Adding fuel to the flames. How TTIP reinvigorated the politicization of trade

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Early draft – Please do not cite without permission

Abstract:

It is a truism to state that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a politicized issue, yet the explanations that account for this politicization are mostly singular in nature. In this paper I add to this understanding theoretically and empirically by presenting a broad analytic framework that puts TTIP at the intersection of two evolutions. There is, firstly, a longer-term trend of increasing political authority of (European) trade policy that is (at least by several organizations and citizens) not considered legitimate. I argue that TTIP is an extension and an intensification of this perceived authority-without-legitimacy trend. Secondly, the particular explosive situation that has occurred since 2013 is furthermore the result of a specific combination of a favoring political opportunity structure, combined with pre-existing mobilization resources that have facilitated a large mobilization by civil society organizations. This explains the spike of politicization that is attached onto this longer term trend. Relying on several exploratory interviews, I try to uncover the determinants in the different categories.

1 – Introduction

Since the 1990s, a rising trend in European politics is that elites increasingly have to look over their shoulder when negotiating European issues (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). This is part of a broader evolution in international politics since the 1980s, signifying that the gap between the elite game of international relations and the contested domestic sphere is becoming increasingly blurred (Schmidtke, 2014). Zürn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt (2012) argue that this 'politicization' is a process in which "progressively more societal actors pay attention to and reflect on the political order *beyond national borders*" (cursive added). In this sense, world politics has apparently reached a "reflexive moment" whereby societal and political actors are increasingly becoming aware that international institutions have can have a decisive impact on our lives (Zürn, 2004). Especially concerning the European Union, much effort in the past few years has gone into furthering this literature on politicization of European integration, which has focused both on the politicization of 'Europe' itself (De Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Van der Eijk & Franklin, 2007), or on specific domains, such as the eurocrisis (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015; Leupold, 2015; Statham & Trenz, 2015), tax governance (Schmidtke, 2015) or consumer policy (Rauh, 2013).

Nowhere is this evolution towards more contestation and debate about the use of supranational institutions or issues more visible than in the case of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), a free trade agreement under negotiation between the US and the EU. Debates about this in essence very technical trade and investment issue are regular media items in several countries and frequently discussed in the 'European bubble'. Mobilization from civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions and citizen movements is large and growing, and even the general public is increasingly aware and engaging with these trade issues that were some years ago seen as – above all – dull. Many of these expressions form part and parcel of a general process of 'politicization': *an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation within the EU"* (De Wilde, 2011, p. 566).

Explanations for this politicization of TTIP frequently focus on singular arguments, such as anti-American feelings, the stir that the Vattenfall ISDS case caused, or a general revolt against the European Union. Without downplaying the relevance of these statements, a broader and integrated approach to explain the politicization of TTIP is needed. In this paper, therefore, I use and further insights from the politicization literature to add to this explanatory understanding.

The theoretical part of this paper consists of two parts. Firstly, the (adapted) framework here explains politicization, *manifested as mobilization by civil society organizations and citizens*. This conceptualization of the dependent variable follows the argument made by Zürn (2015) that too much emphasis in measuring politicization has been on analyzing mass media, as reflective of the 'public sphere'. With the specific example of (European) trade policy, I show that this approach could here indeed miss important aspects. Secondly, the resulting explanatory framework combines (i) a longer-term **trend** of the politicization of (EU) trade policy, mainly determined by increasing political authority with or without the required

legitimacy; and (ii) the **spike** of mobilization around TTIP consisting of a combination of a particular political opportunity structure and (pre-existing) mobilization resources possessed by civil society organizations. This politicized spike or episode adds fuel to a longer-term trend of the politicization of trade. With insights from the main literature and several exploratory interviews with activists or CSO representatives, I elaborate on different aspects of this framework.

2 – Theoretical framework

Politicization research to date[1] has followed a trajectory from (i) understanding and getting to grips with the fact that "something like politicization [of the EU] has happened since the mid-1980s" (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Schmitter, 2009), (ii) defining and conceptualizing the phenomenon and process (see e.g. (De Wilde, 2011; De Wilde, Leupold, & Schmidtke, 2015), (iii) explaining what its causes are (De Wilde et al., 2015; Rixen & Zangl, 2013; Schmidtke, 2014; Zürn et al., 2012) and (iv) looking into the causal consequences and normative implications (De Wilde & Lord, 2015; Rauh, 2013; Zürn, 2014). In this framework, I focus on step 2 and 3.

2.1 The run-up: different elements, different manifestations

As Zürn (2015) remarks, politicization has mainly been studied as a discursive phenomenon, measured predominantly through mass media (content) analysis (Hutter & Grande, 2014; Statham & Trenz, 2013), parliamentary debates (Wonka, 2015) or laypeople's discourse (Hurrelmann, Gora, & Wagner, 2015; Hurrelmann & Schneider, 2014). Indeed, many authors conceptualize and define it this way. De Wilde (2011) sees politicization equated with intensifying debates among an increasing amount of groups or people, located *within the public sphere* (through media, parliaments or 'on the streets'). In the words of Rixen and Zangl (2013): "*Politicization is present if collectively binding decisions increasingly become the subject of controversial public debates*" (p. 365). Others have also argued that politicization is best dealt with as a discursive phenomenon, that must become salient in political communication (Green-Pedersen, 2012; Hurrelman & Schneider, 2014). The main operational elements used to study the phenomenon in the public sphere (mostly through mass media analysis) are: *salience* (is it often mentioned?), *polarization* (do different opinions exist?) and *actor expansion* (are there many contributors to the debate?) (De Wilde et al., 2015).

If politicization would only/mainly manifest itself in the public sphere (studied through media or in parliament), trade policy can show long periods of non-politicization. Arguably, contentious and important episodes have surely been present, but as trade policy generally involves technical issues (and for the EU, embroiled in the complex multi-level EU structure) it does not lend itself to common public interest, making it hard for trade to make the media's

[1] The politicization literature reviewed here focuses on the *societal* politicization of the European Union (or international institutions in general), which deals with the narrowing divide between international relations and civil society/public. Public administration scholars see politicization as the opposite of bureaucratization or expert rule (see e.g. Wille (2012)). This could be defined as *institutional* politicization. De Wilde (2011) provides a framework that could integrate both interpretations. Many thanks to Pieter De Wilde himself for providing these insights.

agenda (Beyers & Kerremans, 2007). Equally, national parliaments have often been reluctant to spend much time on trade policy issues, seeing the greater public was not really interested[2].

What is more, European trade policy has been actively *de-politicized* in various ways, in the sense that it has been taken away as much as possible from debates in the public sphere. Since the Treaty of Rome (1956), the idea has always been to insulate trade policy from (special) interest groups (known as collusive delegation, cfr. Dur (2008)) with the explicit goal to preserve a liberally oriented (free) trade policy. This is wat Flinders and Buller (2006) refer to when recognizing formal principal-agent relations as an institutional de-politicization tactic (p. 5). The same logic could be seen on international level in the 1990's with the institutionalization of several (neoliberal) frameworks (such as NAFTA, WTO, EU Single Market) into legal and quasi-legal agreements, actually "insulating these policies from day-to-day democratic debate and decision-making (Dierckx, 2012), a process widely known as the "new constitutionalism of neoliberalism" (Gill, 1995).

A more subtle de-politicization tactic is the reliance on the discursive claim that free trade or globalization is irreversible or the natural state of things (Hay & Rosamond, 2002); Van Apeldoorn (2003) in Dierckx (2015)) or that trade debates are "purely technical" (see Rixen (2009)). This has strengthened the idea that *there is no alternative* (TINA) to globalization or the free flow of trade/capital (Dierckx, 2015)[3]. More generally, this de-politicization tactic can be described as "*the invocation of preference-shaping through recourse to ideological or rhetorical claims in order to justify a political position that a certain issue or function does, or should, lie beyond the scope of politics or the capacity for state control*" (Flinders & Büller, 2005, p. 10). In an opinion piece[4], Trade Commissioner Malmström (2015) made the case for TTIP as being a "no-brainer" to reach much-needed jobs and growth; as if this is an issue we should not even consider debating. These tactics seem to suggest that these issues are "off the table", and that we don't even have the *possibility* of making collectively binding decisions on this matter, as this is the natural state of things and it is beneficial for everyone. Through these de-politicization tactics (consciously or not), trade policy has an even smaller chance of making it to public spheres such as parliaments, the media or laypeople's discourse.

Not making these agendas, and therefore not being picked up by politicization research, does not imply that trade (or any issue) is any less political (Zürn, 2015)[5]. Trade may be de-

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[2] The president of the Foreign Affairs committee in the Belgian federal Parliament said, for example, that trade agreements were simply rubber-stamped for years, mainly relying on what their European colleagues were saying (Debate on TTIP in Ghent, 2015).

[3] This kind of belief, if widespread in popular or political consciousness, can be extremely resilient, even if it faces crisis or contradicting empirical evidence about its fundamental claims (Flinders & Büller, 2005, p. 11). (Orbie & De Ville, 2011) show, for example, that the neoliberal trade policy trend of the European Commission has not only survived the financial and eurocrisis, but has – through subtle discursive changes – been branded as part of the solution, instead of the problem, to get out of these difficulties.

[4] "Don't believe the anti-TTIP hype – increasing trade is a no-brainer", via https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/16/ttip-transatlantic-trade-deal-businesses

[5] According to Zürn (2015), the root of this insuffiency in current research, lies in two different conceptions of "the political". He distinguishes between *the political* being, firstly, bound by *public debates*

politicized (or non-politicized) in the sense that it does not make the public sphere frequently, but it has not lost its inherently political character: protest movements that stay under the (media) radar, activity of interest groups through consultations or the writing of position papers, changing beliefs (for better or worse) about the benefits of trade deals negotiated by the EU, are all manifestations of the same process of politicization, that are hardly reflected in the media. They point towards the *presumption* that trade is political in the sense that it constitutes a public good we should be talking about (Zürn, 2015), or the *demand* that we reflect about the policy-making or the policy itself (De Wilde & Zürn, 2012). They indicate "*an attempt to move something into the political sphere that was previously not*" (Zürn, 2015, p. 168). Politicizing something, according to Buzan (1997) therefore means "*to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice […] in contrast to issues that either could not be different (laws of nature) or should not be put under political control*".

Several authors therefore point out that politicization is manifested in different ways, i.e. types of expression in which politicization becomes evident so we are able to research it (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015; Zürn, 2015; De Wilde et al., 2015[6]). The different operational elements (salience, polarization and actor expansion) could then apply to all three such manifestations. Next to the *macro* level of public debates (where the focus of research has been), there is a *meso* level of political activities or mobilization efforts, that points towards social protest and the activities of parties and interest groups related to supranational decision making (Baglioni & Hurrelmann, 2015). Thirldy, there is a *micro* level of changing attitudes and beliefs related to the supranational level. In this paper, I want to use this broadened understanding, and focus on the meso level of political activities or mobilization. Table 1 summarizes this theoretical argument[7].

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about the right course of handling collective problems (i.e. the discourse-theoretical view of politics à la Habermas), and secondly, the ability to make collectively binding decisions (the system-theoretical view of politics à la Easton (1965)).

[6] Even though De Wilde et al. (2015) do not speak literally of different manifestations, they do point to these different types of expressions when describing the operational elements of politicization.

[7] I acknowledge that when issues or institutions get politicized at macro level, there is a most likely chance that this will entail consequences, more than when it is only politicized on micro and/or meso level. However, we do need this broader conception, exactly to point to those situations that are not politicized on macro level.

	Salience	Polarization	Actor expansion
Micro (beliefs)	Importance relative to other issues or institutions	Different beliefs about the issue or the institution	Individuals with different traits (social status, sex, ethnic group etc.) see the issue or institution as important
Meso (mobilization)	Importance relative to other targets of mobilization	Mobilized groups stand for different positions	Many different types of groups mobilize
Macro (public debates)	Often mentioned in media (relative to other issues)	Polarization of statements/claims	Expansion of contributors to the debate

Table 1. Operational elements and different manifestations of politicization. In grey what is focused on in this paper. Source: Zürn (2015)

2.2 Dependent and independent variables

2.2.1 Dependent variable

My take in this paper is therefore to focus on *politicization, manifested as mobilization (or political activities) by civil society organizations and citizens*:

> *an increase of political activities (or the resources spent towards it) by a growing and diverse group of [civil society] organizations with different goals, that are related to supranational decision-making, in an attempt to affect or influence it[8].*

Examples include participation in formal activities at EU level, such as Civil Society Dialogues or consultations; writing of position papers towards MEPs (or MPs, with the ultimate attempt to influence EU decision-making); (trans)national protest activities, or the resources spent towards it (opening up of lobby offices at EU level, personnel hired to follow trade debates, investment to develop expertise on an issue), etc.

As a full operationalization (especially over time) is outside the scope of this paper, I only indicate here that TTIP itself is a politicized issue.

There are many ways in which the *salience* of TTIP relative to other targets can be indicated. A consultation on the contentious ISDS clause, for example, received about 150.000 answers,

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[8] Note that this does not automatically reflect protest or resistance, but also increased use of the supranational level (or international institutions). Cfr. Infra.

which is a record-high in Europe[9]. Another way to show this is by plotting the attendance of CSOs in the formal Civil Society Dialogues, held by the European Commission (fig. 1). Attendance for TTIP(-related) events (in grey) have an average of about 120 organizations present, while similar agreements such as CETA and ACTA barely made it to 30 organizations.[10]
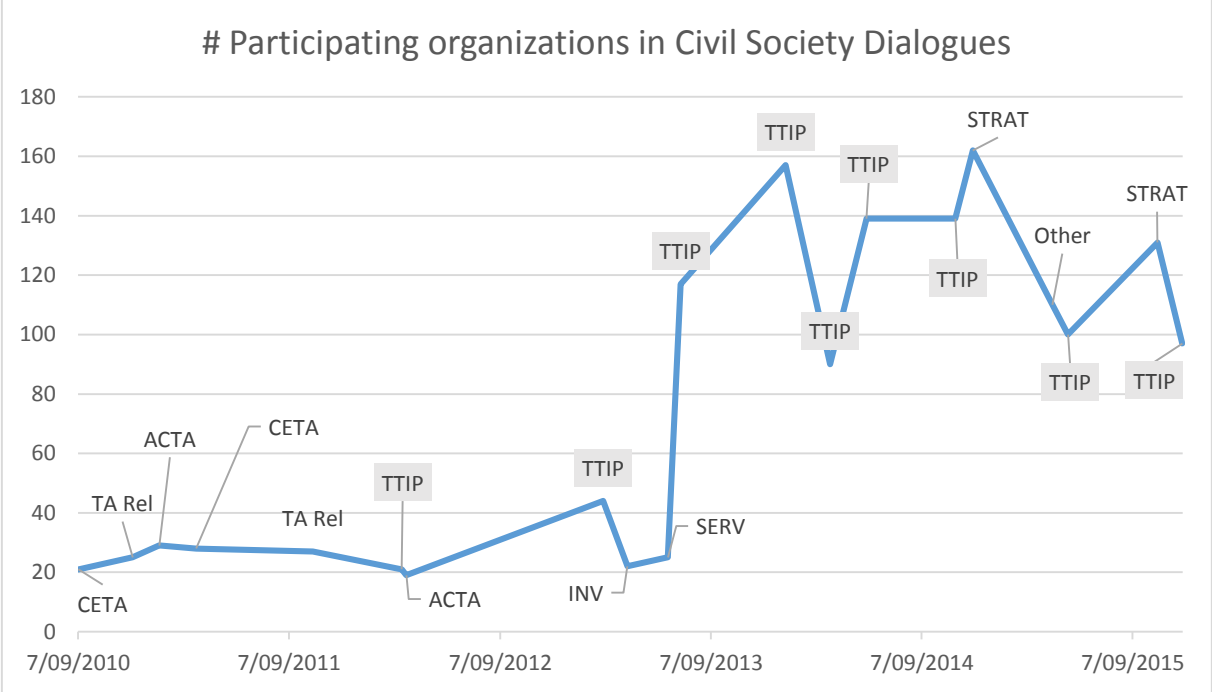

Fig. 1. Number of participating organizations in DG TRADE's Civil Society Dialogues.

Secondly, the *actor base* has clearly expanded and now involves more groups than only the direct economic stakeholders of trade agreements. Environmental, labor and consumer groups; organizations active in North-South or human rights issues; (new) social movements directly or indirectly tied to the TTIP issue (some have taken this up while formerly/in parallel campaigning on e.g. anti-austerity issues); SMEs and large corporations; academics; journalists; critical observers or activists (e.g. the influence of George Monbiot on the debate in the UK); municipalities and cities; citizen movements; all of these are engaged in political activities to a certain extent.

Thirdly, these groups all have very different opinions of what should happen with TTIP, which certainly makes the debate *polarized*. Making unavoidable mistakes by abstraction, there is a clear divide between the pro-TTIP, business-side and the anti-TTIP civil society camp, which has already been labelled a new form of trade politics (Young, 2016). Of course, within these two camps, lots of diverging views exist, such as a classic reformist-rejectionist divide in the anti-camp (see e.g. the position papers by BEUC (2014) or ETUC (2014) that support TTIP in

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[9] Consultations on fracking (22.000 replies) and copyright reform (9500 replies and 11.000 questions) are clearly outnumbered.

[10] What is striking is that the CSD on the state of play on investment protection (which also included ISDS) held in the beginning of 2013 barely sparked any attention among organizations. Only months later, when discussions started, for many this went top of the agenda.

principle, but with modifications) or the lack of unified 'business' positions regarding SMEs (see Young, 2016, p. 19).

2.2.2 Independent variables

Trend

To explain politicization, *political authority* above the nation state is seen as the main driving force of the politicization of European integration (issues) (Schmidtke, 2014; Zürn et al., 2012; Rixen & Zangl, 2012). An international institution is said to have this authority "*when states recognize, in principle or in practice, their ability to make legally binding decisions on matters relating to a state's domestic jurisdiction, even if those decisions are contrary to a state's own policies and preferences*" (Cooper, Hawkins, Jacoby, & Nielson, 2008, p. 505). This implies the acceptance that someone or some institution should be given the authority to make decisions to advance the common good (Zürn et al., 2012). De Wilde and Zürn (2012) discern level, scope and inclusiveness as central components of this authority. *Level* means the centralization of decision-making powers vis-à-vis Member State governments and the extent to which majoritarian decision-making procedures count instead of mere intergovernmental consensus (Börzel, 2005; Rixen & Zangl, 2013). *Scope* refers to the breadth of policy fields in which the institution has a say, and to what extent it penetrates in domestic policy-making issues (Schmidtke, 2014). *Inclusiveness*, lastly, refers to the constituencies affected by the EU (different countries, but also different types of groups), and the extent to which they (the constituents) can affect the EU[11].

With increasing political authority a certain level can be reached where institutions can make collectively binding decisions on matters that were previously predominantly domestic jurisdiction (Cooper et al., 2008), so-called behind-the-border issues (Woods & Narlikar, 2001; Zürn, 2004). As such, EU citizens are more frequently confronted and affected by decisions taken on that level, which logically leads to questions about the legitimacy and accountability of these institutions (De Wilde, 2011; Smythe & Smith, 2006; Statham & Trenz, 2015). Hence, as (trade) issues rub against various issues of domestic politics, it becomes politicized (Hocking, 2004). This line of research thus expects that there is a longer term trend whereby rising political authority and politicization are strongly correlated, a finding that comes back in different studies (Schmidtke, 2014; Rixen & Zangl, 2013).

The intensity or the form that politicization ultimately takes (resistance and protests, or increased utilization of the institution) crucially depends on legitimacy (Rauh, 2013; Zürn et al., 2012; De Wilde, 2011). According to Zürn et al. (2012) legitimacy is "*the acknowledgement of the rightful exercise of this authority*", making it conceptually distinct from authority[12]. Authority

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[11] Authority differs across institutions along a continuum. At very high levels, one could label it "supranational", as in the case of the EU in several domains (Cooper et al., 2008).

[12] This is not a common conceptualization, as many people actually see authority as "legitimized" power. Interestingly, however, making this distinction can be very promising in explaining why TTIP is criticized by NGOs and public interest groups (mostly on social, environmental or consumer grounds), but also by far-right groups such as the FN by Marine Le Pen. The former dispute the

is thus considered legitimate depending on whether the norms, rules and judgments produced by it are based on a shared belief of the common good and procedural fairness (ibid.) In the following I use the broad definition put forward by Schmidt (2013), as it includes different legitimacy elements I will further work with: "*the extent to which* **input** *politics,* **throughput** *processes and* **output** *policies are acceptable to and accepted by the citizenry, such that citizens believe that these are morally authoritative and they therefore voluntarily comply with government acts, even when these go against their own interests and desires*" (p. 10).

Output legitimacy refers to the capacity to solve problems, and the likelihood that the outcome will be accepted based on its impacts or its effectiveness in upholding community values (Smythe & Smith, 2006); in other words, its societal acceptability (Zürn, 2004). *Input legitimacy* refers to the participatory quality of the process that leads to laws and rules and directs our attention to elements such as elections, political parties, demonstrations and protests, or the voice of interest groups (Scharpf, 1997; Schmidt, 2013). *Throughput legitimacy*, lastly, is a process-oriented question, that focuses attention on the decision-making process as a whole, and the intermediation of interest groups in particular. It is about the practices that go on inside the 'black box' of policy making: transparency, inclusiveness, openness, accountability, efficacy (Meunier, 2003, 2005; Schmidt, 2013).

Applied to trade policy, all the above means that if the rising political authority of EU trade policy is not perceived as legitimate (trade does not "deliver" in economic and normative terms, and the way trade policy is made, is not perceived as fair, transparent and inclusive) this would according to Zürn et al. (2012) lead to politicization taking the form of resistance towards EU trade (or towards the EU polity as such[13]). To the extent that actors do perceive this as (potentially) legitimate, it will lead to increased utilization of (and discursive support for) the policy[14]. In figure 2, the box signifying '**Trend**' plots this part of the framework: the link between authority and politicization, is mediated on a longer time frame by throughput and output legitimacy.

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legitimacy of the exercise (we accept that you can set the rules, but we're not happy with how you do it, nor what you produce), while the latter even dispute this authority transfer in itself (doesn't matter how good you do it, we don't want the EU doing this for us).

[13] Or, for that matter, resistance towards the EU itself. Mair (2007) claims that the absence of organized opposition at EU level has dampened the 'political' dimension in several EU domains, which has led to direct opposition to the EU polity instead. In TTIP as well, claims against TTIP are often conflated with claims against the EU.

[14] There is obviously a large amount of actors that recognize what is or can be achieved through EU trade policy for the advancement of common or individual goals (see e.g. the discussion of the EU as a power 'through' trade, Meunier and Nicolaidis (2006)).
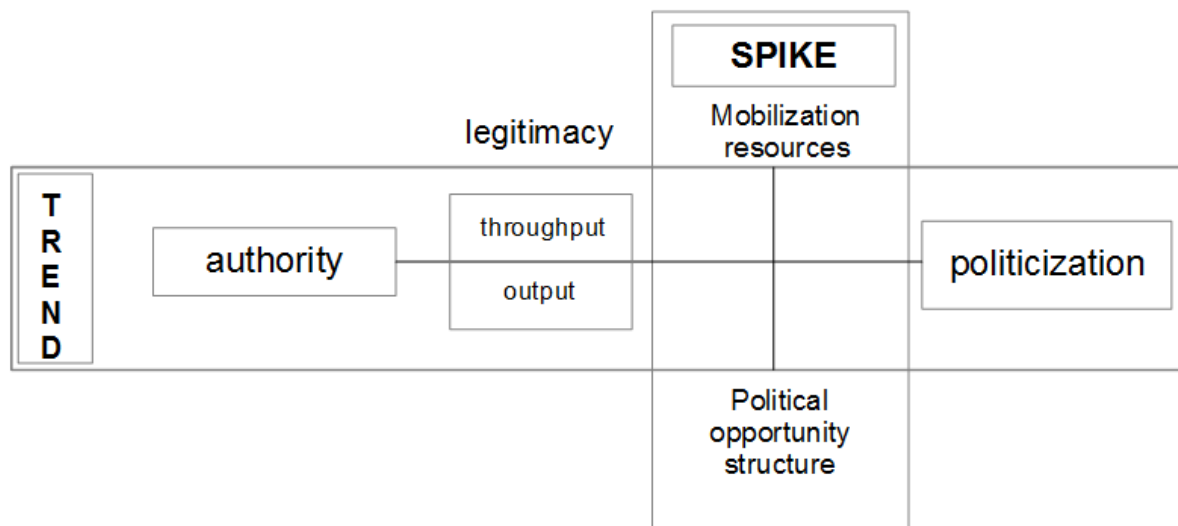
Figure 2. Theoretical framework. Own adaptation of Zürn et al. (2012), Rauh (2013), (Zürn, 2015).

Spike

However, this rather abstract and longer term trend does not result in the same politicization (be it manifested as public debates, mobilization, or changing beliefs) levels over time; there are specific 'episodes of contention' (De Wilde, 2011) that fuel this trend. Such specific spikes are often centered around crises or specific initiatives, which make it appear top of the mobilization, media or parliamentary agenda. A trivial one is that you need 'something' to mobilize on. If TTIP wasn't here, for example, maybe none of the mobilization would have happened. Others involve having a genuine potential to mobilize, or a favorable context to make your voices heard. According to Zürn (2015), the variables accounting for this time-specific element[15] are 'mobilization resources' and 'political opportunity structures'[16].

Translated to a context focusing on the meso level, (pre-existing) '**mobilization resources'** is defined here as all necessary or sufficient elements that facilitate the engagement with supranational decisions (own definition), such as the number of organizations operating in a certain field, (pre-existing) network linkages between groups, financial resources, or specific expertise and discourses. **Political opportunity structures (POS)** are defined as "*consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics*" (Tarrow, 1989). Two different categories of POS exist: structural and signaling variables (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). The first relates to formal changes in rules and policies that affect political access and the changed practices that follow from them

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[15] Note importantly that this also involves location-specific politicization – this is not taken up in this paper, but is an integral part of furthering this research project.

[16] I propose to handle them distinctly here, even though they are arguably influenced by each other. Mobilization resources can be increased, for example, when a favorable (structural) political opportunity structure is present. The other way around, structural changes in the polity can be advocated by civil society groups.

(Eisinger, 1973; Kitschelt, 1986 in Meyer (2004)). Signaling variables, secondly, are related to the activity and perception of activists themselves, who look for encouragement for mobilization in a changing political environment (Tarrow, 1996).

In sum then, a combination of a specific political opportunity structure and pre-existing mobilization resources provide an environment in which a spike of politicization, manifested as mobilization, can occur. This is signified by the 'Spike' box in figure 2 above. To answer the question "Why is TTIP such a politicized issue?" therefore, we need to assess the previous elements in light of trade policy. In the following, I decompose authority, legitimacy, POS and mobilization resources in this specific case.

3 – Authority and Legitimacy

3.1 Political authority of trade policy governance

Trade policy has always been an exclusive competence of the EU vis-à-vis the Member States since the Treaty of Rome (1956). Subsequent treaty changes and decisions by the Court of Justice have almost always resulted in a spillover of competences, and thus the widening of the *level and scope* of the supranational layer (Devuyst, 2013). In the areas where the EU has exclusive competence, decisions can be made with qualified majority voting in the Council. Trade authority is therefore a defining characteristic of the EU's authority in general.

In terms of *scope*, the evolution on EU level cannot be seen as disconnected from the multilateral level. The 1990s especially were changing times in this respect. Since the conclusion of the Uruguay round and the establishment of the WTO (1995), services, investment, commercial aspects of IPR, and an increasing amount of behind-the-border tariffs (as resembled in TBT and SPS rules) have come onto the trade radar. The EU's commitment in this era lay above all at the multilateral level, but the provisions in the WTO have subsequently been the benchmark of efforts at bilateral or regional level as well[17]. In the years that followed, dead-lock at the multilateral forum has spurred the EU (and the US) to engage in more and more demanding bilateral agreements (Sbragia, 2010)[18]. The provisions included in these EU FTAs go both further than what could be decided upon in the WTO (WTO-plus provisions) or include domains that are not even on the WTO's agenda (WTO-extra) (Horn, Mavroidis, & Sapir, 2009)[19]. Through trade, the EU is therefore increasingly dealing with issues that were exclusively domestic beforehand, which has been coined the 'new trade politics' (Young &

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[17] Using different forums to liberalize goods and services can be seen as an exercise in the "politics of scale". See e.g. Raza (2016).

[18] Which is the main reason why transnational trade protest has first been witnessed towards multilateral level (Seattle WTO, or MAI) and later towards EU trade.

[19] It is often argued that what could not be achieved multilaterally, is increasingly pushed through by the EU (and the US) bilaterally (Shadlen, 2006). Best example of this trend are the so-called 'Singapore issues' on investment, public procurement, trade facilitation and competition. These were an absolute no-go on the multilateral table for developing countries, but are increasingly becoming standard provisions in bilateral FTAs. Trade facilitation, however, is the only Singapore issue where consensus was reached in the WTO, at the Bali Ministerial in 2013.

Peterson, 2006). The Lisbon Treaty change in 2009 again enhanced the EU's trade authority vis-à-vis the Member States by supranationalizing partly 'unresolved' issues such as services and IPR (that were still mixed competence before) or investment protection.

The intrusion of trade rules into domestic policy, combined with the increasing 'legalization' of trade policy have imposed international constraints on domestic maneuvering space (ibid.)[20] and have increased the political authority of European trade policy. As trade issues touched upon various aspects of domestic politics, the issues became more politicized, that is, more actors became engaged and conflicted in increasingly salient trade issues. Indeed, a widely recognized effect of the change in trade policies, is that an increasing amount of groups feel affected and have joined the debate (i.e. increasing *inclusiveness*). Whereas early tariff negotiations were about reciprocal market access and diffuse benefits related to liberalization, negotiations on non-trade-barriers (NTBs) in essence deal with measures adopted to secure public policy objectives. These are intended to be in the interest of the public[21], but can to a certain extent be harmful for businesses that are engaged in cross-border trade (Winslett, 2016). The distribution of costs is thus different, and subsequent disputes (such as fights over TRIPs, dolphin-unfriendly tuna or reformulated gasoline) that were sparked by this trade-off triggered the attention of a multitude of environmental, consumer and/or development NGOs that are active on these fronts (Young, 2006). Many feared a race-to-the-bottom in the wake of competitive deregulation to attract foreign investors (Vogel & Kagan, 2004), but once mobilized, these new trade actors often became pro-active later on, seeing trade rules not only as a threat, but also as a possible tool for realizing (Young, 2006). This reflects the double reaction of on the one hand, groups utilizing the supranational trade authority to their benefit, and on the other hand, groups contesting it[22].

To conclude, trade authority (first through the WTO, but overtaken by the EU) has risen in level, scope and inclusiveness over the previous decades, which has shifted more and more attention to (EU) trade policy, as it increasingly penetrates domains that were previously domestic policies. This authority is expected to lead towards increased utilization and resistance towards it, which is premised on the existence of legitimacy, or the lack thereof.[23]

3.2 Output legitimacy: Is trade really for all?
International trade has always had and still has the potential to bring many advantages to the welfare of individual countries and their citizens. At the same time there is no denying that

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[20] And arguably also on developing countries (see e.g. Wade, 2003; Chang, 2005).
[21] Or can arguably be protectionist in nature as well.
[22] Von Bülow (2010, p. 198) notes this can even be seen within groups' discourse: there is an unresolved tension between arguments in favor of more global regulation (such as environmental or labor rights), and at the same time preserving national sovereignty in other areas, such as investor rights.
[23] Even regarding authority in itself (the acknowledgement that the EU level is functionally and necessarily responsible for trade policy), there is already contestation. Member State battles about the transfer of sovereignty in this domain are of course the best examples, but a part of nationalist resistance against the EU in general is guided by the skepticism about every transfer of competence that reduces national sovereignty (cfr. the national backlash view triggered by increasing cultural and economic interdependence, Kriesi et al., 2008).

trade deals, through lowering tariff barriers or opening markets, have always spurred winners and losers. A main challenge of the post-war international economic system has therefore been to reap the benefits of trade, while making sure the impact on the losers stays minimal. John Ruggie has famously dubbed the specific solution in many Western-European countries to this problem 'embedded liberalism' (1982): as long as there is some form of protection for the "losers", domestic support for increasing economic openness is provided (Hays, 2009)[24]. Rodrik (1997) has empirically shown that there is indeed a positive relationship between the scope of government (especially in social welfare programs) and open economies, related to the compensation hypothesis: social safety nets are installed to mitigate income or employability drops.

While it might have been reasonable to claim that increasing trade liberalization in the GATT-era has brought great advantages to everyone, this has proven difficult to sustain, for several reasons. Firstly, this has to do with the fact that many displaced workers, due to free trade agreements with low-cost countries, have not found new jobs as easily as was predicted in the economic models justifying the signing of those agreements (Autor, Dorn, & Hanson, 2016). Moreover, the social safety nets that should catch these workers are waning in many advanced economies as well, where pressure from different angles (e.g. budgetary restrictions through European economic governance) have made it increasingly difficult to sustain (universal) social security coverage[25]. The globalization paradox or dilemma (Rodrik, 2011)[26] points to this tension: globalization makes the demand for social safety nets bigger, but at the same time undermines a country's ability to finance additional spending (Hays, 2009). The concern was put forward here that this dilemma would either lead politicians to rethink economic openness, or to a popular backlash against globalization (ibid.).

Secondly, the content of trade deals since the mid-90s (both in the WTO and regional/bilateral deals) has also raised doubts about this 'global benefits' claim (Smythe & Smith, 2006). One of the most recurring (popular) claims is that international trade is only to the benefit of business, especially large internationally oriented firms – a claim that goes back two decades. The TRIPS agreement on intellectual property rights, for example, was seen by many as serving the large pharmaceutical multinationals (ibid., p.35). The negotiations on a Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) in the mid '90s were labelled as a "charter of rights for multinational corporations", or "NAFTA on steroids" (Walter, 2001). Exclusion of investor rights from trade agreements was one of the few things that challengers of trade agreements throughout the Americas (across very different organizations) could unite on (Von Bülow, 2010, p. 197). One of the main claims of the anti-GATS network of campaigners during the Doha round was that "the chief beneficiaries of this new GATS regime are a breed of corporate service providers"

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[24] This was also seen as re-embedding capitalism, which for some had become decoupled or dis-embedded from society; the term "dis-embedding" has been famously coined by Karl Polanyi in his work *The Great Transformation* (1944).

[25] See Hays (2009) for a good explanation why liberal market economies such as the US and the UK are most prone to enjoy a liberalization backlash in the (near) future.

[26] This has been expanded to a trilemma; choose two of the following: globalization, the nation state and democracy (Rodrik, 2011).

(Crespy, 2014, p. 174). This overarching claim that trade has gone too far and has not been to the benefit of everyone, has been around since the '90s, and does not seem to withered over the years.

Thirdly, even besides the income effects of trade, many other concerns pop up that seem to contradict the "normative beliefs" people have about the outcomes trade *should* produce. Ehrlich (2010) shows that there is a significant amount of people who call themselves 'fair traders', who express sincere beliefs that trade should be regulated in order to prevent harm to the environment or to labor conditions in third countries, without being necessarily against trade per se. Several authors have written about the shrinking of policy space for developing countries because of the multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements they have gotten into (Chang, 2006; Mayer, 2009; Wade, 2003). The many organizations (North-South, environmental, labor) that have campaigned or are increasingly campaigning on trade issues, recognize these dimensions of trade (both post-materialistic and altruistic) as salient and it constitutes their core business. Many of them are fundamentally criticizing the outcome of current trade negotiations, the best example of this being the creation of an 'Alternative Trade Mandate' alliance. This consists of more than 50 organizations that have developed an alternative vision of European trade policy that puts people and planet before profit and business[27].

These different reasons show that at least the perception of the outcome legitimacy of trade is wobbling. A recent study on public opinion in Germany and the US furthermore showed that, compared to the numbers in a Pew survey of 2014, the generally positive opinion of trade is sharply decreasing (Bluth, 2016). Rodrik (2016) argues that trade has been a large contributor to inequality in advanced economies, claiming that "globalization has not lifted all boats" and therefore becoming a culprit for the deprived. The long-standing claim of opponents that trade is only for the large and powerful is all but dead. An opinion piece by economist and former Secretary of the Treasury in the US, Larry Summers, formulated it sharply:

> *"The core of the revolt against global integration, though, is not ignorance. It is a sense, not wholly unwarranted, that it is a project carried out **by elites for elites** with little consideration for the interests of ordinary people — who see the globalization agenda as being set by big companies playing off one country against another."* (Summers, 2016)

The above paragraphs provide no exhaustive picture of what European trade policy does or does not produce. The argument, however, is that the output legitimacy of trade, i.e. its measure of acceptability with regards to efficiency and normative beliefs, has through the last two decades been waning across a large amount of groups and citizens. Whereas in the post-war trade period it was possible to claim that trade benefits all and that sectors or groups could be protected, the perception of validity of this claim has withered away and question marks have been put next to the ability of trade to serve all.

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[27] http://www.alternativetrademandate.org/

3.3 Throughput legitimacy: "*this is how we do*"

Throughput legitimacy considers aspects such as the transparency of the decision-making process, how inclusive the process is in terms of consultation or participation, and the accountability of decision-makers themselves (Zürn et al., 2012). The more intrusive into domestic spheres (and thus authoritative) trade policy has become, the more calls for a fair and transparent process have emerged.

As mentioned, EU trade policy has been designed in such a way that special interest groups (or national representatives) do not have the ability to capture the process to their benefit (De Bièvre & Dür, 2005). If applied and evaluated in real life, however, the evidence in favor of this collusive delegation argument is tenuous at best (Schwartzkopff, 2009). Trade officials at the European Commission have always had the necessity of reaching out towards organizations for input (called "reverse lobbying", Woll (2007)), and actors that can provide technical expertise have been shown to have the greatest access (Bouwen, 2002). Particularly in trade policy, this expertise is predominantly provided by business organizations. Governments mainly relied on export-oriented firms that have information on market access in third countries, to counter domestic protectionist opposition (Walter, 2001; Dür, 2008). Even when the focus of negotiations changed towards regulation, the business-government relations changed accordingly (Woll & Artigas, 2007). The result is what Hocking (2004) described as the 'adaptive club model': a model that recognizes it should reach out to the constituents most affected by it, while still keeping the mode of consultation fairly closed.[28] As Walter (2001) notes: nowhere was the process of government-business consultation very transparent or "democratic".

The further trade policy intruded domestic domains and public policy spheres, however, the bigger the calls were to open up this policy-making system (Winslett, 2016). This was already voiced around the mid-90s by CSOs that were actively mobilizing against NAFTA or the MAI (Walter, 2001), but the bulk and most significant outbreak hereof was channeled on the WTO. In the famous Battle of Seattle (1999), the lack of transparency of this institution, and the almost total absence of options to participate in the debate, had come center-stage (Smythe & Smith, 2006). In the EU as well, trade policy processes were informal and dominated by a 'relatively small expert policy community' (Woolcock, 2010). According to Meunier (2005) as well, resentment in this area got bigger as citizens became increasingly aware that trade decisions affect their lives, and because trade is a domain in itself that arouses suspicions of illegitimacy because of its collusive delegation, the power of the executive authority and the many trade technicalities. These concerns already stood against a background of a perceived democratic deficit in the EU, the traditional distorted interest representation in EU trade policy, and the Pandora's box of legitimacy concerns opened up in Seattle (ibid.)

In the aftermath of the failures of the Seattle Ministerial and the MAI negotiations, a lot of thought therefore went into changing the practices of trade policy-making, as governments throughout the developed world started to recognize that trade policy could no longer be a

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[28] Hocking (2004) doubts however if the EU is the best example of the adaptive club model, especially in trade, as the amount of formal mechanisms to include business groups is not extensive.

technocratic, behind-the-doors, policy, without input from civil society (Hocking, 2004). The general solution to this (perceived or real) legitimacy crisis was to open up the procedures, both in terms of transparency and participation, to arrive at what Hocking (2004) describes as a multi-stakeholder model: a model that includes a broad range of CSOs, in order to enhance the consensus in favour of free trade, and to counter the growing opposition to it (Ostry, 2002).. The WTO has responded over the years by setting up websites, making access to documents as easy as possible, and including benevolent NGOs to a certain extent in the process (Smythe & Smith, 2006). For the EU as well, a larger process of opening up Europe (manifested through e.g. the White Paper on Governance (2001) or the European Transparency Initiative (2006)) included the setting up of so-called Civil Society Dialogues to establish continued working relationships with a core group of CSOs (Hocking, 2004). Since then, consultation on EU trade policy has fundamentally stayed the same.

Both in the WTO and the EU, however, the changes have not been perceived as going far enough. In the WTO, the changes have been channeled around *formal* transparency provisions (Marceau & Hurley, 2012), while many believe real participation is still – unjustifiably – not on the table (Charnovitz, 2003) The CSDs in Europe, although an effort to increase participation, have been pejoratively described as 'policy briefings' (Hocking, 2004), giving NGOs access without influence (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007), and fraught with an insider/outsider distinction favoring those NGOs that have adapted to a business-like organizational lobbying style (Jarman, 2008). An on-going debate about the question how much transparency and consultation is enough still lingers (Hanegraaff, Beyers, & Braun, 2011; Meunier, 2003).

In sum, the ever-increasing political authority in EU trade policy has been accompanied by a long-standing perceived lack of legitimacy, both about how trade policy is made, and increasingly about the outcome of this particular free trade regime. Whatever the scope of these claims, they persisted through and are strikingly similar across time. TTIP is in itself an extension and an intensification of this trend.

3.4 TTIP – more of the same?

Although TTIP is a free trade agreement and not a treaty change, it still has a large **authority** potential. Arguably the most important chapter and goal of the negotiations is (horizontal) regulatory cooperation, which would entail a shift in the discursive context surrounding regulatory decision-making (Bartl, 2015; Siles-Brügge, 2016). This would oblige governments preparing laws and regulations, to undergo some sort of Trans-Atlantic screening test, which includes "early warning" to the other partner and "stakeholder input and involvement" at any level. It is feared that this would put unnecessary high burdens on future laws and regulations that are prepared with the goal of protecting consumers, environment or workers, as, for example, rules would have to be crafted in the "least trade restrictive way" (BEUC, 2015). The political authority increase could therefore be said to exceed even the European level, transferring it to a symbolic Trans-Atlantic level, by giving more authority to US authorities and foreign companies to engage with the regulatory decision-making process at European

and maybe national level[29]. Likewise, the debate on ISDS is often framed as a corporate power grab, in which private firms would have – through private or public tribunals – the chance to fight domestic regulations that potentially interfere with their business plan and profit – an authority transfer to the corporate world[30].

Furthermore, the "living nature" of the agreement makes this political authority theoretically *infinite*, as both regulatory cooperation and ISDS provisions can potentially be applied to every regulation in the future that has an (implicit) trade impact. As such, it directly affects a vast amount of people and organizations. As a coordinator of the S2B[31] network formulated it very well: "Groups get involved in TTIP, not because it is evil as such, but because they care about *something*. They want to see something happening, they want a fair food system, they want financial regulation, they want whatever. And then they come to realize that TTIP is actually a terrible idea to get what they want as positive reforms" (interview 2). Added to these concerns is the specific dynamic inherent to trade negotiations, which involves deadlines and compromises, adding a whole new dimension to regulatory cooperation, which has historically been based on voluntary agreements (see e.g. Nicolaidis and Shaffer (2005); Pelkmans and Correia de Brito (2015))[32].

The **output** legitimacy of TTIP has also been contested widely. The projected economic benefits of the deal are contested on an academic level (Capaldo, 2015), with claims that the models showing TTIP's benefits are an exercise in "managing fictional expectations" (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2014). The most contentious issues, such as ISDS and regulatory cooperation are labelled frequently as the prime examples of the "transatlantic corporate bill of rights", a "corporate power grab", and a threat to democracy (CEO, 2013; Monbiot, 2013); the same discourse and language that has been around for decades. The value-critique on trade is reflected in De Ville & Siles-Brügge's (2015) argument about the conflicts surrounding TTIP being not *distributive*, but *normative* in nature. Opponents are not (primarily and solely) contesting the asymmetry of distribution in benefits, but the impact on our standards and values, on how we want to shape our society. Questions and concerns relate to a broad range of issues, such as food safety, data protection, energy provision, which are fused with normative questions of how we should shape (solutions to) these problems. The answer that TTIP would provide, is here not perceived as satisfactory, and runs counter to many people's and organizations' belief of what outcome trade policy should produce. Much in the same way that Ruggie (1994) wrote about a new "dis-embedding" of the market from society after the

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[29] At the time of writing, it was not sure if regulatory cooperation would involve the non-central level (Siles-Brügge, 2016)

[30] In both these respects, it is argued that TTIP is an issue driven by a philosophy that idealizes the efficient dynamic of the free market and seeks to minimize constraint by democratically elected institutions (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2015).

[31] The Seattle 2 Brussels Network is a network of organizations that challenge the corporate-driven trade agenda of the European Union and European governments.

[32] Pelkmans et al. (2015) conclude that negotiating regulatory cooperation is fundamentally different from standard (tariff) trade negotiations, as regulators have to be certain at all times that they can still fulfill their primary duty of protecting standards.

Uruguay round, does the emergence of TTIP reflect the profound ambition for further dis-embedding (De Ville & Siles-Brügge, 2015).

More generally, TTIP is often seen as a crystallization of many other problems people and organizations are dealing with, making it an ideal target to channel frustrations. TTIP taps into middle class concerns about the nature of globalization and demographic change (Fabry, 2016). It is seen as a "corporate lobbying paradise" (CEO, 2015) and as such a prime example of what is wrong with EU lobbying in general. A representative from the Belgian patient organization stated that TTIP would re-open the door towards further privatization of health insurances; a debate they thought was settled over the past years (interview 5). So in sum, TTIP is a symbolic file for many citizens and organizations who all have their own concerns, but see it distilled into this one debate.

TTIP is also under fire regarding **throughput**. Transparency concerns and the one-sided approach of the Commission of only consulting (big) business organizations, without credibly hearing the concerns of CSOs, are the main bones of contention. Hundreds of organizations have condemned "the lack of transparency and democratic procedures [which] makes it impossible for citizens and civil society to monitor the negotiations in order to ensure that public interests are being protected"[33]. Fighting for transparency is arguably even the one issue where every CSO is committed to, with a view on fundamentally changing the trade practice on this level. As one interviewee put it: "*I hope we can keep pushing on this, [changes in transparency and] the structure of trade policy, and that – now that we are with so many people – we can change those things that can help us later on as well. We shouldn't put everything on the content of TTIP*" (interview 1). The accusations, furthermore, that TTIP is a prime example of the distorted interest representation is shown in leaks and reports claiming that about 90% of organizations lobbying TTIP were business groups (CEO, 2015).

To conclude, TTIP crystallizes many of (and is a substantive shift in) the longer term evolutions witnessed in EU trade policy: an ever-increasing political authority, which is not considered legitimate, neither in terms of output nor in the way it is made. This, in turn, describes the 'Trend'-part of the theoretical framework. To explain the explosion of mobilization against TTIP, more is needed than just a long term trend, however. The next two parts indicate several political opportunity structures and mobilization resources that combined have facilitated politicizing TTIP, in terms of mobilization.

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[33] http://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/Global/eu-unit/reports-briefings/2015/TTIP%20letter%20and%20signatures%20-%20EN.pdf

4 – Political opportunity structures

While POS can refer to both signaling and structural variables (see 2.2.2), I predominantly focus on the former in this part, as this reflects the answers provided by NGO representatives during interviews.

Absence of asymmetric negotiations

Negotiating with a country like the United States holds a first time possibility that the EU itself will need to compromise on substantive issues. In the past, EU trade policy has focused first and foremost on ex-colonies and developing countries (Orbie, 2009). The EU, fundamentally a large market of 500 million consumers, was in these negotiations always the dominant partner, able to influence international affairs through persuasive and coercive means (Damro, 2012). This situation hardly triggered concerns among European organizations or citizens that Europeans would have to "give in" to reach a deal[34]. Even after the Global Europe strategy kicked off in 2006 and the EU started to negotiate with ASEAN countries, India, Canada and South-Korea, it was never expected that these countries would have much leverage in these discussions that would hurt the European economy[35]. As one NGO representative stated: "*the big difference with TTIP is that people immediately understood that these negotiations will be different from all others we had; that the EU is meeting a player here that can change Europe.*" (interview 1). In other words, the symmetry in power relations between the negotiating partners gave TTIP a certain salience that was not present in other PTAs (Young, 2016), which has alarmed a variety of organizations that see potential harm in these agreements. Moreover, this asymmetry has also helped the message come across to a wider public. As one of the coordinators of the Seattle 2 Brussels Network argued: "*to put it very simple, the US scares people, which has been extremely useful for our campaign. […] The bad opinion that many people have about US corporations [was there] already, so there was not many education to do on this.*" (interview 2).

The emerging clashes in TTIP are also not new. The most famous trade disputes in modern history are exactly between the US and the EU: the mad cow disease outbreak in 1996 that led to a ban in the EU on hormone beef (BST) and several GMOs; the NSA scandal and the subsequent dispute on transferring and handling data; the US-unilaterally reformed Sarbanes-Oxley act on accounting rules which spurred EU criticism; the entry into force of REACH, a broad chemicals-regulating regulation, causing likewise opposition from the US side. These concern exactly those topics that are on the table now: financial regulation, data, pharmaceuticals, food standards (which are probably the most sensitive topic in the EU, deep-

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[34] Of course many organizations were critical with respect to the impact on developing countries, see above.

[35] Occasionally there are sectors fearing that FTAs could lead to a deteriorating European position in the world economy, but these calls have been accommodated. For example, In the EU-South Korea FTA, concerns were voiced by the European automobile sector (ACEA). A safeguard clause was subsequently voted upon by the European Parliament, to mitigate potential negative consequences (Van den Putte et al., 2014).

rooted in cultural aspects, see e.g. Eliasson, 2015). For NGOs, therefore, it is at least perceived that the costs at European side will fall in the areas of regulation[36].

ISDS cases

Arguably the most toxic element of the deal has been the investor-to-state-dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism. What is in essence a legal, technical and complex arbitration procedure, has risen to the top of the agenda for almost every TTIP campaigner; an evolution that was unthinkable some years ago (interview 4). As will be elaborated in section V, the expertise on ISDS was already present, but hardly anyone was listening to these concerns. In parallel with the start of the TTIP negotiations, however, there were several big ISDS cases for the first time directed towards European countries. The most famous one is from 2013, when the Swedish company Vattenfall sued Germany for its decision to fade out nuclear energy after the Fukushima nuclear disaster (Bernasconi-Osterwalder & Hoffmann, 2013)[37]. This sparked an understanding of the mechanism that wouldn't have existed without the case (interview 1, 4) and had in itself outraged the massive anti-nuclear (*anti-Atomkraft*) movement in Germany, who subsequently joined the mobilization against TTIP. This POS is very similar to what we have seen in the 90s when protests against the MAI were fueled by the *Ethyl vs Canada* ISDS-case, resulting in much more media attention and other groups joining (Walter, 2001).

In TTIP, the same ISDS provisions were being negotiated in the context of a free trade agreement with a country that holds thousands of large multinational companies (and which has never lost an ISDS case). This combination of high-profile ISDS cases (that sparked the idea that Europe *can* get hit), together with the absence of asymmetric negotiations (two capital exporting countries with major multinationals on both sides, interview 2) has really provided an ideal mobilization target. Dierckx (2015) states that other agreements (that hold the same investment chapters, like EU-Canada or EU-Singapore), have much less political resonance, which makes it more difficult for groups to politicize this agreement (Dierckx, 2015). At the time however, no cases against European firms were known, nor did anyone expect that Canadian firms would sue European governments.

Crises everywhere

Another political context variable that facilitated groups' mobilization relates to the financial and subsequent eurocrisis that rocked Europe and its citizens since 2008. It was already mentioned in the part on authority and output legitimacy that many people over the years have started to recognize that globalization has not been for everyone. The recent crises and their outcomes have only exacerbated this feeling and provided a new outlet to vent frustrations, which makes it easier for organizations to build campaigns around these issues. Put frankly:

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[36] The TTIP Leaks of 2 May 2016 have arguably provided a clear insight into the American position, which confirms the importance the US attaches to these chapters.

[37] Other cases are e.g. Spain getting sued for its renewable energy policies or Belgium for its nationalization of Fortis Bank.

"There was a lot of frustration building about this elite, that benefitted from the crisis and were winners of that situation. They caused it and then benefitted from it. I think a lot of people channeled that frustration and anger to the idea that [in TTIP] you also have an elite group, not only of big companies but also of investment lawyers, that were reaping the benefits of this system, at the expense of public policies and people's money." (interview 4)

In this sense, the financial and eurocrisis have been fertile ground that produced a political context where mobilization was effective.

The role of the European Parliament

As a structural variable, the strengthened role of the European Parliament after the Lisbon Treaty is obviously the most significant change concerning "formal changes in rules and policies". This gave the EP veto power in trade policy, as final agreements have to survive a 'yes' or 'no' vote from the House (Van den Putte, De Ville, & Orbie, 2014). Theoretically, then, this adds another lobbying battleground, and could provide additional channels for CSOs (and business organizations) to influence the negotiations. As such, the existence of this new role may affect the success or failure balancing exercise that groups make when deciding to engage on a certain topic, and it could add to the salience of the issue, leading to more citizens and groups becoming engaged (Dür & Mateo, 2014). There have already been preliminary accounts of this role, pointing towards the EP being receptive and the guardian for groups that are vulnerable for trade agreements (Richardson, 2012), generally supporting the EU's liberalization agenda, but susceptible to special protectionist interests (Van den Putte et al., 2014) and gradually recognizing its renewed power, especially since the landmark move of striking down the ACTA agreement in the plenary session (Dür & Mateo, 2014). The significance of this new role is therefore a puzzle still needing more explanation. One interviewee stated that the EP certainly was an important battleground, especially before the TTIP resolution in June 2015, but that the TTIP mobilization as we see it now would probably not reflect big differences had the EP not received this veto power (interview 4), so its relevance for the amount of mobilization is in dubio.

5 – Mobilization resources

Combined with a favorable political opportunity structures, there have to be mobilization resources present, i.e. necessary or sufficient elements that facilitate the engagement with supranational decisions. This includes variables such as financial resources, breadth of constituency, expertise and discourse, or networks and coalitions. In this explorative framework, I will only touch upon the latter two: trade coalitions and pre-existing expertise.

It is unsatisfactory to describe or explain trade contestation against TTIP without looking at what came before, a finding that other authors have picked up as well. Walter (2001) argues that "it is difficult to understand NGO opposition to the Millennium Round agenda in Seattle in 1999 without addressing their opposition to and mobilization against the MAI." (p. 52). Von Bülow (2010) also puts a particular emphasis on the social context, meaning the coalitions (nationally and transnationally) that anti-trade groups have gotten into, to explain their organizational and ideational choices.

The core transnational group that has been working on trade issues over the last 15 years is the *Seattle 2 Brussels Network*, established in the aftermath of the protests in Seattle, 1999. De Ville & Siles-Brügge have called this a transnational advocacy network (TAN): networks of activists, distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values in motivating their formation (Keck & Sikkink, 1999)[38]. The majority of members represent the categories of organizations that have historically worked on trade issues: environmental and North-South organizations (trade unions are the third pillar; interview 1). "The key people in S2B have been working on trade for 20-30 years, so they are in touch with pretty much every trade campaigner." (interview 2). Some big members of S2B took it upon them to immediately organize some form of European coordination, with meetings, trainings and organization on Member State level. "*They were the ones conveying this big strategy that made the movement European from the start.*" (interview 2).

Many organizations have furthermore (re-)joined these "traditional" trade campaigners very quickly. Several organizations had been campaigning on trade before, and thus had already developed network linkages with the core group, but had left for the climate debate. "*Many people I see at the CSDs on TTIP, I know them. They got back to trade, after they worked on these issues in the past, but were now dealing more with natural resources or climate*" (interview 1). Besides those, a lot of new organizations also joined, such as consumer, patient or health organizations. Also several movements that do not have trade as their core business such as movements against GMOs, or anti-austerity groups. It can be hypothesized that these groups, as they constitute the same civil society space as those others, were already linked to other groups and were therefore informed and engaged quickly. Network analysis of these pre-existing *and* emerging coalitions could give more information of the most important linkages before, both on a pan-European or national scale.

Secondly, there was an enormous amount of expertise and discourses ready-available. As stated in the previous part, criticism on trade deals is not new, so many organizations had already developed an analysis and critique of EU trade, which they saw reflected and aggravated in TTIP. More importantly, the most toxic element of the deal, ISDS or investment protection, was an issue that had been studied and criticized by a core group of people years before TTIP was launched. Three moments had triggered a surge of resistance and expertise-building against including far-reaching investment protection provisions in trade agreements: the MAI (1995-1998), the possibility of including investment in the WTO at Cancun (2003) and the transfer of competences on investment protection to the EU after the Lisbon Treaty (2009). The same groups at the forefront of ISDS criticism now, were those people that campaigned against it 15-20 years ago (interview 4). As a result: "*The moment TTIP took off in 2013, all the material, the discourse, everything on investment and ISDS was ready.*" (interview 1). The discourse on ISDS has put the Commission on the defensive from day one, a situation they have to date

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[38] It is arguably increasingly difficult to speak of a 'TAN', as their definitional goal would not be mass mobilization, but changing the discursive frames of the debate. The latter is obviously true, but the fact that we have seen extremely large mobilizations throughout Europe – and specifically in Germany – is hinting towards more than just a loose coalition.

not fully recovered from, and prompted them to change their approach on investment protection in September 2015 (European Commission, 2015).

Expertise is not confined to ISDS. Many different groups that were working on separate topics, such as German NGOs on REACH or rural organizations on GMOs, have a vast pool of expertise on their specific topics (interview 2). These issues are now all included in a trade dynamic, which necessitates their involvement and adds detailed and quality knowledge to the debate. A representative from a Belgian consumer organizations (new to the trade debate) said, for example, that they have been working for years on issues such as GMOs, or chemically rinsed beef or chicken and that it has been fairly easy, or at least manageable, to keep these topics off the table through normal legislative lobbying. These topics are now all included in a trade negotiation through the regulatory chapter, which necessitates their involvement in EU trade policy (interview 3).

(Non-)trade coalitions or sharing expertise is of course facilitated through the use of internet and media. Smythe & Smith (2006) state that the ICT revolution has made it much easier for NGOs to establish and sustain activist networks, share information and build campaigns. The frames and discourses that were ready, were quickly disseminated through (mainly) online social media (Bauer, 2015) and caught on surprisingly well with the public (Eliasson, 2015). The resulting upsurge of citizens becoming aware of TTIP, has pushed even more groups to campaign on the issue, the same dynamic seen during the ACTA negotiations (Dür & Mateo, 2014). All these things have facilitated the outburst of mobilization against TTIP, or as Von Bülow (2010, p. 199) stated: "Coalition building seemed to yield better results in terms of sustainability when actors were able to adapt preexisting social networks, repertoires, and resources to deal with new challenges." These pre-existing mobilization resources, combined with the particular POS that (the time of) TTIP represents, can include a fair share of the mobilization/politicization spike.

6 – Conclusion

The politicization of TTIP, manifested as mobilization by civil society organizations and citizens, needs a broader understanding and explanation than singular statements. In this paper I have used insights from the politicization literature to discern a longer-term trend in the politicization of EU trade policy, and the spike of mobilization against TTIP. As trade has an increasingly large political authority, the political activities towards this part of the EU will increase. The legitimacy requirements coupled to this authority are equally high (especially given the far-reaching impact regulatory cooperation would have), and to the extent that organizations and citizens do not perceive output nor throughput legitimacy as satisfactory, this has resulted in increased resistance or protest (through political activities) towards EU trade policy. Pitted against this longer term trend, TTIP is an extension and intensification of the same elements: a possibly infinite political authority increase to a (symbolic) Trans-Atlantic level, which triggers the same legitimacy concerns. Adding to this story, and accounting for the particular spike in attention and mobilization given to TTIP are the perceptions and actions of interest groups and CSOs. They have witnessed a particular political opportunity structure that, combined with pre-existing mobilization resources, facilitated their mobilization. Seen on

this longer time frame, TTIP was therefore only the adding of fuel to flames that were already burning for some time, be it a bit under the radar.

Several directions of further research can be provided, as this is only an explorative attempt at constructing a theoretical framework of trade politicization. There should be, *firstly*, more detailed time series data on trade mobilization that can make the dependent variable more qualified and measurable. *Secondly*, there should be more elaboration on how political opportunity structures and mobilization resources interact, and specifically which variables were the decisive factors in this story. This points attention towards the literature on social movement building, but also necessitates more interviews with representatives of CSOs. *Thirdly*, the explanatory framework used could be adapted to explain differentiated politicization across Member States. As De Wilde et al. (2015, p. 15) have claimed: "*differentiated forms, degrees and manifestations (…) depend on the time, setting and location in which it unfolds*". Several authors have already taken up this task of explaining cross-national differences, but with a conception of politicization linked to public debates in mind. (De Wilde & Zürn, 2012). The theoretical insights from these could be transformed into a mobilization perspective, that can account for the question: "why is TTIP more politicized in some countries (notably Germany and Austria) than in others?" *Fourthly*, more research is needed on the consequences of this politicization, in terms of its impact on polity (transparency regimes, participation rules, the role of national parliaments), politics (who holds power in politicized debates?) and policy. We can also not neglect the more normative questions surrounding this debate: does the politicization of TTIP (and trade) also lead to a democratization of trade on EU level? Is this process (or product) inherently a good thing? These are only some of the questions and interesting directions further research can lead to. The politicization literature can provide lots of insights to this trade debate (and vice versa), and this paper is only one starting point of making this link.

Interviews

Interview 1 – *Marc Maes*, Policy Officer Trade & Food – 11.11.11-CNCD

Interview 2 – *Lucile Falgueyrac*, Coordinator Seattle 2 Brussels Network

Interview 3 – *Joost Vandenbroucke*, Head European Policy and Advocacy Test-Aankoop Belgium (consumer organization)

Interview 4 – *Cecilia Olivet*, Researcher at Transnational Institute Netherlands

Interview 5 – *Jean-Pierre Descan*, Policy Officer Europe Christelijke Mutaliteit Belgium (patient organization)

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