



Can cosmopolitanism fix the EU?

A case study of the pan-European political movement Volt Europa

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Abstract

Cosmopolitan theory has long argued that the world is becoming increasingly interconnected. Through borderless phenomena such as climate change, and through globalizing processes such as cross-border mobility and the global market, we are becoming increasingly aware of their social and political impact as global news and debates fill our social media channels. To this end, cosmopolitan theory argues that politics and academia are no longer capable of understanding these processes from the point of view of the nation-state. While the European Union presents a prime example of a cosmopolitan model, attempting to actively tackle these challenges transnationally, the sovereign member states remain the primary point of departure for politics and democratic participation, rendering the governance body largely ineffective. Amidst an increasing awareness of these shortcomings and the growth of Eurosceptic movements in recent years, a new movement is establishing itself with the mission to reform the EU and tackle such challenges head-on: Volt Europa.

The thesis employs a case study methodology in order to gain a holistic understanding of the growing political movement as a European expression of cosmopolitanism. It argues that the study of Volt Europa, a political movement and party aiming to reform the European Union through a pan-European platform, reveals significant findings about the current deficiencies of European democracy and how they can be resolved. The thesis argues that this approach is grounded in a cosmopolitan democratic and communicative framework, which reveals evident expressions of this phenomenon. The thesis aims to describe this expression in the larger context of the EU, while simultaneously aiming to prescribe how a cosmopolitan approach may be a solution to the deficiencies of European democracy. The findings reveal that this fix may very much be grounded in an emerging cross-cultural communicative framework for EU citizens, and a growing public sphere based on digital democratic participation.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan democracy, cosmopolitan communication, Volt Europa, European Union, European governance, pan-European, democracy, political participation, digital participation

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1. Introduction

...the paradox of our times refers to the fact that the collective issues we must grapple with are of growing cross-border extensity and intensity, yet the means for addressing these are weak and incomplete. (Held, 2010:4)

It has become painfully obvious that the world, as we see it today, is increasingly interconnected. A popular catchphrase found in cosmopolitan thinking is that humanity is now part of an international community of fate: we simply have to consider the fact that images of melting glaciers in the Antarctic are sending warning signals across the globe - climate change is happening, and will affect us all in one way or another. Only by looking at Europe, we can see that economic crises or terror attacks in one country give us cause for worry in another. These phenomena are on the rise, and we are becoming increasingly aware of their consequences as news about them flood (pun unintended) our social media feeds. Naturally, we are also gaining an awareness that something needs to be done on a global political level. There is in fact a general understanding that with inherently borderless phenomena, such as climate change or natural disasters, and phenomena that have become borderless through the processes of globalization, such as migration, transnational crime, IT-security, terrorism or the global market, we are becoming less capable of dealing with them on a national political level (Held, 2010:13). Despite some notable attempts to actively tackle such challenges transnationally in the form of global organization such as the UN, or various regional constellations such as the European or African unions, the nation-state remains the primary point of departure in this endeavour, where protection of state sovereignty remains the key virtue in the global system and where democratic participation remains bound territorially (Beck, 2006; Held, 2011; Kaldor, 1995). In a critical response to this, cosmopolitan theory argues that we have reached a point of no return, where the only way nation states may catch up with issues beyond their borders is to pursue stronger international political action (Beck & Sznaider, 2010). While a range of global political initiatives have been facilitated in the past century, which, in their essence, strive to pursue more robust transnational institutions to tackle such issues, they have to a large extent been ineffective in their ability to exert actual political influence.

One such initiative is the European Union. Numerous cosmopolitan scholars have argued that the EU is an evident model of a cosmopolitan political community (Archibugi, 1998; Delanty, 2005; Habermas, 2003). Nowhere else have we observed a large-scale project of international governance such as the European Union. In many ways it has been a remarkable and unique project, establishing a century of peace on the European continent, constructing “mechanisms of collaboration and human rights enforcement” (Held, 1998:23), and uniting twenty-eight nation-states to submit parts of their sovereignty to pursue a common political agenda (Hix, 2008:11). Despite these achievements, however, there is a broad consensus that we are beginning to see the cracks in its governance structure, and at the same time, a broad disagreement about the appropriate remedy (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sift et al., 2007; Steffek & Nanz, 2008:1). Arguably, however, these issues boil down to exactly that of nation-state centrism.

With this in mind, transnational democracy in its current state is of course hardly comparable to national structures, and there are several factors which make a transnational democratic body such as the EU different from the national dimension: voters’ distance to the governing-body and the social distance to other voters. These factors represent the overarching challenges to this project. The national and local populations of members states are far-removed from the transnational decision-making bodies, which in the case of the EU has resulted in lack of awareness on how the political body affects people’s lives, as well as lack of insight into how they can directly affect the debates and decision-making (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sift et al., 2007). As many of the political decisions have moved away from the nation-state, the new and expanded democratic structure has arguably failed in allowing citizens to catch up, leading to a “widening gulf between the EU and the people” (European Commission, 2001:7). Essentially, civic political dialogue remains situated on the national level while politics have extended beyond (Sift et al., 2007:128). Meanwhile, as the European Parliament elections are soon to commence, member states and their citizens have no choice but to direct their attention to the decision-making body beyond national borders.

Moreover, voters are also more diverse and socially distanced from each other: decisions on the EU level are made not only to represent single national interests, but instead force all EU citizens to synchronize their ambitions as to accommodate a multitude of political agendas. These

differences, however, lie not only in diverse identities and cultures, but also institutional structures and the varying levels of economic development across the member states. Subsequently, we have entered into a time where the interdependence between states and citizens is causing serious debate: Brexit, mass migration, global terrorism or climate change are among many phenomena that have in recent years created an awareness of the interconnectedness of Europe and its consequences (Beck, 2006), and have caused a clearer division between sentiments of openness and protectionism, or, in the case of Europe, pro- and anti-Europeanism. As globalization increasingly takes control from the nation-states, which remain the “essential political units”, we are also seeing the rise of fundamentalism in an attempt to regain control (Held, 1998:23; Hix, 2008:68).

The EU has in fact observed the rise of numerous populist and Eurosceptic political movements in recent years such as Rassemblement National in France, Fidesz in Hungary or UKIP in the United Kingdom, to name a few. Uniting such movements is the sentiment that state sovereignty is under threat as the European Union exerts increasing political pressure on member states. In addition to this trend, there have also been a range of voices and initiatives arguing for the protection and strengthening of the European project. Some examples are, naturally, the EU institutions themselves, various liberal and pro-European political parties, as well as numerous civil society movements such as Stand Up For Europe or the European Movement International. Many such initiatives have strongly argued that the EU is indeed necessary for the stability of Europe and for its potential to address transnational challenges, however, some of them also recognize that it is in drastic need of reform, and a new way of doing politics. In fact, one such movement has grown amidst the precariousness of the European Union, prescribing a new approach to European politics: pan-Europeanism.

Herein comes Volt Europa.

The case of Volt Europa

In 2016, the year that Brexit and Donald Trump were dominating global headlines and stirring debate across Europe and the world, a group of students decided to kickstart Volt Europa. The

individuals believed that, to the background of various events which had shaken Europe and the world, something needed to be done, and urgently. As Europeans, their target for action became the European Union, a valuable project that was to be protected, but one that was also in dire need of reform and of a new political structure. The political project that they envisioned came to be defined by a new and unique approach to European democracy - pan-Europeanism. Broadly speaking, what this entails is that, in contrast to the current structure of the EU where individual nations are represented via nationally anchored MEPs, political parties and ideological alliances, Volt is pursuing a different agenda where a single political party with a common platform and shared values aims to represent the citizens of *Europe*, and not just citizens of sovereign states. What then motivates such an agenda?

To begin with, a pan-European approach is motivated by a concern for the ever-growing transnational political issues and phenomena such as the global market, migration flows or climate change. In this regard, the movement recognizes that such processes cannot be managed by nation-states alone and need to be dealt with on a European federal level - the goal is to work outside of national boxes and pursue a new political paradigm. Here, we begin to observe the key issue recognized in cosmopolitan thought: nationally grounded politics are no longer sufficient if we are to address the ever-growing transnational interconnectedness (Beck, 2006; Habermas, 2003; Held, 2010; Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011). According to Volt, however, the issue also runs deeper in that Europe is currently under the “visible threat of populism and nationalism, corruption and the fruitless ‘old way’ of doing politics” (Volt Europa, 2019a). What this means is that the continent as a political arena is currently a battleground for ideological forces where disagreement, rather than consensus, dominates the political and public debates. Here, another key vision is thus to operate outside ideological boxes, where traditional left-center-right categorizations are abandoned for a best-practice approach - the key is to find solutions that work based on scientific objectives, rather than dogma. Furthermore, the transnational program is established based on a perceived set of shared values among all Europeans, especially pertaining to values of democracy and civil rights. The movement envisions a continent where the shared history, experiences and values give the potential to unite citizens across the European Union under a common political agenda. For this purpose, Volt highlights the importance of stronger transnational communication and common understanding as a process to fulfill these goals and for a more effective way to

perform European democracy. By working under a grassroots and citizen-empowerment program, it aims to give each EU citizens the tools to shape their lives and societies, empowering communities on local and national levels in order to give them better opportunities to shape European politics from the bottom-up. In order for this to happen, Volt envisions a digital revolution which provides effective platforms for European citizens to mobilize across borders and together bring real change into European politics.

As the European Parliament elections are approaching, the political platform has emerged with the simple intention of “changing the way politics is done and shaping the future of Europe!” (Volt Europa, 2019a). It is now campaigning for the European Parliament through a single program across the member states, and “making headway to getting at least one member of parliament” with the hopes of challenging the status quo (Interview 1, country-lead Sweden). Volt is a movement that seeks to unite individuals from all over Europe under a common platform in order to drastically change politics, where recognition of borderless issues, a strong belief in the transnational European project, an acknowledgement of shared history and values, and a vision to overcome cultural differences, are crucial factors to enable a strong and coherent European Union. As the thesis will argue, this framework indicates that Volt Europa is a clear manifestation of a cosmopolitan project. As such, it provides us with a strong empirical case in order to describe and understand its broader context of the European Union as a cosmopolitan phenomenon. Most importantly, however, it provides a significant perspective as to how cosmopolitanism may be a solution to Europe’s deficiencies.

What do we mean by cosmopolitanism?

In the analysis of transnational processes, the social sciences traditionally speak of globalization. The process of globalization, to the background of cosmopolitanism, explains a social fact of increasing interconnectedness between citizens and nations through the blurring of boundaries between the local and global levels of society. It reflects a “time-space compression” (Barbalet, 2012:199), where social phenomena and human interaction are expanding across space and time, and in this process, the local and global dimensions become deeply interconnected (Held, 1998:13; Köhler, 1998:234). The concept of cosmopolitanism adds an important layer to this

conceptualization: multiculturalism, global mobility, and interconnectedness are not just a social fact, we are also becoming increasingly aware of these factors and their consequences. As individuals are continuously exposed to different cultures and political identities through an increased cross-border mobility and an embeddedness in global digital media, they are adapting a mindset of a global people with a shared fate (Beck, 2006:7; Habermas, 2006:43). It is at this point that cosmopolitanism taps in as a research framework.

Starting out as a theory of ethics and morality in international relations, with a highly ideological view of how the world should function in order to protect the needs and rights of all citizens of the world, the idea has in recent conceptual developments began evolving into a legitimate methodological framework to study various levels of human organization. It departs from the critical assumption that the social sciences are currently stuck in a methodological nationalism paradigm, where even the global society is studied strictly from the point of view of the nation-state. The criticism is simple: as globalizing processes are an increasing reality, nationalist frameworks are not sufficient if we are to understand the new societal order - the social scientific endeavor thus needs to adapt to this new reality (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:382). As will be discussed, the much-debated concept of cosmopolitanism has also been under scrutiny for being overly abstract, limiting itself to prescribing generalizing theories about the world, without necessarily understanding how- and to what extent cosmopolitanism actually manifests itself in individual and organizational realities. This means that the concept has been insufficient in conducting real empirical studies of how identities transform and develop in light of a growing cosmopolitan reality.

The thesis argues that the case at hand, studied in the context of the transnational community that is Europe and the European Union, reveals significant empirical and grounded findings about the manifestations of cosmopolitan identities and social movements. Volt Europa presents an alternative unit of research to uncover a real-world cosmopolitan manifestation (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:395), which serves to bringing us closer to uncovering the frameworks proposed by methodological cosmopolitanism. As the thesis will uncover, the people subscribing to the movement are involved in a continuous process of renegotiating their democratic identities as “belonging both to local and to supra-national entities” which in turn, as argued by cosmopolitan

theory, may “give rise to a genuine cosmopolitan identity.” (Pendenza & Garcia Faroldi, 2015:698).

In the context of the EU, we have seen a rise of nationalist forces, but simultaneously, and as a response to this, we have likewise seen transnational movements arise. This tension will likely continue in the coming future, and therefore, it is more important than ever to highlight these movements and their role in European society. With this in mind, Volt Europa is arguably the most suitable case to understand a real-life manifestation of a cosmopolitan expression in Europe. Simultaneously, as Held (1998:24) argues, cosmopolitan democratic theory is among very few frameworks attempting to understand the “democratic implications of the fact that nation-states are enmeshed today in complex interconnected relations.”

Purpose and research questions

The aim of this research is twofold. First, an overarching goal seeks to further contribute to the theoretical, methodological and empirical study of cosmopolitanism by researching a real-life case that may uncover a manifestation of this phenomenon. It departs from the key assumption that a cosmopolitan approach is necessary to address the multitude of transnational issues we observe today. In this regard, the concept of cosmopolitanism is arguably deeply connected to politics and democracy, prescribing a need to establish a unified political agenda across nation-states. Subsequently, the second aim is to understand what a cosmopolitan approach may mean for the functioning of transnational governance and cross-border democratic and media participation in the context of the European Union. The key assumption is that the political movement Volt Europa shows a clear manifestation of a cosmopolitan democratic approach. By looking at both the external and internal aspects of the movement, it aims to utilize a broad theoretical and methodological approach in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of a real-life cosmopolitan experiment and its democratic implications within the context of the EU.

Cosmopolitanism offers two important contributions to social science. First, it is a normative, future-oriented theory explaining *how things should be*. This moral framework prescribes that, with the resources and capabilities we realistically possess, we can reach an alternative

cosmopolitan future, something we may refer to as utopian realism (Giddens, 1990:154). Second, recent critical cosmopolitan thinking argues that we need to begin applying it as an empirical framework to help us analyze *how things actually are* in real-life contexts. We need to understand the realities of people and in what way cosmopolitan expressions actually emerge on the ground. Consequently, the thesis will utilize both perspectives, providing both a descriptive and a prescriptive conclusion. The aim is to provide further legitimacy to the cosmopolitan approach and strengthen it as a methodological and empirical framework by employing a qualitative case study methodology, as to understand the complexity of the social phenomenon being studied. Simultaneously, the thesis argues that the case of Volt Europa reveals significant perspectives on the current state of the European Union, where it is heading, and how it may be improved. Thus, this research seeks to develop results which show how a cosmopolitan democratic framework in the context of Volt Europa, may - as the title of the thesis suggests – provide a fix for the European Union.

To address this purpose, the thesis poses the following research questions:

1. *What does Volt Europa reveal about the European Union as a cosmopolitan democratic community?*
 - a. *How does the pan-European approach of Volt Europa attempt to address the issues in European democracy?*

2. *How can a cosmopolitan framework address the issues in European democracy?*
 - a. *How can digital media facilitate a space for cosmopolitan democratic dialogue in the European Union?*

2. Consolidating cosmopolitanism

The thesis departs from the theoretical and methodological assumptions provided by cosmopolitan thought. As the literature overview will show, it is a long tradition that has evolved and been reconstructed through intensive academic debate. Considering that a key purpose of the thesis is to provide an academic contribution to the reformation of social science through a cosmopolitan

approach, the text will begin by outlining an overview of the main lines of thinking around this concept. To begin with, the evolution of this concept needs to be dissected in order to understand where academia has found itself today and what the aims of cosmopolitan research are for the development of social scientific thought.

Perhaps the most prominent debate in this regard has been that between the theoretical and methodological application of the concept. Cosmopolitan thought has in recent academic debates been scrutinized for being strictly theoretical in its application, framing assumptions about the social world which fail to reflect how this phenomenon manifests itself in real-life contexts. This argument has been increasingly brought forward in academic discussions, where a new narrative is proposing for cosmopolitanism to develop into a clearer methodological framework to be applied upon social reality. As a concept which has, in relative terms, only recently been framed in academia, cosmopolitanism currently remains a contested and often ambiguous notion, based on a broad variety of social scientific influences. To this end, one of the key aims of this review is to establish a concrete but comprehensive concept of cosmopolitanism which can be utilized in the study of cosmopolitan processes and expressions as indicated by the case at hand. While cosmopolitanism, in its essence, refers to global processes, some delimitations are however necessary for this inquiry, one of which will be to consider what cosmopolitanism means in the context of Europe.

To the advantage of this thesis, an important argument has been made by scholars of this phenomenon in that Europe and the European Union are perhaps the most prominent experiments of a cosmopolitan community (Archibugi, 1998; Delanty, 2005; Habermas, 2003). In fact, the EU has been widely utilized as a case to study this concept. As the point of departure is a manifestation of cosmopolitanism in a social and political movement in the context of the European Union, the review will therefore additionally highlight how this phenomenon has been theoretically and empirically framed in the European experiment. To begin with, we first need to depart from a broad conceptual discussion of cosmopolitanism and highlight some of the key debates among cosmopolitan scholars.

A contested concept

The first scholarly interpretation of cosmopolitanism was framed by the 17th century philosopher and political thinker Immanuel Kant. His account is perhaps the most prominent, as many thinkers of cosmopolitanism have drawn upon Kant's ideas in constructing their frameworks. As an early scholar of international relations, the starting point of his analysis was primarily on the global political level of cosmopolitanism. His ideas stemmed from the conviction that the global order must be built upon the "...respect to the twin goals of containing aggression and fostering respect for humanity" (Nussbaum, 1997:5). In his view, this endeavor could only be achieved by a framework of universal human morality. Kant's primary goal was to establish a concept of participation in a global cosmopolitan society, referred to as "cosmopolitan right" (Reilly, 2011:369). This argument proposed that world citizens must possess the agency and capacity to be heard across diverse political and cultural communities, leading to the establishment of a "universal ethical realm" (Held, 2010:45). It is here that the idea of citizenships and identity comes in, where individuals are seen as not merely citizens of nations, but of the world. As an evidently normative perspective, Kant envisioned a cosmopolitan society constructed upon a "confederation of states that had renounced violence while being governed by the rule of law." (Stevenson, 2011:245). In an almost utopian reality, at least by the standards of his time, he saw the world as in need- and capable of establishing a universal cosmopolitan society "which can administer justice universally (Kant & Reiss, 1991:45). Interestingly, when considering his underlying motivation behind this vision, it could be argued that he was ahead of his time, recognizing the effects of globalization already in the 17th century:

The peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of laws in one part of the world is felt everywhere (Kant & Reiss, 1991:107-108)

The world as it is today, and not least on the European continent, finds immense echoes in this thought.

With the first academic account of cosmopolitanism, we are thus presented with a world where local events have transnational implications, and vice versa. Through the transnational processes

of globalization, the world as we see it today is becoming increasingly interconnected. In *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Ulrich Beck (2006) provides a significant development in the analysis of how our realities have changed through globalization. He begins by arguing that our realities have undergone a transformation toward an increased awareness of the global interconnectedness and its consequences: humanity is now engaged in global events through new information and media technology, where the lives and misfortunes of humans beyond our border are brought into our lifeworld directly through mass media, expanding the “spaces of our emotional imagination” (Ibid.:6). Likewise, phenomena such as migration, multiculturalism and increased mobility across borders have forced us to directly observe our connection to humanity outside our local and national contexts

The world and our realities have thus become cosmopolitan, which forces us to view it from a new perspective, one that breaks away from what Beck (2016) refers to as methodological nationalism. A discussion of methodological nationalism is prevalent in a wide variety of literature arguing for a cosmopolitan outlook. The argument proposes that academic and political thinking remain stuck in analyzing the social world from the starting point of nationalism, where questions of identity, civic engagement and democracy are exclusively limited to the nation states and national belonging. In this paradigm, humans are “naturally” divided into a set of nations, primarily defined by internal organization of society and the creation of external boundaries to separate and distinguish them from other nations (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:383). This poses consequences for social science: empirical inquiry and theoretical developments are guided by a methodology which forces them into narrow categorizations of society and politics, but as the effects of globalization show, “national organization as a structuring principle of societal and political action can no longer serve as the orienting reference point for the social scientific observer.” (Ibid.:384).

This has implications not only for social research but additionally impacts policy and practice in transnational governance. Considering the increasing global interconnectedness and our new awareness of it, if future citizens and transnational constellations want to address “genuine global problems”, then the nation-state cannot be the only frame of reference for the realization of politics and democracy (Stevenson, 2011:257) To the background of this, Beck (2016) proposes a range of factors to demonstrate why we must understand the world from a cosmopolitan perspective.

Here, we can outline several principles showing why identity and lived experience can no longer simply be analyzed territorially. He elaborates on Kant in first explaining that societal risks and crisis are no longer bound territorially. Risks such as climate change, international crime or terrorism force us to become aware of global “interdependence and the resulting ‘civilizational community of fate’” (Ibid.:7). We now know that, for instance, climate change is borderless and affects not only those in our social proximity, but all of humanity. Another crucial element is the relationship to the “other” human being. Arguably strengthened by the rise of mass and social media, as well as increasing mobility and migration, individuals have become increasingly curious about foreign identities and cultural differences and are thus developing the ability to emphasize and take the perspective of persons outside their territorial boundaries. All this results in an “impossibility of living in a world society” where “social boundaries are being redrawn due to an interconnectedness of cultures and traditions...” (Ibid.:7). The question of ethics and morality thus also take a center stage in the cosmopolitan discussion. To be cosmopolitan first and foremost means the ability and will to empathize with “victims” on the other side of the world. As a result of the global interdependence and a “globalization of emotions” Beck (Ibid.:5-6) claims that “...the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a transnational sense”.

The discussion of the role of media is crucial in an attempt to understand cosmopolitanism and how this emotional imagination is expanding. As previously mentioned, it is a key factor in the awareness of interconnectedness and plays a crucial role in the transformation of identities through cosmopolitanization (Beck, 2006:19; Yilmaz & Trandafioiu, 2015:2). Mass- and social media have forced us into a diversity of transnational connections and confrontations with people and events across the world, resulting in cultural ties and identities increasingly expanding across national borders (Beck, 2006:7). We therefore constantly “inhabit different worlds” by partaking in global media and transnational communication. According to Beck (Ibid.:19), this results in an *unconscious* cosmopolitanism, where exposure to global interconnectedness makes us “part of another world” than our own contextual reality, without us necessarily “realizing or expressly wishing it”. On a similar note, Roger Silverstone (2007:5) puts forward the perspective of Mediapolis, discussing the critical role of media in the creation of a global “social, civic and moral space” as a force which increasingly penetrates our reality. In this regard, humanity has become dependent on media for our everyday lives and experiences. By extent, we are thus situated in not

only our own realities, but that of other individuals and communities (Ibid.:5), and in this way, social relations are increasingly being stretched as new communication and information technologies penetrate our lives (Held, 1998:13).

With the traditional account of cosmopolitanism, we have observed how it takes its expression in moral obligations to all of humanity as the strongest obligation of each individual, as well as a new reality in which our consciousness is becoming increasingly global. Here, we are presented with what some consider to be an extreme view on world citizenship, where a global cosmopolitan identity is always “morally superior to more local bounds...” (Calhoun, 2003:539). A slightly different approach to cosmopolitanism takes into account rights instead of obligations, proposing a democratic theory stating that “wherever people are joined in significant social relations they have a collective right to share in control of these.” (Ibid.:539). We thus begin to speak of cosmopolitan democracy which argues for “a democratic polity to administer affairs at every level at which people are connected to each other” providing citizens of the world with the rights to democratic mobilization across borders (Ibid.:539). As a response to the traditional approach, David Held (2010) therefore considers a cosmopolitanism where human allegiance is more nuanced than the idea of an inevitable cosmopolitan identity. The counterargument is that individuals belong to *both* local communities and humanity as a whole. In this regard, the cosmopolitan identity should not be seen as a replacement of local identity, but as a supplement to it. The starting point is thus “consent, deliberation and collective decision-making as the essential mechanism for the creation and development of cosmopolitan institutions and forms of governance.” (Ibid.:15-16). In his approach, Held’s end-goals are cosmopolitan, however, “cultural and political specificity” is still significant. The key contribution here is therefore that cosmopolitan theory must also recognize how its meaning is interpreted in local contexts (Ibid.:16). Scheffler (2002) likewise discusses the idea of moral obligations to all human beings as not being adequate to explain the reality of cosmopolitan expressions in society. In understanding local affiliations, he (2002:7) argues that this extreme version of cosmopolitanism views local favoritism as justifiable only if it is “by reference to the interests of all human beings considered as equals”. Calhoun (2003:534) highlights that thinkers of liberal cosmopolitanism “fail to recognize the social conditions of their own discourse”, and that cosmopolitanism as a societal and scientific discourse often argues for a “freedom from social belonging” without

empirical evidence to support this claim. On a similar note, Roudemetof (2005:114) argues that we must be careful in the application of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, as they are “far from innocent description of an actual situation” and have often been applied selectively based on privilege. We must therefore pay attention to who has the power to be labeled as- or to call themselves cosmopolitan in a specific context, something that the traditional cosmopolitan perspectives tend to overlook. Thus, if the world is moving in a cosmopolitan direction, what is then the course of action for “real people who are necessarily situated in particular webs of belonging...” (Calhoun, 2003:535). In conclusion, wherever we find expressions of cosmopolitanism, we will simultaneously still find ties to local communities - cosmopolitan theory must begin to recognize how this phenomenon actually manifests itself in societal processes and identities. This debate has been paramount for both contemporary discussion on cosmopolitanism and for the methodological and empirical application of the concept.

Despite the debates, it is important to continue asking whether - as Beck & Sznaider (2010:383) argue - the global and local actually “have dissolved and merged together in new forms”. As will be observed, much of contemporary research on cosmopolitanism takes this criticism into account and highlights that local realities cannot be entirely neglected as to attain a cosmopolitan vision. While these new conceptual developments have only scarcely been observed in real-life contexts, the key idea that the world is moving in an increasingly cosmopolitan direction, with “no way of turning the clock back to a world of sovereign nation-states and national societies” (Ibid.:390), it should arguably continue to be tested empirically and developed into a legitimate research framework. A broad agreement in this endeavor is that analysis must begin on a grassroots level as to understand cosmopolitan expressions to the background of local attachments (Calhoun, 2003:532; Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011:8).

The cosmopolitan research agenda

As previously discussed, the social sciences should be able to adapt to the new cosmopolitan reality, with increasing interconnectedness and the individual and societal awareness of this phenomenon (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:382). In order to analyze contemporary social and political realities, cosmopolitanism must therefore become a “social scientific research programme”

(Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011:17). As the distinctions between the global and local are dissolving and transforming our identities, a paradigm shift is taking shape in the social sciences arguing for a reformed empirical and theoretical analysis. This is particularly important in studying identities, both in terms of the reach of one's morality but also the curiosity and appropriation of cultural frameworks beyond one's social proximity.

If we are to move away from methodological nationalism, Beck & Sznaider (2010:395) argue that we must "redefine the basic concepts of the social" by looking at alternative units of research. They admit, however, that this is not an easy feat, and ask several important questions to guide the research. What is crucial is to answer what the alternative units of research would be, and what such units mean for breaking away from methodological nationalist academia. In their own research, they consider the idea of "transnational regimes of politics" and "transnational spaces and cultures of memory" as units to observe the blurred distinctions between national and international, and the "plurality of interdependencies" of states, organizations and various other types of social groupings (Ibid.:395). As will be discussed, such transnational regimes, spaces and cultures are exactly what define Volt Europa and its context of the European Union, making them ideal units of research to study the growing cosmopolitan reality.

Despite the aforementioned critique to cosmopolitan theory, it is clear that a significant contribution is being made to the development of social science research. Beck & Sznaider (2010:383) argue that the new cosmopolitan agenda should not aim to abandon the relevance of the nation state and national identity completely, but rather to understand how identities are being transformed, how new identities arise, and how identities might develop accordingly. According to Beck (2006:7), identities should not simply be analyzed as either national or transnational - we must also understand the "both/and character" of modern identity. This is necessary if we are to truly understand the profusion of cultural and political expressions in Europe.

The cosmopolitan perspective on Europe

As previously mentioned, the transnational processes pursued by the European Union, with a unique "layer of governance beyond the nation-state" (Pichler, 2009a:707), make Europe perhaps

the primary example of an actively cosmopolitan unit of research. While it does not represent the essential cosmopolitanism that considers humanity or global citizenship, the most important point is that it possesses analytical qualities of a cosmopolitan mindset, grounded in openness to differences through the ambition to perform politics transnationally, and a pursuit of a shared value system and a transnational moral framework. An important argument here is that cosmopolitanism does not necessarily need to refer to a global space, rather, “it resides in social mechanisms and dynamics that can exist in any society at any time in history where world openness has a resonance.” (Delanty, 2006:43).

As the first transnational body which “begins to resemble the cosmopolitan model” (Archibugi, 1998:219), the European Union has in the last century pursued an “economic, political and also cultural” integration into a unified community (Pichler, 2008:1110). When speaking of culture, an important characteristic of the European community has been the continuous renegotiation of difference and reinvention of history (Delanty, 2002:354). A key example of a cosmopolitan cultural expression is the collective memory of the Holocaust, which with time has become European rather than bound to a specific nation (Ibid.:354). In fact, many studies have considered the aspects of history and memory as feeding into the cosmopolitan community of Europe. This particularly pertains to the question of morality and human rights, which saw its expression especially with the establishment of the human rights paradigm following the atrocities of World War II. Thus, while the state is still the key actor in shaping its citizens’ collective memories, this role is being significantly extended to Europe and the European Union (Levy & Sznajder, 2011:201). National identities have thus gradually begun to take on a European expression.

By means of the economic and political dimensions, Delanty (2005:406) considers the EU in the context of cosmopolitan theory by discussing the concept of Europeanization. By this he refers to the ongoing processes of European integration and the emergence of a societal and political European identity alongside the national communities of member states. To the background of this, he inquires on what Europe means in contemporary terms in relation to “a European Constitution, the growing role of the European Union and its geopolitical enlargement, trans-European networks such as a European civil society and European citizenship”. It has been theorized that, especially in the case of Europe, identities can no longer be seen as homogenous:

As a consequence of the globalizing processes, Europeans are increasingly forced to embrace a “reflexive postnational consciousness” (Delanty, 2002:354). While recognizing that Europe is moving in a direction of increased continental integration, it also needs to be acknowledged that the EU does not necessarily “supersede the nation-state but exists alongside it in constantly changing relations.” (Delanty, 2005:407). Subsequently, the EU in its current form is not replacing the nation-state, rather, it is redefining the notion of statehood and forming new expressions of it (Ibid.:407). This resonates with the argument put forward by critical cosmopolitanism, where we must study the both/and characteristic of modern identity.

Klaus Eder (2004:90) provides an important critical argument to explain why the local and the national still matter in Europe. He discusses the case of “New Europe” as a community constructed upon a strong vision to “synchronize its differences”. When discussing the process of Europeanization, he highlights that we need to consider the continent as “a space with differing speeds” (Eder, 2004:90; Habermas, 2006:82). What is meant by this is that there are clear sociogeographic variations between the Northwest and Southeast, where different nation-states are developing at different speeds, while simultaneously linked together and - particularly in the context of the European Union - following a “culture of synchronicity” in order to reach common goals. He argues that this culture, however, is also prone to be contested (Eder, 2004:104). As the Northwest takes the lead in economic, political and cultural development it also becomes the socially and politically geographic space that sets the agenda. In contrast, the Southeast tends to be a step behind and thus becomes the less powerful set of actors, increasingly contesting the unequal relationship. On a similar note, Habermas (2006:69,81) argues that the eastern enlargement of the EU increases the complexity of the transnational governance project, where “the divisive force of divergent national histories and historical experiences that traverse European territory like geological fault lines remains potent”. The protectionist and EU-sceptic stance taken by the Visegrad Group in the past decade exemplifies this perfectly.

Returning to some of the methodological assumptions of cosmopolitanism, there are several shortcomings in the sociological analysis of Europe in that it lacks the proper analytical tools to understand the real-life contexts of a European society and identity. In this way, mainstream sociological analysis has not moved beyond concepts of methodological nationalism, where

Europe is understood as “a plural - as societies”, while it should instead be analyzed through “additive or, at best, comparative terms.” (Beck, 2007:47). The key here is therefore to expand the concept of a “public” to encompass a European public, in order to understand the blind spots in which communication, organization, mobilization and the creation of identity are increasingly transnational in nature (Ibid.:47-48). Continuing on Beck and other major scholar of cosmopolitanism, an overarching argument proposed in the empirical studies on Europe is the need to establish a methodological cosmopolitanism and a stronger empirical groundwork. Several studies have attempted to follow this line of thinking in order to study manifestations of cosmopolitanism in a variety of contexts based on the EU and the European continent.

European expressions of cosmopolitanism

Recent studies on cosmopolitanism in Europe have considered a local-cosmopolitan continuum to understand individual and group affiliation to either their local contexts or to humanity as a whole. Haller and Roudometof (2010:278) depart from the observation that most empirical research of this phenomenon has been limited to studying specific countries and argue instead for a cross-national perspective to study cosmopolitan attitudes. In this study, the authors consider “whether cosmopolitanism refers to human attitudes or predispositions, or to social practices” (Ibid.:278). They set out to measure attitudes in order to prove whether cosmopolitanism is reflected in the real world, uncovering that in Europe, there is an increasing detachment from the local end of the continuum in favor of the cosmopolitan. As their study investigates attitudes in different regions and advanced industrialized countries, they confirm that Europe does in fact show stronger transnational attitudes, providing further legitimacy to the claim that Europe is an important cosmopolitan model for the social sciences to investigate (Ibid.:294-295).

A similar study by Florian Pichler (2009a:705) aims to capture multiple dimensions of cosmopolitan thinking in order to analyze “feelings of belonging and attitudes reflecting world-openness” in Europe. He poses two critical questions in his research: “How do individuals experience and react towards an increasingly transnational or cosmopolitan world?” and “Have people adjusted themselves to the new circumstances?” (Ibid.:708). Here, he distinguishes between a subjective and objective approach to cosmopolitanism, where the former relates to individual

affiliations, and the latter to attitudes. The subjective approach aims to observe individual attachment or “feeling of belonging” to either the local or the global, in order to get an indicator of cosmopolitan identity. The objective approach, on the other hand, measure how locals and cosmopolitans respectively view and experience various national and transnational issues, which aim to indicate the attitudes to cosmopolitanism (Ibid.:709-710). An important discussion is the role of sociodemographic factors in cosmopolitan attachments and attitudes. The author recognizes that “the ability to recognize otherness, be self-critical, understand different social meanings...” is contextual and may depend on, for example, the age of the respondents. Here, he shows that younger people are more likely to be “more global and open” (Ibid.:711).

We uncover further evidence of this in the study of internet usage and cosmopolitanism in Europe by Marc Verboord (2016:460), who utilizes a cosmopolitan approach to understand how the internet increases transnational democracy and “global understanding”, inquiring on how engagement with digital media affects people’s “openness to other cultures”. Two elements of cosmopolitan openness are in focus, the interest in foreign cultures and the willingness to learn about the “other” (Ibid:461). The results find that internet users display a higher cosmopolitan orientation in that they are both curious about the “other” and willing to learn more about them. Echoing with Pichler (2009a), the results vary depending on the national and sociodemographic context, where cosmopolitanism finds higher attitudes in countries that are richer, have a higher English proficiency and have a broader internet penetration (Verboord, 2016:476). This provides important perspectives for the thesis about the cosmopolitan orientation of diverse internet users in Europe and opens up for further research on the impact of media on cosmopolitan identity. As will be observed, these studies give insight into an important factor of the political participation in Volt Europa, which is the fact that it is constructed upon youth engagement where the cosmopolitan values it prescribes are very much a question of generational analysis.

A study by Andreouli and Howarth (2018:2) attempts to understand qualitatively how cosmopolitan identity in Europe manifests itself in everyday life, where they likewise criticize traditional cosmopolitanism in that it only “describes how things should be”, instead of additionally understanding how cosmopolitanism is expressed in everyday life. They propose a study of cosmopolitan communication based on the idea of “corner-shop cosmopolitanism” or

“banal cosmopolitanism”, which involves the development of cross-cultural everyday practices facilitated by interaction in diverse contexts among citizens and minority groups in Britain (Ibid.:2). Their methodological point of departure is to view how the people themselves conceptualize cosmopolitanism, rather than seeing it as an assigned “condition or trait” (Ibid.:2). The key assumption is that everyday cosmopolitanism is a set of cultural repertoires available to people across a variety of contexts. This practice, they argue, involves tensions between the local and global which forces individuals to renegotiate their identities (Ibid.:3). Cosmopolitanism in the context of Europe is in this way considered a social representation, utilized as a resource to “navigate” among values and practices at both local and universal levels (Ibid.:14). The results of the study pave way for of the key points of inquiry for this thesis, which is the analysis of how cross-cultural everyday interaction is facilitated in transnational communicative spaces.

3. The case study in political movement research

As the literature overview observed, the traditionally theoretical perspective of cosmopolitanism has been in the process of transforming into methodological framework to be applied empirically and to better understand its manifestation in social realities. Much of contemporary thought has recognized the need to not only empirically test such assumptions, but to begin by exploring them from a grassroots level to understand the tensions between local and cosmopolitan identity. So, the question we should be posing, which this thesis also aims to do, is *how* cosmopolitan expressions and processes manifest themselves in the context of the European Union. For this purpose, the thesis employs a qualitative case study research model as to provide a contextual understanding of this phenomenon. To the background of this debate, it is crucial to understand in what way case study research is important for this endeavor and for the social sciences in general.

Similar to the academic debate of cosmopolitanism, in his discussion of the methodological shortcomings of social science, Bent Flyvbjerg (2001:166) makes the argument that the social sciences have too often attempted to understand the world based on abstract and generalizing theories, with the aim to forge predictive conclusions about the social world as to compete with the natural sciences for scientific legitimacy. He argues, however, that the abstract nature and complexity of human values and the social world are not meant to be understood the same way as

scientific conclusions about the facts of material reality. What makes humans, groups and societies unique in this regard, is that they are themselves capable of a reflexivity about their actions and values within their contextual realities. This is based on what Flyvbjerg (Ibid) refers to as a social expertise, where actions are constructed upon prior experiences within a given social situation. In this regard, no theory of social science is able to predict how individuals and groups “determine what counts as an action”, because this ability stems from a complex set of social frameworks that the subject is situated in. These social frameworks - or lifeworlds - are essentially different in each context (Ibid.:42). The key distinction between social action and the behavior of the material world is thus that humans assign meaning to their actions. This action is based either on intention from the individual, or on “the system of meanings to which it belongs” (Della Porta, 2014:230).

Human rationality (or irrationality) is therefore to a large extent unpredictable due to the vast differences of underlying practices, values and interpretations and cannot be reduced to “predefined elements and rules” (Flyvbjerg, 2001:136). What this means is that for social research to be a legitimate scientific endeavor, the researcher must attain detailed understanding of social values and actions based first and foremost on contextual analysis, with the purpose of providing results that can have genuine real-life implications:

We may transform social science to an activity done in public for the public, sometimes to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in our ongoing efforts at understanding the present and deliberating about the future (Flyvbjerg, 2001:166).

Considering the general purpose of the thesis, aiming to both understand the situated context of the case and to provide insight into the real-life implications of the conceptual framework being established, the research design and analysis is grounded in both a deductive (theory-driven) and inductive (data-driven) approach (Bazely, 2013:336; Della Porta, 2014:231). To this end, Della Porta (2014:231) argues that this distinction is often blurred in the open-ended case study methodology as “knowledge proceeds through frequent interaction between theory and research, reflection and fieldwork”. The research project thus takes into account both the social and theoretical relevance for its purpose, and the interplay between them during both data gathering and the analytical process.

The case study in practice

Case study research as a social scientific method finds its strength in that it utilizes multiple sources of data in order to inquire “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 1984:23). Through a qualitative approach, this method allows the thesis to attain a detailed and holistic understanding of a particular social phenomenon, by observing a multitude of factors relevant to its purpose (Snow & Trom, 2002:151-152). As the case study research entails the collection of data from multiple sources, it is often carried out over a longer period of time in order to better understand the social processes as they unfold. Therefore, the research design must also be “open-ended and flexible in terms of both the design and execution of the research”, open to the discovery of new analytical findings which might alter the design of the research as it progresses (Ibid.:153)

The triangulation approach in the data collection and analysis process means that several types of data are utilized in order to gain a “multilayered” and comprehensive understanding of the case at hand (Blee & Taylo, 2002:105; Snow & Trom, 2002:150). This approach allows to gain an understanding of the complexity of the social phenomenon being studied, as well strengthening the research by accounting for the “limits and biases inherent in studies that employ a single method” (Ayoub, Wallace & Zepeda-Millán, 2014:67). For this thesis, the data collection process undertook a single method in focus, with the complement of several other types of data including participatory observations, documentary material, and various forms of digital material.

Triangulation of methods

The data collection was conducted primarily with the help of qualitative semi-structured key informant interviewing. As it aims to provide a holistic understanding of the values, goals and strategies connected to a social movement, key informant interviews are an effective technique to shed light on the movement’s organizational aspect, as to investigate “strategies, cultures, and internal dynamics; and map out the relationships between social movement organizations in a larger social movement industry.” (Blee & Taylo, 2002:105). The choice of interview subjects as key informants represents the need to address individuals who “serve as an expert” and thus to

provide first-hand information about the “microdynamics of political participations” in order to understand the organizational, strategic and value aspects of the social movement (Blee & Taylo, 2002:106; Della Porta, 2014:228). While there is typically a distinction between informants and respondents, we should however not exclude the function of the key informants also serving as respondents, which means that their own motivations and experiences with the movement are also brought to attention. It could in fact be argued that in the study of a political movement based exclusively on volunteer engagement, where personal passion is an important motive for participation, such distinctions are very much blurred. Therefore, the aim of the semi-structured interviewing is also to uncover individual life-worlds and provide thick descriptions of how informants “construct the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening” in their specific contexts (della Porta, 2014:241; Kvale, 2007:x).

For this investigation, the interview guide was constructed upon the initial research questions, the theoretical groundwork, and with consideration to some of the main visions and strategies of the political movement. Due to the open-ended nature of case study research, however, minor aspects of the guide were adjusted during the entire interviewing process as new themes arose based on the answers from different informants. Kvale (2007:43) argues that this may be desirable as the researcher gains new insights about the phenomenon under investigation, and will result in a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the topic as well as the possibility to uncover new evidence relevant to the inquiry.

With this in mind, the interview method may not always provide a full-proof account of the case being studied, as each informant may give different and sometimes conflicting recollections of how the movement functions. Thus, in order to provide a detailed understanding of the case as well as to strengthen the validity of the research, the thesis also utilized participatory observations and documentary data to attain a more holistic view of the movement in its entirety (Blee & Taylo, 2002:110). Various types of documentary sources have been used to complement the interview data (Della Porta, 2014:237). This is particularly important when carrying out key informant interviews, where respondents are meant to provide an “expert” view on the movement’s organizational and strategic dimensions. Here, documents such as policy proposals or party programs provide information that is representative of the movement as a whole.

Observations are likewise a useful complementary method in order to further understand the actions of participants and the meanings ascribed to them. The aim is for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the community aspect of the movement by attempting to submerge themselves in their everyday culture and political debate, which helps uncover the relationships and potential conflicts of interests between the participants, something which might fall under the radar when conducting interviews (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014:145).

Sampling

Volt Europa functions through a decentralized structure where its various local and national boards are currently spread throughout 27 EU member states. The sampling thus needed to initially be limited to Sweden and neighboring Denmark to gain easy access to the meet-up events and the informants. The data collection was however also extended to Belgium due to their close connection to the Swedish board, and interviews were carried out with several members of the Belgian board via video-call.

In total, eight informants, based in three local boards in three separate countries, Sweden, Denmark, and Belgium, as well as one informant working on the federal level of the movement, were interviewed to provide insight into the movement's strategic, operational and normative dimensions, as well as to gain insight into their own experiences and participation in Volt Europa. All informants were selected on the basis of their leadership roles in the party as to provide an "expert" perspective. In order to provide an overview of the movement's vision in its entirety, content in the form of a party program, policy proposal and other digital material were also incorporated into the study. The documents chosen are central to the strategy and overall vision of Volt's European Union platform. Finally, participatory observations and discussions were carried out at two separate local meet-up events in Lund and Copenhagen in order to observe the interactions between participants, some of which were the key informants, and to gather preliminary data in the research design process.

4. Understanding the cosmopolitan experiment

Beyond national boxes

The slogan of Volt Europa is simple: “to do politics in a different way, outside ideological and national boxes” (Cahen-Salvador, 2018). As we will uncover, however, this sentiment reflects something more significant - a disenfranchisement from the political status quo, a discontent with the drastic political developments in Europe and around the world, and a realization that however European governance currently functions, it is not working. The idea for the movement came about in 2016 out of these exact concerns: the two founders described it as the year of Brexit, Trump, Alternative for Germany and Marine le Pen, and that the inaction to these developments had shocked them, which eventually led to the creation of the pan-European movement Volt Europa (Boeselager, 2019). The slogan represents several key issues which the party has identified as in need of addressing. First, to the background of their own problematization of national and European politics, they recognize that the current focus on national politics does not suffice in addressing the transnational problems that we see today. Simultaneously, the ambition to address such issues through European and global governance is facing threats from nationalist and populist forces resisting the EU as to take back the role of the nation state. Second, Volt recognizes a problem in that current party structures are guided by ideologies and dogma, which obstructs political actors from engaging in effective dialogue and limits their capabilities to find the best possible solutions. Moreover, Volt argues that the European Union currently suffers from a democratic deficit where voters are not sufficiently included in the democratic processes. According to them, the citizens are not receiving sufficient opportunities in order to take active part in the political processes that affect their daily lives. These factors form a strong motivation for the movement and are crucial in its efforts to mobilize and expand, and to bring effective change to the transnational governance project of the EU.

Overcoming national boundaries

We will begin by dissecting the question of doing politics outside of national boxes, a discussion that lies at the heart of cosmopolitan analysis. To the background of the pan-European element of Volt, the transnational nature of many societal and political issues creates a need to reshape the

way politics is done in the European Union. The political platform of Volt Europa works to connect actors on a local and national level together with a European party structure, pursuing a common political agenda and value system in order to work along a unified platform. The main mission is to innovate how politics is done on a national and transnational level in order to address a range of shortcomings currently present in European democracy:

Volt was created to re-energise Europe and to solve the issues we all have in common. Volt offers Europeans a new vision for Europe, one that embraces the EU's common aspirations and that faces its shortcomings head-on. (Volt Europa, 2018)

In order to understand the unique nature of this approach in the context of the EU, we must first understand what the movement's political platform and leadership consider to be the current challenges to European governance. To begin with, there is a clear argument to move beyond the national paradigm of democracy, which, according to the informants, is no longer sufficient in addressing the increasingly transnational problems.

So when we start with the nation, there is so much politics right now that is so grounded in the national context that we fail to see beyond [...] But the winds will blow against our coast regardless of sovereignty, you know, we will have floods because guess what, the water doesn't care about where your borders go. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

This resonates with one of the main assumptions of contemporary cosmopolitan thought, which is that a nationally anchored methodology of addressing various social and political phenomena is becoming inadequate in overcoming the increasingly transnational risks and crisis facing citizens and nations. As globalizing processes accelerate and expand, we are faced with a "crisis in world society" where risks and crises increasingly blur the boundaries between the "internal and external, us and them, the national and the international" (Beck, 2006:7). To this, David Held (1998:19) argues that climate change is the clearest example of a "global shift in human organization and activity", increasingly exerting pressure on the effectiveness of "state-centric policies".

As highlighted by the interview discussion about climate change as an evident cross-border issue, we observe a sentiment to tackle transnational challenges through stronger transnational

governance as the only option moving forward. In fact, this sentiment appears to be self-evident to the respondents:

Because the most important things are still very much in the hands of national governments [...] I think the chance to actually act on a practical level is very small for the European institutions. Because most of the power is still in the hands of national governments, and I feel like nations should give up sovereignty, a little bit at least, and put it in the hands of a federal government in Europe. (Interview 9, City-lead Copenhagen, Volt Denmark)

So, outside of national boxes I think this is quite straightforward [...] a lot of issues that we are facing today are transcending borders, so why are politics not transcending borders? That's like the main question there, and that's what I think Volt wants to change in that regard. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Evidently, the party platform is constructed upon the vision to establish a federal European Union which has the potential to exert stronger influence over its sovereign member states. According to one informant, this is the only way politics can effectively be implemented on a transnational level:

As I said I firmly believe that a federal Europe is necessary and would be very good for all European citizens. And a federal Europe could be very useful to implement policies [...] I feel like a European citizen, but I feel like I'm not properly represented by the current European institutions because they don't have enough power. (Interview 9, City-lead Copenhagen, Volt Denmark)

To this end, the respondents believe that we are becoming more aware of shared global issues and need to further understand how they affect everyone across the globe. In light of an increasingly globalized world, Beck (2006) argues that our experiences are currently under transformation in that we are becoming more aware of transnational interconnectedness. According to this assumption, individuals are obtaining a new perspective on political issues, where risks such as climate change, functioning across national borders, inevitably create a rationale of a “civilizational community of fate” (Ibid.:7); a rationale that becomes increasingly inescapable in the current digital media environment exposing individuals to news and debates from across borders on a daily basis (Silverstone, 2007).

Considering this, discussions with the informants reveal that there is an active reflexivity showing a “genuine commitment to living and thinking beyond the local or national” (Skrbiš & Woodward, 2011:61):

...having established the first pan-European political party, and then creating the identity over those years, making this new paradigm in young Europeans' mindsets... that it's not only through your national parliament that you can have an impact on European politics, but you can actually do it directly through the parliament in Brussels. (Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark)

We thus begin to observe what is referred to as “internalized cosmopolitanism”: the key distinction between the concept of globalization and cosmopolitanism is that, while both attempt to understand global interdependence and multiculturalism as a political fact, cosmopolitanism is unique in that it also takes into account the idea that the awareness of transnational processes is internalized into our worldview - it is a “globalization from within” (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:389; Stevenson, 2011:249). In this regard, globalization does not simply exist out there: when we find ourselves in an increasingly multicultural world, and when news and debates from across the world flood our social media feeds on a daily basis with the headlines “*Where Europe would Be Hurt Most By a No-Deal Brexit*” (McCann, Schreuer & Tsang, 2019), we have no choice but to reflect on the transnational interdependence. What the party envisions for its members and for citizens of Europe is exactly that of increased awareness, and a paradigm shift in that democracy can be fulfilled more effectively on a transnational level.

And that's not a short-term goal, you might even say that it's a challenge for our generation to make the world understand that we have global challenges ahead of us, and I don't mean another banking crisis necessarily. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

What is genuinely “new” in this situation is not necessarily cultural intermixing and global interdependence but an enhanced awareness of these features through the formation of something like a global public sphere. (Stevenson, 2011:249).

This idea of a global awareness and a paradigm change thus gets us closer to understanding what is different and new with Volt’s cosmopolitan approach in the context of the European Union. Of course, as previously mentioned, doing politics transnationally is not an entirely new phenomenon: Since the establishment of a multilateral world order in 1945 we have seen numerous initiatives

toward international collaborative action. At the institutional level this has been done through various constellations, among them the EU as perhaps the most prominent one. Considering Volt Europa's critical position, how then can we understand the EU's ineffectiveness?

While the post-war order was arguably a strong age for transnationality, it was also the beginning of an age of territoriality. Following the two World Wars, the "entire globe was parceled off into separate nation-states" which meant further strengthening of the roles of sovereign states and the protection of their territorial rights (Kaldor, 1995:68). Especially in Europe, the nation-state has continuously been in focus as part of the European integration debate (Rumford, 2005:6). Here, Held (2011:171) argues that the key obstacle currently facing international governance agencies is grounded in the "tension between universal values and state sovereignty built into them from their beginning".

Subsequently, the nation-centrism has also meant that the idea of citizenship has been developed strictly based on the idea of the individual's relationship to the sovereign state, by extent shaping the scope of political and cultural solidarity (Calhoun, 2003:532; Kaldor, 1995:71). What this means is that, while the European Union has been pursuing a multitude of initiatives to foster a European democratic dialogue and identity in order to synchronize its political ambitions, there is a structural issue in that public conversation remains primarily organized in a national context, even with regard to transnational issues (Stevenson, 2011:254). As will be discussed in detail later on, the tension between state sovereignty and universality poses numerous challenges to the pan-European project of Volt Europa. What first needs to be brought to attention, however, is how the nation-centric public debate results in a democratic deficit in European governance.

The deficit of European democracy

A notable issue for the European Union, which arises from the nationally anchored democratic paradigm, is the democratic deficit. Various thinkers argue, and what is key to Volt Europa's own platform, is that there are evident shortcomings currently present in the European democratic structure (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Siff et al., 2007). The main idea here is that citizens are not adequately included in the transnational democratic process. To understand

this, we need to consider how the transfer of power to the European Union affects the nation-state and its citizens.

Habermas (2003) provides an important discussion to highlight the ineffectiveness of states when dealing with transnational interdependencies. He claims that with the economic and societal convergence of actors in a transnational and European setting, states are disempowered in that they “forfeit their own capacities for autonomous action as well as their democratic substance.” (Ibid.:89). He observes several key components to this disempowerment. First, states are losing their capacity for control on a national level. This is grounded in that they are unable to effectively protect citizens from external factors such as climate change, migration or organized crime, and the lack of control over the outcomes and consequences of other states’ political decisions (Ibid.:89-90). Second, there is a democracy deficit particularly evident in the European Union: as political power is increasingly transferred from the nation-states to intergovernmental commissions, important decision-making processes are “withdrawn from democratic opinion formation and will formation”, something that has traditionally been anchored in the national democratic level (Ibid.:90).

Regarding the demand for democratic legitimacy, deficits will always result when the circle of all those involved in democratic decision making does not extend to cover the circle of all those affected by those decisions. (Habermas, 2003:90)

Thus, while decision-making has been significantly brought to a transnational level, the structures of civic engagement have not adequately allowed citizens to directly participate. The distance between the voter and the representative is thus further increased, and the voters have in a sense not received the opportunity for their civic duties to keep up with the increased transfer of power to Brussels. To this, Hix (2008:5) responds that “national elections are, understandably, fought on national rather than European issues. Ironically, European Parliament elections also have very little to do with Europe”.

The presence of a democratic deficit is thus of particular interest to Volt and its mission to reform the EU. In fact, Volt Europa recognizes that politics on a European level are in many ways insufficient in terms of voter representation and transparency. One informant sheds light on one

such issue when discussing the alliances in the European parliament, which consist of groups of parties with the same ideological platforms in each EU country coordinating political efforts in the EU parliament.

Within the SND, there are many parties who are nominally, if you look at the name tag, social democrats. However, there is a major difference between the social democratic party - and I would hope this is self-evident - of Romania, which started the referendum on banning gay marriage constitutionally... (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

The overarching sentiment is that citizens are not fully informed as to what they are voting for on a European level due to the “cluttered” nature of political alliances. While on the surface the parties within a transnational alliance share ideological grounds, their practical politics are drastically different and may not fully represent the interests of the voters. This results in a sense of discontent with political representation in the current political climate, which, according to the informants, has led to increasing disenfranchisement on the part of themselves and their members.

One reason I often hear is disenfranchisement with the current political status quo. They want something... they don't think that the old parties represent their views. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Western democracy, and not least in the EU, has in fact been under increasing scrutiny for being “remote from citizens” and not effectively addressing the interests of voters in its decision-making (Steffek & Nanz, 2008:5). While the EU has an increasingly higher impact on peoples' lives, the extent to which this democratic body provides opportunities for them to be included in political processes remains invisible (Statham & Koopmans, 2013:137). In this regard, Coleman & Blumler (2009:14) argue that citizens have been left feeling like spectators in the political process, gradually losing trust in democratic institutions.

The “spectator” perspective also highlights the dimension of ideology. Due to the clear ideological nature of EU politics, Volt Europa argues that many citizens are not adequately represented in the various EU bodies. Representatives express that a clear issue in the current political climate is that parties are stuck in their specific ideological frameworks, which prevents them from finding the most effective solutions to societal problems:

...what I hear a lot, and what makes me vomit, is when people say ‘I believe in this, I'm voting for this decision because I'm a member of this party and this party has this ideology’. [...] That is the traditional explanation of signing up to a party. The ideological base argument saying, I have to vote this because that's the ideology of my party. It limits and narrows the scope of debate and solutions. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

So, instead of saying that we are, let's say central-left or central-right or green or whatever, we say we are trying to find solutions, no matter what the direction could be. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

...our view is that voters cannot know what they are voting for unless we make sure that there is a true European democratic movement with the same ideology in all the nations. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

To conclude this chapter, we can observe that a cosmopolitan democratic platform is called upon by Volt as a response to remedy the perceived negative effects of globalization: there are processes at play that transcend borders, and it becomes clear that, while the EU is constructed upon a strong belief in the rights of the sovereign nation state, the transnational governance body does in fact recognize that such processes must be addressed through regional or global collaboration. Volt Europa recognizes this potential, but it also highlights that Europeans need to be more aware of the issues that connect them through a shared fate; they need to begin overcoming their differences, not least ideological ones; and they need to begin finding common ground as a European community and people. This brings us to the next key goal of the political movement: the establishment of a transnational program that reflects the common values among every EU citizen. As will be discussed, this is grounded in a strong ambition by Volt for citizens to be aware of shared European historical experiences, common values, and the understanding of how these factors bind Europeans into a single community.

Toward common European values

As the event was about to conclude, we proceeded with a quiz about basic EU knowledge. Naturally, I was invited to participate and joined two active members in the hopes that perhaps their expertise could help me hide my lack of “basic” knowledge. Interestingly, however, I was not the only one in the room struggling, so were my teammates, and so were the other teams of young activists passionate about the European project: “Well, this isn’t basic at all”, we thought. Of course, we had to investigate this deception from the part of the quiz-leader, so we asked her. The

response we received said something significant as to how citizens interact with the European Union: “It wasn’t supposed to be easy, we made it to show how little we all know about the EU.” (Field Notes, 2 March 2019).

What does Volt tell us about what it means to be European? Here, the idea of European identity, or Europeanness, becomes particularly relevant and is a clear recurring theme reflected in the ambitions of Volt. As previously mentioned, scholars of cosmopolitanism have considered Europe and the EU as the first international body to take on a “cosmopolitan model”, a project which “represents attempts by nation-states to pool sovereignty in order to help resolve or at least face a number of shared collective problems.” (Pichler, 2009a:707; Stevenson, 2011:244). This, however, should not simply be understood in terms of the transnational political ambitions: the cosmopolitan model must also be analyzed with consideration to shared history, culture, values and experiences, where we need to consider “the rise of a Europe cultural model in which social realities emerge out of discursive frameworks.” (Delanty, 2005:410). As will be argued, the creation of shared memories and values sets the groundwork for a cosmopolitan Europe to arise.

Uniting Europeans through collective experiences

We begin by considering Europe as a space of shared history, memories and values. In his discussion on the how the stability of the European project can be maintained, Habermas (2006:43) asks: “are there historical experiences, traditions, and achievements capable of fostering among European citizens the sense of a shared political fate that they can *shape in common*?”. He argues that a shared sense of a common fate is crucial for the European democratic process to function, but it does however not “materialize out of thin air” and is based on shared historical and contemporary experiences (Ibid.:43) This question then forces us to closely investigate what binds Europeans in the endeavor to create a transnational political community. Levy and Sznajder (2011:195) argue that the idea of collective memory “serves as an important analytical tool in order to understand the meaning making processes within the negotiation of transnational experiences in Europe”.

In this regard, we often look to the 20th century, with consideration to the World Wars and the establishment and expansion of the European Union as a peace initiative, in order to pinpoint a significant development of universal values. This naturally connects to the formation of the human

rights paradigm as a result of the atrocities of World War II, after which “memories of the great wars have transformed human rights sensibilities, at least in Western liberal democracies” (Levy & Sznajder, 2011:204), creating a cosmopolitan human rights consciousness “with its distinctive features of an expanded global awareness of the presence of others and the equal worth of human beings driven by memories of past human rights violations.” (Ibid.:205). These types of memories are exactly the reason for the establishment of the European Union in the first place and are to this day a key motivating factor for the development of “postnational forms of solidarity and security.” (Stevenson, 2005:48).

When asked about the importance of shared values, informants highlighted the significance of history to the stability of the EU, and the need to acknowledge shared memories of authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes, as a way to protect the European project of peace and democracy:

...that Europe’s history is as bloody and as horrible and as horrifying as any other part of the world’s history. But we are currently in a 50-ish years hiatus of war and bloodshed within the European Union, and well... I do not want to see this go. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Then I would also say, it's not a value but more in terms of what are not our values, the memories... [...] So the memory of state terror and authoritative regimes, which is something that we should learn from... and then what I would say is very important is also a value of maintaining peace and even going further than that, collaboration. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Levy & Sznajder (2011:197) argue that historical memories have a meaningful function for political communities in that they reflect the “shared understandings of and responsibilities for the significance the past has for the present concerns of a community”. It is one of the most crucial ways for a community to validate, challenge and reproduce itself. This is, after all, what the EU is constructed upon: the project exists and recreates itself exactly due to the need for peace after a long period of sporadic and devastating warfare. The pan-European vision of Volt Europa likewise adopts this reasoning:

Beyond its boundaries and despite its flaws, the European project carries a message for the world. It is a testament that centuries of war and opposition can be overcome by common values, that we have more in common than what divides us, and that we can shape our destiny together. (Volt Europa, 2019b:177)

Whether they are triumphant or traumatic memories, Delanty (2005:410) argues that shared memories have in fact become a marker of a shared European identity, which is particularly typified by Europe-wide commemoration and reconciliation of events such as the holocaust, but is also apparent considering contemporary examples such as solidarity shown across Europe in various instances of deadly terror attacks in recent years (Alderman & Bilefsky, 2015). Here, another dimension of cosmopolitanism comes into play which is that of “empathy and perspective taking” (Beck, 2006:7). A cosmopolitan identity means the ability and will to empathize with victims beyond one’s own nation state. As a result of interdependence and the “globalization of emotions”, Beck (Ibid.:5-6) claims that “...the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a transnational sense”. A sense of solidarity among Europeans thus comes into question, which can be observed as informants reflect upon the shared values.

So from traveling mostly to eastern Europe and so on, I developed a feeling of, I would say European solidarity. And basically the realization that the only way to actually make European solidarity real is by establishing a true political union, a real federal Europe. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

A transnational memory culture and solidarity is a prerequisite for a cosmopolitan (European) identity to arise: national traumas of the World Wars are not simply remembered in the nation-state, but are felt across the continent. As previously mentioned, the memory of the Holocaust has become boundaryless, and with this, the idea of a shared morality grounded in, for example, the trauma of anti-Semitism, is shaping a common European identity through this specific collective memory, and with the help of socializing initiatives of the European Union.

While the traumatic experiences in European history are an important point of reference to a shared identity and solidarity, we can likewise see that “triumphant” experiences and values hold a significant function in the establishment of a European community.

The common values are those that have traditionally been represented within the spirit of the European project up to this point. It would a bit of a bastardized, or a bit of a stereotypical view, of the progressive European. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

The idea of a progressive Europe, guided by factors such as liberal values, democracy, human rights or the rule of law, is something that the respondents find to be an important common ground to unite not only their members, but all European citizens:

So what I would say are our common values is our belief in democracy, our belief in human rights, and the rule of law, where we accept that the law is almighty so to speak [...] When we talk about post-ideological, then I would say that one of the first kind of things that Volt also does and the way we make policy, is that we are guided by those values we think guide European citizens... (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

What can be concluded is that, while past experiences are crucial in the creation of a European identity, contemporary experiences are likewise a contributing factor. This especially considering how events and processes are now perceived by individuals whose lives are embedded in the digital era, constantly exposed to different cultures and the tragedies of “distant others” (Levy & Sznajder, 2011:202). The recognition of otherness and the solidarity toward strangers observed here is an important aspect of what facilitates shared European values and commitments for participants of Volt Europa. To dig deeper into how this solidarity is made possible, we need to investigate the question of generations. This sheds light on a particular aspect of Volt, which is its focus on youth engagement and the fact that the movement as a whole is built upon the participation and passion of young citizens. What is especially relevant to this is - as highlighted in the literature chapter - that young Europeans engaged through digital media display higher global understanding and cultural openness (Pichler 2009a:711; Verboord 2016:461). We can therefore identify them as a cosmopolitan generation.

An emerging European generation

Typically, generations are viewed in sociodemographic terms referring to individuals spanning over a certain age group. Relevant for this discussion is the group often referred to as “millennials”, that is, for analytical purposes, individuals born between the early 1980s and late 1990s. What makes this generation particularly distinct is that they are considered the first “digital natives” and possess a unique expertise in navigating digital media. They have been raised with internet technology as a primary means of communication and consumption of information and are thus more prone to express cosmopolitan views (Pichler, 2009a:711).

We are a generation - talking now about the millennials - we are a generation that grew up with the sense that the world is actually literally at our doorstep, you know it's very accessible, we have internet now, we can take the plane to the other side of the world if we want to, and literally just start exploring there. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

While this definition is important, we may also consider a more nuanced concept of generation as prescribed by Karl Mannheim's (1936). His point of departure is to not simply view a generation as a particular age group, but additionally as a group with historically contingent experiences and perspectives binding them together in a shared understanding of social processes. With this in mind, individuals may share life-defining experiences regardless of age differences. For instance, we observe freedom of movement within the European Union as one such experience:

So what I think motivates people like me, and then slightly older, is first of all that these people have had the pleasure of really experiencing a Europe of free travel, through Erasmus, through simply no border controls, and so on. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Still, there remain conceptual distinctions between younger and older generations. Departing from Mannheim's generational analysis, Miegel & Olsson (2012:489) argue that a crucial factor which differentiates a youth generation is that their reception to significant political events and global processes is not defined by prior experiences to the same extent as older generations. This comes to light as one informant reflects that what attracted him and what he thought attracted other young people to join Volt is that they "don't have affiliations yet so they like to join new parties." (Interview 4, Expansion-lead, Volt Sweden). Volts unique platform is in this sense an attractive alternative in the current political climate. Another clear differentiation is the use of digital media: as previously mentioned, contemporary youth are the first generation to have grown up with digital media and are therefore also more proficient in- and open to navigating the world through these new technologies than older generations (Dahlgren, 2009:200).

Like, if you would look at the difference of older and younger generations, the older by far have their know-how of governance and connections, while the younger generation has way more input in communication, social media, for example. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Mannheim (1936:303) further explains that in order for a generation to become an analytically identifiable group, individuals must become "exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a

process of dynamic de-stabilization”, subsequently creating a “concrete bond” between its members. A range of such processes can be identified by observing the sentiments of Volt and the informants:

I know that Volt is the result of Brexit, I know that Volt is the result of the frustration being felt by national politics. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

The connection can particularly be seen following Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as POTUS, both issues that are considered destabilizing to the European Union and the world order. The participants all share a sense of an urgent need to take action to address these changes, after all, this is why the movement was established in the first place.

So these people are right now seeing that this project of free movement is being attacked by nationalist, populist forces, and so on. And I think what motivates people to act is they do not want to lose those freedoms. [...] So I think this awareness of the importance of a united Europe, and the sense of duty to work hard to maintain that united Europe, is what unites most young people in terms of getting active in Volt. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Another destabilizing factor is the access to free mobility across borders. Delanty (2005:410) argues that the increased access to travel for work, education and tourism has been a crucial factor in the process of Europeanization. Education through the Erasmus program in particular is something that has made youth generations travel more extensively across Europe and increasingly interact across borders, arguably adapting a more cosmopolitan worldview. When asked about the generational aspect, one of the informants explained that mobility is a particularly important issue for “millennials” and that this is at stake when EU-sceptic movements “want to take a step back from this globalized world”:

I think it's very important for this generation [...] yeah this is also one of the drivers for young people now to step up and join these transnational parties, because more and more you feel that there is this part of the population, a more older part, who wants to take a step back from this globalized world... and this is hard for these younger citizens (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

The concept of generations as elaborated above is thus clearly linked to cosmopolitanism: members of this generation are connected through an increasingly firm awareness of transnational

processes, how they affect their everyday lives, and what opportunities they bring. Members of such generations in their contemporary global realities, and especially youths referred to as millennials, possess a unique set of experiences and opportunities grounded in a constant digital presence as well as access to free mobility which have led to a degree of transnational openness.

We actually had the privilege to live in Europe, to live in many places, to communicate with people from different backgrounds. [...] So if you could work in an intercultural environment, if you could study in an intercultural environment, if you could hang out with people from different countries, then I guess it's easier to also do politics in an intercultural environment. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

This quote serves as an important transition to the topic of the coming chapter, namely, the communicative dimension of transnational politics. In order to efficiently communicate in the pursuit of shared democratic identities and ambitions, individuals need to tap into the shared memories, values, and experiences, which grants them a sense of belonging and involvement in a society. This is already present in the nation-state but is yet to be fully realized on a transnational governance level. Dahlgren (2009:111) argues that shared values are a stepping-stone to a common communicative culture, which create an effective cross-cultural dialogue and enables the “playing out of political conflicts”. Here, he distinguishes between two sets of democratic values. The first ones, which we have addressed in this chapter, are substantive, which refer to “equality, liberty, justice, solidarity, and tolerance” (ibid.:111). The second set of values are procedural, referring to “openness, reciprocity, discussion, and responsibility/accountability” (Ibid.:111). These are the values that will be discussed in the following chapter, uncovering how they are grounded in the internal communicative culture, as well as the internal communicative space for democratic dialogue.

Through a European communicative space

We have observed how the informants and the party platform elaborate on the importance of a pan-European approach, and how it can be facilitated by a stronger European identity grounded in collective memories, experiences and substantive values. This is the movement’s key vision for the European Union, its citizens, and for the members of Volt Europa. However, we also need to

understand how this European sense of duty and unity is actualized through active engagement in the political project. The manner in which communication and participation is facilitated is an important factor in how and why individuals integrate a cosmopolitan/European sense of belonging, and how they develop an incentive to pursue European integration and safeguard the European project as prescribed by Volt. What the analysis must further consider is how the organizational structure recreates discourses and practices to enable transnational political participation and to empower citizens politically.

There are several key aspects of how the movement is organized which provide insight into how Volt aspires to address some of the issues they recognize with current transnational governance. We will start by investigating the aspect of transnational communication. What is of particular importance here - something that likewise is a key issue of cosmopolitan inquiry - is the question of how this broad diversity of citizens can function to accomplish collective goals. The most significant challenge here is posed by the vast differences in political structures across the EU and the manner in which political values and ideologies are framed in different member states. In this regard, there are several strategies with which Volt Europa attempts to deal with such challenges. This is based in a unique form of communication and internal democracy, grounded in a mediatized model of organization, where the entire party structure is based on digital platforms such as Facebook Workplace and WhatsApp. This provides insight into how a democratic space is facilitated to encompass the range of perspectives and political backgrounds in the party, and how it enables a public sphere for citizens to have their voices heard and take active part in transnational democracy.

A culture of communication

The thesis already touched upon the shared values and experiences among Europeans, which serve as a strong facilitator of a transnational community. The European continent as a social, cultural and political unit undoubtedly owes its development to common memories, experiences and values. However, as previously discussed, the European project remains constructed upon sovereign nations, where their unique political structures and cultures are strongly embedded in how politics are carried out. Considering this, despite the perceived shared values among Europeans, we must also be critical as to their effectiveness in uniting a vast array of political

aspirations into a common societal and political agenda. In fact, it cannot be denied that qualitative differences in culture, society and politics remain across the European nations that impact the potential for transnational political action. How then should we understand these barriers?

There are many ways in which to divide the EU along political and sociogeographic lines. Starting broadly, we may speak of Western and Eastern Europe based on Cold War categorization of the continent. Member countries in Western Europe such as France, Great Britain, The Netherlands or Belgium found themselves integrated into the liberal world order from the onset, developing internal political and economic structures in relative cohesion with the Western world, as well as becoming more open to international convergence. On the other hand, countries such as Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (Visegrad Group) were for a significant period of time part of the Soviet Bloc, forced to integrate the institutional frameworks that came with communism. What this means is that Western European nations have arguably had the advantage in regard to social, political and economic adaptation to global transformations, while the Eastern nations had not reaped the fruits of globalization to the same extent. Subsequently, this means that different nation-states have varying degrees of embeddedness in the global/cosmopolitan transformation (Pichler, 2009a:711). For example, the Visegrad countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) have been particularly vocal about their discontent with the European Union, fearing that the transfer of political power to Brussels is threatening their sovereignty (Than, 2018). As we will uncover, this has meant that national politics in various member states might not always be aligned with the political direction and goals of the European Union.

What barriers does this pose for any cosmopolitan endeavor? In the interviews, the differences of political cultures in countries where Volt Europa works to expand are brought to attention when discussing the practical implications of establishing common values and political aims. The political and legal differences are acknowledged as requiring a significant effort to overcome in communication, policy-making and mobilization. One such difference is notable in the discussion of how ideological perspectives are framed between various countries:

So in Germany we can communicate that we are progressive, but we cannot do that in Bulgaria or in Greece, or even in Portugal. Because in Greece progressive means left. So if you just communicate progressive then you are already into the box [...] We really struggle sometimes to

communicate the same point in all these different political environment... (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

The label of “progressive” is often assigned to the movement, a communicative tool which proves to work in Western countries, but carries negative connotations in some Southern and Eastern European countries. This is grounded in the fact that various members of the European Union, particularly those who were once part of the Soviet Bloc, carry with them a set of historical experiences and traumas which have shaped their political discourses and institutions. The contingencies of each national party are revealed to cause tensions in the communication across the movement’s various national parties.

A lot of people ascribe the label progressive to Volt... However, as it happens, and as our colleagues in Bulgaria never fail to remind us, if you go into Bulgarian politics with the label of progressive, you will be laughed out of the room. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

For example, after the fall of the Berlin wall we had the change in all those countries that were strongly connected with communism, Bulgaria for example. The thing is that Bulgarians enter Europe, the Western culture after the fall of communism. But actually if you go to their legal system your realize there is no law change until 2007 with the admission to the EU. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

The particular political context of each local party often forces them to adapt the overall party framework to fit into the local and national narratives. This connects both to internal as well as external communication. Discussions with communications-leads reveal that media strategies often face the task of having to adapt how they frame their political agenda in different countries.

“We have been discussing, and there is a tie into communications here as well, you know, what do we brand ourselves as?” (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

“And we know that when you have a narrative that is universally European, it's going to flunk in some countries [...] if we start talking about like, I don't know, values like human rights etc., then we're gonna lose the Danes right away [...] it's literally up to each chapter to narrate it so that it fits into the larger narrative of that country (Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark)

Investigating about the challenges in communicating with a diversity of members to establish common goals, one informant highlighted the issue that, from a communications perspective, the general agenda of Volt might also be skewed toward a Western European perspective:

Yeah that's a very relevant question and it keeps me up at night, I have to admit. Like, the danger that we are currently in in Volt, is that we are becoming a Western European party [...] I feel like we do take into account the southern European perspectives on a lot of issues, but we do not take the eastern European perspective into account enough. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

According to the same respondent, another issue is that current political climates in countries such as Romania or Bulgaria also entail that the political disenfranchisement carries with it a certain political burden, posing an obstacle for expansion and mobilization in Eastern Europe where people can be difficult to motivate to commit to a political movement:

...this has to do of course with the political context in lots of Eastern European nations... In Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and so on. Lots of the political systems are almost broken. People are completely fed up with politics, they have no interest in politics anymore. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Many of these differences lead to tensions on the organizational level, where members from different member nations bring with them different approaches in regard to the operations of the party. This is perfectly exemplified by the country-lead of Sweden, who jokingly reflects on his use of the catchphrase “in Sweden we have a system”, something he admits has implications on his own engagement with the party:

Because I have a very particular view on how organizations are supposed to be run, this view would resonate very well with the ideas of the Dutch team, and the German team... maybe not so much with the Spanish team. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

The inherent differences of political approaches thus arguably pose challenges for framing common political aspirations. How does Volt attempt to address this? And how does cosmopolitanism address this? Linklater (1998:24) argues that communication must be the basis of the growing cosmopolitan reality. He proposes that cosmopolitanism needs to take into account more than simply moral commitment to humanity – it also needs to consider “universal

frameworks of communication” to construct “communication communities” as a resource of power to contest political structures (Ibid.:24,28). In addition, for this type of communication to be effective, people also need to be curious about both the similarities and differences of others. Appiah (2006) argues that we must have the capability to enter into conversation with a distant other as to find that which connects us. This connection does not need to be based on universal values or understandings, rather, it needs to depart from the things that particular people have in common within a specific context:

Once we have found enough we share, there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. That is one of the payoffs of cosmopolitan curiosity. We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. (Appiah, 2006:97)

The informants discuss that certain norm cultures are emerging within the party that help facilitate the vast array of opinions and approaches to politics, which all boil down to an active awareness of differences and an acknowledgement that disagreements may arise. To one of them, what is crucial to working with a diversity of people and cultures of interaction, is the acknowledgement of one’s background and how that impacts people’s understanding of what you want to communicate. According to the informant, it is therefore one’s own responsibility to make yourself and your own national perspective understood, while simultaneously, it is crucial for others to actively listen and acknowledge the diversity.

You know, these are basic norms that are not linked to any national identity or any cultural awareness, it's basic human interaction abilities. And I'm happy to see that this is not an issue in Volt, that we, regardless of our ethnicity, regardless of our language, we can agree on these fundamental values and norms, which help the way that we communicate. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

So, a lot of it has to do with its internal... it's not a formal code of conduct, but it is the awareness that this is not your run of the mill book club, and that you're coming into this knowing that you're going to be working with people from a diverse background. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

Appiah (2006:46) makes an important argument in this regard: a cosmopolitan endeavor which aims to engage people across moral differences must anticipate some disagreement. According to

him, fundamentally, a disagreement is a result of the introduction of foreign concept into a communicative setting. In such a situation, “the struggle is not to agree but just to understand” (Ibid.:46). Field notes (14 March 2019) and interviews reveal an important aspect of such diverse communication, which is that various actors within the party may disagree on the process, but agree on the principles and the desired outcome of a specific agenda:

...we have conflicts where one team strongly disagrees on the way we’re doing things, or the rest of the movement strongly disagreeing with how one team does something very specific, but we find ways forward... (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Appiah (2006:57) argues that “all cultures have enough overlap in their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation”, but the same vocabulary also does not necessarily mean agreement. In this regard, the informants propose that active communication and understanding is key to pursuing a common political agenda. In a discussion during one of the meet-up events, the members highlighted that this communication has been a process since Volt Europa was created, and that the movement is slowly establishing a “culture of communication” where members are beginning to better understand each other (Field Notes, 2 March 2019).

So it's not only about communication, it's not only about trying to understand each other, it's also about trying to jump into the history and culture of each country [...] So let's say we're trying to find the words that fit better with the culture and the community, and in that way we come closer to what we want to achieve and what is the vision that we want to promote. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

So for me that would be the most important part, that we listen more to this perspective. And that whatever we communicate and whatever we say to the outside also makes sense in eastern Europe and not just to the western part. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

And it's more about trying to understand their political situation. It's never really an issue about their way of working, or the fact that we can't seem to define a constructive way to exchange ideas. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

According to Appiah (2006), the ability to be curious and take the perspective of particular social contexts is an important aspect of the cosmopolitan endeavor. He (Ibid.:xv) argues that in order to understand each other, we need to “take seriously the value not just of humans lives but of

particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance”. Indeed, the leadership of Volt acknowledges that “what is good in one country is not good in another” (Field Notes, 14 March 2019) and realizes the challenges of integrating a common agenda simultaneously on a federal, national and local level. In response to this, while being a pan-European movement with a strong focus on shared values and policy, the movement also allows local and national teams a certain level of autonomy, leaving it up to them how to adapt policy to fit into local political contexts.

...you know, we're starting a city team here and there, and they can remain, and they can go about their business, and they don't need long philosophical waxing from the leadership, and they don't need direct orders... They just go out with a purple flag. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Going back to the earlier discussion on ideology, we observe that Volt Europa's discourse to work beyond ideology is yet another factor which helps in the integration of various cultural or political perspectives and is a strong tool in adapting their agenda to local contexts. In the case of Volt, working outside of ideological boxes entail pragmatism and best practices. A key goal is to utilize the variety of political and ideological perspectives and solutions, and through deliberative discussion arrive at solutions that are not based strictly on left, center, or right policies.

Well, the fact that we don't stick with one certain ideology already facilitates this a lot, because for example... let's say this weren't the case, we wouldn't do this, and we would say we are a left party... then you could say, you're left in eastern Europe, but for Western Europe this is right for us... so this wouldn't help the integration at all. By saying we are pragmatic, we are open to everything we just look at what the impact is. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Volt will enable citizens and civil society organizations to share their challenges and solutions across borders, and learn from each other's best practices. (Volt Europa, 2019b:171)

What we observe from this is a strong incentive for members to familiarize themselves with each other's differences as a driving force to work towards common political ends. The discussions reveal a high degree of openness to other cultures, supported by the willingness to pursue a collective vision. Appiah (2006:99) provides a crucial point in this discussion:

...when the stranger is no longer imaginary, but real and present, sharing a human social life, you may like or dislike him, you may agree or disagree; but, if it is what you both want, you can make sense of each other in the end.

He highlights the importance of conversation and common understanding in order to learn living with one another. Citizens need to be curious, anticipate disagreement and possess efficient frameworks and opportunities to meet and pursue dialogue with the distant other. Thus, to facilitate interaction and conversation about democratic rights, citizens also need adequate communicative spaces for this purpose. This brings us to the next chapter, where we consider the mechanisms by which political dialogue and participation in European democracy can be facilitated. As we will uncover, Volt's unique communicative structure provides significant insights into this issue.

Connecting Europeans through a digital public sphere

When discussing this topic, one of the participants brought up a bible of a document containing their mapping of policies, which, according to them, was all written with the input from members across Europe. I became curious as to how they managed to write an almost 200-page policy document and simultaneously get the input from members in 11 different countries. The answer was quite obvious: social media. I looked over at one of the informants, and he responded: "I told you, we live on social media". (Field Notes, 2 March 2019).

The idea of "living on social media" is perhaps not surprising. As previously discussed, Volt is a youth project, and the contemporary youth generation is strongly embedded in digital media, especially for the purpose of doing politics. However, what is particularly interesting in the case of Volt Europa is that the movement does not only pool together a generation of media users, it also utilizes social media for its entire operations.

Before we explore this further, we must first return to the issue of the democratic deficit in the EU and understand the problem of the "missing public" (Statham & Koopmans, 2013). The issue lies in that there are currently insufficient opportunities for citizens to mobilize on a European level to claim their rights to democracy, address the deficits existent within European democracy, as well as take active part in policy-making (Fossum & Schlesinger, 2007:2; Statham & Koopmans, 2013:141). To this Statham & Koopmans (2013:137) pose the question: "How is it possible to

maintain adequate links between elite decision-making and citizens when power shifts to a level beyond the nation-state?”

The remedy for this, according to Statham & Koopmans (2013:141), is the creation of a strong European public sphere based on three key elements: “collective action within institutional networks; a field of public communication that can be seen by a public; and resonance, the mutual observation between institutional actors and audiences...”. These elements are very much present in most Western nation-state settings, which possess a range of formal and informal spaces for citizens to participate, ranging from political party engagement to civil society (Steffek & Nanz, 2008:4); there is a “*single public sphere* where people discuss the same issues, at the same time and with the same frames of interpretation”. (Eriksen, 2007:31). However, this is something that many authors argue is insufficient in the current democratic framework of the European Union (Eriksen, 2007:33; Steffek & Nanz, 2008:1). As previously discussed, formal politics have to a certain extent been transferred to Brussels, however, democratic participation has not been equally brought up to this level.

How then can this type of participation be elevated to a transnational level? Dahlgren (2009:115) argues that in order for a stable democracy to flourish, citizens need opportunities and spaces to interact and mobilize. In addition, these spaces must also provide citizens with the right to communicate with their representatives and gain a transparent view of policy- and decision-making processes (Ibid.:115). In his view, the solution for a strong European public is the emergency of interactive digital media, which allows citizens to be “co-present with others who are physically removed, contributing to the growth of ‘despatialized simultaneity’” (Ibid.:115). Political discussions and mobilization on a transnational and cosmopolitan scale can thus be effectively carried out via a digital social space (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:27). In fact, much of political mobilization and organization in the current digital era already occurs through social media, especially for the purpose of democratic debate and activism. Political parties as well as activists effectively complement their mobilization efforts through social media networks, as exemplified by the rapid spread of the Arab spring or the Occupy movement (Castells, 2015:93, 156; Della Porta, 2013:85). Verboord (2016:460) argues that a key essential property of the internet is its “ability to increase democracy and “global understanding” through its connectivity,

but this property has hardly been put to empirical testing”. The main question therefore becomes: how can this digital political engagement be carried over to actual cosmopolitan democratic practices? Volt’s strategic dimensions reveals significant insights to understand this process.

As previously mentioned, Volt’s political agenda, both externally and internally, is based on a strong focus on technology and digital media. As part of their citizen empowerment platform, the movement envisions a digital revolution in European politics:

Make digital solutions the backbone of our administration, providing key tools to improve both internal processes (back-end) and external services (front-end), reducing inefficiencies, and strengthening relations between administrations and citizens. Digital tools must be embedded in every policy decisions as a means and not an end. (Volt Europa, 2019b:9)

The argument is that in order to carry out effective democracy where citizens can mobilize and claim their rights, there must exist smart solutions to enable the use of technology for this purpose. Citizens need access to digital technology in order to engage with both national and European politics.

Our freedom of expression and our economic, social and cultural rights depend on our ability to engage with technology. Volt will create a new type of politics, forming the forum to debate our common future with emerging technologies. (Volt Europa, 2019b:41)

Interestingly, this agenda is likewise reflected in the structures of participation of the party. Volt’s own internal organization is in fact an experiment of their prescribed digital revolution, which brings us back to the aspect of “living on social media” as explained by one of the country-leads. As Silverstone (2007:5) argues, people are increasingly “dependent on the media for the conduct of everyday life”. According to the informants, it is almost inevitable that a party mobilized across an entire continent is based on one or several social media platforms, and the digital embeddedness of contemporary reality is being utilized to Volt’s advantage.

So, if it were not for these technologies, Volt would not exist, and I’m very confident in saying that. And the same kind of holds true for the entire model, you cannot have a political movement, or political party, or family of political parties that promote a broader community than the one that

your voice can carry... and you can't make that reality if you cannot keep everybody on some level connected. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

...but, the party organization model is social media. Because it is absolutely impossible to organize in any other way [...] So, we don't use social media internally, the party *is* a social media platform (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

When digging further into the digitally embedded communication and organization, we uncover a range of practical implications for participation, democracy and transparency. We begin by observing what this means providing a space for political and social interaction, as facilitated by the main digital platform Facebook Workplace.

So, workplace works a lot in groups, which most of the time everyone is welcome to join. So I think that workplace is a good platform for us in terms of making sure that we communicate effectively on a European level, on a transnational level. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

With the use of digital media, connecting thousands of volunteers and functionaries across the member states, Volt also provides an openness to the internal communication for all participants: The manner in which the platform is used is that anyone can connect with anyone to discuss political, organizational and everyday issues.

Only Volters can join and there is an approval process to get in, so that basically everyone on the inside is an insider. And, the way we do this is, you join the teams that are relevant to you, and/or the teams that you just want to follow. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Furthermore, the connection is not only between active members, but is likewise extended to an open communication between the leadership and volunteers, as well as between the federal party and all local parties. The party program argues that this type of structure is crucial for their own operations and for a stronger European Union:

This requires a functioning, healthy and independent public sphere, one in which citizens not only have access to quality information, but are also able to process this information; where diverse perspectives are publicly deliberated by media, political actors, and civil society, and where citizens are able to choose between valid political alternatives. (Volt Europa, 2019b:161)

So if I want to say something to the people in charge of something, I can reach them directly. If a member wants to take something to the VCR (Volt Country Representation), which is the leadership council of all the national presidents. Basically, shoot us an email and we'll discuss it (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

With all this in mind, the organization through digital media likewise offers opportunity for offline mobilization. Dahlgren (2009:116) argues that this is a crucial aspect of online spaces, which have the potential to facilitate “political interventions in “real-life” spaces” where people are able to connect with strangers to facilitate shared activities. He further argues that “face-to-face” interaction remains important for political activity, but as the offline activity is decreasing, we are forced to innovate the potential of digital media to “complement and compensate (Ibid.:116).

Participation can be both on-line and off-line. But the on-line participation is often about moving people to action off-line. It is about building associations and forging affinities rather than simply providing information. (Olsson & Dahlgren, 2010:24)

According to Volt, face-to-face encounters and offline activity still remain an important aspect of their work. However, the offline activities are to a large extent initially facilitated online via external and internal digital media.

We are on Facebook workplace, I would sit there all the time, we live on social media, and that is how we coordinate. However, that isn't really worth anything unless you take it to the streets (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

While on social media you can target way more people, but of course it's not ensured that a significant amount of them will vote for you, this will only give you recognition. So that's why you need both... (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Another crucial factor of the digital communicative space is its function for Volt Europa's own internal democracy. In this regard, the media structure takes on a deliberative character where online discussions are constantly taking place and members can provide input as the agenda develops. Here, the party platform recognizes the potential of digital technologies to further participatory democracy in Europe:

Political innovation in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to more actively take part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone. (Volt Europa, 2019b:169)

For instance, on the party's main organizational platform Facebook Workplace, debates and decisions on policy are made open and transparent for all those active, where members are invited to take active part in developing policies and receive access to a digital voting system.

I am not a member of the policy team, but I wanna see what they're up to so I join their group, and get notifications, and I can pop them a call if I want to see what's going on [...] Same with the board, you know, send them an email, see what happens, or make a post in workplace regarding the specific team, and a specific team-leader can talk to you. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

So for example we have written our policies which has become a huge document, because for example, if you have an issue with specific points on animal rights, we can just ask this to our members: do you agree with this amendment? do you agree with this position that we are taking? And then everybody will receive a link, and then they can just vote like, I'm okay with this, I'm not okay with this. And then from a majority or 2/3 of a majority then adaptation can be made. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Here, we observe how the movement constructs an open and transparent communicative space for democracy through their digital platforms. These spaces allow members to address their concerns, communicate with each other and mobilize their efforts for organizational and political change. Dahlgren (2009:161) argues that the availability of digital spaces is crucial for citizens to enact their democratic rights and duties:

It can potentially help contribute to the long-term transformation of the institutions of democracy and the modes of participation [...] Democracy today is seen to be, precariously, at a new historical juncture, and in this context, the impact of Internet use becomes significant.

And actually when it comes also to policy making, we should ensure that actually citizens, people that are going to be affected from those policies, have a say and are able to share their opinion... and their opinion will be heard. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

This structure arguably resembles what Coleman & Blumler (2009:38) refer to as “more deliberative democracy”, which prescribes citizen participation on the onset of decision- and

policy-making processes, where citizens must be able discuss and have a direct influence on issues that affect their communities and nations. In this regard, a democratic government must operate in an accessible manner to encompass public discussion in the everyday work of “policy formation, legislation, policy scrutiny and post-legislative review” (Ibid.:38). As a result, democracy flourishes as citizens are empowered to further influence the political direction. If neglected, confidence in democracy decreases and feeds into disenfranchisement, an issue currently brought to attention in many Western democracies, not least in European governance.

All of this leads us to conclude that there is a need for real-world experimentation in public deliberation, utilising technologies which support effective democratic interaction, and embedded in structures and processes that can result in meaningful consequences (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:40).

... the Volt dogma, if there is one... you know, if you put enough people in a room and you facilitate an educated discussion, they will come up with a policy they are happy supporting... and it is the role of the politicians to make sure that the people are informed, to facilitate a discussion, and to help bring best practice [...] you vote for people whose job it is effectively to come back to you and to help you remain engaged in the political process. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

It thus becomes clear that an adequate space for a transnational public sphere to flourish is an enabling factor for the realization of a cosmopolitan form of democracy. An efficient and accessible public sphere of the form proposed by Volt may well help address the issues that arise with the national orientation of public debate and opinion formation (Sifft et al.,2007:128). The internet possesses not only cosmopolitan communicative properties, allowing for increased cross-cultural dialogue and an openness to difference, but it also plays an important role in the organizational aspect of any movement or transnational governance body, as to address the shortcomings of representation and democratic participation. Hix (2008:9) argues that the national “societies allow for greater direct participation in government and ensure that political elites are less distant from the people”. Thus, when political institutions are increasingly de-physicalized, internet technology is arguably the primary way forward to allow citizens to effectively mobilize their collective efforts and have the potential to influence transnational political processes.

5. Conclusion - A realistic utopia

That we are faced with cross-border issues is nothing new. There are problems that affect us all as part of a humanity; there are global problems that have local implications; and there are local issues that reverberate across the globe. These are increasingly escaping the grasp of the nation-state and its political processes. Many know this, yet, the nation-state remains the primary point of departure for addressing such issues. Even in the case of the European Union, a transnational governance structure that many argue is as close to a cosmopolitan community of states as can be observed, the dominant discourse of sovereignty continues to pose barriers to the ambition of tackling cross-border issues such as climate change or refugee movements.

Whether or not the minds behind the European Union envisioned for it to be a cosmopolitan project of democracy, as the thesis has shown, it has undoubtedly developed into a clear manifestation of this phenomenon. Departing from the assumption that a cosmopolitan framework, elaborated through the case of Volt Europa and its critical approach, is desirable to understand the EU and to address its shortcoming, the thesis embarked on outlining a holistic overview of the political movement and its goals and strategies. By applying a range of conceptual and theoretical ideas in the case study analysis, the thesis combined into a comprehensive cosmopolitan framework to address two overarching findings to the background of the research purpose and questions.

The first aim is descriptive: we want to understand cosmopolitanism empirically to find out *how things actually are* and how expressions of this phenomenon manifest themselves in real-life contexts. By taking the analysis to a unique political movement and party, situated in the context of the European Union, the thesis posed the following questions:

1. *What does Volt Europe reveal about the European Union as a cosmopolitan democratic community?*
 - a. *How does the pan-European approach of Volt Europa attempt to address the issues in European democracy?*

The case study analysis utilized in the research, guided by a methodological framework allowing us to attain thick descriptions of the vision, values, strategies and participation processes, and with qualitative key informant interviews at its core, reveals significant findings for this inquiry.

Having started with the intention of becoming a pan-European political party, Volt Europa was born out of the passion for Europe and a belief that the European Union has an important function, something that is clearly reflected in the empirical findings. The aim is to protect European democracy and to “re-energise it”, as this is the only way that transnational issues such as climate change can truly be overcome. Indeed, the informants all share the belief that overcoming national boundaries is the only way forward, something that is likewise a core assumption of cosmopolitan thought - we need to move away from methodological nationalism, both in theory and practice. Subsequently, Volt represents a vision to make all citizens of Europe adopt a new paradigm and a new mindset, where individuals have an active awareness that the key challenges ahead are European and global, not national. This, however, is not sufficient in the quest to unite Europeans under a common political platform. Equally as important is the awareness of what Europeans have in common, both in the historical and contemporary experiences that they share, and the substantive values of the European Union, an argument which is likewise deeply embedded in cosmopolitan thinking, particularly with consideration to the moral human rights paradigm which gave birth to the identity of shared European imagination and compassion. Volt presents the ambition for solidarity to expand beyond the nation state on onto a European and global level.

Interestingly, the discussion about the connection of common European values and experiences has forced us to consider the aspect of generations. Volt Europa, a project to a large extent driven by the passion of young Europeans, is a clear reflection of a cosmopolitan generation. These are individuals who motivate their ambition to bring effective political change to Europe, to the background of contemporary processes that have destabilized their realities. As one of the informants concluded: Volt is the result of Brexit, and the result of the frustration being felt by national politics. Indeed, Volt is the result of disenfranchisement with the political status quo, the realization that the fruitless old ways of doing politics are not working, and the overarching vision to do things differently and to force Europe into a new cosmopolitan democratic paradigm. As

Loader (2007:1) argues: “traditional political activity no longer appears appropriate to address the concerns associated with contemporary youth cultures”.

The political movement recognizes the vast potential of the European Union to adapt a pan-European democratic approach in order to be a strong force in overcoming transnational issues. What the study reveals, however, is that there are numerous challenges currently facing the European democratic structure that prevent it from enacting effective and real political change. The first and essential challenge is exactly that which comes with the methodological nationalist paradigm. Considering that the European Union was constructed upon the protection of sovereign rights following the territorial violations of World War II, the nation-state currently remains the strongest political actor on the international level. According to Volt, however, the issue also runs much deeper. With regards to the current democratic structure of Europe, the nation-centric orientation in European governance not only prevents the EU from enacting real change, it also causes a deficiency in that citizens have little to none direct influence on debate and decision-making. As political power is transferred to Brussels, the structures of democratic engagement remain bound territorially, subsequently leading to a lack of insight into what citizens are actually voting for and how they can impact politics on a European level. Yet another challenge arises when we observe the internal organization and strategic framework of the political movement. When discussing the strategic aspect of the movement, the differences in political structures and ideological discourses across the member states pose a challenge for Volt’s vision to connect Europeans under a common platform.

How does Volt work address these issues? To begin with, the pan-European, cosmopolitan democracy approach is a strategy to face transnational issues head-on. By uniting citizens from local and national levels under one common platform, it brings forward a cross-border democratic engagement that aims to create opportunities for direct impact on the parliament in Brussels. By extent, this means that citizens’ civic engagement is brought closer to European democracy, addressing the deficit problems that come with the distance to the governing body. Furthermore, the movement works under the clear vision of creating a program that reflects common values among Europeans. Its leadership remind us that the trauma of European history, the triumphant substantive values, and the destabilizing experiences in recent years, are all reminders of why the

European Union exists and why it needs to be protected. While recognizing that the diversity of political perspectives poses obstacles to such a project, the movement works to actively promote cross-cultural communication and understanding. In the process of constant negotiation of values and political aims which involves a wide range of diverse actors, the members of Volt are continuously exposed to the life-worlds of “the other”, enabling a curiosity, understanding and realization that differences in approach may arise, but that the cosmopolitan pan-European approach requires agreement on the outcome and vision. Finally, this “culture of communication” is enabled by a unique space for democracy provided by digital media. The entire party structure is based on internet platforms, which provide easy and direct access for participants to pursue dialogue, mobilize and have their voices heard by their representatives. In this regard, it takes on a “more deliberative” democratic model as prescribed by Coleman & Blumler (2009), where citizens are provided with the capability to be directly involved in the decision-making processes that affect their communities and nations. As previously discussed, while democracy has been elevated to a transnational level, citizen participation has not received the chance to catch up. Volt provides a legitimate solution to a transnational public sphere, via a digital revolution.

While the European Union itself may not fully live up to its cosmopolitan reputation, the fact that the members of Volt actively talk about these issues and attempt to solve them, recognize the values that connect them as Europeans, and believe that the EU can be fixed only through a unified European people, already reveals something significant about the potential of a more cosmopolitan democracy in Europe. This brings us to second aim of the thesis, which attempts to guide us to *how things should be*. To this end, we posed the questions:

2. *How can a cosmopolitan framework address the issues in European democracy?*

b. *How can digital media facilitate a space for cosmopolitan democratic dialogue in the European Union?*

Whether a cosmopolitan vision is the one solution to this is difficult to answer. We should not neglect that anti-Europeanism is alive and kicking and will likely remain a strong opposing force to any attempts of a cosmopolitan agenda in the near future. To a certain extent, we should be sensitive to this sentiment: as globalizing processes increasingly take control away from the nation

state, and by extent the control of its citizens, the nation state will resist. For the European Union, the resistance of the Visegrad Group, the dramatic exit of the United Kingdom, or the rise of populism all exemplify this perfectly. Meanwhile, for Volt Europa the idea of a progressive transnational platform clearly does not resonate everywhere in Europe. But what this thesis has attempted to establish is that cosmopolitanism has the potential to at least become a long-term ambition for the social sciences and for politics to address the common fate of humanity. Indeed, as the analysis has shown, despite the growing sentiments of nationalism, sentiments of openness are also on the rise. The fact that Volt Europa - being one of many European expressions of growing openness - is becoming a recognized and attractive political movement in Europe, shows that a cosmopolitan vision may be a strong alternative.

Indeed, the sentiment that nation-centric solutions are insufficient is becoming attractive in Europe and across the world. The issue of climate change is a key contemporary example, as can be observed by the School Strike 4 Climate in 2019 where students from across the world staged strike action to demand global solutions to address this issue (Local, 2019). Naturally, Volt Europa is likewise a clear manifestation of such a discourse. As the analysis observed, the goal to overcome national differences and to pursue a collective, cross-cultural understanding is challenging, but it is not impossible. In its current form, the European Union is unique in that it does in fact work to promote openness across Europe. Especially at this point in time as the European Parliament election is approaching, a transnational community is continuously under construction as the “public engages in the discourse on current and future issues at the European level” (Pichler, 2009b:4). Volt Europa taps into this exact discourse by forcing people to talk about the European Union and to start thinking in terms of Europe. Their engagement is a crucial factor in the construction and reconstruction of European and cosmopolitan identities: citizens must be curious about their European neighbors, both in terms of differences and similarities, they must engage in an active dialogue with them in order to understand their local realities. The cosmopolitan generation exemplifies this process. Through study programs such as Erasmus, young Europeans are traveling more than older generations used to and are increasingly exposed to different cultures. They are also digital natives, where an everyday engagement and expertise in navigating digital media forces them to inhabit different worlds. On a similar note, we can also see that a stronger European public sphere can well be facilitated by a mediated cosmopolitan

space. The increasingly mediated reality is not just a social fact, but it also shows the potential for the development of more cosmopolitan communication, increased democratic dialogue across cultures, and the ability for citizens to claim their democratic rights and enact their civil duties in transnational forms of governance. Arguably, the internet will likely be the key arena of civic participation in the future, and as it possesses true cosmopolitan capacities, it can also pave way for the development of such identities and be used “as a tool for social change.” (Olsson & Dahlgren, 2010:19). In this regard, we arguably need to move away from understanding the public sphere “in terms of selected space of co-present social interaction” (Barnett, 2004:191), especially when democracy is being elevated to a transnational level.

What the analysis has taught us is that tensions do exist and pose real challenges, but they also do not need to define the potential for a more open and integrated European Union. Volt Europa proves that different nations and diverse citizens do not have to be at odds with one another to address common issues, and therefore, a cosmopolitan model may well provide us with a remedy for a fragmented European Union. It is for future cosmopolitan research and political movements such as Volt Europa to really tell whether we have the answer in such a worldview:

For we can envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them to be realized. What is needed is the creation of models of utopian realism. (Giddens, 1990:154)

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Interviews

Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-13. Lund, Sweden

Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-14. Copenhagen, Denmark

Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-15. Video call, Google Meet

Interview 4, Expansion-lead, Volt Sweden. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-25. Lund, Sweden

Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-27. Video call, Google Meet

Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-31. Video call, Google Meet

Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-04-01. Video call, WhatsApp

Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-04-07. Video call, WhatsApp

Interview 9, City-lead Copenhagen, Volt Denmark. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-04-14. Video call, Skype

Field notes

Field Notes [2 March 2019] Crossing Borders with Volt, John Bull, Lund, Sweden

Field Notes [14 March 2019] Meet Volt, Kulturhuset Islands Brygge, Copenhagen, Denmark

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information about the interviews

The interviews were carried out in-person and via video-call. Before the interview began, the informants were given an introduction to the general aim and purpose of the study, and informed that the research is interested in investigating the strategies and values of the movement as well as the informant's own experiences.

The individuals were asked to consent to the recording of the interview and informed that their names would not be used in the thesis, but that their official titles were going to be stated. Their responses would be used strictly for the purpose of the thesis. They were also told that if they could not respond to a question or if they felt that it was sensitive or controversial, they had the right to abstain from answering. If a question was unclear, they were informed that the interview may be interrupted at any time to clarify the questions. Finally, the researcher informed about the estimated 45-minute length of the interview.

Appendix 2: Interview guide

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews and flexible design of the case study research, it should be noted that additional questions were also asked during the process of each interview. The interview guide was also development as new questions arose during the research process.

Following is the original interview guide:

- Tell me about your role in Volt
- What motivated you to get involved in this movement?
- One of Volt's values is "doing politics outside of ideological and national boxes". Could you elaborate more on this? Why is this important?

- One of your key goals is to establish a transnational program to reflect the common values among every EU citizen. What do you see as the common values?
 - How do you work to pursue/construct these common values?
- How does this correspond with your own values? What do these values mean to you?
- Having worked to establish a pan-European party, it is clear that Volt aims to have unique way of doing politics. What is the impact of this type of transnational political engagement for European politics and democracy?
- What is your general methodology/strategy behind recruitment and mobilization of members?
 - What is the role of social media in the mobilization process?
- Going more into the internal social media. What is the importance of social media for how you organize the movement?
 - Tell me about the open communication you have on your social media platform?
- If we talk about youth participation. What do you think motivates young Europeans to get involved in a transnational movement such as Volt?
- Volt is all about empowerment. How do you think that Volt empowers the youth that is involved in the movement?
- Considering that Volt stretches across Europe, it means that you work with people from different national and political backgrounds. How does Volt facilitate the cross-cultural communication and dialogue between the different actors involved in the party?
- Could you elaborate on how it is to work and communicate with such a diversity of people in order to achieve common goals?
 - What are the challenges?

- What are the opportunities?
- What do you think is the role of social media in facilitating the integration of common European political values?
- Could you elaborate more on the party's grassroots approach to European politics?
- What do you see as the role of the European/federal level?
- Considering the multitude of political approaches. What are the challenges of integrating a political agenda on both a local grassroots level and a federal level?
- How do you see the future of Volt?
- Is there anything else that you'd like to add? Or something that you forgot to mention?

Appendix 3: Interview sample

Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-13. Lund, Sweden

M: Tell me about your role in Volt

“My name is [...]and I am the country lead, or the, chairman of Volt Sweden. Basically my job is to coordinate the Swedish team, make sure we do what we are supposed to do in the Swedish board and within the, what we call the functional team leaders which would be for example our communications officer - so on and so forth - in the Swedish team. I also represent the Swedish team upwards towards the leadership. So basically... ok let's put it this way, I bring down the will of the leadership to the Swedish team, I bring the will of the Swedish team up to the leadership, and I also coordinate with all the other national presidents to make sure we're all aligned together as peers”

M: “What motivated you to get involved in this movement in the first place?”

“As opposed to quite a few in the movement I actually do have experience in politics since before. But I was kind of on my way out for ideological reasons out of [political party in Sweden]. But I found a new movement with which I resonated more closely, and I decided to join and see what happens. Then seeing as the movement was in a very young stage, things happened very quickly”

M: “So what would you say was the difference between your previous political engagement and this one?”

“First of all Volt is more progressive, let’s not knock around the bush [inaudible], but also the main thing I think is the major change to volt from wherever you come from would be the pan-European element. Which is, in the end the heart and the soul, the very core of the party”

M: “One of volt’s key values is doing politics outside of ideological and national boxes. Could you maybe elaborate more on this? Why do you think that that’s important?”

“Let’s take the national boxes first since that one’s the quickest. There is a problem in the European Union according to us, and the problem is that you vote... there is a parliament where you vote for national parties. Sure, let’s compare it to the USA. In the USA you vote for basically the same parties. The party structure is entirely different, no further comparisons, but the point is you vote for the same parties, the same structures, even though you have a certain amount of delegates from Alabama or from New York City. However in the European Union you vote for national politics, and being a social democrat... I would at least argue that being a social democrat in Sweden is another thing than being a social democrat in Romania, from the post-soviet social democrat party. So the point is, we believe that there is an asymmetrical information and asymmetrical values, and seeing as these [inaudible] basically crop up in our view rather ad-hoc, our view is that voters cannot know what they are voting for unless we make sure that there is a true European democratic movement with the same ideology in all the nations”

M: “When you say that the voters cannot know what they’re voting for, could you elaborate on that?”

“The point I’m trying to make is that, hypothetical example, I go to vote for the social democrats... now obviously this vote will contribute to a number of members of the European parliament from the social democratic party, so far so good. The problem is that they will then sit in an alliance which would be the SND, socialists and democrats. Within the SND, there are many parties who are nominally, if you look at the name tag, social democrats. However there is a major difference between the social democratic party - and I would hope this is self-evident - of Romania, which started the referendum on banning gay marriage constitutionally, and the Swedish social democrats. There is just a factual difference... and these sit in the same group. So for example voting for the moderates in Sweden, which will send one to three moderates to the European Union, so far so good. But then they sit in the EPP with parties like Viktor orban. The alliances have become very cluttered and very strange, which is what we want to solve. This is the entrepreneurship, this is the problem this is what we want to solve”

M: “Another key goal is to establish a transnational programme that also reflects the common values among every citizen? What I’m curious about is, what do you see as the common values that Europeans have?”

“The common values are those that have traditionally been represented within the spirit of the European project up to this point. it would be the... a bit of a bastardized, or a bit of a stereotypical view of the progressive European. and of course we can never propose to represent every single European citizen, but what we do is we want to represent those that want to keep this European project of progressive, and of liberal democracy, alive, and give it a breath of new life. So then those are the values that we want to find as common ground within our member-base and our supporters all over Europe”

M: You said the progressive European citizen, what do you refer to there?

“More liberal values, civil rights, you know, that kind of package. Which is usually if you go abroad, I would hazard at least, I’m not gonna make any scientific claims but I would hazard I guess that that is kind of one of those views that come up when you think of Europeans”

M: “How do you work to pursue, or actually construct, these common values within the party”

“First of all we have what’s called the policy team, which is a very strong engine for the party internally. And within the policy team, whether you’re either a Swedish member or a German member, you’re always a member of the team, and this team churns out policy at a very very high rate, in which everyone gets a say. But these things are also then sent along to the national teams for adaptation. So you know, it’s very easy to talk about large questions and values, but... and that’s usually what the European team does, then it sends it along, I say something in the Swedish team and our policy lead then adapts it... and proposes it to the Swedish group of course and what this means to the Swedish context. So it’s kind of a trickle-down policy making process. At the same time anyone can make proposals.”

M: “If you consider these values, how would you say that they correspond with your own values, and what do they mean to you?”

“The values mean to me that we have... that Europe’s history is as bloody and as horrible and as horrifying as any other part of the world’s history. but we are currently in a 50ish years hiatus of war and bloodshed within the European Union, and, well I do not want to see this go. And my personal view is that, if the European union dissolves we will not have war tomorrow, but we will in 50 years. that is how humans work, that’s how humans have always worked, and this is something that I want to safeguard. We have something beautiful and I want to protect it”

M: “So having worked to establish a pan-European party, it’s clear that Volt has a unique way of doing politics. So what would you say that is the impact of what you’re doing, and the transnational political engagement, for European society as a whole?”

“I think it shows that a pan-European civil society is possible. There is this catchphrase in the Eurobubble, or this sound bite which is “just another movement”. It doesn’t refer specifically to Volt, but just another movement is one of those movements that always pop up and say, you know “we’re the new face of Europe, we’re the new pan-Europeans etc.”, and these usually die off. We can prove that we are not just another movement, and if we prove that, we prove that there is actually room to do politics in this way. In the member states we are growing, we are being recognized, we are being recognized by parties, we are being recognized by media... This proves that we can make an impact on the local level and on the national level. And if we can do that and still keep together, that proves that what we’re doing is actually possible”

M: “I would actually like to dig into this a bit more, what you’re saying about “just another movement” and how Volt is different. So how do you think that it’s different?”

“First of all it’s different because we’ve succeeded, and we’re actually making headway to getting at least one member of parliament, which would be historical success because... sure we’re very big for a European movement, but then again, we would have the member base of a smaller party in Sweden if we compile us into Sweden, or every single European member. So to do something as widespread as this is actually very difficult. But I have seen many pan-European movements come and go, and Volt has already lived longer than most of them, and either for legal reasons, or for internal strife, such movements often dissipate into different clusters. What Volt has actually done is create a structure in which all these different opinions and cultures... of course, there are many different cultures, political cultures between Germany and Sweden which are very close to Spain and Italy, or even Poland or Hungary [inaudible]... to create a system in which these different political cultures can lock horns and actually create something together, I think was the main hurdle to get over, to be able to actually do something”

M: “So what are the different factors that have actually allowed you to succeed as a party?”

“Well this is the thing, I think that the internal way of having both a structure that allows for nations as such to speak up, but parallel to that having a peer system where it doesn’t matter where you come from. I would say that those two parallel structures... those are absolutely necessary, and I

would also claim that the fact that it started as a pan-European idea with the intention of always being a pan-European idea, but then just random people hearing it, and liking it and starting a little city team. You know, in some German little town... made it possible to root ourselves in the societies that we want to represent in another way than say... a pan-European students association, which would be intellectual students from all over the world coming together, waving saying hi and then dissipating across the globe again. What we're actually doing is we're tying ourselves down to the different societies... you know, we're starting a city team here and there, and they can remain, and they can go about their business, and they don't need long philosophical waxings from the leadership, and they don't need direct orders, they just go out with a purple flag. And this get this engine going, this machine going, is crucial to make sure that the movement keeps its momentum, and I think that is what we've managed to do"

M: "In terms of civil society, could you maybe elaborate more on the party's grassroots approach to European politics?"

"First of all it's part of the internal structure in the sense that anyone can basically be part of anything... you wanna do this, well, join the call. It's one of those taglines you can put as well, join the call [...] But also the fact that as I said, for example, we're not only running for European elections. In Belgium, we have already run for local elections, and this was done with little to no involvement of anyone outside of Belgium. And the Belgium team decided... ok, we are gonna contest seats in Antwerp and in Brussels, in a couple of communes in Brussels. The point is, the Belgian team just decided to do this, this was not contested by the leadership, of course it was their decision. And it shows the autonomy of different parts of such a massive movement. I think it's necessary to have that, and the Antwerp team decided... we're gonna be in the elections, they were, they created a programme, they ran on a joint list with the pirate party, mainly because we wanted to cooperate technically. So on and so forth... because the members there decided to do it, and it worked."

M: "So what would you say is Volts general strategy, or philosophy, behind recruitment and mobilization of members?"

“The point is to connect them on two points. Connect them to the European level and connect them to the local level. Not necessarily event national, but European and hometown basically. So for example if I get a member application from somebody in Lund, I contact them, I make sure to see what they wanna do... So for example, we have a member in Lund, he joined, he wanted to do something related to one of the internal teams, you know, are you interested in communication, in building new city teams. Are you interested in wiring politics, etc. He got to pick, and then I put him in contact with the leading operative on the European level, I said “hi this is this guy, he wants to do this”. But at the same time, I connected him to the rest of the people here in south Sweden and said, regardless of what you’re doing on the European level, we still need somebody to go up with me and hand out flyers, and to make sure that there is... Like, do not misunderstand me, but Volt on the European level is a social media project. We are on Facebook Workplace, I would sit there all the time, we live on social media, and that is how we coordinate. However, that isn’t really worth anything... it’s worth a lot if you go to the streets with it, but it’s worth nothing unless you take it to the streets. Which is why every member who goes to the European level to do something for the party and to create the values, or the strategizing, etc. Also has to have somebody to grab them by the wrist, pull them to the street, and say “we are gonna talk to regular people, and they’re gonna hear about what we’re doing”. That way you create a structure on the local level, which also would make it possible for one or two interested people to just come and see what happens on the local level, and then take the transition upwards. So you always have to keep these two nodes in mind.”

M: “How do you think social media plays into this mobilization process?”

“I would like to distinguish here between internal social media and external social media. The external social media is of course a cheap and important way for us to be noticed. It is the way that a Spanish news article or a Swedish news article can be published in all languages. For example we had an op-ed written in [inaudible] and we managed to... you know we sent it to the rest of the team and said “hi this is the key of it do you want to translate it?”, so the German team translated it and shared it on Volt Deutschland, so on and so forth. External social media is making sure that a Spanish, Swedish or German success can resonate beyond the borders, and make sure that we actually show what we’re doing. Because, if volt is doing something in Germany, I can show that

to a Swedish interested voter, and they can be inspired by that... Not only by things that happen in Sweden". I think would also elaborate a bit on the internal social media, because the way the party is structured is we run off a platform that is called Facebook Workplace, with complementary conference calls with google hangouts. And this is the party structure, disregarding all the legal structures that create the legal entities and the bank accounts and such. That's not what I'm talking about... but, the party organization model is social media. Because it is absolutely impossible to organize in any other way. As I said earlier, most of the leadership lives on workplace. So the point is, we have all these different groups that you can join on our internal social media platform. Only Volters can join and there is an approval process to get in, so that basically everyone on the inside is an insider. And, the way we do this is, you join the teams that are relevant to you, and/or the teams that you just want to follow. I am not a member of the policy team, but I wanna see what they're up to so I join their group, and get notifications, and I can pop them a call if I want to see what's going on. And then all these different working groups, they have regular calls. So if I want to say something to the people in charge of something, I can reach them directly. If a member wants to take something to the VCR [Volt Country Representation], which is the leadership council of all the national presidents. Basically, shoot us an email and we'll discuss it. And if you wanna tell us something, or if you wanna make a plea to the VCR, and explain the problem... send us an email and we'll send an invitation to the call. And members have been heard... they can be regular members, they can be team members, they can be functional leaders, who come across a problem. Same with the board, you know, send them an email, see what happens, or make a post in workplace regarding the specific team, and a specific team-leader can talk to you. Also for example, we also have just civil society things going on there. We have a chat called Voltbnb, which is basically just for travelling people... doesn't have to be political or work-related, just "do you need a couch to stay on. Or, we are now preparing for a congress in Rome in two weeks, and so I reached into the German platform and asked the Germans, in superbly broken German, if I would be able to travel with them north back to Berlin, because that's cheaper for me than going back by airplane. And then the balls are rolling, it's like a Facebook chat, just add people in and then we got a group together to travel back and forth. So, we don't use social media internally, the party *is* a social media platform.

M: “And it seems like you have quite an open communication between the different levels of the party”

“I would say that this is a blessing and a curse of the party. It is the blessing because it is what makes us possible. You know, any regular joe in the party can reach out to almost everyone... and obviously there's always the social hurdle of reaching out to leadership... but I mean, the leadership doesn't mind, the leadership is very approachable. So you can reach out to almost everyone, you can talk to them, and you can get assigned to whatever you wanna do. and if you wanna do something local, you can ask the European level for support. Imagine a three-member team, somewhere in a little town... they want flyers, and they don't have the capacity to do graphics design, ask the European team and they're gonna make you a flyer... and that way we can keep the competences alive, and we can use all the competences that exist... this is the good part. The bad part is that workplace is a clusterfuck, with a million posts, in a million groups, with hundreds of people posting all the time... and it is more or less a job to keep up with it. And, you know, if you wanna do Volt as a part-time thing, you'll have to be on workplace all the time, and you'll have to be there or you'll risk asymmetrical information and things slipping through your fingers. So, people who are easily stressed by phones ringing, beware. So that's kind of the backside of running things from social media... and obviously groupthink models of chats... you know, riling each other up and patting each other's backs... and I am very much annoyed when this happens, and when it hurts what I wanna do, but I can easily admit that I am guilty of the same thing... and people just, you know, entrench themselves in their filter-bubbles.... volt places a filter bubble [inaudible] ... the policy team, or the comms team, or the social media team, or the VCR, or the board... you know you stick to your corner in the end, even though anyone can join everything, it means that either you get overloaded, or you join your little bit. So, the main part is the organized chaos that is workplace”

M: “so despite this openness, you can still kind of create your own community?”

“so for example we have a channel called “swedengeneral”... just to clarify, Facebook workplace has more or less the same technology as Facebook, but it's based off of making working groups... so there's no real wall where you post your own statuses, but it's rather, you join the working

group for volt Sweden, or volt Germany and so on. So, we have working groups called, you know swedengeneral or Sweden communication, or Sweden social media... and I would post things there and, unless I really need a car to join, I don't go into Deutschland discussion... because that would be just the German team hanging out and talking in German. And if you want to go to the Spain discussion, then you'll find a lot of people talking in Spanish... and even the working teams, unless I want to check what our policy is on a different political subject, I usually won't poke about in the policy channels. So the ability to be everywhere, ironically creates this need to really partition what you're actually doing."

M: "I've already asked you why you're motivated to join the party. Why do you think that other young Europeans get involved in transnational movement such as Volt?"

"Just as an interjection, the memberships median age is... what I do not is that it is steadily rising. A substantial minority within the party are actually senior citizens who have the time on their hands to be part of something as time consuming as activism. But, most people are very young, 18-35 indeed. And I would say that there are a couple of different reasons. One reason I often hear is disenfranchisement with the current political status quo. They want something... they don't think that the old parties represent their views. So, they think that there are new lines of conflict in politics, but the only ones who really capitalize on this would be... what is colloquially known as, radical right-wing populism. So they don't resonate with that, but at the same time they want something new. It is the idea of actually making a citizen-powered movement where any member can be part of something greater for the European Union, is something that just attracts people... and it's this air of positive energy, and this air of making change... that, going back to keeping the change, of a Renaissance for the change of the European Union, and a lot of young people who have grown up in the European union, and as such don't know what they're actually [inaudible] kind of finding a love for the European Union.. and they realize what good things they actually have to defend. And also just a general mood of student activism, where the values are present, and they find volt to be an interesting and strong vehicle for their activism.

M: "What do you think that this particular sociodemographic group gains from the participation?"

“I would say that in the case of knowledge would we learn from each other, because I would say that young people are more digitally connected to each other than the previous generation. And this has been true for generation upon generation. My generation is connected more than my parents’ generation, who were more connected than my parent’s generation. And with this sort of online connection, it creates this online youth culture, and youth bubble of values. And this would be weaker if it was just the young people who got a bunch of cooky ideas online, in Sweden. However, if all the swedes with these cooky ideas get together in Sweden and Germany and France and so on so forth, we can actually make a difference, and we can help each other to actually realize these things that we are talking about. So I think that being able to organize ourselves in a way that creates momentum, that would then strengthen these cooky online ideas in each and every country. I think that is the core of it”

M: “If you consider that Volt does stretch across Europe, that also means that you have to work with people from different national and political backgrounds. So I’m just curious how do you and how does Volt facilitate this kind of cross-cultural communication between all the different actors involved in the party?

“I would say the core of it, or the key of it, is patience. I do things in a very particular way, and the phrase, in ridiculous Scandinavian English, “in Sweden we have a system”, has become kind of a catchphrase of mine, self-ironically. Because I have a very particular view on how organizations are supposed to be run, this view would resonate very well with the ideas of the Dutch team, and the German team... maybe not so much with the Spanish team. And, different organizational cultures are not a problem... Well, they are a gift and a curse. I might go about my business my way, but the Spanish team might have a solution. Also, the Spanish team might cause a lot of problems for me, or I might cause a lot of problems for the Spanish team. The Spanish team does something that I would consider very cowboy, I raise my concern, and then they explain that this is necessary in the Spanish context. You know... the open communication... or in the Bulgarian team, where we would sometimes question “why do they do this?”, “how does this work?” and “why do they act in this way?”, and then the Bulgarian leadership can sit down and say look... we’re currently the strongest, or more or less only really active post-soviet country team... we live in an entirely different political context, respect this... and, we have to do things

in a certain way. And then we talk how can we do this, how can we improve, how can we help you, how can you help us... and you learn. You know it's a learning process. But I would definitely say that the open communication, and also, acknowledging that every side in a conflict potentially is aware of the different cultural colorings... I think that is the key to get over them. And we have never had a team fall out... we have conflicts where one team strongly disagrees on the way we're doing things, or the rest of the movement strongly disagreeing with how one team does something very specific, but we find ways forward... a team has never left us, a team has never broken off. And, you know, again, communication."

M: "If we continue on this. You are a very diverse group of people working to achieve common goals. So, do you have any other thoughts on challenges that come with that?"

"I think that the challenges that are ahead of us... currently, we are working to incorporate a proper legal structure, because we are re-arranging our legal structure... not because we are actually changing the way we operate, but just rearranging the background structure to be more open and inclusive to new members. Which is, you know, a process that keeps going. And I think it's important that we get this done before the elections, so that when the elections happen, we are all in the same legal boat, and I just think that's very very important. I would also say that one of the big challenges comes after the elections... because... those who are political veterans in the party come from the SND, LD, which would be the liberals and the center party in Sweden... we even have some from the EPP besides me. One of the leaders of the French team was a part of les republican, and the leader of the Bulgarian team was a member for the EPP party of the Bulgarian national parliament. The "what then" question... if we get one to five elected, which I think one to three is realistic, what do we do then? Where do we sit? These are discussions that we are having, that we have to have, and we are bringing in of course people with European parliament expertise to see what we can actually do. But the view of which groups are clean enough to cooperate with varies widely between Spain and Bulgaria, and all the countries in-between. Because, again, the social democrats as I mentioned earlier in Bulgaria, are really not the same thing as the social democrats in Sweden. And going into, for example the liberal party of Sweden, or the center party of Sweden, they sit in the same group [inaudible] in Spain... they are really not the same thing. And, to have this discussion of which groups are sanitary for us to cooperate with,

and who can we actually work with... I think is a main issue to tackle... and we are tackling it, and so far no blood has been shed. But I would say that it is very important that we learn even further to move as one movement here, to make sure that we don't get into parliament and then go bang, splinter into million pieces. Because, as a young movement of activists, the campaign engine is attractive... Take to the streets, wave a purple flag, hand out the flyers, roll up the posters... the nitty gritty politics isn't really what attracts most people in the party... now I may enjoy it [inaudible] but I'm in the miniscule minority. And, for the people who want change and hit the streets, we're gonna have to keep that momentum going. And the way I think to do that... that is because, it's kind of the American model, there's always an election somewhere in the US, and there's always an election somewhere in Europe. The European elections are once every fifth year, some countries like Belgium for example have all their elections except the local ones at the same time, so Belgium federal, Belgium national, and Belgium EP, happen on the same date, so they're gonna contest on all points. But then again we ran for local elections in Belgium, and our view and hope is to always be able to run somewhere... because then we can keep the passion and we can keep this activist feeling of hitting the streets and doing, you know, activism and politics. Because what I fear is, that as soon as this momentum and this perceived purple wave of activism dies down, people are gonna lose interest because a lot of people aren't really in this for the nitty gritty... you know, a lot of people don't give two cents about who's a rapporteur on what issue, which sub-committee will Damian (vice-president of Volt) be sitting when he comes into parliament... will he be a rapporteur on feminist issues, on copyright issues... you know, some people in the party, me in particular, are really interested in this, for most members that is way on the horizon... and to make sure that we, first of all, include all the members in these discussions, to show them how that is the nitty gritty daywork of how to actually effectuate our vision... but also, to make sure that we who are interested in this don't run away doing corridor politics, but that we instead make sure to include all the members in the discussion, but also allow the activism to persist. This I think is the core issues, because if we can do this for the next five years, then we're set for the next 50."

M: "You've talked a bit about the challenges now, but I'm also curious about the opportunities of this?"

“I think the opportunity for the future... and obviously this is not achievable this election cycle, we’re not delusional... but, our view and our goal is to make sure that we can have our own parliamentary group. Your own parliamentary group requires members of parliament from seven countries... we will not be elected in seven countries this time. And not only seven but you also need nominally 25 members, distributed in any way you find between these seven or more countries. So for example you could have one in each of 25 countries. but, 25-7 is this key phrase that we always use internally. Because the leadership immediately set out in the beginning to get 25-7, then quickly realized it’s impossible to do in your first election, not to say delusional. But, it is our view, we want 25 in 7... and when we do that, that is when we spread our wings truly. Because then there is no party group office, then we unshackle ourselves from the party structures that we want to destroy, and we become part unto our own with one coordinated leadership in all the countries in the European parliament. Should I for the sake of the record elaborate on the process to which I’m referring? Ok, so the point is, when you get into parliament, you need to choose an alliance... Volt now has a choice of getting our one to three members to join an existing group, which in one way hurts our narrative because we want to be alone... You know, this is the problem that we want to solve, we don’t want these party groups... but on the other hand we also want to be pragmatic, and show that we are adults in the room. So on the one hand, we are less pure if we sit down in one of the groups, because this is the problem that we are addressing, but on the other hand if we are [inaudible], we find ourselves in this situation where we will not be able to do anything but talk and vote... we will get no legislation, we will get no rapporteurs, we will get no committees, we will only be able to do the Marine le Pen style of arriving five minutes before the vote, screaming at the microphone, voting and leaving. And these are the two extremes, 25 in 7 of our own, or being entirely on roll with 3 people and as piranhas. And, our vision is to get 25 in 7. So what I think is... as long as we can find a way forward on handling the lack of 25-7, we will eventually reach 25-7, and that is when we have really changed how the European parliament can operate... because then we are not part of any other discussion than our own internal and then we can speak with a loud voice internally. And I think that if we do this... you know, I welcome pan-European Eurosceptic party, I welcome a pan-European conservative movement, I welcome a pan-European socialist movement, for example like DiEM25, who’s basically Volt but supremely socialist, but also less organized, because it’s a coalition of different parties... I welcome such initiatives, because if people follow volts organizational model, but with

different values, that means we don't have to fight the conservatives of Germany or of France... that means we can fight the conservatives in Europe. And, if we inspire other ideological groups to all organize themselves transnationally, then we've won. Then we can discuss what the European Union should do, then we can discuss how much of this or that shall be done, or how conservative or progressive, or whichever word we want to use, that we should be in Europe... but then we have the same discussion there as in Sweden. If we can manage people to raise themselves to the European level, then the structural problems would be mitigated.

M: "What do you see as the challenges of integrating a political agenda on both a grassroots level, but then also federal level."

"So the question would be how do I view the possibility to actually do this and effectuate it?"

M: "Yeah"

"Ok so for example, we need to make sure that there is a certain level of cohesion but also a certain level of autonomy... and, this says nothing at all. But, for example, when the Antwerp team decided to run on what was basically called the paarse list. In the Antwerp local elections, we decided to... you know, the leadership did not contest, because the Flemish team said "look, this is what we're gonna do, this is the way we can actually run on a list, we're gonna do a joint programme with basically the pirate party and some unaffiliated local muppets who want to run for the election. And, for example, they had their own programme, the European leadership didn't contest this, they looked at it and said "huh, this is volt stuff". And we ran in Brussels local... so then we grabbed the concepts or the overarching vision of the European level... for example smart state, it's one of those ideas we have... we want a smart state, we want technology to be used in smarter ways. Not for the sake of it, not digitalizing everything because it's fun, but we want to see if technology will actually help us more than it actually is doing now. So the Belgian team went into a discussion on translation, or efficiency... because you know, Belgium is split between so many language groups... and the discussion was that "can't we just do everything in bloody English?". So they went to the polls in Brussels to anglesize the local government... We didn't get elected sadly, but we got quite a few votes in several local districts of brussels local... and it was

just one of these ideas that, you know... the local level becomes much more nitty gritty... and I think the key to this is to keep the European level nebulous, vague and philosophical, on everything that isn't immediately related to the European Union's legislative competences. Because, if we're talking about the internal market, then we can have really well-defined, perpendicular angles, very square idea on what wanna do, because it is our concrete policy on that level. But at the same time, the European level must be careful not to be so concrete in general on non-EU competences, that we handcuff the local teams. And, at the same time the local teams need to be very well aware that they keep within the lines that are actually prescribed by the European level... And to make sure that these different moving parts of the organization at least roll in the generally same direction... Then we actually effectuate it."

Appendix 4: Field Notes sample

Field Notes [2 March 2019] Crossing Borders with Volt, John Bull, Lund, Sweden

I met up with the participants in central Lund where they were still talking to people on the street and handing out flyers. After introducing myself to the people, who were all active in the party, we proceeded to the pub where the first thing was to find our booth and proceed to hang up a purple flag with the text "Volt".

As the participants were clearly all familiar with each other, the conversations that ensued were not as much about politics as they were small talk, discussions about their everyday lives, or discussions about some night out during one of their conference weekends. While this was pleasant and interesting, I knew I had to learn something about the movement itself, and really had to ask the question that had been bugging me since I first learned about the movement: "How can this diverse group of people work together for political ends?" Luckily, they were more than happy to respond, after all, the purpose of the meet-ups is exactly to tell people about what they're doing, even though I was the only outsider there.

The participants reflected upon the communication that occurs within the movement and discussed that they were indeed aware of the vast differences of perspectives and opinions of all their local

and national boards. What was interesting to me was that they also discussed how, over the years, they have slowly began establishing a culture of communication. One of the participants in particular expressed their amazement with how members have developed a better understanding of each other's perspectives and political contexts simply by interacting on a daily basis and closely working on policies together. When discussing this topic, one of them brought up a bible of a document containing their mapping of policies, which, according to them, was all written with the input from members across Europe. I became curious as to how they managed to write an almost 200-page policy document and simultaneously get the input from members in 11 different countries. The answer was quite obvious: social media. I looked over at one of the informants and he responded: "I told you, we live on social media".

As the event was about to conclude, we proceeded with a quiz about basic EU knowledge. Naturally, I was invited to participate and joined two active members in the hopes that perhaps their expertise could help me hide my lack of "basic" knowledge. Interestingly, however, I was not the only one in the room struggling, so were my teammates, and so were the other teams of young activists passionate about the European project: "Well, this isn't basic at all". Of course, we had to investigate this deception from the part of the quiz-leader, so we asked her. The response we received said something significant as to how citizens interact with the European Union: "It wasn't supposed to be easy, we made it to show how little we all know about the EU."

Appendix 5: Coding

This process began with an open and flexible coding to find codes based on the research questions, conceptual framework and initial empirical findings in Volt's strategy and values. The codes were then organized to create the themes and sub-themes which made up the final analysis. Below is a sample of the coding process of the interviews and a matrix showing how the data was initially organized.

Sample of coding process

<p>time. But, what I found was all these young people with passion and experience and... not experience, and energy, and ideas, and I just thought.... I cannot imagine not being part of this group of people, and maybe I won't be a candidate, maybe I won't be a leader, maybe I won't be whatever... but this group of people, I like these people. So maybe it wasn't so much like a political ambition, like, I can see this as a stepping stone to a big career etc. It was more like these people, there's a personal connection here that I really like. And then, before the retreat was over... the girl who was kind of the contact person for volt, she said "look, why don't we make you the country lead because you're Danish and it makes sense", and again [inaudible] someone asked me and I said yes. And, I recognize that not just in myself, but also in other people that I see in the team now and other places around Volt, there are some people that just raise their hands and say "I will do it", but what I really like is when people, you know, ask out and say "we need capacity in this, who can help?", and then you get ideas from all sides, and you get this diversity of opinions, and you get people that you didn't even imagine might raise their hand, feel that "yeah, if they're asking for that particular skills, I can bring that to the table". Which is nice because I... maybe in another organizations you might get a tap on the shoulder and say "hey, you should do this"... but, I like this idea that we're asking... who wants to do this? So, it's really up to the individuals to say "ok, am I ready to step up?".</p>	<p>Michal Gieda Generational experience</p>
<p>M: "If we talk a little bit about Volt and its values, one of the key values is doing politics outside of national and ideological boxes. Could you elaborate more on this? Why do you think that's important?"</p>	
<p>"ok, so when we start with the nation, there is so much politics right now that is so grounded in the national context that we fail to see beyond, and in Denmark there is a big conversation about the issue of sovereignty... well, not a big discussion, but one of the things that keep us from being a fully-fledged member of the EU, for example, there this idea that, if we give up our [inaudible, 13:31], if we give them up, we're gonna lose our sovereignty. But, the winds will blow against our coast regardless of sovereignty, you know, we will have floods because guess what, the water doesn't care about where your borders go. There are so many issues that are affecting us regardless of sovereignty. And, I just don't see that nationally based politics are truly able to meet those challenges, or problems as you might say. What I do see is a short-sighted, nationalistic approach, and I don't even mean nationalism as in the ideology, I simply see people are fully anchored and solidly planted in the national soil, that they cannot, they don't feel they have the mandate to go beyond those concerns that have been documented by polls, by question marks, all these professionalization and quantification of politics. And, we need a different approach. Also, to answer your question about the ideological scape, so as we have traditionally been told, the political spectrum runs left to right, and there are different parties on different sides of the spectrum and, what I hear a lot, and what makes me vomit, is when people say: "I believe in this, I'm voting for this decision because I'm a member of this party and this party has this ideology". It's like you leave your mind, it's like you leave your critical thinking at the door when you sign up to a political party today, and you say... well, you know, a lot of people will say "I support this party but not a 100%, I support like 60% on a good day of the party's policies. You know, it's the party that I most agree with". That is the traditional explanation of signing up to a party. The ideological base argument saying... I have to vote this because that's the ideology of my party, it limits and narrows the scope of debate and solutions. So, I had this image in my head and I think you can also see it in front of you, you know the iceberg right.... So, imagine that all you can see is a political spectrum, and two tips of two icebergs... And what I really want for people to really engage with is the iceberg underneath. Because, we need to somehow understand how did we arrive at this opinion. So right now, because of the 20-30 seconds instantaneous politics the instant debate, the soundbite politics, the soundbite media, there's only time for the opinion, there's only time for that provocative statements. And, we are way beyond that now, we are beyond this... it's no longer sustainable to be soundbite democrats. And for us to be able to go further into why, we all need to be able to ask the question why... First and foremost, with ourselves, why is this important to you? Why do you care?"</p>	<p>Michal Gieda Beyond the national</p> <p>Michal Gieda Transnational issues</p> <p>Michal Gieda Democratic deficit</p> <p>Michal Gieda ideology</p> <p>Michal Gieda ideology</p>

Example of how the data was organized

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Quotes	
"Beyond national boxes"	Overcoming national boundaries	Transnational issues	Volt was created to re-energise Europe and to solve the issues we all have in common. Volt offers Europeans a new vision for Europe, one that embraces the EU's common aspirations and that faces its shortcomings head-on. (Volt Europa, 2018)	But the winds will blow against our coast regard of sovereignty, you know, we will have floods because guess what, the water doesn't care about where your borders go. (Interview 2)
		Beyond the national	So when we start with the nation, there is so much politics right now that is so grounded in the national context that we fail to see beyond (Interview 2)	So, outside of national boxes I think this is quite straightforward [...] a lot of issues that we are fac today are transcending borders, so why are politi not transcending borders? That's like the main question there, and that's what I think Volt wants change in that regard. (Interview 3)
		Transnational awareness	...having established the first pan-European political party, and then creating the identity over those years, making this new paradigm in young Europeans' mindsets... that it's not only through your national parliament that you can have an impact on European politics, but you can actually do it directly through the parliament in Brussels. (Interview 8)	And that's not a short-term goal, you might even that it's a challenge for our generation to make th world understand that we have global challenges ahead of us, and I don't mean another banking cr necessarily. (Interview 2)
	The deficit of European democracy	Ideology	Within the SND, there are many parties who are nominally, if you look at the name tag, social democrats. However, there is a major difference between the social democratic party - and I would hope this is self-evident - of Romania, which started the referendum on banning gay marriage constitutionally... (Interview 1)	...what I hear a lot, and what makes me vomit, is when people say: "I believe in this, I'm voting fo this decision because I'm a member of this party this party has this ideology" (Interview 2)
		Democratic deficit	...our view is that voters cannot know what they are voting for unless we make sure that there is a true European democratic movement with the same ideology in all the nations. (Interview 1)	One reason I often hear is disenfranchisement wi the current political status quo. They want something... they don't think that the old parties represent their views. (Interview 1)