



# **The Hour of the Citizens The Political Consequences of Mass Euroscepticism**

**Giorgio MALET**

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## **Abstract**

In the last decades mass domestic opposition has progressively challenged the institutions of international cooperation. In Europe, skepticism towards European integration has increased in all countries and recently led to the first withdrawal of a member state. While we know a great deal about the sources of Eurosceptic attitudes, researchers have devoted less attention to their consequences. The goal of this thesis is to better understand under what conditions these preferences matter, to what extent they affect political behavior, how they are activated, and how they spread. The core argument is that, as a consequence of the increasing politicization of European integration, people's EU attitudes have come to affect the dynamics of democratic representation in Europe. I analyze three crucial consequences of citizens' integration attitudes: their impact on voting behavior; their impact on the political discourse of mainstream parties; and their impact on the opinions of other citizens abroad. Thus, the papers of this dissertation investigate three different conditions under which mass Euroscepticism has political consequences: (1) during election campaigns, when challenger parties' discourse provides information to voters that increases the impact of EU attitudes on vote choices; (2) between elections, when competition from rival parties pushes mainstream parties to adapt their political discourse to the ups and (mainly) downs of public support for the EU; (3) in occasion of momentous EU referendums, when public preferences, in the form of election results, provide a signal to citizens in other countries and set in motion a process of contagion. The findings of this thesis suggest that the politicization of conflicts over national sovereignty may be at the same time a threat to the survival of the European project and a necessary step to reinvigorate the channels of political representation in our dissatisfied democracies.



**Jury:** Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI) (Supervisor), Elias Dinas (EUI), Sara B. Hobolt (LSE), Laura Stoker (Univ. California, Berkeley)

### **Bio**

Giorgio Malet is a researcher at the Chair of International Relations and International Political Economy of the University of Zurich, where he works on a project on "The Mass Politics of Disintegration." During his PhD, he held visiting positions at the University of California, Berkeley and at the London School of Economics. At the EUI, he was also involved in a research project on "Political Conflict in Europe in the Shadow of the Great Recession". His research interests focus on the study of party competition, voting behavior, and opinion formation.