

Understanding the Crisis Symptoms of Representative Democracy: The New European Economic Governance and France's 'Political Crisis'

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This article will investigate the 'political crisis' in France (Amable, 2017) to highlight two aspects often set aside in public and academic discussions: 1) the technocratic, neoliberal character of the European Union (EU) that limits democratic debate about political economic issues and 2) the socio-economic context the parties operate in. Using this perspective, I add to the debate on the inherent theoretical/conceptual tension between representative democracy and populism (Taggart, 2002) by showing how the 'new economic governance' increases the democratic problems of the EU by limiting the discursive space. Representative liberal democracy has particularly marginalised anti-capitalism at EU and national level. My analysis shows that the EU's discursive strategies are aligned to those of governing parties and the employers' association. Left-wing actors and the Front National (FN) oppose the EU's discourse not necessarily for reasons of sovereignty but for political reasons concerning the politico-economic trajectory of France.

Keywords: Crisis of representative democracy, France, Front National, European economic governance, discourse.

Introduction

As the United Kingdom (UK) has triggered Article 50, the question of European disintegration is becoming more and more salient. Party leaders in other countries have emphasised their intent to follow the UK's example, most prominently in the Netherlands and France (Lyons and Darroch, 2016). The debates centre on right-wing Eurosceptic domestic parties, which limits the scope for a critique of the European Union (EU) that does not seek nationalism but 'another Europe'.

In this article, I show how EU discourse and the 'new economic governance' contributes to the marginalisation of anti-capitalist discourse. Using the example of France, I highlight two aspects often set aside in public but also academic debates: the technocratic, neoliberal character of the European Union that seeks to limit democratic discussion about political economic issues, and the discourse of the much-discussed right-wing parties like the Front National (FN) in relation with the discourse of other public actors. Using this perspective, I add to the debate on the inherent and theoretical/conceptual tension between representative democracy and populism (Taggart, 2002) by showing how the 'new economic governance' works to increase the democratic problems of the EU by limiting the discursive space. In other words, representative liberal democracy has particularly marginalised anti-capitalism at both EU and national level. My

analysis highlights that the EU's discursive strategies when addressing economic and social issues are more aligned to those of governing parties and the employers' association. Left-wing actors and, with a different quality, the FN oppose the EU's discourse not necessarily for reasons of sovereignty but for political reasons concerning the politico-economic trajectory of France.

The article's structure is as follows: in a first step, I will recall current debates in European integration theory and research on populism and right extremist parties as a 'political crisis' or crisis of representative democracy to then sketch my analytical framework based on a discourse-focused reading of Gramsci. In a next step, the EU's technocratic and neoliberal discourse and 'new economic governance' will be raised in the context of its democratic problems. In the following section, I discuss the discursive strategies of the socio-economic actors in France in the public domain about questions of politico-economic development and related social policy. In the conclusion, our understanding of the French case allows for a discussion of the more general developments within the EU.

Understanding European integration, 'right-wing populism' and democracy

Mainstream approaches have started to discuss the 'politicisation' of the EU in more detail (de Wilde, 2011; de Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Zürn, 2015), including a diagnostic of a retrenchment of the 'permissive consensus' to EU integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Politicisation in this literature is understood as an obstacle to integration (Schimmelfennig *et al.*, 2015: 765; de Wilde, 2011: 565). This limits the integration debate to institutions, the decision-making process, or authority transfer (de Wilde, 2011; Zürn, 2015) and ignores the political content of integration. In sum, this current debate in European integration theory reproduces a general limitation of mainstream EU integration theory: 'every dissenting voice [is viewed] as a Eurosceptic threat' (Manners and Whitman, 2016: 10). What is more, framing politicisation as potentially problematic reflects a liberal understanding of representative democracy in which rational elites are seen as best placed to make decisions and should not be hindered from doing so. As will be argued below, this is problematic for democratic deliberation and thus democratic quality.

This EU integration yes/no binary can be paralleled with an analysis of 'populism' or extremism that frames left- and right-wing approaches as similar in contrast to a rational and democratic centre. Mény and Surel (2002: 3) have characterised this conception of populism as a 'pathology of democracy' and have argued:

... this definition of populism implies being able to measure its degeneration by reference to an accepted standard. A pathology is meaningful only by comparison with a situation defined as normal, a definition which in this case is, to say the least, problematic.

To underline their point, this 'pathology of democracy' conception serves to delegitimise positions deemed too radical and blurs the analysis of the distinctiveness of right extremism: namely, its oppressive perspective and practice against specific societal groups. The binary framing of support or criticism of European integration reifies the parallelisation of 'extreme' right and left positions (Leconte, 2015). As criticism of the European Union seems to come both from the right and the left (Taggart, 2004), the yes/no integration binary seems to prove the point that right and left-wing 'extremism' are the same.

Understanding populism as a 'pathology of democracy' implies a liberal understanding of democracy. Farrelly (2015) discusses two broad models of understanding democracy: liberal (competitive elite democracy, classic pluralist democracy and legal democracy) and broadly Marxist (participatory democracy and democratic autonomy). The former conception focuses on rationality and technological elites as representing a public that might not know what is good for them. Thus, populism is seen as a pathology that undermines 'rational' parties. This article builds on democratic models and understanding 'populism' from a more critical perspective. This challenges liberal understandings of democracy for trusting in elite rationality and for assuming that a 'best practice' or solution to a problem exists and can be identified by decision-makers who set the framework for these solutions, thus limiting the debate and its participants (Wöhl, 2013). The following analysis centres the importance of the deliberative aspect of democracy, i.e. political debate about social issues (Farrelly, 2015).

As a result, this article argues that we need to understand the rise of the right in European member states as an effect of representative democracy but without assuming a centrist position as 'normal'. It adds to the debate on the inherent and theoretical/conceptual tension between representative democracy and populism (Taggart, 2002) by arguing that representative democracy is undermined by discursive practices that limit the scope for debate.

In order to map the discursive space on politico-economic development and show its limitations, I propose an analytical perspective based on Antonio Gramsci's work. Using Gramscian insights for an analysis of societal formations highlights the following aspects.

One, Gramsci's conception of hegemony as both coercion and consent (Gramsci and Forgacs, 1988) deepens our understanding of capitalist democracies. Coercion describes the force and power social groups have over others through e.g. capabilities of exercising physical force but also through limiting material alternatives. The centrality of wage-labour, for example, is part of the coercive side of the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production. When the alternative to doing waged labour is starving because there are no other means of subsistence available, this is a coercive mechanism. Consent, in contrast, describes when parts of the subaltern – that is, the non-hegemonic group – do not resist hegemony. Consent can be active: in the example of waged labour, people can embrace their job and their position as an employee. It can also be passive, so while the employee might not question the general existence of waged labour and their position as an employee, they might be dissatisfied with aspects associated with waged labour. Hegemony can be problematised as potentially undemocratic as it limits the discursive scope. At the same time, as Gramsci highlights, hegemony is a constant struggle, i.e. a process and always incomplete. In other words, the existence of hegemony does not necessarily describe an undemocratic situation.

Two, a Gramscian understanding emphasises that ideology is always collective and social not individual (Hall, 1986; Bruff, 2008). This point is particularly pertinent to an understanding of nationalist, racist actors – as any analysis that focuses solely on the racist agent denies racism (van Dijk, 2016). To elaborate, van Dijk (2016) points out that attributing racism to specific actors, regions, time frames, or incidents obscures rather than acknowledges the structural presence of racism in society. This insight will be applied to the domestic context in my analysis. The socio-economic forces behind the European project are put to the side and have been analysed in other research (van Apeldoorn,

2002; Bieling, 2003; Cafruny and Ryner, 2003). (Discursive) struggles at the European level can also be not included.

Discourse is important to hegemony and the analysis both ontologically and epistemologically. As Fairclough (2010) argues, hegemonic struggle often takes a discursive form, thus making it possible to analyse hegemonic struggle through discourse. Further, being able to contain the discursive space is part of hegemonic rule: thus, discourse is co-constitutive of hegemony (ibid.). Elsewhere (Lux, 2017), I have developed a discourse-oriented operationalisation of Regulation Theory and a Gramscian understanding of hegemony by distinguishing different discursive strategies. These strategies are linked to social actors and their material positions in the mode of production and development trajectory of their national context. The discursive strategies I have distinguished are *non-address*, *externalisation*, *positive connotation*, *questioning*, *criticising*, and *the formulation of alternatives*. I have argued that the former three can be linked to a hegemonic position in a specified context (in this context, the capitalist mode of production and its country-specific accumulation regimes and modes of regulation), while the latter three are usually tools for advancing a potentially counter-hegemonic agenda. Implications for representative democracy are that the more limited the discursive space – i.e. the more aligned the discursive strategies – the less scope for democratic deliberation.

For the discourse analysis, newspaper interviews, press conferences and other speech acts of French domestic actors have been analysed for the period 2010 to 2015 as these cover the introduction of the ‘new economic governance’ as well as the euro crisis. These genres of data have been selected as they present direct means of communication with the public. Policy papers and party manifestos have not been included as they are received by a smaller audience and are more ‘polished’ than interviews. For the EU, selected policy papers have been analysed as the EU does not directly intervene in French public debate. The Commission authors and the Council adopt these reports¹. The domestic actors selected include political parties and alliances, i.e. the *parti socialiste* (PS), the conservative party (UMP, in the meantime renamed as *Les Républicains*), the left alliance *Front de Gauche* (FdG, in the meantime regrouped as *France Insoumise*), and the FN, plus socioeconomic actors, i.e. the employers’ association (Medef) and trade unions (CFDT, FO, CGT).

For the data analysis, I first identified passages relevant to the economy, labour and social policy. Second, I highlighted specific codes (like ‘ownership structures’, ‘competitiveness’, ‘purchasing power’) using Atlas.TI. Third, I linked the discursive strategy pertaining to these codes for every individual actor and then compared them across the actors to ensure consistency.

With regards to France, this analysis highlights that our understanding of the success of the FN remains limited when we isolate the FN’s positions on European integration from their conceptions about the economy and the social. Ultimately, this isolationist perspective serves to legitimise European integration without any qualification of the kind of integration, thus falling into the traps outlined above.

Europe’s ‘new economic governance’ and old democratic issues

The financial, economic, and euro crisis have led to discussions about deeper integration, particularly of the Eurozone. The Commission has labelled the EU’s new approach to economic and monetary Union since 2010 ‘new economic governance’. Its building

blocks are the European Semester, the so-called Six Pack, the Euro Plus Pact, the Fiscal Compact, and the establishment of the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund). This mix of agreements, treaties, and regulations introduces the processes and aims of the 'new economic governance'. The work of the Troika is visible in *Memoranda of Understanding* (MoU) with countries who have sought support through the European Financial Stability Facility or the European Stability Mechanism. The MoU set out the reform programme that member states have to implement in order to receive financial support.

The framework of 'new economic governance' has implications for both European policy (guidance) and European politics. Neoliberal recommendations are further enshrined into the aims and instruments of European and member-state economic, labour, and social policy. When it comes to politics, both the negotiations to establish the 'new economic governance' (Konecny, 2012) as well as the procedures laid out in it are characterised by a lack of transparency, lack of debate, and lack of involvement of stakeholders (e.g. legislative institutions or social partners). As a consequence, the democratic legitimacy of the 'new economic governance' has been criticised (Oberndorfer, 2013; Wöhl, 2013).

Where European integration in the past decades has focused on economic integration, while disappointing hopes for a 'Social Europe' (Platzer, 2011), the 'new economic governance' implies a further attack on the rights of workers, their trade unions, and social security systems (Hyman, 2015: 98). That is, the Commission is pushing for reforms that will:

'decrease statutory and contractual minimum wages', 'decrease bargaining coverage', 'decrease (automatic) extension of collective agreements', 'reform the bargaining system in a less centralised way' ... introduce/extend 'the possibility to derogate from higher level agreements' ... promote measures that 'result in an overall reduction in the wage setting power of trade unions' (cited in Schulten and Müller, 2015: 337).

This policy agenda is not new. However, the Commission now has more tools at its proposal to demand the implementation of this agenda. As indicated above, those recommendations come with a strong conditionality attached for countries with MoU. The mechanisms for other countries are less binding (Schulten and Müller, 2015).

Weakening the labour movement and demanding neoliberal reforms affects social policy. And, while the impact of the crises is very palpable in many European countries, social policy is still not an overly active area for the European Commission. The issue of social inclusion and poverty is deemed less important than the aim of fiscal consolidation (Leschke *et al.*, 2012: 275). There are few social indicators and they are not attached to an alert mechanism – in contrast to macroeconomic indicators that can trigger intensified monitoring and even sanctions when they are deemed to be at an undesirable level (Jolivet *et al.*, 2013: 47). As a result, recommendations in this area focus on increasing incentives for labour market participation (Leschke *et al.*, 2012: 257). While labour market participation is seen as the key mechanism to prevent material deprivation and social exclusion from the EU's perspective, critics have argued that this approach fails to deliver significant outcomes (Daly, 2012).

In the case of France, recommendations also include the use of income support schemes rather than raising the minimum wage to tackle in-work poverty (Lux, 2016: 9).

Policy changes in line with neoliberal restructuring are commended. Attempts to strengthen or preserve social achievements are usually criticised (ibid.). The EU discourse on social policy thus supports domestic actors who are pushing for a neoliberal restructuring of economy and society. This has implications for the democratic debate in France.

France's 'political crisis', the Front National and social policy

In other words, it contributes to a 'political crisis' in France. Amable (2017) highlights the following symptoms of political crisis in France: incumbent governments failing to get re-elected, the number of 'outside' candidates increasing significantly, the rise of the Front National, and the dissatisfaction of citizens with their government. He then argues the root of these problems is that a 'dominant social bloc' cannot be aggregated through existing institutions. In this analysis, he focuses on the role of institutions to mediate conflicting interests within the supposed dominant social bloc. This institutionalist reading of Gramsci's concept of the historic bloc glosses over the antagonism between workers and capitalists by focusing on somewhat individualised societal groups and parties as well as existing institutions. In the following, I will link the debate about the success of the FN to my analysis of the discursive space in France and the role of the EU. This allows me to highlight issues of democratic deliberation on capitalism and anti-capitalism and I contend that the limitations of the debate on socio-economic development present a crucial problem for liberal representative democracy.

The surge of the Front National in surveys and elections as well as the change in leadership has led to increased interest by scholars. In order to explain the success of this extreme right party, the leadership strategy of '*dédiabolisation*' (toning down the extremist rhetoric) has been in focus (Almeida, 2013; Stockemer and Barisione, 2017). Analyses of the French electorate have highlighted the people 'left behind' in a globalised France (Goodliffe, 2013; albeit not a new phenomenon, see Surel, 2002). Scholars have also observed a change in the FN's programme, from a neoliberal economic policy stance to a more protectionist and often termed 'left-wing' position (Goodliffe, 2013; Shields, 2014; Ivaldi, 2015). Research further investigated the motivation and characteristics of FN adherents and small-scale organisers (Stockemer, 2014). The FN's hostile view of the EU is seen as a 'unique selling point' in France's political spectrum (Goodliffe, 2013, 2015).

While the FN's attitude to the EU is characterised by hostility (Vassallo, 2012; Goodliffe, 2013), their practical relationship with it is ambivalent. The party has profited massively from being in the European Parliament in terms of both the professionalization of its leaders as well as material resources (Reungoat, 2015). With the change in leadership from Jean Marie Le Pen to Marine Le Pen, two processes have taken place: the anti-elitist rhetoric has increased with regards to both European and national (political) elites (Stockemer and Barisione, 2017: 105) and

... anti-immigrant appeals are interwoven with the main concerns of large part of the French public, such as wages, purchasing power and social and public security. As such, the FN's anti-immigration platform is no longer presented as an end in itself but rather as part of a holistic solution; a solution which stresses that unemployment, social security and France's cultural and intellectual history can only be preserved if immigration is efficiently curbed (Stockemer and Barisione, 2017: 107)

Table 1 Discursive strategies in France on selected codes

	PS	UMP	Medef	EU	FN	CFDT	FO	CGT	FdG
Ownership Structures	●	●	●	●	▷	●	○	○	○▷
Power Relations	◇	●	●	●	◇	○	○	◇	◇▷
Wage Labour	▷◇	▷●	▷●	▷	▷◇	▷	▷	▷	▷◇
Internal Demand	▷	●	●	●	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Purchasing Power	▷●	●	▷●	●	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Public investment	▷●	▷	○	●	▷	▷	▷	▷	▷
Competitiveness	▷	▷	▷	▷	◇	▷	◇	●◇ ○	●◇ ○

● Non-address, ◆ externalisation, ▶ positive connotation
▷ questioning, ◇ critique, ○ alternative

Source: Adapted from (Lux, 2017)

In a second argumentative step, the membership of the EU is then given as an explanation for 'increased' immigration (Stockemer and Barisione, 2017: 108). In other words, the FN shifts the 'blame' of immigration to the European level and uses existing racism to target the EU.

While this is certainly important for our understanding of the recent success of the party, two connected aspects are overlooked in the scholarly discussion of the FN. One, the FN is rarely discussed in relation to other parties and/or actors in the public sphere². Two, the FN's anti-elitism and anti-EU claims are explained by an inherent Euroscepticism that is normatively discarded as wrong. In this way, the literature on the FN parallels critique of the EU and nationalism. While this is certainly true for the FN, it also delegitimises a left critique of the EU and limits the responsibility of European and political elites for the rise of right-wing nationalism.

Looking at the discursive strategies of the Front National in context with other actors in French public discourse, Table 1 shows selected findings from a comprehensive analysis of public debate over the period 2010–2015. When it comes to the different codes, I have selected those most relevant to the mode of production and social policy. Ownership structures signify the concentration of ownership of the means of production. Power relations encompass the power that the owners of the means of production have both at the sites of production but also in the political structures more generally. Wage labour reflects the centrality of wage labour in society and its normalisation.

The symbols illustrate that the EU's position on most of these important codes are in line with the employers' associations and the governing parties, in particular the conservative UMP. It is important to keep in mind that while in terms of columns, there seems to be balance in the debate but when the political and socio-economic standing

of the actors in the columns is considered, the discursive space is skewed towards the big parties, the employers' organisation and the EU.

With regards to the three codes relating to the mode of production, it becomes apparent that, wage labour remains unquestioned but the other aspects are also discussed in a limited manner. Hegemonic actors do not even positively connote the concentration of ownership but can just not address it. This makes it more difficult for subaltern actors to get into a debate about it. Le Pen cautiously criticises the concentration of ownership when she states:

Je crois que l'entreprise, réellement sur le fond, n'appartient pas uniquement au capital. Nous avons réfléchi à un système qui permettrait de faire une réserve légale de titre de 10% qui appartiendrait . . . aux salariés de l'entreprise . . .³ (Le Pen and Lamy, 2011)

At the same time, this proposal to make employees shareholders in their company is not connected to a further increase in control or cooperation. Stopping at 10 per cent also makes it limited in its reach. The FdG and some of the trade unions have much more far-reaching proposals in this regard.

It also becomes visible that competitiveness is a contested term as it is used to cut social security contributions of employers and limit wages. The different symbols for the trade unions on the right hand side of the table show some of the development over the years. At first, trade unions tried to not address competitiveness but the term then became so pertinent in the debate that they needed to engage with the term and ultimately, the CGT and others tried to introduce the concept of capital cost as a counter-discourse to labour cost into the debate – albeit with limited success.

The FN prioritises the positive role of internal demand, purchasing power, and public investment, while it questions competitiveness. Furthermore, the party celebrates not just workers and the employed but also criticises other actors for individualising responsibility for unemployment (for a more detailed discussion see Lux, 2017: 209–210).

Those discursive strategies advance the FN's social policy programme, which promotes a racist, nationalist solidarity. Within this setting, however, this programme challenges the neoliberal transformations in labour and social policy that France has seen in recent years. Doing so helps Le Pen criticise both France's government and the EU, even though she seldom attaches the word 'neoliberal' to her critique⁴. Concrete proposals for social policy include taking back the Loi El Khomri – which decentralised collective bargaining and deregulated labour law (Pernot, 2017) – reducing the retirement age to sixty with a contribution period of forty years; raising the basic pension rate and disabled persons support; providing a monthly prime of 80€ to be paid to low income-earners; increasing housing support for under twenty-five year olds; and making family allowance universal for 'French' families (Le Pen, 2017; Vie publique, 2017).

This social policy programme promises to mitigate social issues that the financial and economic crisis as well as the transformations in the French mode of regulation in recent years have exacerbated (Lux, 2017). In just a few indicators those social issues include a high level of unemployment (6.1 per cent in 2016) and youth unemployment (24.6 per cent in 2016) and at least eleven million people at risk of poverty (Eurostat, no year). In addition, as French political and economic elites have reshuffled during the crisis years, it is the accumulation strategy of small and medium enterprises that

has mainly been undermined by the attack on purchasing power of French people (Lux, 2015). Le Pen sees herself fighting for this capital fraction as she embraces it in her nationalist agenda. She regards small and medium enterprises as 'truly French' enterprises that need to be protected from 'savage globalisation' and 'disloyal international competition' (Vie publique, 2017). In other words, the electoral success of the Front National not only reflects racialized fears and economic anxieties but also the struggle among capital fractions where the existing rift between small and big firms in France has intensified.

In democratic discourse, racism, islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny need to be rejected as 'bad arguments' (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 265)⁵ and as harmful. The opposite is true for the resistance to neoliberalism and capitalism more generally. However, a look at the discursive space in France shows that the latter is marginalised at this level of analysis, i.e. highly visible public debates. The alignment of the EU position with neoliberal actors in France demonstrates how opposition to neoliberalism let alone capitalism is an effect of the EU's discursive practice, thus severely limiting democratic discourse by closing the discursive space even further. Importantly, this effort to marginalise anti-capitalism does not remain discursive but has been systematically institutionalised in both policy recommendations and the dynamics of the European economy more broadly.

Discussion

As a starting point for my analysis, I have placed the importance of democratic deliberation that covers a wide range of ideas. While this does not apply to ideas that are inherently oppressive and harmful to groups of people, it is particularly important to discussions about political-economic development. I have shown how the EU contributes to skewing domestic debates by strengthening (neo)liberal, capitalist reformers against anti-capitalist transformers.

At the European level, this effect is linked to the debate about EU integration that remains binary, thus limiting the discursive scope and setting aside political contents of debates about EU integration. This might not be an issue for liberal conceptions of representative democracy but in line with a more participatory and deliberative understanding, the current institutions and discursive practices of the EU need to be problematised for their limiting of the discursive space.

The case of France can be illustrative for other member states. The democratic implications of the Troika have been documented and criticised (Fisahn, 2014). The discursive impact, as the case of France shows, is important for big member states without Troika involvement. This becomes even more salient as many effects of the crisis and the European crisis management linger.

The rise of right extremist parties and the social aftermath of the economic crisis processes (and their management) challenge and deteriorate the democratic quality of the EU and member state political systems. As a result, 'the social after Brexit' in the EU and its member states continues to be subordinated to a neoliberal mode of integration and the human costs this entails. As long as the crisis symptoms of neoliberal integration at the European level are not met with a progressive, internationalist challenge, those symptoms are likely to continue to fester and morph.

As representative democracy has met severe limitations throughout the course of the crisis processes, the question remains how progressive forces can overcome these limitations. One strategy has been highlighted by intriguing research on anti-austerity, radically democratic movements that try to find new ways of resisting and organising thus reflecting and addressing the need for a new quality of democracy (Bailey *et al.*, 2017).

Acknowledgments

I am very thankful for the helpful comments and suggestions received on earlier versions of this article from John Jordan, the editors of this themed section (particularly Steve Corbett), those received in the context of the anonymous review process, and the editors of this journal.

Notes

1 While I acknowledge that the EU is not a unitary actor, the focus on these institutions as representative is justified in view of their centrality in the political system of the EU.

2 An exception is this quantitative analysis by Ivaldi (2015); and Goodliffe (2013) discusses the FN in relation to the French Communist Party and left trade unions, thus reinforcing the so-called 'horseshoe theory' that the 'extreme' left and right are similar (for a refutation see Choat, 2017).

3 I think that the company, really fundamentally, does not belong to capital alone. We have thought about a system that would allow for a legal reserve of 10% of stocks that would belong to the employees of the company ... (author's translation).

4 Le Pen rather uses the term 'ultraliberal': '... il faut en finir avec l'ultralibéralisme, la folie de l'hyper austérité, la loi absurde et dévastatrice du tout commerce' Le Pen (2013). Author's translation: ... ultraliberalism and the craziness of hyper-austerity, an absurd law that destroys all trade, need to be abolished (author's translation).

5 Reisigl and Wodak (2001) share the Habermasian ideal that, within deliberative democracy, the public sphere will gradually arrive at the conclusion that racism and other forms of oppression are invalid. It therefore seems important to recall Fraser's (1990) criticism of those assumptions. Here, I would like to argue that while I am not sure that an ideal deliberative democracy would arrive at the position that negates all forms of oppression, it is the role of a critical scholar to assert that no form of oppression should have a place in democratic discourse.

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