

Better than Europe*

Eurosceptical self-descriptions in Norway and Switzerland

Jochen Hille

Summary

In Norway and Switzerland the majority of the people rejected EU-integration in several referenda. The emotionality and the enormous mobilization that took place in the debates on integration cannot be sufficiently explained by economic and political reasons. Instead, the main resource aiding this eurosceptic mobilisation for lies more in reactivating deeply rooted descriptions of the national self and those of the 'others'. Carving out these collective images, this paper compares how the major eurosceptical actors of Switzerland and Norway describe their actions as meaningful in their iconography and narrations. Eurosceptics perceive themselves mainly as defenders of the national community and its nation-state, which are regarded as warm, natural, close, just, efficient, peaceful and democratic, while an integrated Europe is perceived as a distant, cold and bureaucratic super-state EU.

Zusammenfassung

In Norwegen und der Schweiz haben die Bevölkerungen die EU-Integration in Volksabstimmungen mehrheitlich abgelehnt. Die enorme Mobilisierung und Emotionalisierung in den Integrationsdebatten kann weder durch ökonomische noch durch politische Umstände hinreichend erklärt werden. Die Hauptmobilisierungsressource der Euroskeptiker liegt vielmehr in der Reaktivierung tief verwurzelter nationaler Selbst- und Fremdbilder. Der vorliegende Beitrag zeigt, wie Akteure in der Schweiz und Norwegen ihren Integrationswiderstand mittels nationaler Erzählungen und Bildersprachen als sinnvoll darstellen. Euroskeptiker verstehen sich primär als Verteidiger der guten nationalen Gemeinschaft. Diese Gemeinschaft und deren Nationalstaat beschreiben sie als wärmer, natürlicher, näher, gerechter, effizienter, friedlicher und demokratischer als das integrierte Europa, welches als ferner, kalter, bürokratischer Superstaat EU dargestellt wird.

Dr. Jochen Hille is a political scientist and member of the Research Group for Northern European Politics (FOR:N) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Contact: jochenhille@compuserve.de

Introduction

The deep blue colour of the European flag is the background for discourse about Europe coming from politicians and social scientists. The flag with its stars, and other European symbols are widely used as icons at their conferences. The basic assumptions made by social science research focusing on European Integration are that integration is both positive and that it is an ongoing process. Both assumptions might be right and true, but they pre-empt our way of understanding and make it impossible to understand eurosceptics.¹ Seen from a pro-EU point of view, eurosceptics can only be described as ignorant and backward nationalists or as defenders of special interests. But both of the above are misleading descriptions for eurosceptical views.² Indeed, it is true that eurosceptics are “nationalists” in the definition that they prefer and defend their national community and national political system against EU-integration.³ However, to get an understanding of the motivations behind euroscepticism, we need to understand eurosceptic values and self-images as well as their images of Europe. According to Gebhardt it is necessary to understand the cultural core – the collective virtue system – to get an insight into the motivations of actors.⁴

For a better understanding of eurosceptical ideologies, I will compare the core-arguments and ideologies of eurosceptics in two of the most eurosceptical countries, Switzerland and Norway. Choosing these two countries for comparison is not only motivated by the fact that they both are among the very few countries in Western Europe

* This article is based on the PhD thesis *Gute Nation oder Europa? Euroskeptizismus in Norwegen und der deutschsprachigen Schweiz*. Berlin 2005. The full text can be downloaded from the internet (<http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/dissertationen/hille-jochen-2005-07-13/HTML/>).

¹ The author's basic view on the production of knowledge is rooted in stoicism and scepticism. In contrast to dominant discourses the term “eurosceptic” is used in a strictly neutral (indifferent) meaning and as a simple description of a well founded political “sceptical” standpoint concerning integration: There are people who regard European Integration as positive, while others – the eurosceptics – give reasons as to why they are sceptical concerning European Integration.

² See Schymik, Carsten: *Europäische Anti-Föderalisten. Volksbewegungen gegen die Europäische Union in Skandinavien*. Berlin 2006.

³ For the crucial role of state-nationalism for European Integration and identity formation see Cederman, Lars-Eric: *Nationalism and bounded Integration*. Florence 2000.

⁴ See Gebhardt, Jürgen: “Politische Kulturforschung – ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Analyse soziokultureller Ordnungszusammenhänge”. In: Constantin von Barloewen and Kai Werhahn-Mees (eds.): *Japan und der Westen*. Vol. 3, Frankfurt am Main 1986, 60–77.

which still have not become members of the EU, but also because of the differences in ‘distance’ – geographical as well as cultural – both countries experience vis-à-vis the EU. Norway being at the edge of Europe, Switzerland at the very heart of the continent, one can assume that eurosceptics in both countries do not interact with each other – unlike eurosceptics in the Scandinavian countries with one another, respectively, and as eurosceptics in Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein do. Therefore, their arguments will have been blurred, to a lesser extent, by mutual influences.

Norway and Switzerland – two different EU non-member states

The end of the Cold War and the deepening of economic integration changed the international environment for the small European states and initiated public debates about closer links to the European Union. These debates led to referenda on full EU-membership in Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway in 1994. The results were that Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, while Norway stayed outside because the majority of the electorate rejected membership in the referendum.⁵ However, by still being a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) Norway is integrated within the European framework in a much more institutionalised way than Switzerland.⁶ There even membership in the EEA was rejected by the people in a 1992 referendum and by a majority of the federal states of Switzerland (Cantons). Yet, because EEA was regarded as a “training camp”⁷ for full membership, the debate on the EEA treaty in Switzerland can be compared with the debates on full membership in the other countries.⁸

In some respects Switzerland and Norway have much in common. Both are small, rich countries with stable democracies and a highly educated population. They are small open corporatist economies with some sheltered sectors – especially the agricultural

⁵ See Miles, Lee: *The European Union and the Nordic Countries*. London 1996.

⁶ For information about the legal framework between Switzerland and the EU see the website of the Swiss public administration *Integrationsbüro* (<http://www.europa.admin.ch/>).

⁷ This term was originally used by the protagonists of integration. Later it was also adopted by the eurosceptics in an ironical manner, to illustrate that protagonists of integration have full political integration as their long term goal.

⁸ Kux, Stephan and Ulf Svedrup: “Fuzzy Borders and Adaptive Outsiders: Norway, Switzerland and the EU”. In: *European Integration* 22 (2000), 237–270.

sector.⁹ But there are also basic differences: Switzerland is a highly industrialized country with an internationally competitive banking sector and a strong currency, while the Norwegian economy is based on its natural resources (in particular oil, gas, hydropower and fish), the Norwegian Krona roughly mirroring the oil price.

Different roots of the eurosceptical organisations in Norway and Switzerland

“No to EU” (*Nei Til EU*) is the dominant eurosceptical movement in Norway. In the campaign against EU-membership in 1994 *Nei til EU* had up to around 140 000 members. *Nei til EU* is a single issue movement against EU-membership and other forms of adaptation.¹⁰ The organizational bases of *Nei til EU* rely on the interest groups of the rural Norwegian peripheries (farmers, fishing communities, counter-cultures etc.), as well as left-wing groups.¹¹ *Nei til EU* mirrors the views of large parts of Norwegian society. Left-wing intellectuals, social democratic defenders of the welfare state, Christian fundamentalists, and the strong rural Norwegian periphery provide the socio-economic background of members. On a left-right axis, the average eurosceptic is close to the political centre with a smooth tendency to the left.

In contrast to this, most Swiss eurosceptics are right-wing national conservatives.¹² The major political organization “Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland” (*Aktion für eine Unabhängige und Neutrale Schweiz*, AUNS) is based on national conservative rural forces. Their political spectrum ranges somewhere between Christian Democrats in the German province of Bavaria (*Christlich Soziale Union*, CSU) and *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) of Jörg Haider in Austria.¹³

⁹ In research, this is a very common line of argumentation for explaining why some of the small, rich European societies are reluctant concerning European Integration. See Gstöhl, Sieglinde: *Reluctant Europeans: Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland in the Process of Integration*. Boulder 2002. The major comparative study on Scandinavia is still Ingebritsen, Christine: *The Nordic States and the European Unity*. London 1998.

¹⁰ Cf. *Nei til EUs* basic programme (<http://www.neitileu.no/man/organisasjon/serv/bjelker.html>, 19.10.03).

¹¹ See Bjørklund, Tor: *Om folkeavstemninger Norge og Norden 1905–1994*. Oslo 1997; Christensen, Dag Arne: “Foreign Policy Objectives: Left Socialist Opposition in Denmark, Norway and Sweden”. In: *Scandinavian Political Studies* 21(1998:1), 51–70.

¹² On the programmatic viewpoints against socialism see Blocher, Christoph: *Freiheit statt Sozialismus. Aufruf an die Sozialisten in allen Parteien*. Zürich 2000.

¹³ For the programmatic views of the movement see its website <http://www.auns.ch>.

Basic differences between Swiss and Norwegian eurosceptics organisations concern their original objectives. *Nei til EU* is a single-issue movement, which only represents views against EU-membership and does not take a pronounced stance in domestic political debates. *Nei til EU* even supports the membership of Norway in the UN and in other international organizations. In contrast to this, AUNS was founded against Swiss membership in the United Nations. This organization is against any form of integration into NATO, EU or even UN because it regards this as a hindrance to Swiss self-determination and neutrality.¹⁴ Furthermore AUNS takes a strong stance in Swiss domestic politics. It is strongly linked with the national conservative and right-populist Swiss Peoples Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*, SVP) – a former peasant party.

Albeit Swiss, the eurosceptical AUNS is much more concerned with other issues than *Nei til EU* and it takes a much more extreme stance within the debate. The common eurosceptical voter can be supposed to be much more moderate in their views on integration, than those of the Swiss movement. The Norwegian eurosceptical organization *Nei til EU* is much closer to the views of the voters and it expresses the overall eurosceptical views of large parts of Norwegian society, even though leftist lines of eurosceptical argumentation concerning equality within society, women's emancipation and environmental concerns appear more important in the programme of *Nei til EU* than they are for the general electorate.

Socio-economic profile of eurosceptics

The ideal typical socio-economic profile of eurosceptics is a low degree of education and a low socio-economic status, a person residing in the rural periphery.¹⁵ That people in the rural areas are more eurosceptical than elsewhere is not very surprising, since rural interest in state subsidies,¹⁶ as well as those moulded by political traditions of local rule and subsequent attitudes directed against political centres merge into a move-

¹⁴ This isolationist tradition of Swiss eurosceptics can already be found in the early discussions on integration in international regimes. See Moos, Carlo: "Ja zum Völkerbund, Nein zur UNO. Die Volksabstimmungen von 1920 und 1986 in der Schweiz". In: *Schweizer Beiträge zur internationalen Geschichte*. Vol. 4, Zürich 2001.

¹⁵ Listhaug, Ola and Pascal Sciarini: "Single Case or Unique Pair? The Swiss and Norwegian 'No' to Europe". In: *Journal of Common Market Studies* 35 (1997:3), 407–438.

¹⁶ Direct state subsidies on the primary sector and indirect support by providing infrastructure, tax releases etc. are much higher than in the European average.

ment against Brussels. This pattern is more stable and more intense in Norway. The two referenda on European Integration in 1972 and 1994 resulted in nearly identical regional voting patterns – a clear-cut “no” to Europe came from the peripheries and a “yes” majority from the few urban centres.¹⁷ While the Norwegian conflict on EU-Integration is dominated by the traditionally strong social cleavage between centres and peripheries, in Switzerland the cleavage between the eurosceptical German-speaking majority and the pro-European French-speakers must also be taken into account. Furthermore, border regions tend to be more pro-European than the geographical and historical heartland of Switzerland.¹⁸ In both countries, leftist groups are against membership. But while these eurosceptical groups are isolated in Switzerland, Norwegian leftist eurosceptics do have a strong voice within *Nei til EU*.

How do eurosceptics campaign and agitate?

The way of both movements' campaign in both countries is very different. AUNS is a right-wing populist movement and relies much more on polemics than on arguments. Articles in brochures and papers published by AUNS, like for example *Grauer Brief*, deal with national history. They focus on stories about neutrality as the safeguard of peace and of wealth. Again and again it is repeated that Switzerland must be understood as a defence community against foreign and undemocratic powers. In different ways, Germany and France are presented as threats: Germany because it is perceived as simply being “too big”, and France because its political system is described as the blueprint for the political system of the EU. Here, the motifs of resistance against integration are the fear of centralization and of stronger social hierarchies. French and European ways of recruiting higher civil servants are accused as a way of giving “arrogant elites” power over the common person.¹⁹ This line of argumentation is similar to the Norwegian idealization of the person and their power to control political decisions within the national framework.

¹⁷ Bjørklund, Tor: “Old and new patterns: The ‘no’ majority in the 1972 and 1994 EC/EU referendum in Norway”. In: *Acta Sociologica* 31 (1997:1), 143–153.

¹⁸ Quantitative data on all referenda in Switzerland is accessible in the so called *Vox-Analysen* (<http://www.polittrends.ch/vox-analysen/daten.php>, 17.9.2007). On the formation of Swiss collective identity from a qualitative historical point of view see Im Hof, Ulrich: *Mythos Schweiz. Identität – Nation – Geschichte 1291–1991*. Zürich 1991.

¹⁹ See AUNS (ed.): *Grauer Brief*. 1986ff.

Norwegian and Swiss eurosceptics reject the idea of a centralized or federalist Europe from different perspectives. In Norway, they defend the unitarian Lutheran nation-state, while in Switzerland they want to preserve the federal state.²⁰ For this reason, the institutional organization of a state should not be regarded as the main reason for strong euroscepticism. In other words, and in contrast to much of the national discourse on the reasons of non-integration, Swiss federalism and Norwegian unitarism are of minor importance for explaining euroscepticism in both countries. Of major importance is the belief that the nation-state, with its specific ways of institutionalizing power, is the best possible state or at least better than the EU-system.²¹ The basic assumption is that the respective nation-state is a good state.

Normative motives of euroscepticism in Switzerland and Norway

Freedom, peace and war – the historical experiences and the EU-debate

It is often said that the historical experience of the Second World War is the major source of euroscepticism in both countries. While successful neutrality is described as the reason for euroscepticism in Switzerland, Norway's status as a victim of great powers is regarded as the source of a spirit of struggle for freedom. As a paradox, neutrality and independence in Switzerland, and occupation in Norway, lead to the same result: euroscepticism.

While in Norway the linkage between the status as a victim and euroscepticism is rather weak,²² we find strong empirical evidence for this historical argument in Switzerland.²³ This is founded on the strong belief within the Swiss population that armed neutrality in both World Wars was the reason for peace, stability and wealth in the country.²⁴ This simple interpretation of Swiss history is hardly contested either by pro-

²⁰ See Linder, Wolf: *Schweizerische Demokratie*. Bern 1999.

²¹ Cf. Hille, Jochen: "Nationale Demokratie oder Europa? Die Integrationsdebatten in Norwegen und der Schweiz". In: *Berliner Debatte Initial* 13 (2000), 36–44.

²² See Jenssen, Anders Todal et al. (eds.): *To join or not to join. Three Nordic Referendums on Membership in the European Union*. Oslo 1998, 235–265.

²³ See Langejürgen, Ralf: *Die Eidgenossenschaft zwischen Rütli und EWR. Der Versuch einer Neuorientierung der Schweizer Europapolitik*. Zürich 1993.

²⁴ On the Swiss discourse on neutrality see Kreis, Georg: *Kleine Neutralitätsgeschichte der Gegenwart*. Bern 2004.

European forces, by left-wing parts of Swiss society nor by historians. But yet it is still a major point of reference for a positive understanding of the Swiss state and national community. In Norway by contrast, membership in NATO – adopted as a consequence of World War experience – is broadly accepted. Therefore, discourses concerning international relations and security politics are of minor importance within the debates on European Integration.

As a consequence, it can be said that it is not a specific kind of history nor a fixed historical experience that is decisive, but the view that the nation and its nation-state are not responsible for causing war. In contrast to this, the EU is regarded as an imperial “superpower in the making”²⁵ possibly endangering peace. Contrary to much of federalist thinking about European Integration, mistrust against nationalism and the nation-state is lacking and therefore the most common argument in favour of European Integration is missing. It is not the specific histories of the countries that provide the source of euroscepticism, but an understanding of the nation and the nation-state as a positive community and an effective, peaceful way for organizing society.

Democracy and self-determination

The strongest argument eurosceptics hold is that integration endangers democracy. Most no-voters and activists clearly emphasize the democracy argument. While economic arguments are mainly pro-integration arguments, the major argument of eurosceptics is that of defending democracy.

In Norway, the whole campaign against EU-integration was based on the democracy argument. In a strategic paper for the campaign before the referendum of 1994, *Nei til EU* emphasized that all separate arguments are linked to the question of who should decide.²⁶ Even in the field of economy, the major concern of *Nei til EU* is about the control and decision-making concerning rich natural resources, like fishing grounds, oil and gas.²⁷ The Swiss discourse centres around the defence of real and direct democ-

²⁵ Galtung, Johann: *The European community: A superpower in the making*. Oslo 1993.

²⁶ Compare *Nei til EU: Kampanjeplan. Strategic paper introduced on the conference of Nei til EU on 10–12 June 1994 in Trondheim*.

²⁷ On different arguments see *Nei til EU* (ed.): *Norge og EU. Virkninger av medlemskap i Den europeiske union*. Trondheim 1994.

racy, too. But due to Swiss national history, there is a second major goal: the upholding of neutrality, which is supposed to be a safeguard for peace and wealth.²⁸

Obviously democracy is a highly normative goal, and the lack of democratic legitimacy often described by social scientists is, indeed, a weak spot for European Integration.²⁹ Therefore, eurosceptics do have good reasons to stress the endangerment of democracy through EU-integration.

Besides this, there is another aspect, which in my view is of great importance for the major impact concerning the democratic argument of eurosceptics: democracy – the idea that the people should rule – is a universal value. But, simultaneously, democracy relies on the people – a term often used for the nation. Furthermore, democratic virtues are defined in a national context and are mixed with the idea of self-rule, freedom and independence for the national community. For these reasons, I want to give some insights into the different meaning of democracy and national community within the Norwegian and Swiss EU-discourses.

Norway and Switzerland have in common a longstanding tradition of democratic rule. In Switzerland, democracy eurosceptically dates back to the legendary founding fathers of Switzerland of the 13th century. The founding of Switzerland is described as a contract of three cantons against “foreign knights”.³⁰ This myth is often used to illustrate the central ideas of the Swiss state: federalism and direct democracy. Here, the democratic community is not based on the notion of a primordial code of language or ethnic belonging, but on a contract to defend the common freedom against foreign powers.³¹ The myth is centred around the idea of a universal contract, which by definition includes all language groups within the Swiss state. However, as a matter of fact, this myth is more popular in the German-speaking areas and communities. This might also partly explain the higher degree of euroscepticism in German-speaking Switzerland.

²⁸ See Mörgeli, Christoph (AUNS ed.): *Das Wesen der schweizerischen Neutralität*. Bern 2001.

²⁹ See Fuchs, Dieter: *Das Demokratiedefizit der Europäischen Union und die Integration Europas*. Berlin 2002.

³⁰ See for example the printed version of the oath of Rütli in AUNS (ed.): *Grauer Brief* No. 79 (2001), 2.

³¹ See the summary of a large national research project on Swiss identity formation by Kreis, Georg et al. (eds): *Die Schweiz unterwegs. Schlussbericht des NFP 21. Kulturelle Vielfalt und Identität*. Basel 1993.

Norwegian eurosceptics emphasize that the constitution of 1814 was one of the most democratic in Europe, for its time. Here too, the values of independence – from Denmark, and of the democratic tradition of the Norwegian state, are intertwined. But in contrast to the idea of a multicultural national community in Switzerland, Norwegians are strongly connected by a primordial code of language and ethnic belonging. The links of this primordial community are strengthened by the idea of equality, which is enforced by the welfare system and the democratic nation-state. While Swiss political community is loosely tied together by the ideas of the state as a defence community,³² Norwegian political community is tied together by both: the idea of a contract and strong primordial codes.

Still, the provocation from a Swiss artist that a native “Switzerland does not exist”³³ is often quoted in political discourse on Swiss identity, and this shows that the Swiss national community is not self-conscious.³⁴ In contrast to this, according to Iver B. Neumann, Norwegian political community is imagined as close and uncontested in public discourse.³⁵ Therefore *Nei til EU* states that Norway is a close-to-the-people democracy (*nærdemokrati*), which has at least two meanings: On one hand, this means that inside the homogeneous Norwegian national community, people have close relations to their politicians and the administrative bodies. In this sense it is about a non-hierarchical structure of society and the political system. On the other hand, according to Esborg, this describes the idealization of local democracy and of living in the Norwegian rural periphery, an idea that is close to the political notion of subsidiarity.³⁶

Swiss eurosceptics mean something different. The people of Switzerland are heterogeneous regarding language and culture. In the eurosceptical view, the country has found the ideal system to combine economic success, freedom of the people, and a way to

³² On major role of defence and the army for building Swiss identity formation see: Münger, Kurt: *Militär, Staat und Nation in der Schweiz 1798–1874. Das eidgenössische Militärwesen als Faktor der nationalen und nationalstaatlichen Integration von der Helvetischen Republik bis zur Gesamtrevision der Bundesverfassung*. Münster 2002.

³³ “La Suisse n’existe pas.”

³⁴ See as an example for the aggressive leftist discourse on the deconstruction of Switzerland Lerch, Freddi and Andreas Simmen: *Der leergeglaubte Staat. Kulturboykott: Gegen die 700-Jahr-Feier der Schweiz. Dokumentation einer Debatte*. Zürich 1991.

³⁵ See Neumann, Iver B.: *Norge – en kritikk. Begrepsmakt i Europa-Debatten*. Oslo 2001.

³⁶ Cf. Esborg, Line: “Mellom bakkar og berg. Om den norske EU-motstandes retoriske sted”. In: *Historien på livet. Diskusjoner om Kulturarv og Minnespolitikk*. Lund 2002, 139–258.

manage cultural diversity through regulation, tradition and its federal structure. While the Norwegian eurosceptics do not have so vivid an idea of the “close-to-the-people democracy”, Swiss eurosceptics support federalist and subsidiary views. According to eurosceptics, power should be placed on the lowest level. Norwegian eurosceptics are against centres too, but they have the political community of the Norwegian people in mind, which often is imagined as the inhabitants of the periphery.³⁷

Swiss and Norwegian eurosceptics both follow a strong anti-centralist notion. The European Union is described as the distant centre of power. But when using this metaphor – “distance” – they mean slightly different things. Swiss eurosceptics, who describe their country as “the neutral heart of Europe”,³⁸ refer to distance towards the hierarchical, bureaucratic and nontransparent political system of the EU. Norwegian eurosceptics add a geographical meaning, in a narrower sense to this, as the popular slogan “A long way to Oslo, but even further to Brussels”³⁹ indicates. This has as its foundation the long tradition of political thinking and cleavage structure in Norway, which stresses geographical distance as an important factor for political power. In the EU-referenda, it was the periphery of Norway which clearly rejected European Integration in 1972 and 1994.⁴⁰ Besides the economic interest of keeping subsidies, voters followed an old 19th century pattern of political mobilization against centres and towns. Ideologically, this has the background of a national romantic idealization of the peasants and the countryside versus the decadent life in the towns. In Switzerland we find a similar feature, which describes the prototype of a Swiss as a peasant.

The common concern of eurosceptics is to defend the nation and the nation-state. This includes aspects of identity and the fear for the loss of identity within a larger European framework. This fear is directly linked to the question of democracy and legitimacy of the European Integration. Here, eurosceptics criticize the lack of democratic legitimacy on an institutional level. But beyond these arguments, the lack of trust and belonging is the most important source of euroscepticism. The nation and its state provide people with the feeling of orientation, while Europe is regarded as a distant bureaucratic organization. Swiss and Norwegian eurosceptics, despite of their deep ideological differences on a left-right axis, describe themselves as the defenders of the

³⁷ See Esborg, Line: “Om kultur, politikk og EU-kamp”. In: *Dugnad* 25 (1999:3), 5–19.

³⁸ The slogan “Das neutrale Herz Europas” is often used by AUNS.

³⁹ In Norwegian: “Langt til Oslo, lenger til Brussel.”

⁴⁰ Bjørklund, Tor: *Periferi mot sentrum. Landsomfattende folkeavstemninger i Norge*. Oslo 1999.

nation, national democracy and as popular movements against an elitist Europe. Due to their ideological viewpoints, Swiss eurosceptics regard European elites as social democrats, while Norwegian eurosceptics suspect European elites to be neo-liberal. The Swiss defend the image of a successful neo-liberal state, while Norwegian eurosceptics defend the concept of the Nordic welfare state.

Conclusion

The basic ideological standpoints of the major Norwegian and Swiss major movements – *Nei til EU* and AUNS respectively – are counterposed on a left-right axis. Therefore close ties between the major eurosceptical organisations of Switzerland and Norway are impossible. They could not collaborate in any eurosceptical frame- or network, since their basic views on left-right topics like welfare are adverse.

Furthermore, the history and the form of the political mobilization demonstrated by the two eurosceptical movements AUNS and *Nei til EU* are very different. AUNS is a populist right-wing movement and actively takes part in various domestic debates. Its origins lie in opposition towards Swiss UN-membership and any kind of integration. In contrast, *Nei til EU* is a broad societal single-issue movement against EU-integration with a smooth tendency to the left and a low profile in domestic political struggles. AUNS mobilizes the electorate by retelling national myths of defence and of the democratic peasants, who are supposed to have founded Switzerland and resisted against “foreign knights”. *Nei til EU* campaigns are much more based on giving reasons, albeit underpinning this with national symbols.

Regarding their socio-economic bases, eurosceptical voters in both countries have much in common. A low degree of education, a low socio-economic status and a rural-peripheral background provide the typical socio-economic profile of eurosceptical voters. In Switzerland additionally the German-speaking majority tends to be eurosceptical.

While there is no “axis of euroscepticism” in the sense of a cross-country connection of the popular movements, the motivational structure of Swiss and Norwegians have much in common. There is strong support against political centralization in both countries, especially in the Norwegian peripheries and in the traditional heartland of Switzerland – both rural. Furthermore, the idealized common person versus Brusselian “eurocrats” is an often-used feature. Eurosceptical self-description is based on the

view that the nation and the nation-state are the best model with which to organize society – or at least better than the cold, distant, inefficient and undemocratic EU.

Here, well-founded arguments against the lack of democracy within the EU and the idealized national community, as well as the defence of its freedom, can hardly be separated. Swiss eurosceptics emphasise the glorious history of defending Switzerland's neutrality. Norwegian eurosceptics are more concerned about their national welfare state as a national symbol for the good national community, which is kept together by a mixture of essentialist views and state nationalism. To live in small democratic and peaceful communities – in the meaning of national romanticism – provides the major ideological resources of eurosceptics.

While political actors in public discourses – as well on the pro-EU-side as on the eurosceptical-side – describe and define themselves as “left” or “right”, these are misleading descriptions for political standpoints in struggles on European Integration. The major question in EU-debate is, if the national set of virtues and the existing nation-state are perceived as enforced by European Integration (EU as a larger and stronger Germany, France, Switzerland or, respectively, Norway) or are threatened by it. From this point of view, the correct differentiation between eurosceptics and supporters of integration in the successful small European nation-states is the following: Eurosceptics are supporters of the small successful nation-states, while supporters of European Integration prefer the EU as the extended version of the good nation-state. For this reason, scientific research should free itself from the poor descriptions of public discourse categorizing “pro-European”, or a corresponding “anti-European” and “left” and “right” as being respectively correspondent. Instead, it seems more appropriate to use different labels – the following – in order to understand the views which preempt and do lead to the answer of the question as to whether to join or not to join the EU: “small eurosceptical nation-state centred” on the one hand and “nationalism extended to include the political system of the EU” on the other. The European “super-state” is only regarded as legitimized if it is perceived as a larger version of the existing good nation-state. Otherwise, large parts of the electorate will continue to regard their nation-state as better than Europe.