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ARTICLE

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From the cultural and foreign policies of western European far-right parties to the European Union's 2015–2018 Work Plan for Culture – identifying and opposing nativism

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ABSTRACT

This article is framed by an interest in cultural policy in the context of shifting political trends and cultural governance. It begins by comparing the cultural and foreign policy proposals of a number of western far-right Eurosceptic parties (FN, PVV, UKIP), arguing that they reveal a set of shared assumptions regarding cultural identity and sovereignty. It then suggests that the European Union's 2015–2018 implementation of its motto ('United in Diversity'), emphasising the ideas of intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, did not question such nativist assumptions. Finally, proposing to imagine a relational cultural strategy incompatible with nativism, the article connects François Jullien's understanding of culture as something that is built around shared resources with Judith Butler's notion of performative agency. In doing so, the article contributes to the development of cultural policies that aren't methodologically nationalist.

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Introduction

After a period of increasing political integration in the European continent, the last few years have seen a resurgence in nationalist political forces. Yet despite the increasing tension between nationalism and internationalism in political debates, the role that is played by cultural policies and assumptions within these narratives remains mostly unexamined.

On the one hand, following increasing voter support for radical Eurosceptic political parties, political scientists have turned their attention towards understanding the appeal of such forces. This essay is partly aligned with scholarship interested in the importance of cultural factors in this regard, since studies suggest that economic variables do not always explain support for Eurosceptic parties. For example, among the European Union (EU) member states that were the most impacted following the 2008 financial crisis (such as Spain and Portugal), support for far-right parties remained low (Mudde 2014). Rather, some studies propose that voting choices can be increasingly explained by axes structured around disagreements on cultural values; for example it has been suggested that the increase of support for the far-right reflects a shift in the tension between libertarian-universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian values (Bornschier 2010; also see Jennings and Stoker 2017).

And yet, despite their explicit acknowledgement of the importance of cultural elements in the appeal of Eurosceptic parties, these discussions very rarely mention, let alone examine their cultural policies. Additionally, the relations between the cultural and foreign policies of such forces are yet to be analysed. Responding to these two gaps in the existing literature, the article begins by

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developing a textual analysis of the cultural and foreign policy proposals of a set of western European far-right parties (i.e., political parties whose ideologies include at least nationalism, law and order, and welfare chauvinism; Mudde 2000). Textual analysis was chosen due to the method's ability to uncover patterns in separate material, as well as its reliability and ease of replication. Although it is descriptive and hence unable to identify an explanation for the patterns that it uncovers, this method is particularly relevant in the context of cultural policy discussions. This is because it makes it possible 'to gather information about sense-making practices [...]. This can allow us to better understand the sense-making cultures in which we ourselves live by seeing their limitations, and possible alternatives to them' (McKee 2003, 14).

Applying this method to a number of far-right political programmes, the article uncovers that their understandings of cultural identity and sovereignty are united by nativist assumptions. Additionally, rather than being an optional dimension of nativism, the close reading of these programmes suggests that cultural assumptions are echoed throughout several policy areas, and are hence key to understanding the worldview of the western European far-right.

On the other hand, confirming McKee's point above, the second part of the article argues that the assumption of nativism wasn't explicitly questioned by the 2015–2018 Work Plan for Culture (European Union 2014, henceforth known as Work Plan). This reveals the continued influence of methodological nationalism in cultural policymaking at the European level despite the Work Plan's purposed aim to enact the EU's motto: United in Diversity. The article concludes by suggesting two principles that could structure a relational European cultural policy.

The choice to examine the cultural and foreign policies of three western European far-right parties and the EU's Work Plan for Culture resulted from the combination of several ideas. First, the cultural policies of far-right parties remain mostly unexamined in the literature, and this article confronts this gap. Second, in order to make an in-depth analysis possible, it was decided to limit the case studies to a selected number of parties that have been successful, in different ways, in some of the most powerful EU member states. Third, acknowledging what the literature on radical politics identifies as the profound differences between western and eastern European far-right parties, leading to their analysis in separate ways (see, e.g., Ellinas 2010; Millard 2004; Lee and Kim 2012), a choice was made to select the former and to examine the latter's cultural policies in future research. Fourth, considering the timeline of the Work Plan (2015–), and in order to examine ideas that coexisted in time, the article focuses on western European far-right parties that were successful in 2016 and 2017. To give an example, that is why the article doesn't mention the manifesto of Lega Nord, which achieved power following the Italian general elections in March 2018. Indeed, the election overlapped with the beginning of discussions regarding the New Agenda for Culture in early 2018. Since the narrative at EU level was already moving in another direction, and the main goal of the article is to examine the cultural assumptions of simultaneous discussions by nationalists and internationalists, examining the cultural policies of the Italian far-right was not deemed particularly relevant.

The article has several consequences. Firstly, identifying and discussing the common assumptions of cultural and foreign policies makes the broader values of western far-right parties clearer. Although the conclusions will be tested against other far-right parties in future research, this analysis already questions the traditional policy separation between those two policy fields. Secondly, joining the view that non-cultural policies also have implicit cultural purposes (Throsby 2009), the article suggests that having a better understanding of the cultural assumptions of radical parties (understood both in the strict sense—as cultural policies—and in the broad sense—as values) may contribute to better comprehending the appeal of their foreign policies, and vice versa. Thirdly, the article contributes to ongoing reflections regarding the development of cultural policies beyond the nation-state—a concern that is increasingly shared by theorists (De Beukelaer 2007) and policymakers alike (e.g. the EU's strategy for international cultural relations, European Union 2017) but hasn't yet resulted in the identification of principles that may guide such a process of inter-, supra- or, as I will argue, transnational policy development.

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Sovereignty, cultural identity and nativism—ongoing debates

Before advancing, it is important to briefly define the three central terms of the article. Sovereignty refers to the authority of a state to govern itself. Traditional definitions of the term (echoed, e.g., during the Brexit referendum campaign, The Economist 2016) associate it with the capacity to make decisions in full freedom from external control (Schmitt [1922] 2005). However, recent scholarship has questioned the association of the term with state independence. For example, Kal Raustiala affirms that the former is strengthened (and not diminished, as Schmitt's thinking would suggest) by a country's decision to join international organisations (Raustiala 2003). Rather than being threatened by the expansion of global governance, the author argues that this process allows states to increase their reach and that, in fact, 'international institutions are now the primary means by which states may [...] reassert or express their sovereignty' (860). The European Union, sharing inter- and supranational elements of governance that pool the sovereignty of its member states, is one of the examples discussed by Raustiala. However, responsibility for cultural action isn't pooled; rather, it remains a competence of the EU's member-states. Indeed, following the principle of subsidiarity, 'primary responsibility for cultural policy [remains] at the level of individual member-states. Any EU action [is] meant to supplement member-state policies, serving primarily as a means to encourage exchange and co-operation' (Barnett 2001, 12). As for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, although it remains a responsibility of its members, the decision-making procedure in this policy field includes a strong component of intergovernmental cooperation (European Parliament 2018). Sovereignty is a central topic of concern for the radical parties whose policies will be examined in the following section.

Radical left and right-wing European parties share strong criticisms, if not an altogether rejection of the European Union. In particular, they repudiate what they describe as its increasing and unnecessary concentration of power, which they view as constraining the ability of EU member-states to rule over their own affairs (see, e.g., Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004). This said, data from the European Election Study (2009–2014) and the European Social Survey (2008–2012) demonstrate that left-wing and left-right voters 'differ in [...] their motivations for being sceptical of the EU [...]. Euroscepticism among left-wing citizens is motivated by economic and cultural concerns, whereas for right-wing citizens Euroscepticism is solely anchored in cultural attitudes' (Elsas, Hakhverdian, and Brug 2016). That is, right-wing radical parties tend to oppose European integration because they consider that it endangers national sovereignty—a movement against which they mobilise narratives and policies around national identity—while left-wing radical parties tend to reject what they describe as the neoliberal project of the EU (Bornschier 2010; De Vries and Edwards 2009).

This division is confirmed in the cultural stances of these parties: while multiculturalism is explicitly rejected by the far-right, often in association with a repudiation of religious diversity (Jennings and Stoker 2017; Eltchaninoff 2018), the far-left is more likely to criticise what it sees as the marketisation of culture and the subsequent concentration of American (or American-inspired) cultural practices (regarding the latter, see Stevenson et al. 2015). And yet, there are some similarities that unite them: 'nationalism cuts across party lines and constitutes the common denominator of both radical right-wing and radical left-wing euroscepticism' (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, and Vasilopoulou 2012).

As for cultural identity, the definition provided by cultural theorist Stuart Hall combines two notions that tend to be discussed as separate—a traditional idea of identity, focused on stability; and a more recent understanding.[1] In a text reflecting on identity and the politics of representation in relation to the then emerging cinema of the Caribbean, Hall proposes that the term can be understood in two ways; in the first one, 'our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people", with stable, changing and continuous frames of reference and meaning' (1993, 223). He discusses this definition by referring to the experience of being subject to a dominant regime of representation under the British colonial regime. On the contrary, the second definition of cultural identity

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> recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* [...]. Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past (Hall 1993, 225).

The second definition suggests the possibility of cultural practices to 'constitute [...] new kinds of subjects' (Hall 1993, 237). This is reflected in the second part of the article.

Using the definition of a postcolonial thinker in an article that examines cultural policies of both the European Union (whose member-states, such as the countries of the three parties mentioned in the following section, include former colonial powers) and far-right actors (who oppose immigration and cultural diversity, namely from former colonies) has a purpose. Its aim is to explicitly position this article among existing debates around multiculturalism and cultural diversity (joining Vertovec and Wessendorf 2015). I do so by looking at the proposals of groups that reject the former and at a recent cultural strategy of the EU, which celebrates the latter. Additionally, by conceiving of culture as both predefined and continuously emerging, turned towards the past and the future, Hall's definition provides a relevant backdrop to consider the cultural vocabulary of the EU, whose actors repeatedly connect it with the institution's original aim—to maintain peace in the continent (e.g. O'Sullivan 2017)—and its potential for building a common identity in the present.

The next section will analyse recent programmes of radical parties to test to what extent a simultaneous analysis of their cultural *and* foreign policies uncovers shared assumptions regarding sovereignty and identity that wouldn't be otherwise evident. It will be argued that such an analysis contributes to discussions of nativism by suggesting that the cultural dimension of the latter is central in the worldview of western European far-right parties.

A recent overview of scholarship on and around nativist and xenophobic parties in Europe has defined nativism as 'a way to reshape the features and contours of an already established construction of national identity in order to exclude from nationhood people who have a legitimate claim to it' (Guia 2016, 6). The author identifies five constitutive but optional elements of nativism under conditions of cultural diversity and immigration: a fundamental threat; essential features and values in need of protection; culture as a zero-sum concept; priority for natives' rights; and a single narrative of belonging (12). In the context of this article, three of these analytical dimensions are particularly important. The idea of essential features and values in need of protection refer to policies that aim to 'preserve native cultural values (religious values, racial composition, ideological hegemony) (12). Culture as a zero-sum concept refers to proposals that: 'support only native culture; minimize non-native cultural uses of the public sphere; restrict cultural rights of non-native minorities; avoid multiculturalism and interculturalism' (12). Finally, with regard to the idea of a single narrative of belonging, Guia indicates the following ideas: 'nativists embody the real nation and thus "Natives" who embrace cultural diversity, cosmopolitanism or multiculturalism are traitors; natives who defend a civic nation with limited levels of mandatory acculturation are also endangering the nation' (12).

Rather than optional, the following section will suggest that cultural aspects are fundamental to understand the nativism of the western European far-right. Subsequently, the following section will propose that such nativism was not directly questioned by the EU's 2015–2018 Work Plan for Culture. This said, before advancing it is important to stress that nativism can also be 'embraced by mainstream right and centre-left sections of the political spectrum' (Guia 2016, 7). The article's focus on far-right Eurosceptic policies (and EU cultural narratives) should not suggest otherwise.

Understanding nationalism: the cultural and foreign policies of the FN, PVV and UKIP

In order to test my hypothesis regarding the interrelated understandings of sovereignty and cultural identity of western European far-right parties, this section will develop a textual analysis of the programmes of French Front National (National Front), Dutch Partij Voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom) and British UK Independence Party.

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Front National (FN)

The French Front National was founded in 1972,[2] uniting several nationalist movements, and was led by Marine Le Pen's father (Jean-Marie Le Pen) until 2011.[3] Known for his nationalist, anti-Muslim and antisemitic rhetoric, Jean-Marie Le Pen's passage onto the second round of the 2002 presidential election inspired popular unity in support of Jacques Chirac, who was subsequently elected French president. Marine Le Pen repeated this feat in 2017, achieving the second round of the presidential election—although she was ultimately beaten by Emmanuel Macron. Subsequently, in 2017 the FN got 8 out of 577 seats in the National Assembly.

In France, cultural policy is a competence shared with the country's regions. Yet this only partly explains the lack of a cultural policy in the FN's programme; rather, one can also induce from this absence the party's aversion to contemporary cultural practices (of which there is repeated evidence, Taleb 2015). Its proposals focused on heritage, indicating the party's high regard of past French culture. For example, the FN proposed to 'stop the policy of selling to foreigners and to private individuals palaces and national buildings' (Front National 2017, 16). This policy conveyed the idea that French identity is clearly distinguishable from that of foreigners—suggesting an exclusionary understanding of identity. Finally, among other ideas, the programme proposed to suppress the teaching of foreign languages in primary school and in higher education (15), suggesting that French language is at risk—if not under attack. Aiming to minimise non-native cultural uses of the public sphere, this suggests that the FN shares the assumption of culture as a zero-sum concept, while the rejection of a linguistically diverse education confirms the FN's support for a single narrative of belonging (following Guia 2016, 12).

The programme also made indirect references to cultural identity. Under the title 'defend the unity of France and its national identity', one could read Le Pen's aim to, namely, 'defend national identity, the values and the traditions of French civilisation' as well as to 'adorn permanently all public buildings with the French flag and remove the European flag'[4] (Front National 2017, 15). These points hinted at the FN's strong Eurosceptic dimension and also reflected what Guia identifies as the assumption of culture as a zero-sum concept (evident in the FN's proposed minimisation of the use of the public sphere by non-natives, paraphrasing Guia 2016, 12), as well as the party's single narrative of belonging (suggesting that the FN is the only party representing the true French nation; see Guia 2016, 12). Indirectly, they also suggested that native ideological hegemony is in need of protection (12).

Finally, with regard to Le Pen's foreign policy proposals for the 2017 presidential election, one could find them below the titles 'uphold respect towards France' and 'make France a major country in the world again' (Front National 2017, 19). The former included four points, namely, to quit NATO 'so that France is not engaged in wars that are not its own' (19) and to ensure 'an autonomous defense capacity' (19). As for the role of France in the world, the proposals included to 'return France to the role of a potency of stability and equilibrium' (19), as well as to strengthen the relations between francophone peoples.

These proposals also reflected what Guia identifies as a single narrative of belonging; particularly, the rejection of cosmopolitanism, evident in the idea that wars taking place abroad are not of concern to the French (Guia 2016, 12). Additionally, they suggested that France is disrespected in the international arena, engaging in unnecessary wars and unable to defend itself. In the FN's worldview, France's geopolitical position is unstable, and dependent on other countries to maintain its autonomy. As a result of this, the FN suggests that the country's authority in the international arena is under question.

Crucially, these policies reveal that there is a link between the FN's view of culture and that of sovereignty. Focusing on national identity can be understood as part of the FN's response to France's position as a former colonial potency in a shifting multilateral order. This was implicit in the language that was used in the programme ('inscribe', 'permanently'), which suggested certainty and strength. Broadly, the FN's cultural policies can be read as responding to the party's negative

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perception of France's changing geopolitical position—seen as moving from power to weakness and from autonomy to interdependence.

This analysis echoes the findings of Dimitri Almeida. Analysing campaign speeches and programmatic documents between 2007 and 2012, the author concludes that, rather than a post-radical Front National, such texts suggest the importance of a 'process of [...] integration of republican lieux de mémoire accompanied by a radicalization of its programmatic responses to European integration' (Almeida 2013). More recently, Almeida studied the cultural agendas of ten local governments with a FN majority, concluding that 'the cultural policies of the Front National remain deeply rooted in a nativist understanding of culture and a dirigiste approach that wilfully excludes postcolonial minorities' (Almeida 2017). By looking at its cultural proposals alongside its foreign policies, one is able to identify an unmovable definition of national cultural identity as the FN's response to a shifting geopolitical order.

In other words, both the cultural and the foreign policies of the FN reveal the importance of the principles of cultural stability, homogeneity and autonomy in the party's worldview.

Partij voor de *vrijheid (PVV)*

The Dutch Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) is a right-wing party founded in 2006 by Geert Wilders.[5] In 2006 it won 9 seats out of 150 in the general election, becoming the fifth largest party with parliamentary representation; subsequently, in 2010, the PVV won 24 seats, becoming the third largest party. In 2017, the PVV won 20 seats and became the second largest party in the Dutch House of Representatives.

The PVV is known for its anti-immigration, and particularly anti-Muslim stance, as well as its Euroscepticism; indeed, like the FN, it also defends leaving the EU. This is evident in the party's manifesto for the 2017 election: a one-page list composed of only 11 proposals. Among them were to 'De-"islame" the Netherlands'; to 'make the Netherlands more independent; leave the EU'; as well as 'No more money for development aid, windmills, art, innovation, broadcasting, etc.' (Partij van de Arbeid 2017). The reference to the end of funding for the cultural sector within such a short document reveals its importance within the PVV's worldview.

With regard to culture, the programme presented the sector as not in need of public support—a view that hinted at the strong suburban dimension of the PVV vote (Gent, Jansen, and Smits 2014), since suburban and rural voters are not as likely as those who live in cities to support culture. Indeed, the PVV tends to understand art as a 'leftist hobby' that endangers native culture and identity (Financial Times 2010). This suggestion was reinforced by the other topics that were mentioned alongside art, which (with the exception of windmills, a Dutch particularity) tend to be topics of concern to urban citizens. Additionally, the absence of a foreign policy (which it rejected altogether) confirmed the nationalist character of Geert Wilders' party (Vossen 2011).

To return to Guia's framework, these proposals demonstrate that the PVV shares the assumption of culture as a zero-sum concept. This is evident in the party's rejection of multiculturalism and of what it perceives as non-native uses of the public sphere (i.e. Islam). Additionally, the programme suggested that the cultural sector (perhaps due to its liberal tendencies) is in opposition to real Dutch nationhood, which confirms the importance of a single narrative of belonging in the PVV's worldview. Altogether, the document also suggested the belief that native cultural values should be protected (Guia 2016, 12)—albeit, and seemingly paradoxically, by rejecting funding to the cultural sector (understood in the strict sense).

Considering the PVV's rejection of funding for the arts (and religious diversity) in association with its desire to make the country more independent highlights the link between the PVV's rejection of cultural experimentation, its appreciation of cultural homogeneity and its support for foreign policies that are not shared with other EU member-states. These preferences are consistent with a complex understanding of nativism. Indeed, in her article, Guia writes that 'the growing salience of secularism [...] and gender equality to oppose Muslim Dutch and Muslim immigration

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are civic arguments that go beyond ethnic characteristics' (Guia 2016, 5). However, the party's support for cultural homogeneity and for full independence from other EU member-states suggests that the PVV's nativism is even more profound than what this quote suggests. Rather than denying the possibility that individuals may be (or become) Dutch because of their origin, ethnicity or religion, the PVV's nativism is founded on a broader rejection of all kinds of experimentation, interdependence and fluidity. In identifying Dutch cultural identity as exclusionary and fixed, it directly opposes Hall's second definition of the term (1993).

UK Independence Party (UKIP)

The UK Independence Party was established in 1991 as the Anti-Federalist League, an Eurosceptic party.[6] Renamed in 1993, the until then single-issue party developed a broader policy basis when Nigel Farage became its leader, focusing on anti-immigrant concerns shared by part of the white working class. This strategy led to increasing positive results in the 2013 local elections, the 2014 European elections (gaining 20 out of 73 British MEPs), and in the 2015 general election. UKIP's pressure on the Conservative party to hold a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union led to Brexit in 2016. Since then, the party's share of voting intentions has heavily declined (Merrick 2018).

In the British system, cultural and foreign policies are also competencies of the government. As such, UKIP's cultural and foreign policies were included in its manifesto. However, rather than focusing on cultural or heritage policy (as did the FN and, to a certain extent, the PVV), the programme addressed British cultural identity. Its cultural proposals argued that 'a multi-ethnic society can be a harmonious and successful one, but only if it is bound together by an over-arching attachment to Britain and British identity' (UKIP 2017, 35).

These statements reveal a tension within UKIP's worldview: on the one hand, it proposes that all should live under the same law, suggesting equality among British citizens; on the other hand, it states that there is indeed a hierarchy of values. This ambivalence, which echoes that identified by Sarah Proust in her analysis of the FN's stance on religion (2017), was further reinforced by the manifesto's rejection of multiculturalism, which it described as having 'fragmented British society by allowing new migrants to Britain to behave in exactly the same way as they would if they were still in their countries of origin' (UKIP 2017, 35). This suggested that British cultural identity is characterised by homogeneity (i.e., that cultural difference is necessarily not British) and that such an essential British value (as perceived by UKIP) is in need of protection (Guia 2016, 12). Moreover, UK's rejection of multiculturalism confirms its support for the assumption of culture as a zero-sum concept (UKIP 2017, 12), while its backing of acculturation reflects the party's assumption of a single narrative of belonging' (UKIP 2017, 12).

Echoing the PVV, foreign policy was only briefly mentioned. Nonetheless, the document included two related statements: first, that 'EU membership has weakened our foreign policy interests' (UKIP 2017, 42); second, that 'Brexit means stepping boldly out into a global world as an important actor on the world stage. Free [*sic*] to pursue a foreign policy prioritising British interests' (42). In reality, foreign policy is not a competence of the EU and the UK was always able to pursue its own. Nonetheless, these statements revealed UKIP's conflation of the UK's membership of a supranational entity on the one hand with the UK's supposed loss of national sovereignty on the other hand. This is reiterated by the language of the programme, which prioritised British interests, echoing the idea of a single narrative of belonging (Guia 2016, 12).

Reading these two types of policies together suggests that independence is a key value to UKIP, both in terms of British foreign affairs and in terms of cultural identity (which could explain the idea that individuals from ethnic minorities must commit to British identity, understood as having to overlap other affiliations). Moreover, the assumption that cultural difference is incompatible with Britishness is predicated on the association of the latter with the ideas of homogeneity and permanence.

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Altogether, the analysis reveals that the programmes of these three far-right parties shared a set of assumptions regarding the notions of identity (reflected in their cultural policies) and sovereignty (evident in their foreign policies).

On the one hand, that is internally, culture is seen by these parties as having to be protected from actors or influences that are perceived to be corrupting the native (French, Dutch or British) identity. Cultural identity is, they suggest, immutable and stable, and hence harmed by processes of transformation initiated or accelerated, namely, by immigrants. Furthermore, far-right parties are weary of cultural actors: the latter's work, celebrating experimentation, directly opposes the normative assumptions of such political forces. On the other hand, i.e. externally, national sovereignty is understood as being threatened by the existence of inter- or supranational forms of cooperation with other countries. As such, the definitions of cultural identity and sovereignty of these three parties can be understood as two sides of the same coin, echoing a nativist understanding of the nation-state.

To give some examples, the rejection of the EU flag in heritage monuments by the FN, of financial support to cultural actors and institutions by the PVV, and of ways of living that aren't bound by an explicit commitment to British identity by UKIP suggests that the cultural policies of western European far-right parties are inseparable from their perception that the national sovereignty of their countries is under threat. Additionally, the far-right's policies in the field of culture are strongly related with other policy areas, such as education. As such, scholars of far-right studies would gain from expanding their analyses of the stances of these parties regarding immigration policy and multiculturalism into the realm of cultural policy.

United in diversity? Cultural nativism at the European level

In light of these findings, I now propose to reflect on the assumptions underlying the EU's cultural strategy.

Although a detailed description of the legal and institutional background of the EU in the cultural domain is beyond the focus of this article, it is important to mention that article 151 of the Maastricht Treaty (officially known as the Treaty on European Union 1992), provides a basis for EU action that encourages, supports and supplements the activities of member-states, 'while respecting national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore' (European Union 1992). This was a significant change from the Treaty of Rome, which instituted the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957. Despite referring in its preamble to the potential of culture to unite people, it did not contain an article dedicated to the sector. The fact that these two treaties form the constitutional basis of the EU highlights the ambivalent position of culture in it.

As a result of this, despite having competence to act in the field of culture since 1992, this policy domain remains a competence of the member-states following the subsidiary clause. The latter restricts the EU 'proposals and financial support for cultural cooperation between the member-states, possibly with some supplementary actions; that is, specifically excluding any interventions, or EU-initiated reform or standardisation' (Gordon 2010, 102). Nonetheless, European actors and institutions repeatedly state that culture is one of the policy areas that can reinforce an existing common European identity (Schunz 2012). This reflects the contradictory character of the EU's cultural narratives, institutional frameworks and programmes (as identified in Gordon 2010, 104).

This is evident in the transference of the Open Method of Coordination to the cultural sector with the aim to 'promote coordination and best practice exchanges between the member-states' (Staiger 2009, 11). However, scholars disagree regarding the impact of this method. On the one hand, some argue that, despite the lack of clarity of its mandate and the lack of expertise of its members, the 'process allows cultural cooperation between Member States to become more organised' (Psychogiopoulou 2017, 243). On the other hand, 'while the OMC may be successful at creating opportunities for exchange, this does not necessarily translate into concrete outcomes'

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(Mattocks 2017, 11). More broadly, scholars are also divided in how they evaluate the use of culture by the EU's institutions—interpreting it either as a technocratic instrumentalisation of the sector (Shore 1993) or as a recognition of its potential to contribute to building a common identity through programmes such as the European Capital of Culture (Sassatelli 2009).

Nevertheless, in the next pages, I will suggest that the implementation of the motto United in Diversity through the EU's 2015–2018 Work Plan for Culture was compatible with nativist assumptions. This was made possible by the coexistence of contradictory understandings of the relation between culture and citizenship in the Work Plan. Such an ambivalence has been discussed in detail by Uta Staiger, who analysed the semantic clusters through which culture and citizenship are mentioned in policy documents of the EU, reflecting its gradual integration process. Such clusters are

> the ontological, the intercultural and the participatory. If the first harnesses culture to address the EU's 'legitimacy deficit' by promoting a European demos, the second shows how these are complemented with new policy concerns emerging in the context of transnational migration. The third in turn focuses on culture as a platform for citizens' agency through participation in political and deliberative processes (Staiger 2009, 1).

The Work Plan had as its main goals to enhance cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, to nurture the potential of culture as a catalyst for creativity (discussed in detail in Mattocks 2017), and to place culture as an important component in international relations. However, the implementation of the motto unwittingly reinforced the differences that it purported to aim to overcome. Indeed, the idea of intercultural dialogue was used to support projects to strengthen 'the social, cultural, political and economic integration' (European Commission, n.d.) of groups often understood as Other, namely by the far-right parties surveyed earlier—for example, migrants. By suggesting that dialogue was being facilitated between cultures, the Work Plan reiterated that difference. In a similar manner, its celebration of cultural diversity implied that cultural practices are non-evolving (Romainville 2016).

Indeed, although Guia identifies intercultural action as one of the ideas that are rejected by nativist forces, the notion of intercultural dialogue is compatible with the assumption of culture as a zero-sum concept. That is, while I acknowledge Zapata-Barrero's points regarding the potential of interculturalism to promote exchanges (2017), I disagree that such relations imply cultural transformation (Henze 2017, 10) and hence necessarily question nativist cultural narratives. That is, and to return to Guia's framework, the principle of cultural diversity does not question the idea of a single narrative of belonging.

These statements are informed by Welsch's discussion of multiculturalism and interculturalism as models that essentialise cultures as separate (1999): one can only unite what is *separated*; and one can only establish dialogue between cultures if they are understood as *different*. Intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity suggest that cultures and cultural practices are independent and stable. As such, these principles implicitly magnified the differences that they explicitly seeked to oppose and failed to reflect the first part of the United in Diversity motto—what *unites* different European peoples and cultures. In other words, the nativist understanding of cultural identity that was present in the programmes of the far-right parties discussed earlier was not explicitly rejected by the EU's cultural implementation of its motto during the same period.

More broadly, such a concern with intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity also reflected the nation-centric basis of international relations. To return to Gordon, this can be read as an unintended consequence of the simultaneity of elements of subsidiary and federalism, which have been '(*ab*)used by member state governments almost as a justification for defending nationalism and control' (Gordon 2010, 112–3) in the cultural domain.

This could be solved by shifting the Work Plan's goal from fostering *intercultural* dialogue to promoting *transcultural* exchanges and diversity. While multiculturalism highlights the existence of and the exchanges between multiple cultures within a nation-state, interculturalism stresses the

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idea of exchanges between existing cultures, and transculturalism underlines the invention of a common culture.[7] Furthermore, the idea of a transcultural Europe explicitly rejects an integrationist cultural policy agenda (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou 2006)—which is evident in the cultural policies of the FN and UKIP.

By suggesting that the EU's cultural implementation of the United in Diversity motto could enact a transcultural understanding of cultural identity, I am proposing that this movement could contribute to solving the coexistence of contradictory models of citizenship in the EU's approach to culture. This ambivalence not only fails to directly confront nativist assumptions but could also be potentially used by Eurosceptics, echoing Le Pen's strategy of 'enlisting a strong civic culture for nativist purposes (Mondon 2014; cit. in Guia 2016, 5). In other words, I am suggesting that such a transcultural strategy would directly oppose an exclusionary deployment of culture.

At this point, it is important to clarify the links between nativism, identity and citizenship. Far-right parties reject sharing sovereignty and cultural identity with other member-states because they see the latter as Others, rather than as part of an evolving community. In this static understanding of identity, the French, the British and the Dutch do not and never will share more than what separates them. Returning to Guia's work makes the significance of this rejection clear. Referring to the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism (Özkirimli 2005, 23 cit in Guia 2016, 5), the author stresses that nativism 'can be premised on ideological or cultural features, that is, along civic rather than ethnic lines' (Guia 2016, 1). My analysis of the cultural and foreign policies of far-right parties confirms the nativist association of the civic with the cultural and vice versa. At the same time, as I will explain below, even if the EU's narrative suggests a participatory form of citizenship (echoing a republican framework), the ideas of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue that were so central in the Agenda presuppose a communitarian understanding of culture and identity.

Ricard Zapata-Barrero's discussion of the liberal, communitarian and republican citizenship traditions and their concomitant models of cultural citizenship (2016) delineates the differences between these models. While the first and second models have a passive understanding of citizenship, the third model differs in its active understanding, suggesting that citizenship emerges out of an active, gradual process of becoming through actions that are civic-minded (Zapata-Barrero 2016, 543). With its unquestioned focus on national cultural practices and identities, the Work Plan's implementation of the United in Diversity motto reflected the communitarian understanding of citizenship of the EU's member-states. Rather, if it were mainly inspired by the republican model, the Work Plan would 'encourage the devotion of public space to promoting sociability […] and a sense of community [and] develop participatory and creative capacities for making citizenship' (Zapata-Barrero 2016, 545).

Although Zapata-Barrero doesn't explicitly mention nativism in his article, one can read it as suggesting the opposition of the republican framework to this idea. Indeed, a republican model of cultural policy necessarily rejects the exclusion of individuals based on their preexisting differences; rather, its focus lies on building a community.

In the next pages, I propose to identify two principles to structure a republican cultural strategy at EU level. While there have been attempts to think about how to build a cultural policy within the nation-state that rejects methodological nationalism (De Beukelaer 2007), such thinking at the level of the EU remains underdeveloped. What would a transnational reading of the United in Diversity motto that didn't crystallise a zero-sum, exclusionary understanding of cultural identity look like? What would be the underlying principles of a European cultural strategy of not only differences but also affinities—one not nativist but inclusive, not diverse but *united*?

I will suggest two ideas to begin to address these questions: culture as a shared resource (which directly opposes the assumption of culture and identity as zero-sum concepts) and performative agency (which rejects single narratives of belonging) proposed by philosophers François Jullien and Judith Butler, respectively. In common, the authors can be read as sharing constructivist understandings of culture and identity, echoing two recommendations included in Markus

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Prutsch's recent study for the European parliament's CULT Committee on European identity (2017): to recognise 'identity as an elusive and intrinsically constructive concept' (2017, 35) and to 'revise existing identity policies with a view to strengthening bottom-up approaches' (2017, 37).

François Jullien is a French philosopher known for his work on Chinese and Greek cultures. In 2016, motivated the far-right's perception of Islam as imperilling French culture, Jullien wrote a short book reflecting on the idea of cultural identity. In *Il n'y a pas d'Identité Culturelle* (2016, translatable to *There is no Such Thing as a Cultural Identity*), the author argues provocatively that French culture does not exist. Moreover, Jullien suggests replacing a focus on cultural identity, which implies and values homogeneity (one of the key assumptions of cultural nativism) with the idea of cultural resources, which can be exploited flexibly and put in relation. That is, rather than cultural identities and the differences between them, the philosopher argues that one should focus on the *écarts*, the *gaps*—a term that suggests that the space within a divide can be overcome. Highlighting the *differences* between two cultural references stresses the strengths and weaknesses of one against the other; rather, focusing on the gaps between them, the *écarts*, places the work of one reference in relation to the other, making it possible to identify their differences and similarities.

Crucially, the author suggests that this relational approach can be the basis to understand culture as a shared resource with which one can experiment (Jullien 2016, 79–93), conveying culture as something that can be transformed and taken elsewhere. That is, Jullien suggests that one speak of culture as a crisscrossing of overlapping *écarts* between (artistic, philosophical, musical…) references, based on which it is possible 'to inaugurate, building on the inventive power of *l'écart*, an intense common' (Jullien 2016 93).

This approach could be reflected in the EU's cultural strategy, leading to a pooling of cultural references that would expand their reach. While several aspects of EU support for the cultural sector would be compatible with this approach (e.g. translations, international cooperation, touring…), they aren't yet structured around an understanding of identity that rejects cultural nativism.

A text by Judith Butler on the notion of performative agency (2010) helps one to imagine ways to enact such a relational and constructionist understanding of identity through cultural practices. The philosopher defines the performative as a method though which individuals and groups can build and assert their political positions.[8] Among other work, she has moved the term into discussions about the emergence of transnational actors, echoing Arendt's aim to imagine the shape of 'non-nationalist modes of belonging' (Butler and Spivak 2007, 50).

For example, Butler writes that the conceptual distinction between the economic and the political constitutes in itself a process of exclusion (Butler 2010, 149). In an analogous manner, by *not* performing European cultural identity as an active process of becoming, it could be argued that the cultural strategy of the EU sustains the naturalised association of culture with the nation-state. This preempts a change of threshold from the national to the international level and, for that reason, from the intercultural to the transcultural as the benchmark against which identity is imagined, named and lived.

This change could be enacted through cultural practices, projects and strategies that affirm European cultural identity as a complex weave of references, relations and gaps (to use Jullien's terminology), enacting what Butler calls 'performative agency' (2010). In this text, she gives two examples that are relevant in the context of the tension that characterises the United in Diversity motto. One of them is Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), in which the philosopher decides to sentence Eichmann to death. Eichmann had been judged by a representative of the Israeli nation; however, Arendt argues that the judgement should have taken place 'for the Jews, as […] for any other minority […]. Equality […] works through differentiation itself' (Butler 2010, 157).

Arendt's call for action in the name of all cultural minorities is a performative act that affirms the normative limits of the nation-state. Translated to the contemporary European context, the idea that performative acts open possibilities that are hitherto unimaginable suggests the potential of a cultural strategy that would foster spaces of transnational encounters and, through this process, would gradually lead to a European pooling of cultural identity.[9] In doing so, such a strategy would

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contribute to enacting the transition from the national to the European level and from the intercultural to the transcultural.

Much work in the cultural sector provides clues as to how these principles could be translated into practice. To give some examples, and first, the sector witnesses a paradigm shift: arts managers are increasingly seen as hosts or catalysts that make possible certain conversations rather than top-down managers of excellence. This approach is evident in the selection criteria of the European Capitals of Culture, which include 'the involvement of local artists and cultural organisations' (European Commission 2017b, 16) as well as 'the local population and civil society' (European Commission 2017b, 20). In this not difficult to imagine iterations thereof inspired by Jullien's understanding of exchanges around cultural references from the European continent.

Second, and in order to successfully perform a transnational cultural identity, one must take into consideration the ownership of these programmes to guarantee broad participation and representation, namely by rejecting their top-down design, as well as the patterns of exclusion that characterise participation in cultural activities. Indeed, recent publications by the EU highlight an increasing concern with participatory governance in the cultural sector. However, these documents suggest an assumption of consensus (see, e.g., the OMC's report on participatory governance of cultural heritage, European Commission 2018).

Although a relational plural policy would focus on the building of similarities, it should nonetheless recognise conflict and differences of power, which it would otherwise reinforce. Indeed, and crucially, Jullien's understanding of culture as a shared resource doesn't assume the immediateness of understanding; rather, it suggests an effort to *try* to understand each other. Reflecting the EU's multileveled governance, a relational cultural policy would share elements of what Singh and Flyverbom call the strategy of 'performative mobilisation' used by transnational movements whose approaches 'highlight agent-driven, "performative" efforts and interactions involving contestation over the meanings and effects of participation' (Singh and Flyverbom 2016, 695).

Conclusions: a relational cultural policy

Despite their opposition in the nationalism–internationalism spectrum, the article uncovered that Eurosceptic politicians and EU policymakers can share nativist assumptions of culture. First, the comparison of the cultural and foreign policies of the programmes of western European far-right parties in Europe revealed that the ways how they understand identity and sovereignty are related—suggesting a self-reinforcing understanding of the two notions. This finding is consistent with the fact that all existing far-right parties in the European Union are Eurosceptic (albeit in different ways and to different degrees; see Vasilopoulou 2010). Second, the paper argued that the underlying principles of the EU's 2015–2018 Work Plan did not question a nativist understanding of cultural identity. In order to begin a reflection on the form that an alternative *relational* cultural strategy would take, the article proposed two principles to pool the cultural references of the EU's member-states.

More broadly, this article was framed by the tension between the vocabulary of cultural policy and contemporary cultural experiences. As such, it joins De Beukelaer, who argues in favour of replacing a methodologically nationalist cultural policy (De Beukelaer 2017). To do so, he draws inspiration in Kwame Appiah's (2007) discussion of cosmopolitanism as a form of global belonging. However, even if both the author and Appiah recognise the importance of local connections and situated belonging, it is difficult to dissociate the goal of a cosmopolitan cultural policy (to emphasise interconnectedness) from the fact that this philosophical model is often discussed in ways that reject the significance of individual affiliations (Harvey 2009). Rather, the relational model proposed in this article acknowledges different forms of attachment and entanglement (Welsch 1999). In other words, a relational cultural policy recognises the contingency of nation-states; as such, it is constructionist. However, it does not deny their legitimacy, that is, it rejects absolute relativism. A refusal of methodological nationalism should not be confused with a repudiation of the nation-state altogether.

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Notes

1. For more on the relation between culture and identity in the European Union, see Demossier (2007).
2. In June 2018, the party's name was changed to Rassemblement National (National Rally). The article employs the name that was in use when its 2017 manifesto was published.
3. For more on the party, see Eltchaninoff (2018).
4. This translation, as all others in this article, is my own.
5. More on the party can be found at Vossen (2016).
6. For the history of the party, see Ford and Goodwin (2014).
7. See Benessaieh (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of the differences between these terms and their main origins.
8. Originally imagined as something that could be used vis-à-vis sovereign regimes of power (Butler and Athanasiou 2013).
9. This has been recognised by the European Commission in its Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture (European Commission, 2017a).

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