

# THE EU AND THE ALTER-GLOBALISATION MOVEMENT'S ACTORNESS

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*ABSTRACT: This article deals with two actors – the European Union and the alter-globalisation movement – and their mutual relationship regarding recognition. Both actors profile themselves internationally as environmental and human and social rights defenders; they both create their own discourses, e.g. through the dissemination of documents and declarations. On a general level these discourses are very similar and therefore there is an assumption that both actors could seek support from each other: for example, the alter-globalisation movement could seek EU support in combating neo-liberal economic doctrine, and the EU could seek the movement's support in urging global environmental protection. To present both actors and their discourses and mutual relations, various documents issued by them regarding economic, environmental-humanitarian and political topics are examined. As these documents also focus on the mutual support or disaccord between the two actors, the documents can show whether and in which sense they perceive each other as recognised actors.*

**KEYWORDS:** EU, Alter-Globalisation Movement, Actorness, Recognition, Discourse

## INTRODUCTION

We are at the end of the decade during which the alter-globalization movement has grown up, and in its discourse it has manifested demands such as participative democracy, global justice and universal human rights. At the same time, the European Union (EU) has profiled itself as an important international actor in the fields of environmental policy, human rights and social economy. According to their declared attitudes and values, the EU and the alter-globalization movement have a lot in common. In this text I would like to examine whether both the EU and the movement recognize each other as actors and in what sense: do they support each other in opposing neoliberal economic doctrine or do they stay in opposition

despite the common value paradigm?

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The aim of this text is to show in which issues and on what level there is an overlap of the EU and the alter-globalization discourse and in what sense these actors recognize each other. This should show us whether there is any interaction in terms of agenda setting or a paradigm shift between the two actors, whether there is a coalition potential regarding their opposition to the neoliberal economic doctrine, and whether this opposition builds on different sources or does not exist at all. We will be able to compare the perceptions of the same expressions in different discourses and thus understand the sources of the consonance or disagreement between the two actors.

Since I aspire to introduce the EU and the alter-globalization movement as two important actors who directly or indirectly influence the global governance system and its value basis through their discourses, I will try to focus on their actorness, i.e. their capability to act in a consistent and meaningful way. First, I will introduce the concept of actorness, which provides me with a theoretical basis for the study of the mutual recognition of the two actors. Then I will present a discursive analysis of 28 declarative documents focused on three issue clusters; in each cluster particular issues are examined in detail. In the first, economic cluster I focus on neoliberal globalization, free trade and social economy; in the second, environmental-humanitarian cluster the focal points are human rights, environmental protection and development; and in the third, political cluster I concentrate on transparency, accountability and participatory democracy. This analysis will give us a deeper insight into the examined issues and thus enable us to summarize and compare the concrete attitudes of the two actors on different levels; at the same time we will be able to see how the EU perceives the alter-globalization movement regarding these issues and vice versa.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

In accordance with the aim of this text I concentrate on two actors – the European Union and the alter-globalization movement – and their discourses. As the main research method, I use discursive analysis, through which I will try to refer to common elements present in the discourses of the EU and the alter-globaliza-

tion movement.<sup>1</sup> The study will deal with 9 basic issues (neoliberal globalization, free trade, social economy, human rights, environment protection, development, transparency, accountability and participatory democracy), which will be structured into 3 clusters: the economic, political and environmental-humanitarian clusters. In the analysis I concentrate on these issues because they represent specific value paradigms of both the EU and the alter-globalization movement for which these actors are recognized or attractive.<sup>2</sup> The issues repeatedly appear in declarations, statements and other documents published by the two actors.

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A total of 28 documents are analyzed in this text, 14 published by the EU and 14 released as a part of the WSF and the ESF between 2000 and 2010. The chosen period starts at the time of the visible rise of the alter-globalization movement (after the November 1999 Seattle demonstrations) and covers the following ten years, during which the alter-globalization movement's participants regularly met at World and European Social Forums. In the case of the EU, predominantly Green and White Papers were used but important treaties and declarations issued during these 10 years were also utilized. In the case of the alter-globalization movement, the documents were regularly published once a year (WSF) or once every two years (ESF). In each document, all particular issues are identified, analyzed and assigned to one of the clusters. Then it is possible to compare the declaratory attitudes of both the EU and the alter-globalization movement and thus refer to the consonance or clash between the two discourses. The hypothesis is that the EU and the alter-globalization movement have the same declaratory aims and even expressly support each other in their opposition to neoliberal globalization, and thus they recognize each other as actors. This hypothesis is based on the general awareness of the EU as an actor which defines itself as an international human rights advocate, environmental guardian and sustainable development puller<sup>3</sup> and the self presentation of the alter-globalization movement as a defender of human rights, the environment and social equality.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE ACTORNESS OF THE EU AND THE ALTER-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

In this article I understand the EU and the alter-globalization

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movement as actors and I use the actorness concept to study their mutual relationships. Actorness is the ability to express interests and defend these interests on the international field. In the case of the EU, this concept is used to describe its role as an international actor and its position between super powers in a globalized world.<sup>5</sup> It is a theoretical concept which is discussed within academic debates in terms of its four dimensions: legitimacy,<sup>6</sup> recognition,<sup>7</sup> framing<sup>8</sup> and attractiveness.<sup>9</sup>

In this article we will be mostly dealing with the EU as an actor recognized on the international field by the alter-globalization movement regarding the examined issues. Conceptions as Europeanization,<sup>10</sup> gravity centres,<sup>11</sup> normative power,<sup>12</sup> civilian power<sup>13</sup> or soft power<sup>14</sup> depict EU as a unique actor regarding the values it represents (both internally and externally) and the issues it promotes in the international arena. The EU is seen (and often perceives itself) as a leader in global environmental policy;<sup>15</sup> as an important player regarding human rights, humanitarian aid and development policies;<sup>16</sup> and as a source of inspiration for regionalism,<sup>17</sup> internal governance<sup>18</sup> and/or socio-economic models.<sup>19</sup> It is necessary to admit that there is certainly a gap between declarations and concrete actions,<sup>20</sup> which is one of the reasons for the friction between the EU and social movements, although their declared aims are very similar, which I will demonstrate on the analysis of the relevant documents.

The second actor whose discourse I will focus on is the alter-globalization movement, which is also sometimes labeled the anti-globalization movement, the global justice movement or the movement against neoliberal globalization.<sup>21</sup> On the international field the movement presents itself as an actor seeking for "another world"<sup>22</sup> or "another Europe"<sup>23</sup> in many respects, including those of human rights, peace, social equality, justice, a world without war, imperialism, and the hegemony of capitalism,<sup>24</sup> and it is also recognized as such by the actors in academic debates<sup>25</sup> and by international institutions (e.g. the World Bank).<sup>26</sup> According to the social movement's theories, the mobilization of the movement is connected with building a collective identity which is based on common values, common aims and a common enemy.<sup>27</sup> These values and positions will be observed in the documents published during the WSF and the ESF, including the focus on a concrete recognition

of the EU as an international actor in the documents.

## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

In the following paragraph I will go through three specified clusters and the issues they include. For each cluster, I will deal with the alter-globalization movement first and the EU second, and afterwards I will summarize the gained information in short concluding remarks.

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The economic cluster: neoliberal globalization, free trade and social economy.

In this area, statements which refer to local, regional or global economic issues are examined. The neoliberal globalization represents a process in which a specific set of instruments is used (deregulation, privatization, market liberalization, etc.), and it deeply changes the conditions of both global and national economies.<sup>28</sup> The current state of free trade is one of the consequences of this process, and due to its relation to the development of the "third" world, it is an important topic for both the movement and the EU. At the same time economic globalization undermines national states' social security systems and thus it can represent a threat for the EU's socio-economic model.<sup>29</sup>

## THE ALTER-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

Neoliberal globalization, global capitalism and the current state of free trade are in the centre of the alter-globalization movement's radical criticism; the movement claims a 'total rejection of the neo-liberal policies of globalization'<sup>30</sup> and opposition 'to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism'.<sup>31</sup> Neoliberal policies are seen as "destructive",<sup>32</sup> as they destroy 'the rights, living conditions and livelihoods of people'.<sup>33</sup> Moreover the sustainability of the current system is doubted: 'neoliberal globalization itself is in crisis: the threat of a global recession is ever present'.<sup>34</sup> The movement perceives globalization as a complex process with various consequences outside the economic area – e.g. in terms of social rights, environmental security and cultural aspects: 'We reiterate our opposition to the neoliberal system which generates economic, social and environmental crises and produces

war. Our mobilization against war and deep social and economic injustices has served to reveal the true face of neo-liberalism.’<sup>35</sup>

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The neoliberal free trade imposed by the WTO<sup>36</sup> is seen as unjust: ‘free trade is anything but free’.<sup>37</sup> Free trade agreements, including the FTAA, NAFTA, CAFTA, AGOA, NEPAD, Euro-Med, AFTA and ASEAN, are rejected while it is claimed that a new trading system should be able to guarantee ‘full employment, food security, fair terms of trade and local prosperity’.<sup>38</sup> The proposed economic model is a “social economy” which should contribute to ‘fair, mutual, democratic and equitable development’.<sup>39</sup> Although already in the first half of the decade, the ‘European order based on corporate power and neo-liberalism’ was criticized as leading to a weakening of human rights and a worsening of the state of the environment,<sup>40</sup> the European Union has been intensively mentioned only since the process of the creation and ratification of the “European Constitution”, which is labeled as a “neoliberal project”, began.<sup>41</sup>

*In recent years, the popular struggles against neo-liberalism and imperialism in the Americas and in other parts of the World have generated a crisis of legitimacy for the neo-liberal system and its institutions. The most recent expressions of this are the defeat of the FTAA in Mar del Plata and the Agreement for a European Constitution in France and Holland.*<sup>42</sup>

Thus, next to the IMF, WB or WTO, the ‘neo-liberal policies of the states and the European Union’<sup>43</sup> are also opposed – e.g. the Ministerial Declaration of the WTO in Hong Kong is supposed to be ‘the fruit of European Union and United States intimidation tactics’.<sup>44</sup> The European Union is seen to be like the IMF in the sense that it is an actor proposing economic measures with ambivalent social consequences:<sup>45</sup> ‘The policies of the EU based on the unending extension of competition within and outside Europe constitute an attack on employment, workers and welfare rights, public services, education, the health system and so on.’<sup>46</sup> This is understood as a retreat from the original values of the EU: ‘On the European level, we are witnessing a liberal and anti-social front on all domains... decisions of the European Court of Justice, dismantling of the Common Agricultural Policy, reinforcement of Fortress Europe against migrants, weakening of democratic and civil rights and growing repression, economic cooperation agreements.’<sup>47</sup> Concerning the internal economic issues, it is especially the Directive on services in

the internal market<sup>48</sup> and decisions on working time and migrant labor that lie in the centre of debate.<sup>49</sup> To sum up, in the eyes of alter-globalists the neo-liberal globalization leads to an unjust and unfair free trade system which is contrary to a social economy that should be able to guarantee full employment or local prosperity, and the EU is taking part in this neo-liberal project; the movement draws the line between itself and the EU, which is criticized along with the IMF and the governments for, e.g. enforcement of social spending cuts.<sup>50</sup>

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Considering the EU's economic actorness, one of the sources of the attractiveness of the EU is its socio-economic model, which is based on a specific value scheme and which for, e.g. Latino American countries represents an alternative to a neo-liberal economy.<sup>51</sup> The economic discourse of the EU pinpoints the social-market economy which contributes to the sustainable development of Europe and 'combines economic success and social responsibility':<sup>52</sup>

'National economic and social policies are built on shared values such as solidarity and cohesion, equal opportunities and the fight against all forms of discrimination, adequate health and safety in the workplace, universal access to education and healthcare, quality of life and quality in work, sustainable development and the involvement of civil society. These values represent a European choice in favour of a social market economy'.<sup>53</sup>

But the EU demonstrates its actorness outside the area of Europe as well. The Agreement for a European Constitution declares that the aim of the EU's external policies is, among others, to 'encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade'.<sup>54</sup> Such a defined aim is not in contradiction with neoliberal economic doctrine. Besides this, the Commission admits that the international trade policy of the EU is derived from the rules that agree with the agreements of the WTO about free trade and externally uses protective measures against free trade violation.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, at the same time the EU declares that 'striking the right balance between free trade and fair trade is crucial'.<sup>56</sup> The Commission recognizes that the difference between the rich

and the poor countries is growing: 'We must promote free and fair trade which will benefit not just Europe but the poorest countries as well.'<sup>57</sup> In this respect the proposal is made that a Globalization Adjustment Fund whose objective would be to balance the inequalities brought by globalization processes should be created.<sup>58</sup>

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Globalization is seen as both a challenge and a threat, especially regarding the competitiveness of the EU in its relations with China or India.<sup>59</sup> 'Globalization does not mean that if others get richer, we must get poorer. Prosperity is a dynamic concept. Globalization is the chance to increase the size of the whole cake, so that everybody gets a slice.'<sup>60</sup> Thus globalization is not understood as a process that should be fundamentally amended but rather as an unavoidable process to which the internal mechanisms of the EU should be accommodated ("modernization") so that the competitiveness of the European economy would be ensured. The perception of globalization is thus rather economic and one of the proposed reactions is to help those who have lost their jobs to find a new one.<sup>61</sup> A key to combatting the poverty is particularly the support of economic growth in developing countries instead of financial development aid.<sup>62</sup> This growth should be accompanied by investment support in targeted countries or by protection of socially disadvantaged people. According to the Lisbon Treaty, the external policy of the EU should 'encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade.'<sup>63</sup> On the other hand the Commission declares that '25 countries with shared values and strong institutions acting together' have 'a real chance to shape globalization, in areas like trade, international labor rules or tackling global health or security threats', because Europe is 'the most important aid donor giving leverage in terms of social justice and human rights around the world, and the leading proponent of multi-lateral solutions to environmental and the other challenges of sustainable development.'<sup>64</sup> The common market and the Euro enable a country to withstand the international competition and to influence the world economy.<sup>65</sup> These statements prove that the EU counts itself as a recognized actor.

#### SUMMARY



Regarding the economic cluster, a recognition of the EU is expressed by the alter-globalization movement. Nevertheless, although the EU declares the necessity of tackling globalization while maintaining social justice, human rights and environmental protection, it is still perceived by the movement as a part of the neo-liberal economic system. Although both actors are using the same terms (free trade, fair trade, social (market) economy, jobs creation) and perceive globalization as a threat or at least a challenge, they do not find harmony in terms of agreeing on a solution to the mentioned problems (deregulation vs. protection).

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL-HUMANITARIAN CLUSTER: Human Rights, Environment Protection and Development.

In this part of the article I focus on "humane" values (equality, solidarity, justice, peace) and environment protection with an emphasis on the global consciousness which is in the core of both discourses and thus can be supposed to symbolize the highest rate of accordance between both actors. The alter-globalization movement highlights these issues in its demands (while neo-liberalism is stigmatized), and these issues are also ascribed to it in academic debates.<sup>66</sup> Very similarly, the EU builds its external attractiveness on issues of global responsibility and is perceived as doing so in academic literature.<sup>67</sup>

#### THE ALTER-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

For the movement the crucial problem is seen in neo-liberal policies and therefore it seeks alternatives 'to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests'; these alternatives should 'respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens – men and women – of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of people'.<sup>68</sup> The required policies should be able to 'solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries'.<sup>69</sup> Globalization is thus understood as a complex

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process with interconnected consequences, and when globalization is in its neo-liberal form, these consequences are seen as mostly negative. Human, ecological and social rights should have supremacy over the economic interests, and people should be “put before profits”.<sup>70</sup> Global consciousness and cosmopolitanism are traced in the documents as well: ‘we commit ourselves to enriching the construction of a society based on a life lived in harmony with oneself, others and the world around (“el buen vivir”)’.<sup>71</sup>

Values represented by the movement include equality, universal rights, social justice, respect for diversity and solidarity “among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples”. In turn, the movement condemns sexism, racism, homophobia, patriarchy, exclusion and domination as well as, e.g., secret prisons. Its concrete demands cover rights to food, water, education, healthcare, housing and energy.<sup>72</sup> Over time, a slight shift appeared in the alter-globalization movement’s relations towards the European Union, and this shift can be understood either as a sign of the movement’s disappointment with the EU’s policies, which have shifted towards neo-liberalism, or as a sign of the movement’s gradual recognition of the EU as an actor able to influence world politics. Despite this, regarding humanitarian-environmental issues, it was rather the UN that was perceived as an attractive and recognized actor by the movement;<sup>73</sup> the position of the movement is actually derived from the UN universal rights conception because ‘civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights, both individual and collective, are indivisible and should be guaranteed through international treaties’,<sup>74</sup> and governments should ‘respect their obligations to the international human rights instruments’.<sup>75</sup> This means that human rights and social justice are universal and indivisible and that they should take precedence over economic interests in international relations.

The movement recognizes the seriousness of climatic change for “all humanity” and supports efforts for multilateral environmental solutions, e.g. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction.<sup>76</sup> Air, water and land should be protected, not treated as commodities, and multilateral environmental agreements should be obeyed.<sup>77</sup> Instead of genetically modified organisms (GMO), sustainable agricultural processes are supported in order to maintain biodiversity.<sup>78</sup> Concerning developing countries, two important instruments are mentioned in most documents: debt relief and the Tobin tax.<sup>79</sup> Debt creates a burden that

represents an obstacle to further development of the countries. The financial aid of debt relief, which is supplemented by the support of the amounts of money that are collected through the Tobin Tax, is believed to be a partial solution to the problem and even an obligation of first world countries.<sup>80</sup> No humanitarian or development activities of the EU, the World Bank or individual countries are recognized and supported; on the contrary the neo-liberal system is blamed for the damage to the developing countries' economics and environments.<sup>81</sup>

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## EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union defines itself unambiguously as an actor worthy of recognition but also as an attractive actor by means of the values it represents:

*'In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.'*<sup>82</sup>

The EU stands on the values of 'respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'. These values should be defended both internally ('the Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples')<sup>83</sup> and externally ('the European Union will continue to promote democracy, stability and prosperity beyond its borders').<sup>84</sup> The EU struggles for a 'sustainable development; meeting the environmental challenge; contributing to regional peace and stability'.<sup>85</sup> On the international field the Union builds on the principles of 'democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law' and develops partnerships with countries and organizations which share these values.<sup>86</sup> Other declared aims include preserving peace, prevention of

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conflicts, supporting developing countries, eradication of poverty, and protection of the environment.<sup>87</sup> The Laeken Declaration analyzes global threats, including poverty, racism and regional conflicts, while the EU is seen as a sphere of “humane” values, democracy and human rights.<sup>88</sup> Thus the EU is an actor that should, with respect to these values, change the direction of globalization so that its positive effects would be more justly spread between the ‘rich countries but also the poorest’.<sup>89</sup> Again, the EU clearly demonstrates its aspirations to be an internationally recognized actor or even a leader in the area of “humane” values.<sup>90</sup>

The EU declares a ban on all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender, race or ethnicity, nationality, religion, age or sexual orientation.<sup>91</sup> ‘Women and men enjoy equal rights’.<sup>92</sup> Although the Green Book is focused on internal matters of the EU, ‘the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination ... represent a cornerstone of the fundamental rights and values that underpin today’s European Union’.<sup>93</sup> The Commission highlights that the EU has an important role in enforcing a non-discriminatory approach on the international scene – e.g. the World Conference against Racism and Xenophobia in 2001. The EU’s ‘anti-discrimination legislation is among the most advanced in the world and is widely regarded as an effective model’.<sup>94</sup> Although most documents express protection of human rights, especially in the area of the EU, the statements also include the “developing” or “poorest” countries of the third world that are affected by globalization processes.

The Union commits itself to environmental protection, ‘promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems’,<sup>95</sup> particularly ‘combating climate change’.<sup>96</sup> But the Union is aware that particular goals may be in contradiction and therefore stresses ‘averting the global threat of climate change’<sup>97</sup> while acknowledging that ‘the need to address climate change cannot be a reason to limit efforts to lift the world’s poorest citizens out of poverty’.<sup>98</sup> The climate change combat endangers poverty eradication as the former demands huge financial resources but the EU is not willing to undergo an abandonment of the principles of its development policy because challenging global poverty is ‘one of Europe’s core values, goals and interests’.<sup>99</sup>

The policy of the EU in the area of development aid is performed with the aim of ‘the reduction and, in the long term, the

eradication of poverty'.<sup>100</sup> The Commission refers to the Millennium Development Goals and admits that although many goals have been reached, 'around 1.5 billion people still live in extreme poverty (half of them in Sub-Saharan Africa) and one sixth of the world's population is undernourished' and therefore 'for the Union development assistance remains a matter of solidarity, of commitment and of mutual interest'.<sup>101</sup> Also the pursuit of change of governance systems is an integral part of development policy in supported countries so that legitimate democratic administrations, including contributions of civil societies which would be able to guarantee peace and human rights, would be ensured.<sup>102</sup> 'The European Union wants to promote freedom and development in the world. We want to drive back poverty, hunger and disease. We want to continue to take a leading role in that fight'.<sup>103</sup> The EU declares its clear willingness to be a leading international actor in development policy, which is perceived as an instrument of external policy that enables the spread of European values beyond the borders of the EU.<sup>104</sup>

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#### SUMMARY

Although there is a strong accordance between the EU and the alter-globalization discourses regarding environmental-humanitarian issues, only indirect references of support for the other group were found on both sides. The EU declares that a key role in challenging discrimination should be ascribed to civil society.<sup>105</sup> The movement refers to the labor protection of the ILO and to the UN Charter as well as to the EU.<sup>106</sup> Both actors refer in their declarations to the Charter of the UN but still the EU is viewed by the movement as 'Fortress Europe', an organization which does not fulfill the rights of migrants and asylum seekers and limits their freedom of movement and their prospects of gaining citizenship.<sup>107</sup> Despite the EU's efforts to become a leader in a multilateral solution to climate change or development policy, the movement expressed no real support for the EU.

*THE POLITICAL CLUSTER:* transparency, accountability and participatory democracy

The movement's demands on the principles of governance functioning can be summarized by dividing them into three areas: trans-

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parency, accountability and participation.<sup>108</sup> In the Commission's White Book, the EU presents principles of openness (which can be understood as an equivalent to transparency), accountability and participation (in the sense of representation via national, regional and local governments), adding effectiveness and coherence. Some supposed discursive junctions will be analyzed in the following lines.<sup>109</sup>

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Concerning transparency and accountability the movement states that 'people have the right to know about and criticize the decisions of their own governments'.<sup>110</sup> States and institutions of governance (the movement addresses mainly the WTO, the IMF and the WB) should be accountable regarding their policies, especially in developing countries.<sup>111</sup> Without access to information and reflection, no responsible participation is possible. As they lack the attributes of transparency, accountability and participation, the international institutions (WTO, IMF, NATO) or G8 'have no legitimacy in the eyes of the people' and thus the movement 'will continue to protest against their measures'.<sup>112</sup> At the same time the movement understands that these principles must be applied to civil society (the movement itself) as well and feels 'the need to constitute a network of movements that is responsive, flexible and sustainable' yet 'also broad and transparent'.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, the core of the procedural demands of the movement is represented by participative forms of democracy which enable active citizenship; 'the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy', are supported.<sup>114</sup> This arrangement is understood as a better alternative to representative democracy, as the example of Porto Alegre is frequently cited in this respect, but representative democracy is not refused because the movement supports 'the establishment of electoral and participative democracy across the world'.<sup>115</sup> Participative democracy is perceived as an effective way of providing legitimacy. Maybe surprisingly, the EU is placed in the same category as institutions like the IMF or the WTO; it is a target of criticism regarding the Constitutional Treaty because the document was allegedly not publicly discussed to a sufficient extent. Despite any declaration of the EU, the movement states that

*‘This Constitutional Treaty consecrates neo-liberalism as the official doctrine of the EU; it makes competition the basis for European Community law, and indeed for all human activity; it completely ignores the objectives of ecologically sustainable society. This Constitutional Treaty does not grant equal rights, the free movement of people and citizenship for everyone in the country they live in, whatever their nationality; it gives NATO a role in European foreign policy and defense, and pushes for the militarization of the EU. Finally it puts the market first by marginalizing the social sphere, and hence accelerating the destruction of public services.’<sup>116</sup>*

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For the movement this is the reason to mobilize and struggle for collective and individual rights which are endangered by the shifts in the EU’s policy towards laissez-faire policies.<sup>117</sup>

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Concerning political procedures, the EU is aware of its deficiencies: in 2000 the EU recognized the right for access to information, which means an openness of the system, but only on the level of transparency.<sup>118</sup> Later the Commission admitted that the distrust towards politicians, the disinterest for politics and the alienation between institutions and citizens are rising, in other words that the EU policies, as well as the policies of national and global institutions, suffer from a lack of legitimacy.<sup>119</sup> The Green Book published in 2006 declares the importance of transparency, accountability and participation, as these qualities contribute to the legitimacy of institutions.<sup>120</sup> The openness of the institutions, which is the answer to their insufficient legitimacy, should be reached through wider opportunities for direct participation of the citizens and growing accountability, among others with the contribution of civil society. Civil society is given a crucial role in the mediation of information about the interests and needs between citizens and institutions as well as an important part in development policies on the global level.<sup>121</sup> Again, the Laeken Declaration acknowledges the entitlement of the Union’s citizens to democracy, transparency and also legitimacy of power. In its conclusion, the commitment is made to create a Constitution which will be discussed through public debate and which should guarantee citizen rights and thus contribute to a more effective functioning of the EU and a strengthening of dem-

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ocratic procedures.<sup>122</sup> But the EU indirectly addresses social movements, claiming that ‘participation is not about institutionalizing protest’<sup>123</sup> although the EU defines civil society empirically as an organized civil society which should moderate critics and protest. The EU prefers to create institutionalized and structured relations with civil society organizations which are open and accountable themselves.<sup>124</sup>

It is obvious that representative democracy is a key political principle of the EU because the EU’s functioning shall be founded on it, as representative democracy means above all representation by the European Parliament.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, there is a certain space for participative democracy, both on an individual basis and through civil society: ‘The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action’ and ‘shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society’ and thus ‘in order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible’.<sup>126</sup> But the movement uses unconventional means of political action, and the Commission recognizes these untraditional “democratic” channels of participation, declaring that ‘young people are now less committed than in the past to the traditional structures for political and social action (e.g. parties, trade unions), and they have a low level of involvement in democratic consultation’.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, ‘it is up to the public authorities to bridge the gap between young people’s eagerness to express their opinions and the methods and structures which society offers. Failure to do so might fuel the “citizenship” deficit, or even encourage protest’.<sup>128</sup> The EU prefers an involvement of people through traditional political channels and is willing to shape these channel so that this kind of involvement would be possible.

In the White Book on Governance the Commission accepts global responsibility and its part in defining of the principles of global governance institutions to which non-governmental actors from the third countries should also be invited.<sup>129</sup> In the case of the EU the reform of European governance is apprehended also as a means of strengthening the EU as an internationally recognized actor and therefore ‘the Union’s first step must be to reform gover-



nance successfully at home in order to enhance the case for change at an international level.<sup>130</sup> Accenting the global dimension should strengthen the EU's bargaining position on the international field and thus contribute to its advocacy of greater transparency, effectiveness and legitimacy for global institutions such as the WTO.<sup>131</sup> This suggests that the EU is aware of the legitimacy deficiency of international institutions and at the same time it believes that the proven EU governance patterns could help improve this situation.

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## SUMMARY

The movement strives for the transfer of decision-making to the local level (e.g. Porto Alegre) and more transparency and accountability, similarly to the EU. Also, regarding the adoption of European governance mechanisms by global governance which is envisioned by scholars and the EU itself, the movement believes that "another Europe for another world" should be built up.<sup>132</sup> But the crucial dispute in the political area revolves around direct participation. In the alter-globalization discourse "direct participation" means the ability of the citizens to decide, preferably on a local level, about the matters at issue, while the EU discourse agrees with "direct participation" only when it is seen as participation through the institutionalized channels of initiatives or consultations.

## CONCLUSION

Although originally my hypothesis was that based on the general declarations of both of the actors – the EU and the alter-globalization movement – the empirical research would show that the declaratory aims are in accordance and that therefore there is a mutual support between the two actors, only the first part of the statement seems to be correct. Although on the general level the rate of consensus is quite high, in political practice the actors are in opposition to each other. The table below shows that in eight of the nine studied issues, the discourses show an accordance with each other and some accordance can even be found on deeper level of analysis. On one hand, this shows a paradox which can be explained by two factors on the side of the movement:

- I. the movement's general distrust towards established politi-

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- cal structures,
2. the movement's particular disappointment with weak EU policies and the gap between the EU's discourse and its political actions. On the side of the EU the traditional political participation processes are preferred and therefore the demands of the movement are seen as suffering from a lack of legitimacy. On the other hand, both actors recognize each other in some respects although the EU is recognized by the movement much more markedly.

**Table 1: Issue consensus or contradiction**

Issue	Consensus on general level	Deeper level consensus or contradiction.
Neoliberal globalization	YES	More or less consensus but the EU prefers European responsibility over global responsibility. The movement still perceives the EU as a part of the neo-liberal system.
Free trade	YES	Different opinions as to what is "free" and also what constitutes fair trade. The movement does not believe that the WTO and its way of promoting free trade is a route to a really free and fair trade.
Social economy	YES	The EU prefers to guarantee its social-market economy model, which is not social, just and equal enough for the movement.
Human rights	YES	Consensus but not enough is being done by the EU according to the movement's opinions.
Environmental protection	YES	The EU and the movement support multilateral agreements but no direct mutual support is expressed.
Development	YES	The EU supports aid other than financial aid while the movement calls for debt relief and responsible financial flows.
Transparency	YES	Both actors strive for openness of governance systems – information dissemination.
Accountability	YES	Both actors strive for accountability of governance systems – evaluation of policies and their responsible adjustment.
Participatory democracy	NO	The EU prefers representative over participative democracy while the movement encourages direct participation on all levels, especially the local one. The EU recognizes "protest" movements.

Concerning economic issues, free trade and even fair trade are supported in both cases but the conceptions of what is free trade fundamentally differ. Current free trade arrangements, according to the movement, are unjust and only proliferate inequality and poverty. Although the EU admits that the WTO suffers from a lack of legitimacy, it supports the arrangements created within this organization. That can be a reason for why the EU is ranked among neo-liberal institutions by the movement and is therefore recognized rather as an “enemy” than as an ally. In environmental and humanitarian issues the EU profiles itself as a global value leader and aspires to be a leading actor regarding human rights, environmental protection and development policy. Still, the EU is not positively recognized by the alter-globalization movement, although, e.g. the UN conceptions dealing with these issues, including the necessity of poverty eradication, are supported by both actors. In political issues both actors seem to recognize each other even though they tend to recognize each other in a negative sense. The EU does not approve of the protest activities although it acknowledges that young people also require untraditional ways of political participation. The EU admits its deficiencies and even commits itself to taking part in global governance redefinition so that institutions such as the WTO would be more democratic. On the other hand the movement demands even more openness from the EU institutions and member state governments. This indicates that the constructions of both discourses work with the same terminologies but lead to very different interpretations, which causes the movement to recognize the EU as a part of neo-liberal economic system when it comes to the examined issues. At the same time the movement is recognized as a rather illegitimate actor due to the unconventional means through which it expresses its demands. Although both actors could probably strengthen their position in their promotion of some of their declared aims on the international field by supporting each other, this opportunity remains unutilized.

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