due to the French influence.⁴⁰ Thus, the debate in Luxembourg was significantly exposed to the 'French reading' of the subject. CSV MP Laurent Mosar highlighted this issue in relation to a particular No campaign theme concerning the liberalization of public services:⁴¹

Luxembourgers are mostly employed in the public services. That was also an issue here, but perhaps not like in France. It was not a major issue. ... The problem was that Luxembourgers watched French and German TV, especially French TV. Those arguments used in France were finally also used in Luxembourg. The situations in France and Luxembourg are different but people watch TV, hear something on liberalization of public services and think that this is happening in Luxembourg too.

The campaign debate was therefore not limited to arguments originating from Luxembourg. Both the Yes and No campaigners in Luxembourg also underlined the importance of the French media in relation to the shared language. Jacques-Yves Henckes, Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR) MP, said that

³⁸ Interview, 17 November 2008.

³⁹ Interview, 10 April 2008.

⁴⁰ Interview, 12 November 2008.

⁴¹ Interview, 14 November 2008.

their No campaign benefited from the French campaign as Luxembourgers followed the French debate, adding that 'people did not follow the Dutch debate as there was no language connection'.⁴² Charles Goerens, Democratic Party (DP) MP, also explained that although the Netherlands was their first ally after WW2, their culture was closer to France and that people watched French television, finding Dutch less understandable.⁴³ Similarly, LSAP MP Ben Fayot highlighted the importance of the French No campaign websites, which Luxembourgers followed closely.⁴⁴ While such media exposure might be a common problem for campaigners in a globalizing world, Luxembourg's peculiar media set up has magnified the impact of the foreign press, by bringing in the French analysis of the TCE. Luxembourgish citizens were directly exposed to French argumentation.

Implications for Referendum Results

Diffusion matters because strategic arguments are shown to affect public opinion. Even though Luxembourg approved the referendum, as opposed to the outcome in France, it is important to look at the Luxembourgish percentages closely. The No vote intentions went from a very low initial level to a significant 43%, which is remarkable for the highly pro-EU Luxembourg. A TNS-ILRES study found interesting evidence of diffusion.⁴⁵ During the focus group meetings, where people were asked to elaborate on their reasons to vote positively or negatively, Luxembourgers confused Luxembourgish unemployment figures with French figures. This confirms that Luxembourg's referendum debate was heavily subjected to the French argumentation on the TCE due to the diffusion channels. Similarly, the

⁴² Interview, 17 April 2008.

⁴³ Interview, 10 November 2008.

⁴⁴ Interview, 14 November 2008.

⁴⁵ Interviews with Dr. Philippe Poirier on 17 April 2008, and Charles Margue – Director of the TNS-ILRES – on 18 November 2008.

geographical distribution of the negative vote supports the argument. Of the nine communes of Luxembourg that voted against the TCE, seven of them are located right at the border with France.⁴⁶

Yet, understanding whether borrowed arguments influenced referendum results requires further research. While borrowing from the previous successful campaigns is an advantage for the campaigners in second-mover states, both the modular action and policy transfer literatures warn that these arguments should be adapted to the national framework to increase their potential (Dolowitz et al., 1996; Newmark, 2002; Snow et al., 1999; Soule, 2003). In this research, although the ATTAC France was seen as a reference point through their early analysis of the TCE among the three adopter countries, it was only the Dutch campaigners who paid significant attention to local tailoring of these arguments. The far left SP strategically linked these anti-globalization arguments to the loss of sovereignty in a European 'super-state'. The SP Secretary-General Hans van Heijningen explained that far left messages would not carry them to 51% in the Netherlands and strongly emphasized the work that had to be done nationally.⁴⁷

Direction of diffusion is another question that requires attention. In this research, chronological order appears to be the main factor designating French campaign as the source because the French campaigners were the ones that prepared the first analysis of the TCE. In the modular action literature, McAdam (1995) distinguishes between initiator movements, which set a protest cycle in motion, and spin off movements, which are sparked by the initiators. Similarly, the policy transfer literature highlights the dominance of the United States in the transfer of election strategies due to its global ideological hegemony (Dolowitz et al., 1999; Needham, 2010). An important question is whether there is an element of size as well (e.g. Linos, 2011; Ramos et al., 2007). Would Luxembourg be able to serve as the source campaign? This has crucial policy implications. In 2005, the fact that Spain held the first

⁴⁶ (Hausemer, 2005). Socioeconomic status could however be an alternative explanation for this concentration.

⁴⁷ Interview, 11 April 2008.

referendum was not a coincidence (Torreblanca, 2005).⁴⁸ Spain's strong pro-EU attitude was envisioned to build a positive momentum yet this was not achieved.

Conclusion

In contrast with the assumption in most social scientific analyses, cases are not always independent from each other. However, diffusion depends on the existence of channels. The degree to which the campaigners are in contact, discuss campaign themes, and borrow from one another depends on these channels. Collaborative networks exist all around in Europe and facilitate 'shallow' diffusion between campaigners by providing platforms to meet and share campaign-related information. Nonetheless, a 'deeper' version of diffusion, which imports arguments from other campaigns, is visible among states that speak the same language and share media channels, involving not only campaigners but voters as well.

Can the findings of this research be generalized? The literature highlights the exceptionality of the 2005 referendums. Closa (2007) argues that the European arena created a norm in favor of holding referendums during that period. Wimmel (2013) stresses that the TCE referendums were the first EU referendums to be held in Spain, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. While these are indeed exceptional circumstances, this does not mean that diffusion is limited to the four cases. Europe is full of states that share similar cultures, media sources, institutional and personal connections. In a globalizing world, we are bound to see more and more interactions among these states. Had Germany or Belgium held their referendums before Luxembourg, these states would probably have had a similar impact as they also share peculiar diffusion channels with Luxembourg. Focus group data showed that Luxembourgers complain about the doubling of prices after the Euro in the exact same way as Germans discuss it; referring to 'Teuro', a German term combining 'teuer' – expensive – with 'euro' (Dumont et al., 2007).

⁴⁸ Interview with José Ignacio Torreblanca, 6 October 2008.

As discussed, Jahn and Storsved (1995) point to the importance of sequencing among Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Norway in their accession referendums. Similarly, in the first Irish referendum on Lisbon treaty in 2008, Holmes (2008) highlights the UK's influence on Ireland via common media channels. The UK Independence Party has even visited Ireland on several occasions during the Lisbon campaigns, participating actively in the Irish debate and distributing leaflets advising a No vote. My interview data also shows some collaboration among the Dutch, French and Irish No campaigners via the EP groups during the same period.⁴⁹ Diffusion effects can be observed across Europe, thus analyzing cross-case influences is absolutely vital to understanding referendum campaigns, and indirectly to understanding the referendum outcomes.

List of Interviewed Organizations

Spain:

- Spanish Socialist Workers' Party
- Popular Party
- Convergence and Unity
- Basque Nationalist Party
- United Left
- Republican Left of Catalonia
- Initiative for Catalonia Greens
- Basque Solidarity
- ATTAC
- Social Forum
- Ecologists in Action

France:

- Union for a Popular Movement
- Union for French Democracy
- Socialist Party
- The Greens
- National Front
- French Communist Party
- Revolutionary Communist League
- ATTAC,
- Copernic Foundation

⁴⁹ Interviews with Harry Van Bommel, 8 April 2008 and 31 October 2008; Christophe Beaudouin, 15 September 2008; Daniel Cirera, 10 September 2008; Francine Bavay, 22 September 2008.

- Notre Europe
- The Gaullist 'Group for a Confederation of the States of Europe to Say No'

The Netherlands:

- Christian Democratic Appeal
- People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
- Democrats 66
- Dutch Labor Party
- GreenLeft
- Socialist Party
- Christian Union
- ATTAC
- 'ConstitutionNo'
- Pim Fortuyn List and Young Fortuynists
- Livable Rotterdam

Luxembourg:

- Christian Social People's Party
- Democratic Party
- Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party
- The Greens
- Alternative Democratic Reform Party
- The Left
- ATTAC
- No Committee
- National Union of Luxembourgish Students
- Social Forum

European No Campaign

Interview Questionnaire

- What were the main issues/arguments raised in your campaign for/against the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe?
- Why did you specifically choose these issues?
- Did your party/organization have a campaigning strategy?
- Was your campaign affected by the referendum campaigns in other countries?
- If so, which countries were they? Why? How was your campaign affected?
- Did you meet with any campaigners from other countries?
- If so, which networks facilitated such meetings? Were these meetings regular?
- Did you have any contacts with the campaigning groups in other countries through transnational party groups or NGOs?
- Did you use the issues/arguments raised in other countries' campaigns?

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		States that were connected via this channel	Number of interviewees who mentioned the importance of this channel
Shared language/culture		France-Luxembourg	59 out of 85
Common media channels		France-Luxembourg	28 out of 85
Collaborative networks	EP groups	All four states	73 out of 85
	Anti-globalization network	All four states	
	Ad hoc European networks	All four states	
	Mobile communities	France-Luxembourg	

Table 1: Diffusion channels