PUBLIC EUROSCEPTICISM AFTER THE 2016 BRITISH REFERENDUM: UNLEASHING EMOTION

ABSTRACT | What is Euroscepticism? This presentation will explore how the study of Euroscepticism has changed since the EU fifth enlargement (2004-07) and the recent British referendum. Social learning, interaction and political communication increasingly affect opinions and behaviours. In the run-up to the EU accession referendums in Central and Eastern Europe, studies addressed the role of subjective evaluations (Jasiewicz 2003; Guerra 2013), while a few years ago, commenting on the emergence of anti-politics, Alfio Mastropaolo (2012) suggested using qualitative research to show how individual evaluations lead citizens to take political decisions based on their own, often not drastic, judgements. Recently, Capelos and Exadaktylos (2016) explored how the affective content of Greek media influences attitudes towards European integration through traumatic public events. This analysis introduces Euroscepticism beyond party systems, and explores the narrative on the EU debates at the domestic level. An analysis of original data on the British referendum (23 June 2016) addresses the role of subjective evaluations and emotions on attitudes towards the EU and to what extent these can drive Euroscepticism and behaviours. The “Leave” campaign was successful in evoking citizens’ emotions, and “Leave” voters seem to be more driven by anger, while uncertainty spreads among those who are likely to have voted “Remain”, and young people feel both uncertain and anxious.

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