

concept than the ‘Ever Closer Union’. To make an ungainly analogy, the preference for the former approach is replicated in the fragmented character of the otherwise quality book, which together with its high price make it more suitable for reference shelves of libraries than cover-to-cover ‘bing’ readers.

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Direct Democracy in the EU: The Myth of a Citizens’ Union, edited by S. Blockmans and S. Russack (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, ISBN 9781786609977); xi+453pp., £80.00 hb.

As the European Union slowly awakes from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing citizen discontent is anticipated for the years to come. Yet, this is nothing new under the sun for the EU. A decade of polycrisis already passed and triggered raised eyebrows in view of the European representative democracy. Together with a populist surge, it resulted in an increasing demand for more direct involvement of the public in decision making. This timely edited volume sheds light on European direct democracy instruments and aims to find a meaningful response to the problem of supporting bottom-up citizen empowerment amid multiple crises. Therefore, the book provides a significant analysis about past experiences in direct democracy in Europe and serves as a useful guidance for researchers who target the continued relevance of the subject after pandemic.

The book is made up of three parts with an explanatory introduction and a conclusion that identifies suggestions. The book’s first part describes the current EU-level mechanisms for direct democracy ranging from the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) to petitions, formal complaints, public consultations and citizens’ dialogues. The second part focuses on thematic issues such as European conventions, newly developed digital tools for facilitating dialogue with citizens and, last but not least, EU communication policy and the role of civil society. The most striking section of the book is the third part in which fourteen different country cases are evaluated by identifying their past experiences with public involvement, including a chapter covering the UK Brexit referendum, in which a demand for direct democracy combined with political interest strongly affected the direction of European integration.

The merger of qualitative and quantitative research methods points at a thorough investigation of the authors. Cases of national referendums, country specific ECI experiences and the usage of other direct democracy tools are supported by census data and survey results. The book also introduces the analysis of new digital mechanisms throughout Europe like the e-petition techniques. Yet, the lack of a theoretical and conceptual framework slightly overshadows the above-mentioned strengths. Concepts such as Europeanization could have been crucial, but are only vaguely explained and applied to the cases, which leaves the book too descriptive. While case studies proceed, the analysis focuses less on citizen participation in the EU-related matters, and turns more to national politics and dynamics.

Given that citizen discontent continues to grow within the EU, the central argument of the book is rather convincing, but also highly predictable. The authors argue that Europe’s journey towards direct democracy is far from being convincing in its present state. Similar

trends in different cases are in fact confirming this claim. Although people's interest in exploring direct democracy is evolving, citizens' often choose these mechanisms to punish elites, to show unrest and to damage the European project. Therefore, the present edited volume suggests a more complementary approach of direct and representative democracy in which cross-sectoral citizen participation is supported by new transparent instruments and in which national parliamentarians engage to steer the public for a more constructive debate.

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Elite Cohesion in Mediatized Politics: European Perspectives, by E. Mayerhöffer (Lanham: ECPR Press/Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019, ISBN 9781785522840); x+229pp., £65.00 hb.

Against the backdrop of political communication's overwhelming mediatization, technocrats and populists continue to surge across the Western world. In addition, inequality is increasing along with the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. As a result and side-effect, the 'elites' have come back to the forefront of popular and academic debate. In her timely book, Mayerhöffer takes an innovative approach and assesses the question of elite cohesion, focusing on a type of elite that has been somewhat unaddressed by the literature: the political communication elite.

Transcending political communication studies and elite research, the book addresses the balance in the relationship between members of the political and media elite creating, communicating, and disseminating political messages to the public. In doing so, the book offers a novel conceptual model through which to unpack and assess a highly complex relationship. In particular, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 offer an in-depth understanding of the relevant conceptual debates and provide a well-rounded and inclusive analytic model.

Empirically, the analysis draws from an impressive unique dataset of 1,500 surveyed elites across six European countries, which serves as a valuable comparative dimension that highlights the model's explanatory factors. Whereas Chapters 5 and 6 analyses address explicitly the model provided, Chapter 7 goes a step beyond exploring alternative explanatory dimensions. The analysis is systematic and thorough, establishing a new way to perspective in framing and assessing cohesion in the political communication elite and its variance across countries.

The book's implications, addressed in Chapter 8, offer a bird's eye view of this research and its impact on the broader debate. Indeed domestic factors impact elite consonance substantially. Specifically, social mobility (vertical and horizontal), the media systems' autonomy and variety, and the political systems' autonomy and variety; have an impact on the degree of cohesion between elites. Significantly, these factors impact how stable the cohesion is, not only its intensity. Countries where procedural consonance is higher such as Sweden and Germany seem to have more stable cohesion in contrast to countries such as France or Denmark. The chapter also highlights how further empirical work across additional European and non-European countries will provide a better assessment of variance and similarities.