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Talking about Money: Public Participation and Expert Knowledge in the Euro Referendum

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Abstract

This paper uses the proposed UK referendum on the single European currency as a means of investigating the effect of democratising science on the scrutiny of conflicting expert advice. The paper provides a brief overview of the main campaign issues before exploring the organisation and campaign strategies of the main interest groups. The analysis shows that key groups on both sides of the debate are anticipating a campaign in which the political dimensions of the debate are actively minimised in order to avoid alienating the key 'floating voters' upon which success in the referendum depends. As a result, the campaign is expected to focus on the economic costs and benefits of the euro for individuals and households, with only limited discussion of issues relating to sovereignty. Whether or not the campaign groups, particularly those that oppose the euro can maintain this line remains to be seen but if there is a full and frank public debate about the economic, social and political stakes, then this will be despite the referendum rather than because of it.

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Introduction

Persuading people that adopting the euro is compatible with feeling British is still asking them to change some of the emotional associations that they currently make with their currency'¹

If economics is a science, then the UK debate about whether or not to adopt the single European currency is a case study in the public discussion of science. In particular, the referendum and the preparations for it provide an opportunity to examine how decisions that incorporate complex science and social life are taken in a context that is fully politicised. The widening of participation in such decisions is usually taken to be an improvement on elite or expert decision-making processes because it allows the assumptions and values of expert groups to be challenged by those outside the policy-circle. The social commitments and assumptions of scientists and other experts can be revealed, and the boundaries between what is known and what is being assumed are highlighted. In the case of the euro, as in so many other scientific domains from nuclear power to BSE, these boundaries matter because most knowledge-claims remain contested, so that what is known with any certainty is rather limited. In such a setting, the idea of a more participatory process, in which democratic legitimacy adds to what can only be minimal scientific authority, seems like a sensible proposal.

The single European currency provides an ideal lens through which to examine these processes because a euro banknote is so much more than a piece of paper. On 1 January 2002, when the euro became legal tender in 12 EU member states, it was not just national currencies that disappeared. National central banks and monetary policies formally disappeared at the same time to be replaced by the European Central Bank and the Council of Ministers. In turn, the creation of these new institutions gave political life to the economic theories and knowledge that support the single market and its extension across Europe. The creation of a new currency is thus also the creation of new institutions and practices and its legitimacy as a currency depends in part on the legitimacy of the institutions that regulate it.² In this sense, the euro is like a new technology. It takes its meanings from its place within a network of organisations and from the uses, interpretations and evaluations given to it. When deciding how to vote in a euro referendum, voters in the UK will be delivering a verdict on both a technical understanding of the world and the capability of social institutions to bring that world into being. Supporters of the euro need to have faith in both.

As a result, the debate about the euro temporarily prevents money from being an 'abstract system' and foregrounds the previously taken-for-granted relations that enable a token currency to function. In the case of the euro, the issues at stake involve judgements about political sovereignty and accountability as well as judgements on economic questions such as the competitive advantage gained by being inside or outside the euro. It is this combination of national identity and economic science that make the prospect of a euro referendum so interesting for social scientists and, particularly, those with interest in the use of scientific expertise in policy decisions. Adopting the euro is not just a matter of taste or preference it is also a matter of contested economic facts and forecasts and how to proceed in the absence of certain knowledge about the consequences of our actions. As a result, the debate about the euro shares many characteristics with the familiar debates about reflexive modernisation:

- Any technical scientific criteria, such as the ‘five economic tests’ which the UK must pass before the government will recommend joining the euro, are controversial, uncertain and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.
- Both sides of the argument are supported by vocal interest groups, combining political, commercial and scientific expertise and making the separation of the science (i.e. the economics) from the politics impossible to sustain in practice.³
- The debate is not just about a technology (e.g. a more efficient mechanism for making payments) but also about wider social identities and cultural values (e.g. are the British also Europeans).
- The decision will have implications for almost all the citizens associated with each side of the debate

Often investigated through environmental examples, such as new roads, airports or nuclear power,⁴ the investigation of these controversies typically criticise expert committees and public inquiries for being overly restrictive in their format, contributors or terms of reference and suggest the need for more participatory and inclusive forms of decision making.⁵ A wide range of case studies have shown how expert advice, and the implicit social assumptions that underpin it, can be challenged and contradicted by other experts⁶ and new concerns introduced. The discourse of stakeholders and democratising science, as well as the current popularity of focus groups, consensus conferences and stakeholder consultations all testify to the trend in this direction.⁷ Rarely, however, do environmental disputes get put directly to the citizens, so the consequences of these recommendations for decision-making remain speculative.

So where does this leave economic science, economic policy and the euro referendum? My argument is that it places them at the very forefront of such participatory processes, and that analysing the debate about the single European currency will reveal how abstract claims about a broader, interdisciplinary public debate are translated in to real social action. By examining how the debate is orchestrated, who contributes, and what sort of arguments are used it will be possible to explore the future implications for other decisions involving controversial science and, in particular, to ask whether there are limits beyond which increased participation becomes counter-productive. In order to do this the paper first sets out the key features of the relationship between science and the policy process in the UK before considering the intellectual and social organisation of the euro debate in more detail. The paper concludes by emphasising the ways in which the specific features of the euro debate can be used to inform wider discussions about citizen participation in science-based policy decisions.

Science and Policy: The UK Context

The relationship between scientists, policy-makers and the public in the UK has seen the trends that characterise late or high modernity played out within a relatively centralised institutional structure where the rationality and authority of science has been highly valued. Thus the UK has typically relied on a system of expert committees and public inquiries operating within specific terms of reference.⁸ This approach contrasts both with what might be thought of as the US model, in which science-based policy decisions are usually tested through the adversarial setting of the courtroom,⁹ and a more ‘European model’, in which science-based policy decisions may include an element of citizen evaluation.¹⁰ Over the last decade or so, public concerns about the UK’s decision-making processes have grown, with the case of BSE/vCJD playing a particularly important role in crystallising the opinion that something needed to change.

The concept of reflexive modernisation forms the backdrop to these changes, capturing the simultaneous loss of faith in traditional sources of authority, including scientific authority, and the increasing individualisation fuelled by this disengagement from previous forms of collective identity and solidarity. The consequences of this for the place of scientific expertise in policy-making processes have been significant. Scientists have lost their status as ‘impartial’ experts, with the result that their knowledge-claims are now contested not just by other scientists but also by members of the public.¹¹ Social movements and protest groups have grown in number and credibility, with the increasing use the ‘precautionary principle’ marking a change in the risk perceptions associated with scientific and technological innovation. With its limits, uncertainties and consequences recognised, scientific rationality is no longer the pre-eminent source of knowledge and something of a crisis of legitimacy has resulted.¹²

As this public concern about the application of science and technology in a range of domains has increased, official agencies have responded by increasing transparency, accountability and dialogue within regulatory processes.¹³ As a result of consultations and academic research it is now recognised that it is important to show that the full range of views have been considered.¹⁴ In Beck’s work, this process would involve both intra-scientific disagreement and intra-disciplinary scientific disagreement being encouraged to take place in the public domain. Although formal political processes would orchestrate this debate, and take action where appropriate, public evaluation of these debates also would be possible.¹⁵ In practice, many of the recommendations and actions taken by the UK government follow these recommendations, although it is arguable that, despite the wider consultation, the same sort of people, using the same criteria of scientific rationality, still retain a powerful voice in regulatory decision making.¹⁶

More radical proposals have also been put forward, however. In these the aim is usually to move the locus of power away from formally recognised experts and to constitute new decision-making institutions in which the uncertainty and risk associated with scientific knowledge claims are acknowledged and traditionally ‘soft’ frames, such values and ethics, play a more significant part. Perhaps the most optimistic of these participatory scenarios is that painted by Functowicz and Ravetz in their vision of post-normal science,¹⁷ in which quality control decisions are taken by an extended peer community comprising researchers and official experts and stakeholders with local knowledge. As they stress:

When problems lack neat solutions ... when the phenomena themselves are ambiguous, and when all research techniques are open to methodological criticism, then the debates on quality are not enhanced by the exclusion of all but the specialist researchers and official experts. The extension of the peer community is then not merely an ethical or political act; it can positively enrich the process of scientific investigation.¹⁸

Whilst this may seem a long way off, the developing notions of ‘context-sensitive science’¹⁹ and the practice of Constructive Technology Assessment (CTA)²⁰ can be seen as practical steps in this direction. Even in the UK, concern with user-groups is pervasive and the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee report recommends that:

... direct dialogue with the public should move from being an optional add-on to science-based policy-making and to the activities of research organisations and learned institutions, and should become a normal and integral part of the process.²¹

The key difference between these proposals and the fora proposed by Beck and Giddens is that this approach questions the extent to which a modernist rationality can ever bring all relevant factors under its rubric. The implicit assumption of the reflexive modernity theorists is that scientific-type rationality, albeit in a more reflexive form, can respond to the risks modernity continually creates. The more radical alternatives, which typically grow out of the sociology and philosophy of science, are much more sceptical about the possibility of actually knowing this much or with such certainty. Their focus, therefore, is on the ways in which judgements about socially acceptable levels of risk can (must) be taken in the absence of robust and reliable knowledge about these very risks.²² In each case, the resolution comes from broadening the grounds of the debate to include not just more participants -- lay people as well as experts-- but also a wider range of evidence. Values as well as facts now matter, with the importance of values increasing as the certainty of facts decreases. Social knowledge and experience is therefore just as important as science, and may even be given primacy over scientific knowledge if it can be demonstrated that the social conditions needed for a technology to be 'safe' cannot be sustained. Or, to put the same point, another way, what is needed is a more reflexive policy-making process that allows for 'debate of what values and socio-cultural identities the possible technical options and commitments signify, reflect and reproduce'.²³

The Euro Debate as (Reflexive?) Public Controversy

As noted above, the euro debate has many parallels with the science-based environmental policy controversies that have achieved a high profile role in UK and European politics and which are typically seen as visible manifestations of the 'risk society'.²⁴ If this analogy between environmental and economic policy sciences holds, then the features that characterise reflexive modernity ought to be present. For example, not only will the debate about the euro be seen to involve an interdisciplinary concern with contested scientific knowledge-claims, there will also be claims made about the nature of social institutions and about the trustworthiness of different types of expert knowledge. Many of these characteristics can also be found in contested sciences without the label reflexive, however, and so the extent to which the UK's euro debate becomes an example of reflexive modernisation is an empirical question, that will only be fully answered once the referendum campaign is over.

The potential for a reflexive process is certainly present, with the social institutions and structures associated with the single currency debate matching those taken to characterise reflexive modernisation. The key actors combine the same alliance of global capital (e.g. multinational companies, investment banks, pension funds) and policy-makers concerned to manage the social and economic costs of globalisation. Academically too the debate conforms to the expected model. Complex technical models of macroeconomic policy and management are needed, but disciplinary perspectives are also transcended as political science, market research, business administration and psephology join macroeconomics in the conduct of the campaign. If then introduction of the currency itself is included, then an even wider range of law enforcement agencies, engineers, software specialists, retailers, planners and logistics experts become relevant.

The reflexive turn comes not just from the interdisciplinary debate, but from the capacity of that debate to increase public engagement with, and discussion about, the economic and monetary policy choices that are made by governments and regulators. For example, having prices denominated in the same currency across Europe will enable comparisons to be made more easily by individuals, whilst simultaneously disembedding those individuals from local or national markets. This might happen in many ways, such as the development

of a European financial services industry, or the increased use of the internet to purchase goods. More generally, the expectation might be that adopting the euro will increase economic and labour market flexibility, with a rhetoric of lifelong learning, entrepreneurship and mobility replacing older notions of class, occupation and stability.²⁵

But there are also risks associated with the creation of large trading blocks as a response to globalisation. In the case of the euro, these may revolve around the already emerging concerns about employment security and the nature of work within this high-skill economy. In particular, as trade and investment moves towards the most attractive regions, so variations in income and opportunities may become magnified, leading to an increasing regional inequality and social exclusion. While this paper does not aim to settle this debate, one point is clear: given these stakes, concern with the euro may, at least for the duration of the referendum campaign, provoke more public engagement with economic policy, national and european governance, economic science and the world of international finance. If this were to happen, then something like reflexive uncertainty identified by Beck and Giddens would be being made visible.

It may never happen though. Although the euro debate has the potential to be read in this reflexive way, it must also be acknowledged that, in many respects, economics and the euro remain very modernist in nature. As a result, this potential engagement between the public and the fundamental uncertainties associated with the economic rationality may be swamped by an alternative modernist discourse that serves to retrench existing notions of power, authority and control. It is important to note that this distinction between reflexive and classical modernities does not map easily on to pro- and anti-euro campaigns. Rather, the extent to which the reflexive potential of the debate is realised in practice is a reflection of the wider culture within which both the pro- and anti- euro campaigns have to operate.

Both pro- and anti- euro groups are constrained by expectations and discourses about economics that powerfully shape their own campaigns. For example, advocates of the euro can (and do) stress its economic credentials and the way in which it brings increased efficiency and transparency to economic markets. Couched in these terms the euro is presented as a natural next step in the development of free trade and reinforces liberal and capitalist ideologies dating from the nineteenth century. In other areas too, the euro reinforces another characteristic of modernity: surveillance. Most obviously the introduction of a single currency will make direct comparisons between workers, materials and finished products in different areas more transparent and may lead to further rationalisation (on economic competitiveness grounds) of social life and policies. Indeed, the euro actually extends the scope of this surveillance to include the nation state by creating new institutions to monitor economic indicators and impose penalties if the criteria set out in the Maastricht Treaty are not adhered to.

It is impossible to predict at this stage whether the dominant modernist discourses of efficiency and price transparency will, in practice, overwhelm any reflexive potential created by the referendum and prevent public engagement with economic science and its application. The recognition that a referendum, with its focus on participation and public debate, is needed might be taken as an indicator of just such an increasing reflexivity and the awareness that a rational basis for the decision (i.e. reliable and uncontroversial knowledge) does not exist. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that it will be conducted within a modernist framing in which economic discourse of costs and benefits dominate.

Potential Dimensions of the Debate

The euro debate has the potential to include a wide range of issues, but these arguments can be summarised as addressing either the political or economic consequences of adopting the single European currency. As a result, there are four basic claims, each of which is summarised in the table below:

Table 1: Knowledge-Claims in the euro debate

	Pro-euro	Anti-euro
Political claim	Adopting the euro will give the UK government more influence in monetary and other relevant policy areas by enabling it to take a leading role in European institutions	Adopting the euro will give the UK government less influence in monetary and other relevant policy areas by ceding power to European institutions
Economic claim	Adopting the euro will bring benefits to the UK economy by increasing economic output, reducing costs and increasing investment.	Adopting the euro will cause damage to the UK economy by decreasing economic output, increasing regulation and reducing investment

Economic and political arguments that fill each cell in the table exist. The problem is that in no case have they been decisively one by either side. Thus there are eminent economists, business leaders and politicians all sincerely believe that their interpretation of the available data and evidence is right and that their opponents are wrong. This interpretative flexibility is a normal part of any scientific or technical dispute and it is not surprising that any economic or political factor that might be thought to benefit one side, can also be turned around and used by the other. The following examples illustrate how this interpretative flexibility manifests itself in the case of the single European currency in order to show the potential for disagreement that exists and, by implication, the range of issues that could be addressed in any referendum campaign.

Perhaps the most important of all the contested issues is the economic case for and against the euro. On first sight, the economic case for joining, with its appeal to a common-sense economic rationality, appears to favour the pro-euro case. For example, the claim that the increasing economic growth and competitiveness are desirable is so taken-for-granted in modern societies that it is difficult to see how it can be argued against. The argument is not decisive, however, because the referendum is not about the principle of economic efficiency, which all sides accept, but about the practice of organising a successful economy in which employment and economic security are maximised. Once made concrete like this, then it is far more difficult to claim unambiguously that either adopting the euro or not adopting the euro promotes these goals. A selection of some of the more common arguments, and the counter-arguments that negate them, are summarised in the table below:²⁶

Table 2: Economic Arguments For and Against the Euro

Economic arguments for	Economic arguments against
A single interest rate works in the US and will work in Europe. While it is true that convergence between the different areas that are covered by the single currency is important, the evidence suggests that the UK and European economies are converging.	A single interest rate works in the US but will not work for the UK and Europe. This is because there is insufficient convergence between the different areas that would be covered by the single currency; the evidence suggests that the UK has more in common with the US than the European economies.
Having prices denominated in the same currency across Europe will facilitate comparisons and reduce variations in prices through more competitive markets.	A calculator is all that is required to compare prices. Variations in prices across Europe are caused by variations in regulations and introducing a single currency will not alter this.
Europe is a major export market for the UK, so having a stable exchange rate will make it easier for UK businesses to import and export. Indeed, joining the euro will increase access to these important markets.	Europe may be a big market, but it is not the only one. Half of UK trade is with economies outside the euro. Fixing the exchange rate with Europe may make it more difficult to trade with other nations and offers no trading benefits as the UK is already a member of the Single Market.
Because prices can be easily compared, this will tend to drive prices and hence inflation down. Joining will not be inflationary.	Adopting the same interest rate as the rest of Europe will mean lowering UK interest rates and therefore increasing inflation.
Not joining the euro will cost many British jobs as British-based businesses become less competitive (as a result of exchange rate uncertainty) and foreign investors choose to locate elsewhere in Europe in order to reduce transaction costs.	Joining the euro will cost many British jobs as a result of a single European interest rate being the wrong rate for the UK. In addition, these interest rate problems would discourage foreign investment rather than increase it by making trading conditions more difficult.
Converting to the euro imposes some costs on business but these will often involve replacing equipment that had to be replaced anyway. In any case, the savings created will recoup the costs in a couple of years.	Converting to the euro will be very expensive for businesses, which will have to buy new equipment and systems. Any savings will be limited, as most UK businesses have no international trade.
The Chancellor's five economic tests ensure that the UK will only hold a referendum if it is already clear that joining offers economic advantages.	The Chancellor's five economic tests are too vague to be interpreted with any clarity. What evidence there is suggests they have not been passed, so joining is not in the UK's best interests.

In practice, therefore, economic arguments about the euro are wide-ranging but each claim has its own counter-claim, so the outcome is often inconclusive. But it may be that economic agreement is not necessary. Science always assumes a social context and it may be the case that judgements about what sort of political institutions are needed are more consensual. For example, although sovereignty may seem an abstract notion that has little direct appeal to many voters, it is not that far removed from the concepts of choice,

control and accountability that public understanding of science literature suggest are all important in the public evaluation of science-based policy. In this case, the ‘natural logic’ of the argument seems to favour the anti-euro groups, as who could possibly argue against the UK government retaining influence over the economic and monetary policies that effect its citizens. As with the economic case, however, it quickly becomes apparent that although the principle is clear enough, the institutional arrangements that will provide control and allow for effective expression of national identity and interest are not beyond dispute. A selection of these arguments is summarised in the Table 3.

Table 3: Political Arguments For and Against the Euro²⁷

Political arguments for	Political arguments against
Joining the euro protects sovereignty by giving the UK more influence in the European monetary policies that will effect our lives whether we are in the euro or not.	Joining the euro will mean giving up sovereignty and losing the ability to set monetary policies in the best interest of the UK and its citizens
Joining the euro does not mean joining a superstate. National differences in economic circumstances can be dealt with through national economic policies. There is no need, and no desire, for a superstate and, even if such a plan was proposed, the UK could veto it.	Joining the euro will mean becoming part of a European superstate. This is inevitable because the ‘one size fits all’ interest rate needs a large federal budget in order to make transfers between regions that are experiencing different economic circumstances.
Joining the euro will mean that the UK will have a vote on all decisions and a powerful voice in European economic and monetary policy decisions, including those such as the Euro-12, from which it is currently excluded.	Joining the euro will mean that economic and monetary policy decisions are taken by European Committees, staffed by people who are not accountable to the UK electorate and who may not have their interests in mind.
Joining the euro will have no serious effect on what it means to be British: the monarchy, football and the railways will all carry on just as before. The euro merely provides a simpler way of paying for things.	Joining the euro will mean losing our distinctive British identity by forcing us to give up traditional institutions, measures and customs.
European regulations have done much to improve the working conditions of people in the UK e.g. giving them access to paternity leave, equal opportunities and the working time directive.	European regulations will impose additional burdens on UK government and industry making it increasingly difficult for the UK to assert its independence.
Joining the euro will have very little impact on fiscal policies, as the UK will be able to veto changes it does not approve of.	The euro is about economic and monetary union, so joining means that we will inevitably have to have similar fiscal policies to the rest of Europe.

So, just as with the economic arguments the political arguments are also finely balanced. The same is true of other ideas that a referendum campaign might be orchestrated around. For example, the idea of the ‘status quo’ might seem to favour the opponents of the euro, as keeping the pound looks like keeping the status quo. The pro-euro groups would counter, however, that the introduction of the single currency in January 2002 has effectively changed the status quo so that european co-operation is the new normality.

Thus, keeping the pound is not keeping the status quo, but moving outside the new consensus of European and global politics. Thus, the pro-euro campaign is able to re-use their 1975 slogan and argue that it is still 'cold outside'.

Similar interpretative flexibility bedevils the more contemporary notion of 'euro-creep', by which it is meant that support for the euro will creep up as UK citizens become more familiar with it. In effect, doing nothing works well for the pro-euro groups as the danger associated with the risk of the new recedes as the currency becomes increasingly established. Perhaps surprisingly, anti-euro campaigners are also happy to wait for the referendum. From their perspective, the continued success of the euro proves nothing as long as it is accompanied by the continued economic success of the pound sterling. Thus, euro-creep works for opponents of the euro, showing how nothing bad follows from the decision to remain outside.

Citizen Opinion about the Euro

The euro referendum campaign obviously begins from a point where the participants in the vote already have some ideas about it. The evidence from opinion polls is that, while most people in the UK are sceptical about the euro, they have yet to take a firm view. Thus, opinion polls usually show a majority of about 2:1 opposing entry to the euro if a referendum were held soon, but the same polls also show that a similar proportion expect the UK to adopt the euro in 5 or 10 years.²⁸ Significantly, of those who do have a view now, a large proportion admits that they know very little about the euro and that they would be willing to change their mind.²⁹

The referendum campaign is therefore one in which there is still much to play for. Only a half of potential voters are sure of which way they will vote. The remaining half are open to persuasion. What is more, it is this latter group of people, the very ones for whom Europe is not an important issue, that will decide the referendum by adding their votes to the already committed pro and anti lobbies. The paradox of extending participation through a referendum about the single European currency is thus that:

For many people, Europe is of little interest or little impact and, as they see it, of little threat to their own or their family's security. Many are unlikely to have thought about the single currency at all -- except perhaps briefly when changing money at the airport before going abroad. While these voters may be most easily influenced, they make up that part of the electorate which will have the most influence on the final result.³⁰

This is one of the interesting questions raised by the use of referenda to decide policy. Although the democratic base is extended the intellectual dimensions of the debate may be reduced to appeal to the 'floating voters'. In effect, what appeals to them will determine both the content of the campaign and the economic future of the UK. It is therefore possible that, rather than ensuring the widest possible debate, resolving complex technical issues through exclusively democratic methods means that only a limited debate is possible, ironically replicating the one-sided messages about nuclear power and, possibly, with the same consequences.

There is already some evidence that this is happening in the strategies of several of the more high-profile campaign groups. As described in more detail below, both the pro- and anti-euro groups believe that the presentation of issues must be driven by what voters are interested in. As a result, the campaign groups expect to focus on emphasising concrete

examples of tangible costs or benefits and to avoid abstract talk of general principles or ideals, which are believed to turn off all but the most ardent policy ‘wonks’. The following quotes, from a leading anti-euro group and a leading pro-euro group illustrate this perspective clearly:

People are not interested in principled constitutional arguments ... People want the issue explained to them in terms of how it will affect their life, their job, their mortgage, their pension, prices in the shops etc.³¹

We are trying to pitch arguments at a micro level; focusing on what is important to people’s everyday lives. For example, in the euro you will get a better deal when you buy a car but also you will get a better deal when you buy a CD or a pair of jeans.³²

Implied in this framing of the debate is an assumption that a key element of public opinion on the euro is still largely malleable and unformed and that it can be swayed one way or the other by arguments pitched in terms of their everyday experience. This still does not resolve the problem for voters, however. Both pro- and anti- euro groups will argue that individuals are best served by supporting their cause. As a result, the euro debate continues to resemble a public science controversy. Neither science nor politics provides any easy answers. There are no knockout blows or ‘slam dunk’ arguments. Nevertheless, should a referendum be held, then a decision will have to be reached. This will necessarily involve citizens taking a view about the credibility of different actors and of the arguments they put forward. In effect, citizens must do individually, what the experts collectively cannot – make a decision.³³

Social Organisation of the Debate

If individuals are to evaluate these complex and competing arguments they are going to do it without replicating the scientific and political research and argument that the experts and activists in the campaign have undertaken. Doubtless some members of the population will, for a variety of reasons, have taken the time and trouble to acquaint themselves with the arguments, and to become experts in their own right. The majority will not, however, and it is these people who will decide the outcome of the referendum, and who are the key target for the campaign groups. The problem is that, because these arguments display all the interpretative flexibility sociologists have come to associate with other scientific controversies, some way of breaking into the regress of claim and counter-claim needs to be found. In other words, just like scientists, voters will have to find some criteria outside of what is normally considered to be science in order to make their choice between competing claims about the nature of the social world.

In the scientific community, it is participation in the research work and informal knowledge gained at conferences and through casual conversations that help close these debates down by enabling judgements about trust and credibility to be made. The public cannot achieve this level of participation in the relevant communities of experts, even during a referendum campaign, as their access is almost certain to be mediated by television or newspapers.³⁴ Despite this, however, those who choose to vote will have to do so on some basis on which the claims made by economists and other advocates can be weighed, evaluated and ultimately judged. In reality, most citizens are going to have to make a judgement of trust about one side or the other and then use their vote to support a vision of a social future that either includes or excludes the euro as the UK’s currency. The role of the campaign groups is thus not to settle the dispute and achieve ‘closure’ in the

scientific sense. Instead they must argue, agitate and lobby on behalf of one side or the other in order to persuade as many people as possible that their interpretation of the data, and their vision of the future, is the right one.

The social organisation of the campaign is thus crucial to winning the referendum. It is through social groups and institutions ranging from the formal political parties and the media to colleagues and friends that voters will gather the information and confidence they need to take a view. In this context, the formally organised pro and anti euro campaign groups will play an important role as they will be the principal providers of information under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000,³⁵ which lays down strict guidelines on the participants in the referendum campaign. A key provision this Act is that the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns must each have a single organising body, who will each receive approximately £600,000 from the Electoral Commission and be allowed to spend up to a maximum of £5 million on the campaign as a whole. In addition, established political parties in House of Commons get a sum of money proportional to the number of seats that they have. These groups – the designated Yes and No campaigns and the political parties – are the only organisations that will have significant campaign budgets and be allowed to make campaign broadcasts. All other participants will be barred from making campaign broadcasts and have a limit of £10,000 placed on their expenditure.³⁶

Yes campaign

The campaign to build up support for pro-euro position is led by *Britain in Europe*. Although one of the two umbrella organisations in the 1975 referendum, the group was reinvigorated in October 1999 when it was re-launched as the official pro-Europe, pro-euro campaign organisation by a cross-party group of politicians including: the Prime Minister, Tony Blair; the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy; and senior figures from the previous Conservative government such as former Chancellor of the Exchequer Ken Clarke and former Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine. The aim of the organisation is to:

promote public understanding of the importance to Britain of playing a leading role in the European Union while explaining the benefits of joining a successful single currency ... And we seek to ensure the British people reject the views of anti-Europeans who would undermine Britain's position in the European Union.³⁷

Although the re-launch of *Britain in Europe* in 1999 was promoted by senior political figures from the major UK political parties, they claim that these figures represented:

only the tip of the iceberg because behind that was the coalition of top business people and leading trade unionists and representatives from civil society and so on and so forth. What we have done, as it were, building the pyramid downwards, is now build coalitions that are similar in terms of having all parties in business and trade unions and civil society at regional and local level, bottomed out by, now tens of thousands of ordinary people at grass roots level.³⁸

Given this level of backing it is unsurprising that *Britain in Europe* is the recognised leader of the pro-euro campaign in the UK.³⁹ Evidence for this status as lead organisation in the campaign can be seen both in the range of organisations that have signed up to support it and in the limited number of alternative pro-euro campaign groups. As shown in the table below, the number of web sites advocating a pro-euro position is small, suggesting that, to the extent any pro-euro campaign exists, it is centralised with only limited networking between different groups.

Table 4: Pro-Euro Websites and their Networks

Group Name	Links from	Links to
Britain in Europe	0	5
The European Movement	2	4
Pro Euro Conservative Party	0	3
Euro Information Network	0	2
Yes Campaign	5	2
The Federal Trust	2	2
Citizens for Europe	5	1
Young European Movement	2	1
Confederation of British Industry ⁴⁰	0	1
Trade Union Congress ⁴¹	1	0
1 Europe Pro-Euro Mailing List	4	0
Association for the Monetary Union of Europe	2	0
The City in Europe	0	0
Union of European Federalists	0	0

With some security in its role as the designated representative in any referendum, *Britain in Europe* group is fully engaged in preparing for that role. This work focuses on three parallel streams of activity. The first of these is the academic and other research that is needed to develop the arguments and evidence that can be used to counter the critiques of the opposition and justify the claim the joining the euro is in Britain's best interest. The organisation has produced a wide range of these publications, addressing everything from the anti-European myths to the economic case for the euro. This work is being disseminated through its links with organisations such as the TUC and seminars and other events in which information about the euro is made available to local organisations and individuals. In addition, the research is also made available to the public more generally in public through pamphlets and booklets and from their website. This research is not expected to feature prominently in campaign as a whole, however. Rather the aim of the work is to provide context and resources for 'opinion formers' in the media and elsewhere to use in framing their views:

On an issue such as the euro people are looking for leadership from sources they trust, so some effort has been made to try to identify people who are influential to a certain group of people, such as a union official to their members and so on. We need to arm pro-Europeans with enough information to rebut the myths about the euro that will inevitably be put into circulation during a campaign and to get the facts about the euro over to the public from sources they trust.⁴²

The second range of activities is direct campaigning in readiness for the referendum. Given that there is no definite commitment to a referendum as yet, these campaigns are opportunistic and aimed at keeping positive messages about the euro in the public domain. This may be done through press releases that emphasise positive aspects of Europe and the single European currency, but posters, campaigns and leaflets aimed at the wider public are also important. Although not part of the official referendum campaign, these publicity drives do provide some insight into the issues that are expected to matter in any referendum campaign. For example, the national poster campaign launched in January 2002 to coincide with the launch of euro notes and coins used the slogan 'Jan 1st: Britain

misses the boat' to echo the 1975 campaign theme of 'It's cold outside' and emphasise how Britain was being left behind by Europe. In a similar way, direct campaigning in February took advantage of St Valentines Day to promote price transparency and the extent to which goods such as champagne, perfumes and chocolates are all cheaper in Europe.

The third set of activities are probably the most important in terms of any eventual referendum campaign. These activities are the ones that focus on building the local credibility and trust needed to gain the votes necessary to win the referendum. They centre on the local organisations that Britain in Europe has established across the country so campaign messages can be presented at national, regional and local levels. At the national level, the Britain in Europe campaign see themselves as having a significant advantage, with backing from high profile and popular politicians from across the political spectrum. Their position can be summed up as follows:

In this non-ideological age, it is clear that most voters in general elections focus on which of the parties (and leaders) offer the best prospect of future financial well being for them and their families. The referendum will be no different, except that voters will feel less certain of their own ability to judge the case for themselves and thus more reliant on their estimation of the calibre of the proponents on each side. Here the pro-[euro] camp will have an enormous advantage. Almost every politician and business leader they [i.e. the voters] rate will be ranged on the side of joining and the 'starry-eyed' brigade will be advising against. It is quite difficult to entrust your life savings to John Redwood and his friends, rather than to Gordon Brown. This would take a degree of blind bigotry that, happily, not many possess.⁴³

In contrast, the No campaign is seen as having relatively few of these political 'heavyweights', and thus vulnerable to the same kind of campaign that proved to be effective in 1975 when the opponents of the Common Market were demonised as the 'men with the staring eyes'.⁴⁴ Similar attempts to reduce the credibility of the opponents of the euro can be seen in recent campaigns emphasising predictions that the euro would never be launched and characterising their opponents as 'the usual suspects'.⁴⁵

But political campaigns cannot be fought at the national level alone. It is important for both sides to 'get the vote out', and it is here that the Yes campaign might seem to be at a disadvantage. For example, one thing that the absence of web sites reflecting a pro-euro perspective might be taken to represent is a lack of such support in the wider society. This would certainly be consistent with the opinion poll evidence for the support for the euro. In addition, other polls have found that political and business groups are not particularly trusted, suggesting further problems for the pro-euro groups. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen, but it is the case that the *Britain in Europe* campaign is working to establish a network of local organisations through which the door-to-door and face-to-face aspects of the campaign can be conducted. In this way, the structure of the process, as a national political debate, shapes both the content and the conduct of the debate as the campaign groups start to mirror the social organisation found in traditional social movements or national political parties.

By building up campaigning capacity the *Britain in Europe* group is building the mechanism through which the regress of claim and counter-claim can be broken by direct contact with people that share similar experiences and concerns. Thus, despite the position papers and other resources available via the web site and other channels, the key to the campaign is

seen as residing in local people arguing that the euro will be beneficial for them in their local context:

The major thrust of our activity over the past two years has been to build a network and infrastructure able to take the weight of any referendum campaign. When the campaign kicks off and the public has begun to listen seriously to arguments from both pro- and anti- Europeans we will have people in place who, at every level, are the natural leaders of the moderate mainstream majority.⁴⁶

Anti-euro campaign groups

The social organisation of the opposition to the euro differs from to the pro-euro groups. The key difference is that the wide range of active anti-euro groups has no single umbrella organisation that unites them. Instead, the anti-euro groups remain a set of loosely networked groups, each with their own agenda, organisation and resources, and thus in conflict with the Referendum Act, which requires a single organisation to represent the anti-euro position.⁴⁷ A summary of some of these groups is given in the table below, which lists 10 anti-euro group with web sites that are linked to the most:⁴⁸

Table 5: Anti-Euro Websites and their Networks

Group Name	Links from	Links to
Democracy Movement	27	17
Campaign for Independent Britain	32	16
UK Independence Party	14	16
Labour European Safeguards Campaign	2	15
Business for Sterling	0	14
New Europe	0	13
Eurocritic	0	12
Global Britain	17	12
Youth for Free Europe	18	12
Bruges Group	0	11
Congress for Democracy	0	11

Two things are immediately obvious from the table. The first is that there are far more anti-euro web sites than there are pro-euro web sites. The second is that the majority of organisations that have developed web sites would be classed as anti-Europe, or pro-independence, rather than anti-euro. Although these views may be muted in the context of a referendum campaign, the table does suggest that, whatever the opinion poll evidence about the public's concerns, those actively involved in the debate think that sovereignty is important. For example, the four most linked-to sites are all organisations that would see themselves as fighting on a much broader agenda than 'keeping the pound'. They are:

- the *Democracy Movement*, which describes itself as 'Britain's largest all-party grass roots campaign to keep the pound' and was founded in January 1999 through the merger of the *Referendum Movement* (formerly Sir James Goldsmith's *Referendum Party*) and Paul Syke's *Euro Information Campaign*. Both these organisations were committed not just to opposing the single european currency but to ending UK membership of the European Union through 'restor[ing] Britain's status as a self governing democracy'.⁴⁹
- the *Campaign for an Independent Britain*, founded in 1976 as the *Safeguard Britain Campaign*, although its name was changed to the *British Anti-Common Market Campaign* in 1983

before the current name was adopted in 1989. As its name suggests, the *Campaign for an Independent Britain* ‘seeks the repeal of the European Communities Act 1972 under which EU directives take precedence over UK law [so that] the United Kingdom would be free, as an independent state, to co-operate and trade with its neighbours in Europe and with countries elsewhere in the world without the restrictions imposed by EU membership.’⁵⁰

- *UK Independence Party*, which was founded by Dr. Alan Sked in 1993 as a political party committed to bringing about the ‘U.K.’s withdrawal from the European Union to regain control of the nation’s affairs through Parliament at Westminster’.⁵¹
- *Labour European Safeguards Campaign*, chaired by Austin Mitchell MP, and opposed to EU membership as well as the single currency. It also co-operates with the *Campaign for an Independent Britain* in producing campaign material aimed at Labour party members.⁵²

Another implication of the table is that nominating one group as the ‘designated’ representative of the anti-euro position is complicated by the fact that many of the existing organisations, and particularly the better resourced and networked ones, are based in the existing political parties. As a result, they are unlikely candidates for the official ‘anti-euro’ campaign group, because any such group will, in practice, have to be both a cross-party organisation capable of providing an umbrella under which the rest of the groups can unite.

From this perspective the next two organisations listed in the table are particularly interesting. *Business for Sterling* and *New Europe* represent two such cross-party/non-party organisations that are able to claim a national membership and which have officially joined forces to form the ‘Europe Yes, Euro No’ campaign. Often shortened to *No*,⁵³ the organisation was officially launched on 4 Sept 2000⁵⁴, though the two groups had been collaborating before this. Of the two partners in *No*, *Business for Sterling* was launched in June 1998 under the leadership of Lord Marsh,⁵⁵ and with the public support of over 100 business leaders.⁵⁶ According to *Business for Sterling* the case for opposing monetary union needed to be made on two fronts. Firstly, there was a need to counter ‘the myth that the great majority of the business community favours early UK membership.’⁵⁷ Secondly, there was a need to explain how the UK’s prosperity would suffer if it chose to join. Significantly, the *Business for Sterling* group was not against the UK’s participation in other areas of European policy, particularly the single market. Instead they emphasised the uncertainty that surrounded the economics of integration and their belief that joining would bring European style regulations that increase taxes and cost jobs.

The second partner in *No* is *New Europe*. Unlike *Business for Sterling*, which has now removed its web presence so that all links are now redirected to the shared *No* site, *New Europe* retains a separate presence and organisation. *New Europe* is also more broadly based than *Business for Sterling*, drawing support from political, economic communities as well as business. For example, at its launch in March 1999, the key figures identified with the group included Lord Owen, its founder and a former Labour foreign secretary, Lord Prior, a cabinet minister under Margaret Thatcher, Lord Healey, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer under James Callaghan, Barclays Bank chief executive Martin Taylor, and Roger Bootle, an economist and former member of Panel of Independent Forecasters.⁵⁸ Like *Business for Sterling*, *New Europe* is founded on the basis of opposition to the single currency rather than the European Union. The *New Europe* vision is not, therefore, one that sees the UK disengaging from Europe. Instead they:

... believe that Britain should remain a self-governing nation within the European Union. We are committed to the UK's continued and constructive membership of an EU that values the individual contributions and identities of its member states and respects the desire of those who want to govern themselves. We welcome progressive enlargement to 30 plus nations, further progress on achieving a full single market and, where sensible, as in environmental policy, more decisions taken at EU level.⁵⁹

By joining together under the umbrella of *No*, these two organisations represent a potentially powerful combination of business, political and citizen expertise. What is more, their national organisation and secure funding provides a structure that supports a network of local and regional organisations through which their campaigns can be run. In some ways the *Britain in Europe* and *No* campaigns are very similar, with both recognising the importance of local and regional issues for voters in the referendum. There are some differences in approach, however. The *No* campaign is a less grassroots organisation and conducts its regional campaigns in slightly different way, it claims, to *Britain in Europe*.

It's not so much like grassroots campaign delivering leaflets, but you do need to have a regional media operation, be it a regional TV or a regional radio ... Everything we do as a regional angle ... The one slight difference in the regional operations is they [Britain in Europe] use the European movement to do a lot of local letter writing and stuff ... We focus more on having a regional event, some media event, it might be having one of our posters on a bill board, or a van, that kind of thing and you having a couple of local business people pictured in front of it.⁶⁰

This social organisation also has implications for the conduct of any referendum campaign and for the emphasis given to the political and economic arguments if an organisation such as *No* were to become the designated representative of the anti-euro groups. For example, *No* generally believes that economic arguments will be the most effective in persuading people to oppose the euro, and that sovereignty issues will be less salient for most voters.

We don't really ever use the language of sovereignty and so on, partly because when we've done [focus] groups, you find the people don't understand what you're talking about. Sovereignty is a way that politicians express something which doesn't really resonate the public. If you're talking about very simply issues of having good control of how your economies work, having control of taxes, public spending and the macro management in the economy, then that is what works, rather than going on about some abstraction like sovereignty ... People always say in focus groups, I just want to know what it's going to mean to me. So our campaign, in any referendum, if there was one, would definitely be all about that.⁶¹

This position has several pragmatic advantages. For example, it provides the widest possible base from which to oppose the euro, whilst also providing a way out of the credibility gap that might exist between the leading political figures that head the pro and anti euro campaigns. By focussing on the economic arguments, the role of business leaders as experts is highlighted and their social position as interested in making money turned into an advantage: business opposes the euro because it is bad for business and hence employment.

Until the referendum campaign is called, however, there is not a single anti-euro voice and some of the other groups would dispute the analysis provided by *No*. Thus, although *No* appears to be working on the assumption that it will become the designated representative of the anti-euro campaign, this is not yet a *fait accompli*. In particular, the *Congress for Democracy*, another cross-party umbrella organisation that includes many of the organisations listed in the table on its Agenda Committee, rejects the idea that sovereignty is not a salient issue:

the F word [federalism] just can't be ignored. The Yes campaign will have take that one on, that we are talking about a federal state in Europe. And I think they'll have to come out and say that it is worth it. We've had this strange paradox, that whereas on continent of Europe up until now, it's been the case that they have seen it as a political objective for which there is an economic price. We in Britain have, in the past, tended to see it as an economic objective for which there was a political price. And I think that, in a sense, the argument will shift much more onto the continental vision where the objectives are political, and you either agree with the political objectives or not. And the Yes campaign will agree with those objectives and will have to come out much more clearly about this. And if you don't agree with the political objectives, then you will be against the whole concept, and I think that's where the argument will focus on.⁶²

For this position to gain weight in any referendum, then it will need to be promoted by the designated anti-euro organisation, or the various groups that can unite under its umbrella. If this *No* take a leading role, then it is difficult to see how this can happen as its position and strategy is to focus on the economics and not the politics. One obvious alternative is that the *Congress* itself could apply to the Electoral Commission to be the designated representative of the anti-euro group. This option, and the role the *Congress* could play in any referendum campaign, was discussed at a meeting held in March 2002 where the keynote speeches focussed on two issues. Firstly, there was the question of whether or not *Congress* should apply to be the designated representative of the anti-euro campaign and, secondly, how those organisations that oppose membership of the European Union, and not just the euro, should position themselves in any referendum campaign.

The minutes of the *Congress* meeting⁶³ reveal how complex this issue becomes when decisions become part of a democratic process. On the one hand, there was strong support amongst the Agenda Committee for a motion proposing that the *Congress* should apply to the Electoral Commission to be the official representative of the anti-euro side. Of the sixteen organisations consulted, fourteen supported the motion, with only *New Europe* and *Business for Sterling*, the founder members of *No*, opposed to the motion. Of the fourteen that supported the motion, two had proposed a consultation with *No* before any motion was discussed, but, as the Chair of the *Congress* reported, this had been tried and it had 'not been possible to reach an agreement'⁶⁴. Although this may seem to provide an endorsement of the motion, this was not the tone taken in most of the speeches. There were practical issues associated with running an effective campaign, and on this front, Sir Michael had to tell the *Congress* that, despite the support for the motion:

The *Congress* does not, at present, have the resources to set up a campaign of its own.⁶⁵

In effect, participants in the referendum must have resources prior to the launch of the official campaign in order to create the social infrastructure needed to persuade voters to

support them. Whilst it is possible that co-operation between the different members of the *Congress* might get around some of these problems, the challenges facing them are more than just financial. There is also the question of how the arguments on which the campaign against the euro should be fought.

As noted above, the *No* approach is to accept, and even celebrate, membership of the European Union while opposing the adoption of the single currency. Whilst this fits well with what is known about public opinion, it is rather different from the views of many of the other organisations that make up the *Congress*. As shown in the table, many anti-euro organisations place their views in the context of UK independence, and thus tend to see the euro a part of a much wider process in which national sovereignty is gradually being ceded to Europe. Given this, one might expect that the *Congress* would favour a campaign that gives much more attention to the European dimension of the euro. This preference was made clear by Austin Mitchell as he explained why no agreement was reached with *No* (whilst also emphasising the importance of social networks in making the case):

Michael Spicer and I went to see *Business for Sterling* and, it is fair to say, we were not able to move them. I do not think their position of ‘Europe Yes, Euro No’ is going to be broadly representative of the organisations and groups opposed to the euro ... LESC [Labour Euro-Safeguards Campaign] would like discussion to continue to establish the umbrella. We do not think *Business for Sterling* has the political nous, experience and the feet on the ground or on the pavement that other organisations can provide. We want a broader common ground than *Business for Sterling* is prepared to take.⁶⁶

Similar sentiments were expressed by Christopher Gill, the Chairman of the *Freedom Association*, who made clear the link between the euro and Europe:

I would simply urge all the delegates here today to try to avoid falling into the trap of using the language of the integrationists, which is to talk about the euro, as opposed to what it really is, the implementation of economic and monetary union. Of course it follows that if you adopt the single currency, therefore economic and monetary union, you are almost inevitably bound to accept the political union that therefore follows. And that is why we have some reservations about the slogan that the ‘No’ campaign are promoting, which says ‘Europe Yes, Euro No’.⁶⁷

Surprisingly, this view was not shared by all the keynote speakers, with others appearing to accept that *No* would be the designated organisation and that, even if it wasn’t, the referendum would probably end up being fought under something like their banner anyway. In staking out the intellectual ground on which the referendum would have to be fought, the tension between what the speakers believed was correct and what they believed the public would accept, was clearly a significant concern.

The problem for anti-Europeans is the gap between their opinions and those held by the public, which are generally pro-pound rather than anti-Europe. As other speakers made clear, this difference plays into the hands of the pro-euro groups, forcing the opponents of the euro to try and minimise the emphasis given to any anti-European sentiments or risk alienating the very people they seek to persuade. As Russell Walters, the Director of the *Democracy Movement* put it:

Linking the two positions of keeping the pound and getting out of the EU will for a start fragment our support in the country. It will alienate groups and voters who, although, pro-pound at this stage, also want, perhaps naively, Britain to stay in the EU. Among the electorate these people are the overwhelming majority, whether we like it or not.⁶⁸

Similarly, Lord Pearson of Rannoch, the Co-Founder of *Global Britain*, and staunch advocate of the view that the UK should leave the EU, argued that a pragmatic approach was essential:

We come-outers are going to vote No anyway. That must be obvious, but it is worth remembering. And so the official campaign, whatever it is, is really going to have to reach as far as possible to those who think they like the European Union but who can be persuaded to vote No ... So I believe that the elements of this *Congress* which are not committed publicly to come-outery should probably join up with *Business for Sterling* and *New Europe* ... And I do believe, I am afraid, that the reality is that *Business for Sterling* is the best place to organise this campaign. I think it is probably better organised than any other conglomeration here of us here, especially if we are 'tainted' with come-outery.⁶⁹

Even Austin Michell appeared to concede the point, as he argued for the importance of the designated organisation presenting a united front:

It [the designated anti-euro campaign] must not argue about side issues such as corpus juris, in or out, or about the irritations which have accumulated over the years in our relationship with Europe. All these other things are going to complicate what is a single issue and a simple campaign, yes or no to the euro.⁷⁰

The outcome is thus that, although, the *Congress* believes that it has a role to play in the campaign, the extent to which they can define the agenda and the issues is limited by their perception of what public opinion can accept. In other words, although many of these groups would count as experts on European law, institutions and legislation this expertise seems set to be excluded from the referendum campaign at their own request. In contrast, the pragmatic 'Europe Yes, Euro No' position, which many of the same groups do not truly believe, seems set to become the one that orchestrates the campaign because the alternative would be to risk losing the referendum. And that would be even worse.

Conclusion

The debate about the single European currency and, in particular, the preparations for the referendum campaign provide a useful focus for examining how decisions that incorporate complex scientific assessment and advice are taken in a context that is fully politicised. Although the post-hoc nature of a referendum might be criticised for not fully engaging publics at an early stage, it is definitely a more participatory and democratic way of taking the decision than expert committees. Like court cases in which forensic and other sciences are on trial, the referendum has the potential to be an engine of deconstruction. The difference is that in a referendum the jury is the whole population.

Widening participation is usually taken to be an improvement on elite or expert decision-making processes. It encourages trust and allows claims made by expert groups to be evaluated by citizens from outside the policy elite. The social commitments and assumptions of scientists and other experts can be revealed, and the boundaries between

what is known and what is being assumed are highlighted. In the case of the euro, as in so many other scientific domains from nuclear power to BSE, these boundaries matter because most knowledge-claims remain contested, so that what is known with any certainty is rather limited. In such a setting, the idea of a more participatory process, in which democratic legitimacy adds to what can only be minimal scientific authority, seems like a sensible proposal.

Moreover, such an approach fits well with developments in social theory. The idea of the risk society is becoming commonplace, but the extent to which the institutions of reflexive modernisation are emerging remains an empirical question. By examining the debate about the single currency, some answers to this question can be outlined and some warnings raised about an uncritical reliance on increased participation as a route to better decision-making. In particular, the preparations for the euro debate raise two issues that might undermine the credibility of such decision-making mechanisms.

The first concern is that, despite the participatory nature of the referendum, the conduct of the campaign seems to remain a relatively centralised and elite activity determined by access to capital and resources rather than on the basis expertise or commitment. Thus, anti-euro campaign seems likely to be dominated by *No*, not because its position represents in any democratic sense the views of most of those opposed to the euro, but because it is backed by *Business for Sterling* and thus has the necessary resources. A similar position seems to have emerged in the pro-euro camp, although here the identification of *Britain in Europe*, which has a similar pro-Europe, pro-business orientation, as the designated representative seems less controversial. There is therefore the distinct possibility that, rather than promoting reflexive debate about policy and politics in a global context, the referendum will further entrench a narrow economic rationality as the only legitimate discourse.

The extent to which this happens in practice depends on the level of control the designated organisations are able to exert over the presentation of the campaign. The preparations underway so far indicate a clear preference to orchestrate the campaign around this economic agenda and to minimise the profile of sovereignty and British independence in the campaign. In effect, perceptions of a public opinion that acknowledges itself as being uninformed are being allowed to set the referendum campaign agenda. Of course, it might not turn out this way. Although the designation of *No* as the official anti-euro campaign would give priority to this view, provision under the 2000 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act for other permitted participants and political parties to produce campaign material of their own would not preclude these ideas entering into the public debate. The anti-euro groups outside the designated umbrella organisation may yet launch a guerrilla campaign, in which local activists seek to force the debate back onto an agenda of sovereignty and independence, even if this is not the position of the designated anti-euro group. Whether this happens cannot be known until the referendum campaign takes place, but the history of attempts to control public discourse from the centre suggests that silencing all the anti-European groups will be, to say the least, very difficult.

How the referendum campaign is actually conducted cannot be predicted, but the evidence so far suggests that the groups who anticipate participating in it are being led by public opinion rather than leading it. Whilst this will clearly be effective for one side or the other, it is not clear how such a process either ensures a critical examination of the claims made or enhances the capacity of citizens to engage with controversial science. Indeed, if

something like the full range of arguments is articulated in the public domain, then, on the present evidence, this will be despite the referendum and not because of it.

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¹ Curtice, ~John (2001) 'How Important is Identity?' in Leonard, ~Mark and Arbuthnot, ~Tom (eds.) *Winning the Euro Referendum: A Guide to Public Opinion and the Issues that Affect It*. London: The Foreign Policy Centre. Pp. 18-22.

² Whether it is a radical change or merely an incremental one is one of the more interesting features of the debate. In other words, does the introduction of the euro, with its links to a new set of political institutions disturb the existing networks and relations to the point where they no longer have the appropriate qualities? The parallel is not so much with Winch's discussion of the introduction of the concept of a germ, but with his discussion of friendship.

Take the notion of friendship: we read, in Penelope Hall's book, The Social Services of Modern England (Routledge), that it is the duty of a social work to establish a relationship of friendship with her clients; but that she must never forget that her first duty is to the policy of the agency by which she is employed. Now this is a debasement of the notion of friendship as it has been understood, which has excluded this sort of divided loyalty, not to say double-dealing. To the extent that the old idea gives way to this new one social relationships are impoverished (or, if anyone objects to the interpolation of personal moral attitudes, at least they are changed).

See: Winch, P. (1958/1988). The Idea of a Social Science and its Relationship to Philosophy. London and New York: Routledge; esp. pp.121-123, quote at p. 123.

³ For example, although much is made, especially by the Government, of the Chancellor's five economic tests few believe that these are the only consideration. See e.g. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk_politics/newsid_1741000/1741771.stm [accessed 23 January 2002]

⁴ E.g. Twyford Downs, Heathrow Terminal 5 and THORP (Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant) in Sellafield.

⁵ Examples would be: Ravetz and Fuctowicz's concepts of Post-Normal Science and extended peer groups; Rip et al on Constructive Technology Assessment; Irwin on 'Freeing the Voices'; Wynne on challenging cultural framing of science; Beck and Giddens on risk society. See: Functowicz S.O. & Ravetz J. R. (1993) Science for the post-normal age, Futures, 25, pp.739-755; Rip, ~ Arie, Misa, ~ Thomas J. and Schot, ~ John (Eds.) (1995) Managing Technology in Society: The Approach of Constructive Technology Assessment, London ; New York: Pinter Publishers; Wynne, B. (1996) May the Sheep Safely Graze? A Reflexive View of the Expert-Lay Knowledge Divide, in Lash, S. Szerszynski, B. & Wynne, B. Eds. (1996) Risk, Environment & Modernity: Towards a New Ecology, London, Sage. pp. 27-83; Beck, Ulrich (1992). Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity, London, Sage; Giddens, ~Anthony (1990). The Consequences of Modernity. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁶ I take the phrase expert to include both accredited and unaccredited/experience-based expertise. For a full discussion see: Collins, H.M. and Evans, R.J. (2002) 'The Third Wave of Science Studies: Studies of Expertise and Experience', Social Studies of Sciences, Vol. 32, No. 2, (April), pp. 235-296.

⁷ If this claim is doubted, the reader need only consult the reports by Wellcome and House of Lords of Science and Society, the ESRC's Science in Society research programme and the documentation for the forthcoming EU Sixth Framework programme. See: Wellcome Trust (2000) Science and the Public: A Review of Science Communication and Public Attitudes to Science in Britain, London: Wellcome Trust and OST; House of Lords (2000) Science and Society: Science and Technology Select Committee, Third Report, London: HMSO. Also available on WWW at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld199900/ldselect/ldsctech/38/3801.htm> [Accessed 23 January 2002]; ESRC (2001) Science in Society Research Programme, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/esrccontent/ResearchFunding/scisoc.asp> [Accessed 4 July 2002]; Gerold, R. and Liberatore, A (2001) Report of the Working Group 'Democratising Expertise and Establishing Scientific Reference Systems. European Commission. Available on WWW at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/governance/areas/group2/report_en.pdf [Accessed 4 July 2002].

⁸ C.f. Irwin, op cit. note 5; Wynne, ~Brian (1982) Rationality and Ritual: The Windscale Inquiry and Nuclear Decisions in Britain, Chalfont St Giles, Bucks: British Society for the History of Science.

⁹ C.f. Jasanoff, ~Sheila (1995) Science at the Bar: Law, Science, and Technology in America, Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press; Yearley, ~Steven (1992) The Green Case: A Sociology of Environmental Issues, Arguments and Politics London and New York: Routledge.

¹⁰ C.f. Rip et al, op cit. note 5

¹¹ Though see Collins and Evans (2002), op cit. note 6, for a more critical evaluation of the capacity of the public to offer critiques of scientific knowledge.

¹² For example, the House of Lords Science and Society Report begins with the sub-heading 'A crisis of trust' and continues:

Society's relationship with science is in a critical phase. By "science" we mean the biological and physical sciences and their technological applications. On the one hand, there has never been a time when the issues involving science were more exciting, the public more interested, or the opportunities more apparent. On the other hand, public confidence in scientific advice to Government has been rocked by a series of events, culminating in the BSE fiasco; and many people are deeply uneasy about the huge opportunities presented by areas of science including biotechnology and information technology, which seem to be advancing far ahead of their awareness and assent. In turn, public unease, mistrust and occasional outright hostility are breeding a climate of deep anxiety among scientists themselves.

Source: House of Lords, op cit. note 7, quote at para 1.1.

¹³ See for example: Agriculture and Biotechnology Committee (1999) The Advisory and Regulatory Framework for Biotechnology: Report from the Government's Review, London: HMSO. Also available on the WWW at http://www.ost.gov.uk/policy/issues/biotech_report/index.htm [Accessed 4 July 2002].

¹⁴ In the field of economic policy, the Panel of Independent Forecasters, who provided policy advice to the UK government in the late 1990s, could be seen as an example of this sort of process. The Panel comprised seven economists, representing a wide range of views, who were charged with providing economic policy analysis and advice to the Chancellor. Although the Chancellor did not have to follow the advice, and retained his own economic team in the Treasury, the Panel did ensure that the range of economic options available was in the public domain and that the Chancellor was seen to be aware of them. In this way, the Panel countered one criticism of previous policy, which was that the Treasury did not fully consider all the options or views.

¹⁵ For example, Beck writes that:

... things that until now have only been able to make their way with great difficulty against the dominance of professions or operational management must be institutionally protected. Alternative evaluations, alternative professional practices, discussions within organisations and professions of the consequences of their own development, and repressed scepticism. In this case, Popper is really correct; criticism does mean progress. Only when medicine opposes medicine, nuclear physics opposes nuclear physics, human genetics opposes human genetics or information technology opposes information technology can the future that is being brewed up in the test-tube become intelligible and evaluable for the outside world ... For research this would almost certainly have the consequence that it would be necessary to engage in controversial and alternative discussions on the risks of certain steps and plans in advance, and not only in interdisciplinary circles, but in interdisciplinary partial public spheres that would need to be created institutionally.

Source: Beck (1992) op cit. note 5, p. 234-5. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶ An example of this process, is the described by Wynne (1982) op cit. note 8. More recent examples of this process would be the regulation of BSE, the response to claims that depleted uranium (DU) weapons posed no hazard, the response to Foot and Mouth Disease, and examples in the medical literature, such as RSI, where patient groups have struggled to have their own accounts and expertise recognised.

¹⁷ Functowicz & Ravetz, op cit. note 5

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 752-3.

¹⁹ Gibbons, ~Michael, ~Camille Limoges, ~Helga Nowotny, ~Simon Schwartzman, ~Peter Scott and ~Martin Trow (1994) The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies; London: Sage; Nowotny, ~Helga, Scott, ~Peter, and Gibbons, ~Michael (2001) Rethinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty, Cambridge: Polity.

²⁰ Rip et al, op cit. note 5.

²¹ House of Lords, op cit. note 7, para 5.38.

²² This is not to say that reliable knowledge cannot exist, just that the time needed to resolve a complex scientific controversy is typically much greater than the time available to make a regulatory decision.

As a result, regulatory decisions frequently have to be made on the basis of conflicting and uncertain claims and counter claims.

²³ Wynne, B. (1995) 'Technology Assessment and Reflexive Social Learning: Observations from the Field of Risk' in Rip et al, op cit. note 5. Quote at p.35. To sociologists of science, for whom technologies are always 'sociotechnical ensembles' and scientific knowledge always stabilised networks, this is not surprising. For different ways of using the network metaphor see: Bijker, ~Wiebe E. (1995) Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change, Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press.; Collins, H.M. (1992) Changing Order: Replication and Induction in Scientific Practice, 2nd Edition, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press; and Latour, ~Bruno (1987) Science in action: how to follow scientists and engineers through society, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

²⁴ This section draws heavily on the analysis of reflexive modernity and the new genetics in Kerr, ~Anne and Cunningham-Burley, ~Sarah (2000) 'On Ambivalence and Risk: Reflexive Modernity and the New Human Genetics', Sociology, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 283-304; see esp. pp. 284-5

²⁵ Opponents of the euro would argue that this labour market flexibility needed to make a single European currency function effectively does not exist, and is unlikely to do so in the future as European workers are not as geographically mobile as their American counterparts.

²⁶ More exhaustive listings of the arguments for and against the euro can be found in: ~Anthony Browne (2001) The Euro. Should Britain Join: Yes or No?, Cambridge, UK: Icon Books; ~James Forder and ~Christopher Huhne (2001) Both Sides of the Coin, 2nd edition, Croyden, UK: BookMarque Ltd.

²⁷ For more detail see: Brown, op cit. note 26; Forder and Huhne, op cit. note 26.

²⁸ Majorities can be sensitive to question wording, e.g. if lead is given by politicians, support is higher; if question is phrased as co-operation over policy, support is higher and so on. There is also some suggestion by the Britain in Europe group that the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11 has resulted in more public support for international co-operation. Some polls also put the split nearer to 50:50, but these would seem to be outliers at present. See, for example, the BBC Wales poll that reports 41 per cent of respondents in favour of the euro, 40 per cent opposed with 15 per cent replying 'Don't Know' and 4 per cent saying they would not vote.

Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/uk/wales/newsid_1758000/1758567.stm [Accessed 4 July 2002]

²⁹ For example, in a February 2002 poll conducted by MORI on behalf of GrahamBishop.com reports the following results.

Which of the following best describes your own view of Britain joining the euro?	% (n = 499)
I strongly support Britain joining the euro	13
I am generally in favour of Britain joining the euro, but could be persuaded against it if I thought it would be bad for Britain	29
I am generally opposed to Britain joining the euro, but could be persuaded in favour of it if I thought it would be good for Britain	25
I strongly oppose Britain joining the euro	28
Don't know	5

It should be noted that these figures do vary on the wording of the question. If 'British participation in the euro' is used instead of 'joining the euro' the percentage agreements with each statement are: 18, 24, 24, 29 and 5 (n = 510).

The same poll also found that about half the population do not feel even fairly well informed about the euro:

How well informed, if at all, do you feel about the case for and against Britain joining the euro?	% (n = 1009)
Very well informed	9
Fairly well informed	40
Not very well informed	38
Not at all well informed	10
Don't know	2

Source: <http://www.mori.com/polls/2002/gbishop1.shtml> [Accessed 12 March 2002]

³⁰ Worcester, ~Robert M. (2000) How to Win the Euro Referendum: Lessons from 1975, London: Foreign Policy Centre. Quote at p. 19

³¹ *No* Opinion Research Bulletin, Feb 2002, p. 2. (Reformatted from original bullet point style presentation).

³² Interview with *Britain in Europe*, Feb 2002.

³³ Discussing the substantive issues involved would seem to require a contributory expertise beyond that possessed by most citizens (cf. Collins and Evans, *op cit.* note 6)

³⁴ Unsurprisingly, how this will work out is disputed. The recent announcement by Rupert Murdoch that his newspapers will oppose the euro confirmed many suspicions, but there are also high circulation newspapers that support the euro. In any case, mapping voting intentions onto newspaper readership is notoriously difficult as readers may will get information from other sources. For a more detailed discussion see: Mortimore, ~Roger, Atkinson, ~Simon and Skinner, ~Gideon (2001) 'Do Readers Believe What the Editors Want Them To?' in Leonard, ~Mark and Arbuthnot, ~Tom (eds.) *op cit.* note 1, Pp. 23-33.

³⁵ A Home Office circular summarising some of the main features of this act is available from the Home Office web site at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/circulars/2001/rpa436circ.htm> [Accessed 6 February 2002].

³⁶ Anti-euro groups would, of course, argue that this arrangement favours the pro euro campaign. The officially pro-euro Labour and Liberal Democrat parties have more seats, and therefore get more money, whilst the equal funding of the designated Yes and No campaigns negates the wider grass-roots support that the opponents of the euro believe they have. In addition, such groups would also argue that the money spent by the government and the European Union providing 'information' about the euro is also part of the pro-euro campaign's funding, even though it is not classed as such under the terms of the Act.

³⁷ Source: Britain in Europe Mission Statement, published on website at: <http://www.britainineurope.org.uk/templ.phtml?id=1m> [Accessed 28 April 2002].

³⁸ Interview with *Britain in Europe*, Feb. 2002.

³⁹ This has been recognised since the launch of the movement, when for example, the BBC website described *Britain in Europe* as 'the biggest of the pro-euro groups and ... likely to become the principal focus of efforts to sway the British public in favour of the single currency.' Source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/events/the_launch_of_emu/euro_latest/newsid_315000/315948.stm [Accessed 28 April 2002].

⁴⁰ The CBI is included in the table because, under the leadership of Adair Turner it did publicly support UK membership of the single european currency. Under its current leader, Digby Jones, this support has become more equivocal, although the policy statements available on its website on 11 June 2002 continue to endorse membership, providing appropriate conditions are met. For more information, see: www.cbi.org.uk [Accessed 11 June 2002]

⁴¹ The TUC is included as its policy is to support UK entry into the euro. John Monks, the TUC General Secretary has articulated this view on many occasions and the TUC's policy documents and press releases about the euro are available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/index.cfm?mins=40> [Accessed 22 October]. It should be noted, however, that the TUC policy does not enjoy the unanimous support of its members and, like the political parties, the union movement as a whole contains a range of views on the issue. High profile supporters of the euro include the GMB and AMICUS, which supported the TUC stance at its 2002 conference, despite the election of Derek Simpson as the successor to Sir Ken Jackson as General Secretary. Of the unions opposed to the euro, the two with the highest public profile are the Transport and General Workers Union and UNISON.

⁴² Interview with *Britain in Europe*, Feb 2002.

⁴³ Powell, ~Chris (2001) 'Winning on Patriotism' in Leonard, ~Mark and Arbuthnot, ~Tom (eds.) Winning the Euro Referendum: A Guide to Public Opinion and the Issues That Affect It, London: Foreign Policy Centre, pp. 58-64. Quote at p. 62.

⁴⁴ Of course, the No campaign question the importance of such people in the eyes of the wider electorate, arguing that the business people that speak for them will have greater credibility as their interests and those of the country coincide. In addition, they would also point out that the 'status quo bias' that favoured the yes campaign in 1975 now favours their 'keep the pound' position so the runes of 1975 can be read in several different ways.

⁴⁵ The recent cinema advert in which the *No* campaign group uses celebrities such as Bob Geldof, Harry Enfield and Rik Mayal to make their case can be seen as an attempt to resist the characterisation of anti-euro campaigners as anti-europeans or extremists.

⁴⁶ Interview with *Britain in Europe*, February 2002

⁴⁷ Indeed, anti-euro groups would argue that the Act has been designed with this in mind. See note 36.

⁴⁸ The eleven sites lists are the most linked to out of a sample of 46 identified through a snowball sampling strategy. A longer list of approximately 60 anti-euro organisations is provided on the pro-euro *Britain in Europe* site. Whilst the table obviously omits those groups that do not have a significant web presence, it is unlikely that any campaign group wishing to run as the official anti-euro organisation in the referendum will not have some web presence at the current time. By looking at links to, rather than links from, the table provides some indication of which organisations have the greatest recognition amongst their peers.

⁴⁹ Source: Democracy Movement website: <http://www.democracymovement.org.uk/> [Accessed 28 April 2002]

⁵⁰ Source: Campaign for an Independent Britain website: <http://www.cibhq.co.uk/> [Accessed 28 April 2002]

⁵¹ Source: United Kingdom Independence Party website: <http://www.independence.org.uk/home.shtml> [Accessed 28 April 2002]

⁵² Source: Labour Euro-Safeguards Campaign website: <http://www.lesc.org.uk/index.html> [Accessed 28 April 2002] and Campaign for an Independent Britain website, op cit. note 50.

⁵³ Perhaps a deliberate rhetorical ploy to create the impression that they are the designated representative of the No campaign in a referendum.

⁵⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/business/newsid_909000/909043.stm [Accessed 29 Jan 2002]

⁵⁵ Lord Marsh was formerly a Labour MP for Greenwich as served as Minister for Transport and Minister for Energy. Originally a Labour peer, he is now listed as a Crossbencher. His business activities have included being the Chair of British Rail Board, the Newspaper Publishers Association, the British Iron and Steel Consumers Council; Lee Cooper Group plc; TV-AM Ltd and a number of investment companies. (source: http://www.politicallinks.co.uk/politics/BIOG/LD_BIOGS/1739.stm [Accessed 6 February 2002]. Current interests listed on House of Lords site (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldhome.htm> [Accessed 6 February 2002].)

Other speakers actively involved in promoting the group at the time were: In practice, however, the main speakers on behalf of the group were Lord Marsh, Sir Stanley Kalms (Dixons), Lord Hanson, Tim Melville-Ross (Institute of Directors) and Brian Prime (Federation of Small Businesses). See, for example, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/business/the_economy/newsid_110000/110698.stm [Accessed 29 Jan 2002]

⁵⁶ According to a *No* campaign press release dated 4 September 2001, this figure has now increased to 700. Source: *No* website: <http://www.no-euro.com/release.cfm?IDNO=130> [Accessed 28 April 2002].

⁵⁷ Full text of the letter and the accompanying press release are available from the 'Eurocritic' website: <http://www.eurocritic.demon.co.uk/bfspress.htm> [Accessed 6 February 2002].

⁵⁸ The New Europe organisation is now more complex, and includes a Limited company (NEU Limited), an Advisory Council, a Steering Committee and a Research Trust with Charitable status. For more information see the *New Europe* website: <http://www.new-europe.co.uk/vision/qanda.html#14> [Accessed 14 February 2002]

⁵⁹ Source: New Europe website. <http://www.new-europe.co.uk/vision/index.html> [Accessed 1 October 2002]

⁶⁰ Interview with No Campaign, February 2002.

⁶¹ Interview with No Campaign, op cit. note 60

⁶² Interview with Congress for Democracy, February 2002

⁶³ Available on the WWW at: <http://www.congressfordemocracy.org.uk> [Accessed 17 April 2002]

⁶⁴ Sir Michael Spicer, Address to Congress of Democracy, 1 March 2001. Available at: <http://www.congressfordemocracy.org.uk/Spicer%20speech.html> [Accessed 17 April 2002]

⁶⁵ Sir Michael Spicer, op cit. note 64

⁶⁶ Austin Mitchell, op cit. note 64.

⁶⁷ Christopher Gill, op cit. note 64.

⁶⁸ Russell Walters, op cit. note 64.

⁶⁹ Lord Pearson of Rannoch, op cit. note 64.

⁷⁰ Austin Mitchell, op cit. note 64. Austin Mitchell is MP for Great Grimsby, Co-Chair (with Sir Michael Spicer) of the Congress for Democracy and the Chair of the Labour Euro Safeguards Campaign.