ENCODE

D2.2

Theories of emotional politics

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ENCODE - Unveiling emotional dimensions of politics to foster European democracy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary achievement of this report is an analysis of theories of emotional politics and the introduction of an original theoretical proposal: the theory of affective pluralization. The report adopts the perspective of normative political theory, which seeks to develop guidelines for structuring political order.

The analysis focuses on the normative political theories of Chantal Mouffe and Martha Nussbaum. Mouffe's work, which builds on the idea of agonistic democracy, serves as a key theoretical inspiration for the ENCODE project. In contrast, Nussbaum's philosophy represents a liberal perspective while emphasizing the central role of emotions in politics. Both thinkers develop conceptions aimed at improving the contemporary political landscape in liberal democracies. Their theories illustrate the broader debate on emotions in politics, ranging from views that see emotions as *political passions* driving our actions to those that treat them as *cognitive value judgments* open to rational debate. Both theories have been reconstructed, subjected to a multidimensional analysis through the lens of ENCODE's objectives, and juxtaposed to explore the productive tensions that contribute to the formulation of the affective pluralization theory. The report also outlines potential applications of Mouffe's and Nussbaum's theories in empirical research, taking into account the specific focus of the ENCODE project.

In addition, the report examines a positive (i.e., non-normative) theory of emotional politics: the theory of affective intelligence, developed by the American political scientist George E. Marcus and his colleagues. This theory draws on insights from social neuroscience, allowing for the identification of distinct brain systems responsible for managing affects and responding effectively to external realities.

The report culminates in the further development of the theory of affective pluralization, whose foundations were introduced in the D2.1 report *Key ENCODE's concepts and their intersections*. This new theory serves as a theoretical framework for overcoming affective polarization, a phenomenon discussed in D2.1. The theory integrates an approach to emotions and acknowledges the potential for discursively shaping emotional states at both individual and collective levels. Its key components include polarizm, political emodiversity, and affective pluralism. *Polarizm* describes the current socio-political climate in Western democracies, redefining the problem that ENCODE seeks to address. *Political emodiversity*, a psychological concept emphasizing the benefits of emotional diversification, serves as the primary tool for solving this problem. Finally, *affective pluralism* is proposed as a guiding principle for political systems, fostering a positive emotional turn—it represents both the anticipated outcome of overcoming the current crisis and a central challenge tackled by the ENCODE project.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE ENCODE PROJECT

The project “ENCODE – Unveiling Emotional Dimensions of Politics to Foster European Democracy" aims to explore and decode the role of emotions in political discourse and their impact on democratic processes. Recognizing that emotional appeals have significantly influenced political movements and voter behavior, ENCODE seeks to understand the interplay between emotions, values, and identities. The project's primary goal is to create new positive narratives that can foster trust and engagement in European democratic processes, thereby counteracting the negative emotions that often dominate political discussions. Through innovative methodologies, including social media sentiment analysis, biometric research, and surveys, ENCODE aims to provide policymakers with tools and strategies to better incorporate the emotional needs of citizens into governance, ultimately enhancing democratic resilience and fostering a more inclusive political environment.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF DELIVERABLE

This report has two basic objectives. First, it develops ENCODE’s theoretical approach by identifying, analyzing, and comparing the key theories of emotional politics, and assessing their suitability for the project, and their general validity. Second, it develops an innovative theory of affective pluralization that aims to serve as a point of reference for further research.

Achieving these objectives is crucial for the ENCODE project, particularly in contributing to the design of empirical research, the formulation of hypotheses, and the interpretation of findings. Equally important is the potential application of the theory of affective pluralization in promoting positive emotional narratives in socio-political life, which is also a key goal of ENCODE.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

The structure of this deliverable follows a logical sequence to present the key concepts and analyses effectively. The remainder of the document is organized as follows. Chapter Two outlines the approach and methodology. The first section explores the understanding of theory, the relationship between positive and normative theories, and the specific characteristics of normative political theory. The second section presents the methodological criteria applied in analyzing theories of emotional politics. Chapter Three synthesizes selected concepts discussed in D2.1, including affects and emotions, values and beliefs, social identity, and populism, and relates these concepts to the focus of the present report. Chapter Four defines the terms “emotional politics” and “theory of emotional politics”, providing a conceptual and theoretical framework for studying emotions in politics. It briefly introduces major theories of emotive states, followed by an analysis of the theory of affective intelligence in the second section. Chapter Five reconstructs the theories of emotional politics developed by Chantal Mouffe and Martha Nussbaum. Chapter Six evaluates these theories against five predefined criteria and compares their empirical potential for projects such as ENCODE. Chapter Seven develops the theory of affective pluralization. It begins by discussing its theoretical foundations, incorporating insights from Mouffe, Nussbaum, and positive theories of emotion. The chapter then presents a polemic perspective on affective polarization, establishing the groundwork for affective pluralization. Three core elements of

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the theory are explored: polarizm, political emodiversity, and affective pluralism. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the theory's potential applications within the ENCODE project. Finally, the Conclusion provides a summary of the report's key findings.

1.4 RELATION TO OTHER TASKS

This deliverable is of significant importance for several tasks within the ENCODE project. The theoretical analysis and the theory of affective pluralization serve as a reference point for all substantive work packages in the project. The findings and conclusions from this report are intended to inform a variety of empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, and biometric) across different work packages within ENCODE. This report is also closely linked to the ENCODE task focused on developing positive emotional narratives applicable in the public sphere. The research outcomes presented in this report are also relevant to ENCODE initiatives, such as policymaking workshops and foresight studies.

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2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the metatheoretical approach and methodology applied throughout the present report. In the first section, we focus, among other things, on the understanding of theory, distinguishing between positive and normative theories and discussing the relationship between them. We also point out the specificity of the normative perspective of political theory adopted in the report, which determines our method and specifies the objectives of our research. Further, we discuss our terminological assumptions regarding emotions and related concepts. The subsequent section presents the method used in this report to analyze selected theories, which involves the analysis of five elements. These elements are discussed in detail and operationalized, providing a methodological tool for studying the selected conceptions.

2.1 METATHEORETICAL APPROACH

The objectives of the report determine our methodological approach. Firstly, we engage in a critical analysis of theories of emotional politics in order to identify their potential and limitations in building a theoretical basis for a concept that supports a positive emotional turn in European democratic societies in the 21st century. Secondly, we present such a concept, which we have tentatively named *affective pluralization*.

We define *theory* in the sense in which the term occurs in the phrase "theories of emotional politics" as follows, following List and Valentini (2017, p.536): „a *theory* [is] as a set of statements – propositions expressed in language – which is a candidate for playing some theoretical or practical role and which is, ideally, representable as the set of all implications of some underlying principles. The set of principles from which the theory can be derived – if there is such a set – is called the *theory formulation*."

This comprehensive understanding of theory encompasses: (1) *positive* theories (i.e. not concerned with judgements), and (2) *normative* (and *evaluative*) theories (List & Valentini, 2017, p.536). The distinguishing factor between these two types of theories is the presence or absence of a judgement element. Positive theories offer a description of reality, while normative theories provide a rationale for potential changes and the reasons why they should or should not be implemented (they „can play a prescriptive or normative role, guiding us in the design of social institutions" (List & Valentini, 2017, p.537)). The former include, for example, the cognitive theory of emotion (see Solomon, 2003) and, in the field of political science, the theory of political culture (see Almond, 1956, Almond & Verba, 1963). While both types of theories are represented in the theories of emotional politics, the main focus of this report is on theories of the normative type, which are represented by the work of Chantal Mouffe and Martha Nussbaum.

In the field of social sciences, however, this distinction is not as clear-cut. The prevailing assumption is that theories of the first type are value-free, i.e. strictly scientific. These theories are expected to present and explain the world as it is, without engaging in reflections on how things should be, e.g. how we should organize our socio-political institutions (see Weber, 2011). In reality, however, it is difficult to avoid any kind of valuation in the social sciences. As a result, the demand for freedom from valuation and the practice of objective science remain only at the level of declaration (see Voegelin, 1987, chap. 1). Consequently, there have been calls for researchers to make their normative position clear even in empirical studies (see Gerring & Yesnovitz, 2006; Taylor, 1985). Nevertheless, the distinction

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between descriptive and normative theories retains its relevance if we note that the former, even when embedded in a particular value system, differ from the latter at a fundamental level. Namely, while descriptive theories may be rooted in values and norms, normative theories have as their immediate goal the elaboration of positions on norms and values.

Another key relationship between descriptive and normative theories is that normative theories tend to take certain positions developed from descriptive theories as a kind of starting point. For example, Martha Nussbaum develops a cognitive theory of emotions and uses it in her normative considerations, and her normative theory makes sense precisely on the assumption that the cognitive theory of emotion is correct. However, it is important to note that determining the correctness of a specific positive theory is not always within the author's expertise. This may result in the adoption of positive theories that are more promising within the context of the normative theories developed by the author. In certain cases, the adoption of positive theory positions could potentially restrict the range of normative theories available. For instance, as William E. Connolly writes (1974, p.128): "Disputes about the proper concept and interpretation of power, then, are part of larger ideological debates. To convert others to my idea of power is to implicate them to some degree in my political ideology."

Following a presentation of the understanding of a theory and the relationship between theories at different levels, the analytical and theoretical assumptions made in this report will be discussed. Our analysis of selected political theories differs from perspectives familiar from political thought, the history of ideas or political philosophy. Generally, it is not our aim to trace the origins of the theories we analyze or the accompanying personal conditions. We also do not seek to evaluate their universal value or philosophical soundness; however, we will pay attention to their basic internal consistency. Our primary interest lies in the functional nature of the theories we analyze. In other words, in the selected theories of emotional politics, we are looking for ideas and elements that could be applied to develop the theoretical basis for a positive emotional turn in contemporary European democracies facing real problems, among them the problem of affective polarization. We therefore situate our approach within the framework of normative political theory, which "is a subfield of philosophy and political science that addresses conceptual, normative, and evaluative questions concerning politics and society, broadly construed" (List & Valentini, 2017, p.525). While political philosophy is often regarded as a moral discipline, as a branch of moral philosophy or ethics (see, for example, Strauss, 1957; Rawls, 1971; Nozick, 1974), political theory, including normative political theory, does not seek clear-cut positions on the major moral issues. Instead, its objective is to address the question of how to organize society, encompassing the rights and obligations of individuals and political institutions, in a manner that optimizes the functioning of the political order under the particular conditions that prevail (List & Valentini, 2017). From the perspective of normative political theory, understood in this way, it is not appropriate to consider questions about whether, for example, an absolute monarchy is superior to a democratic system of government. This is because we do not currently live in an absolute monarchy and there is no indication that this is about to change. Instead, we must consider the current political system, with all its contingencies, and determine the factors that can ensure its proper functioning. In ENCODE, the frame of consideration is therefore democracy in contemporary Europe, and the specific problem to be tackled is the phenomenon of negative—from a political and social system perspective––growing emotive animosities between citizens.

This approach is based on the key assumption of the project, namely the belief in the possibility of reversing the trend of emotively conditioned polarization, also known as

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affective polarization (see, for example, Iyengar, 2019), the phenomenon being typically linked to social identity theory and considered to be deeply rooted. At ENCODE, we do not seek to challenge social identity theory as such, but we recognize that when analyzing affective polarization, a discursive approach is more appropriate. The reason is that we believe affective polarization should be perceived as a narrative construct, shaped by dominant discourses—understood as "systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects" (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, pp.3–4). This requires selecting a positive emotion theory to inform a theoretically substantiated proposal for an emotional turn, with the proposal representing a normative theory. Constructivism, in both its psychological and social forms, is consistent with this approach (see Soniewicka, 2024, pp.135–154). Psychological constructivism posits that emotional experiences are constructed in the brain, influenced by bodily, environmental, educational and cultural factors. In contrast, social constructivism places greater emphasis on these external factors, and perceive emotions as "products of culture, reproduced in individuals in the form of embodied experience" (Rajtar & Straczuk, 2012, p.5, quote selected after: Soniewicka, 2024, p.139). Cognitivism is partly consistent with psychological constructivism and also fits in with the ENCODE objectives. In the cognitivist theory of emotions, individuals are believed to create their emotions based on their beliefs and values.

It is important to note that the ENCODE project does not seek to address the question: "What role, if any, should our emotions have in our political and public lives?" (Brooks, 2022, p.1). Instead, it is understood that politics is inherently linked to emotions, and it is not feasible for this link to be broken. We acknowledge the emotive nature of politics, while recognizing the importance of reason in both politics and emotional states (see Dixon, 2003, p. 3; Marcus, 2002, p.7).

In the current discourse on emotions and related states, the role of terminology is of particular significance. The term "emotions" has been dominant since the second half of the 19th century, replacing other names previously used in theology, philosophy, medicine, rhetoric, and literature to describe emotive states. This shift is largely attributed to the development of modern science, especially psychology and neurobiology, and the accompanying secularization processes. Among the many terms used to describe these states, we can distinguish passions, affects, emotions, feelings, sentiments, motives, moods, prejudgments, emotions, desires, impulses, drives, and lusts (see Wigura, 2019, pp.15–16, 53; Rorty, 2004, p. 270; Soniewicka, 2024, pp.21–30). Contemporary political philosophy and political theory are suspended between the perspectives of philosophy and psychology, which presents an additional challenge. This requires the researcher to carefully read and verify terms, comparisons, and conclusions. For example, Martha Nussbaum writes about political emotions, while Chantal Mouffe is closer to the term "passions." Due to the differences in terminology as well as the differences between specific terms, it has become common practice for researchers to adopt an umbrella term to describe all emotive states. Often, such an umbrella term is "emotions" (see Wigura, 2019, pp.61–63). However, in the ENCODE project, we emphasize the distinction between emotions and affects. While these terms are often used interchangeably, including within the field of political science, the benefits of distinguishing between emotions and affects are increasingly recognized, also in political science (see Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019; Crociani-Windlanda, Hoggett, 2012).

This distinction, along with the subsequent operationalization of specific states as emotional or affective, facilitates an in-depth examination of the emotive states of a human being as a member of society and a participant in political life, while also creating an opportunity for empirical research. However, there is still a lack of even minimal consensus on the definition

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of these terms. This is particularly evident in the case of the term "emotion" (see Wigura, 2019, pp.58–59). Therefore, in the course of our analyses, we will endeavor to ascertain the substance underlying a given author's usage of the term. If necessary, we will make adjustments to the nomenclature so that it accurately reflects the conceptual framework we have established in the ENCODE project. If the content of the terms cannot be identified, we will use our meta-concept of "emotional states." The already established term "affective polarization" is an exception, as it encompasses both affective and emotional elements. From our perspective, which differentiates between emotions and affects, it could be more appropriate to use the term "emotive polarization." However, we will adhere to the term "affective polarization," while treating it (as appears to be the intention of the users) as encompassing not only strictly understood affects, but all emotive states. We perceive the concept of affective pluralization, which we want to use as a counterbalance to affective polarization, in a similar way. In this case, affectivity encompasses a broader range of states, and the term's selection is intended to highlight the distinction from affective polarization.

We also consistently use the term "emotional politics," especially in the combination "theories of emotional politics," although we recognize that such theories may focus on different emotional states and may be defined in different ways, as Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2019, p. 28; references deleted) observes: "In recognition of the increased awareness of the relationship between emotion, rationality and political life, scholars thus reflect on the rise of 'passionate politics', the 'emotional public sphere' and 'affective publics', to mention just a few labels associated with emerging lines of investigation in the area."

This seems to apply in particular to empirical studies in which researchers explore the relevance of emotive states in political contexts. Such studies are also carried out in the ENCODE project, and their results can be used to test existing theories and formulate new ones. In the perspective of "emotional politics," more general assumptions are also made (which are also open to empirical testing). As Ann N. Crigler and Parker R. Hevron (2017, p. 664) posit: "Emotions function as critical factors of political choice by explaining how people communicate about politics, how they seek information and learn, how they make judgments and form preferences, and how they participate."

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES: FIVE CRITERIA FOR THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

In this section, we outline five key criteria for analyzing the selected theoretical frameworks. These criteria serve as a structured approach to evaluating how each theory conceptualizes mostly political emotions but also other important concepts such as social identity or polarization. By applying these analytical points, we aim to ensure a consistent and comparative assessment of different perspectives. This approach allows us to highlight both the strengths and limitations of each theory in the context of the ENCODE project.

(1) Scope and depth. Put simply, this first metric is designed to help identify theories capable of how political narratives, campaigns and leadership patterns can create European-wide emotional landscapes and how they are influenced by deeper levels of individual experiences, beliefs, affects and values.

At the outset, it is worth noting – as Sheldon S. Wolin emphasized in his seminal text – that the significance of a political theory is determined not only by its "structure of formal features" but also by its "*structure of intentions*." This refers to

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> the controlling purposes of the theorist, the considerations which determine how the formal features of concept, fact, logic, and interconnection are to be deployed so as to heighten the effect of the whole (Wolin, 1969, p.1078).

This means that a narrowly defined scope or limited depth of analysis proposed by a theory is not inherently a flaw, provided it aligns with the goals set by its author or with the areas of application envisioned by subsequent users. The author's intention, however, cannot serve as the ultimate measure for our selection—we need a more objective criterion.

To address this, it may be helpful to establish a *reference point* that sets the minimum requirements for a theory to be useful to ENCODE. Following Claude Lefort, we can argue that the emergence of modern democracies, beginning with the French Revolution, established not only a cornerstone for contemporary politics but also for political theory (Lefort, 1988, pp.17–20). In other words, the event shaped both the form and substance of the most characteristic political entity of Western civilization – the democratic state. In doing so, it established the minimal expectations for a comprehensive political theory: it should (1) define political processes occurring at least at the national level (scope), and (2) determine the essence of modern democracy – the process of representing the people, at least at the level of institutional solutions (depth). Consequently, in the ENCODE project:

- In terms of scope, we value theories that enable the analysis of emotions and affects at the national level, while giving additional credit to those that provide insights at the international level. This is because it is at the state level that fundamental democratic processes still take place in most countries: we are interested in theories that do not focus on pure abstraction, but rather are capable of assigning specific meanings to key political practices that are constitutive of contemporary democracies. We are less interested in theories that focus solely on local or regional levels, though we acknowledge that such theories may still include elements of relevance to our project.
- When it comes to depth, we accept theories that analyze emotions and affects in relation to political representation, understood as an essential part of the formal structure of democracy. Additionally, we give higher marks to theories that frame representation not only as a mechanism for aggregating societal interests but also as a deeper process that shapes political identities, serves as the primary arena for political competition or forms the fundamental channels for political communication. We are less interested in theories that overlook the issue of political representation, though we recognize that they, too, may contain valuable elements for our analysis.

(2) Adaptability is an indicator assessing whether a given theory allows for the inclusion of key geographical and cultural contexts in an analysis. We will be strongly focused on whether individual theories provide the analytical tools (e.g., specialized concepts and their operationalizations) necessary to illuminate regional and local differences and similarities regarding the way global phenomena manifest themselves in our case study countries, e.g., in the context of populist identity formation and the development of new identarian movements.

This metric will help us identify theories that strike a balance: **on the one hand, avoiding an uncritical universalism, and on the other, not being overly idiosyncratic—that is, theories whose explanatory value is limited to specific socio-cultural circumstances.** For instance, in contemporary political theory, Francis Fukuyama's famous "end of history" hypothesis

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(1992)—which argues that liberal democracy represents the only viable model of governance—is now widely criticized. Similarly, there is growing recognition that the development of modern social science is marked by Eurocentrism and that even the concept of modernity itself is Eurocentric (see Seth, 2016).

Taking these critical reflections into account, we will place the highest value on theories that address the specificities of the European cultural context—given the objectives of this project—while simultaneously acknowledging and exploring its internal diversity.

(3) Applicability. Our other major interest will be whether a theory can be easily applied to new areas of emergent social interaction, especially the ones explaining how virtual life and social media create emotional ties and satisfy emotional needs.

For this indicator, our focus is on the theory's sensitivity to changing contexts, particularly in terms of technological and informational dimensions, ensuring its ability to capture emerging phenomena. For example, in describing the concept of the public sphere, Jürgen Habermas originally referred to the modes of debate among the bourgeoisie in the 18th century, facilitated by the rise of the press (Habermas, 1999). However, this framework can be problematic today, as it does not account for the shift in the nature of public discourse. In contrast, contemporary scholars like Zizi Papacharissi (2015) emphasize that social media tend to foster diverse affective publics rather than a rational space for debate, making her approach more adaptable to the current context.

With this in mind, we will especially value theories that avoid what Evgeny Morozov terms "solutionism"—the belief that technological progress alone can solve all socio-political problems (Morozov, 2013). Instead, we are looking for theories that illuminate how politics adapts to the *logic* of new technologies. Jay Blummer's work serves as an example, particularly his exploration of how media not only report on politics but actively shape its form, content, and dynamics (Blummer, 2014).

(4) Connectivity. The study will also delve into the extent to which these theories can be combined in broader exploratory schemes encompassing other related fields such as comparative anthropology, cultural studies or psychology, which will allow us to problematize issues such as political polarization, mobilization, participation, activism, and collective responsibility more broadly.

At the same time, our emphasis remains on maintaining the specifically political character of these inquiries. While insights from disciplines like cultural studies or psychology are valuable, our priority lies in understanding how these intersect with key political processes such as institutional change, public opinion formation, or the dynamics of governance. For instance, theories addressing *affective citizenship* provide a compelling example of how emotional and cultural dimensions intersect with political engagement (Fortier, 2016). Theories that demonstrate the *capacity to bridge these domains* without losing their political specificity will be particularly valued.

(5) Validity. Our investigation will also cover the assessment of theories' validity, by checking their coherence, assumptions, and premises, which will allow us to eliminate possibly flawed approaches. To make this assessment more precise, we will divide this area into three components, corresponding to three sub-indicators: (1) comprehensiveness, (2) logical coherence, and (3) critical stance.

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- **Comprehensiveness**. We do not assume that all theories must have a fully articulated ontological and epistemological stances. However, when such a stance is present, it can significantly enhance our understanding of the theory and its application. Similarly, theories that are clearly situated within a specific research paradigm or intellectual tradition often demonstrate greater clarity of reasoning and explanatory power.
  Additionally, we will evaluate whether a theory employs a sufficiently robust conceptual framework within the chosen research area and whether it includes key concepts critical to our project—particularly those addressing the intersection of affect, emotions, and politics. Theories that successfully integrate these dimensions while aligning with broader paradigmatic considerations will be especially valued
- **Logical Coherence.** A theory's internal consistency and the logical flow of its arguments will also be crucial indicators of validity. We will prioritize theories that provide well-reasoned justifications for their claims, avoid contradictions, and ensure that their premises align with their conclusions. Logical coherence not only strengthens the explanatory potential of a theory but also enhances its applicability across diverse political phenomena.
- **Critical Stance**. Finally, we will assess the extent to which a theory adopts a critical approach to its subject matter. This includes questioning underlying assumptions, being open to alternative interpretations, and addressing its own limitations. Theories that demonstrate reflexivity and engage critically with their foundational premises are better equipped to adapt to complex and evolving political contexts.

The table below briefly summarizes the listed criteria for theoretical analysis.

CRITERIA	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Scope and depth	Should be applicable to the national level (scope) and should be related to political representation (depth).
Adaptability	Should provide tools to analyze regional and local variations in global phenomena, while addressing Europe's cultural specificities and internal diversity.
Applicability	Should be adaptable to new forms of social interaction, especially in virtual life and social media.
Connectivity	Should integrate insights from related fields while maintaining a clear political focus.
Validity	Should be a theory that is conceptually robust, logically coherent, and critically reflexive

Table 1 The five criteria for theoretical analysis

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3. KEY CONCEPTS FROM D2.1 THROUGH THE LENS OF D2.2

Before we proceed to analyze the theories of emotional politics and construct the affective pluralization theory, we will briefly introduce key concepts from the previous report, D2.1 *Key ENCODE's concepts and their intersections* (see Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024), and place them in the context of this report. This will maintain the theoretical and conceptual continuity within Work Package 2 and will serve as one of the points of reference when analyzing the emotional theory of politics as well as when constructing the conception of affective pluralization. This discussion includes excerpts from selected sections of D2.1, omitting the footnotes to the works we used in D2.1, unless we use a direct quote.

3.1 AFFECTS AND EMOTIONS

In D2.1, we distinguished between affect and emotion as fundamental concepts that describe emotive states. The theory of affect evolved in conjunction with the so-called affective turn in the social sciences, where researchers began to prioritize the affective aspects of human action and connect them to biological processes. The concept of emotions, in turn, played a significant role in the so-called emotional turn, which placed greater emphasis on cognitive aspects.

An affect is an emotive aspect that is characterized by the following features: It is embodied (experienced through one's body), impulsive, not fully formed, and not fully conscious. The dimensions of affects include valence and arousal. We refer to valence when we are interested in how negative or positive, pleasant or unpleasant a given affective state is. Arousal concerns how high or low an autonomic nervous system is activated when a person experiences a particular affect. Although affects generally have a limited duration, some can persist for an extended period, potentially serving as a catalyst for political action. In this regard, the concept of "abiding affects" or "moods" emerges. These are relatively enduring affective states that can be transmitted among individuals or groups.

An emotion is an emotive component that is more conscious than affect, and it concerns some objects. Therefore, emotions have meaning and focus, and they are intentional. They stem from affects, thus representing affects, explicating them, and attaching meaning to them. As stated in the "Approach" section, the ENCODE project is open to both cognitive and constructivist perspectives in emotion theory. This allows us to analyze political theories that refer, either directly or indirectly, to various theories of emotion, as well as to draw from these theories. The possibilities of combining them are limited, although there are attempts to do so (see Prinz, 2004). It is essential to interpret and acknowledge the challenges associated with theoretical eclecticism.

3.2 VALUES AND BELIEFS

We adopted the definition of values as "abstract goals or motivations that are important in many situations," e.g., freedom, security, equality, tradition and toleration" (Scharfbillig et al., 2021, p.22). Among the important features of values, we can mention the following: (1) citizens are committed to their values, meaning that values are relatively stable at the individual level; (2) values build identities; (3) shifts in societal values depend on generational changes; (4) people need choose between competing values in given situations, however (5) there are

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values that might be considered as absolute and sacred; (6) certain values are interpreted in the same manner across the globe, but in general (7) the hierarchies of values cause political differences between citizens concerning particular policies; (8) when significant differences in values occur, political polarization increases; (9) studying values allows us to forecast collective activity. Finally, it should be stressed that values are not another word for world views, ideologies, attitudes, opinions, and morals, despite being principal components thereof.

When comparing values with beliefs, we can divide beliefs into simple and moral beliefs. Simple beliefs are much weaker and therefore change more easily than moral beliefs, which are equated with values in functionalist theories of values, like the ones mentioned above. A general take on belief is that it is the sort of attitude which we have when we regard something as existing, happening or being true. Believing in something does not have to follow from reflection. Beliefs might concern trivial things.

Emotions have a lot to do with values and beliefs. However, the interconnections between values and beliefs on the one hand and emotions and affects on the other might be misleading. Although both cognitivist and constructivist approaches assume that emotions are derived from values and beliefs, they have different views on the origin of the latter two. Cognitivists claim that emotions are produced from affects filtered by values and beliefs chosen by an actor, whereas constructivists argue that the source of these values and beliefs is sociocultural rather than individual.

When developing the concept of affective pluralization, it is important to consider that values are relatively persistent and difficult to change. Consequently, efforts to depolarize by altering values may not be as effective. Instead, it is more feasible to modify common beliefs, such as those about one's own circumstances, the socio-political environment, and other individuals—including those with differing views on the socio-political divide

3.3 SOCIAL IDENTITIES

In the D2.1 ENCODE report, two theoretical decisions shaped the way we defined various concepts, including those related to the process of social identity formation: (1) rejecting extreme methodological individualism and (2) adopting the assumptions of the constructivist paradigm. Both decisions are reinforced by the fact that our research is conducted in the context of EU actions, where it is necessary to consider both individual and collective experiences.

Our decision to define social identity as the declared or perceived sense of belonging to a particular group (e.g., family, local community) or social category (e.g., gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, social class, or age) should be understood in this context. Crucially, this definition allows us to acknowledge that social identity connects individual feelings with collective groups. It emerges through the process of identification, in which an individual aligns themselves with a *We-identity*.

This allows us to recognize that social identity is not only an individual feeling but can also be a subject of *collective negotiation*, as noted by Jürgen Straub (2022, p.71). In other words, social identity has a discursive nature—it is *socially constructed*. This means, first, that social identities arise as the intentional or unintentional consequence of social interactions, through which individuals involved develop a sense of solidarity among themselves. But

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second, and perhaps more importantly, social identity is linked to how individuals develop their self-understanding and their broader perception of the world.

Our theoretical framework for social identity is rooted in two psychological research traditions: the first developed in response to Erikson's work, while the second builds upon *social identity theory*. The first tradition emphasizes that "a need to belong is a fundamental human motivation" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497), which helps explain a significant portion of political behavior. The second tradition is particularly relevant for us because it highlights that possessing a social identity in practice includes a cognitive element—it provides (1) a definition of the group, and (2) a description or prescription of what it means to be a group member. While these insights are crucial to our constructivist approach, we also recognize the risk that this second tradition, in particular, may have contributed to the *naturalization* of affective polarization—treating this phenomenon as simply arising from universal mechanisms of human psychology. These issues will be further discussed in section 7.2.

In contrast, one could argue that our behavior is shaped not only by conflicts between groups but also by internal conflicts *within us*, as our identity stems from our belonging to multiple groups. An approach that emphasizes the significance of this condition—known as *intersectionality theory*—is currently gaining traction. Further, the assumptions of social identity theory may need to be interpreted somewhat differently when discussing a specific form of social identity—*political identity*. While some scientists suggest that political identities may be a distinct part of personal identity—"something that cannot change without loss of self" (Prinz, 2021, pp.15–16)— they appear to be inherently social in nature. They are closely tied to *partisanship*, a politically motivated identification that solidifies "based on the individual's affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment" (Campbell et al., 1980, p.121). Moreover, political identity is not an objective fact reflected in the political sphere but rather the product of performative actions by political actors, shaping both emotions and cognition. This interpretation aligns with the theory of Chantal Mouffe, whose work informs ENCODE, as she highlights "the affective dimension which is mobilized in the creation of political identities" (Mouffe, 2013, p.137).

Finally, emphasizing the constructed nature of social identity appears particularly valuable in the context of *European identity formation*. As noted in D2.1, European identity should not be seen merely as a matter of belonging to Europe as a geographical or even cultural entity but rather as the result of a specific supranational political project. In this sense, it is a *narrative construction*—shaped by how citizens self-categorize as European, evaluate their membership in the European collective, and develop "affective attachment to Europe and other Europeans" (Bergbauer, 2018, p.6). The success of this process depends on social engagement and the effectiveness of key political forces in driving it forward.

3.4 POPULISM

The conscious shaping of political identity is central to the current debate on affective polarization in modern democracies. A significant part of this debate focuses on *populism*, which is often defined as the primary challenge facing contemporary liberal democracies. However, as we noted in the previous report, this common understanding fails to capture the complexity of populism, which can be defined both as (1) a *"thin-centered ideology"* and (2) a feature of the *ontological structure* of democracy. In both cases, populism is understood as a *mechanism of political mobilization*, based on the antagonism between the underrepresented "true people" and the hegemonic "elite groups".

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Populism does not constitute a coherent set of beliefs and value judgments and, therefore, does not qualify as a "full ideology". While there are similarities among political forces in different countries that are labeled populist, it is difficult to speak of an international populist movement. Nevertheless, certain core elements of populist narratives, such as the people, the elite, and the general will, can be distinguished as key components of populist discourse. From this perspective, populism is largely a phenomenon of political communication, which, in the previous report, we defined—following Jamieson and Kenski—as "making sense of symbolic exchanges about the shared exercise of power" (Jamieson & Kenski, 2017, p. 5).

In the second of these perspectives, populism is more than just a specific form of ideology or a style of political communication. For theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, the term "populism" serves to describe how key antagonisms within a given society play a structural role in political processes. In this approach, one "does not define populism by its contents but instead identifies populism as a way of articulating demands" (Thomassen, 2024, p.148). A crucial aspect of this approach, especially for Mouffe, is the role of *political passions* in shaping hegemonic political projects. For her they are not merely an irrational part of the superficial layer of institutionalized party competition, but are instead deeply embedded in the structural foundations of democracy—an issue that will be explored in detail later in this report (see sec. 4.1).

We argue that the choice between these two perspectives ultimately comes down to a slightly different interpretation of the role of emotions in the crisis of contemporary liberal democracies:

- Viewing populism as a thin-centered ideology emphasizes the dangers associated with the misuse of emotions in democratic processes.
- Viewing populism as a deep structural feature of democracy highlights the risks stemming from the failure to properly recognize the importance of emotions in democratic processes.

At this stage, it is important to stress that while the thin-centered ideology approach is more commonly used and well-established in empirical research, the second approach is more significant for the philosophical and theoretical foundation of this project.

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4. THEORIES OF EMOTIONAL POLITICS. A GENERAL OVERVIEW

This chapter clarifies the concepts of "emotional politics" and "the theory of emotional politics," referring to various contexts and the distinction between positive and normative theories introduced in Chapter Two. We highlight key positive theories of emotions, with particular focus on one—the theory of affective intelligence—which was developed specifically to study emotive states in relation to politics. This theory is described and discussed in the context of the ENCODE project.

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THEORIES OF EMOTIONAL POLITICS

Affects and emotions are common human characteristics, although in Western democracies emotive states were considered irrational and therefore negatively affecting politics. As early as the end of the 1970s, Philip Rief vividly described this situation, writing that an "irrational passion for dispassionate rationality" was emerging from liberal democracy (quoted from Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, p.21). This paradigm has undergone significant shifts in recent decades, largely due to the emergence of the *emotional culture* that values emotions in various aspects of life, including the workplace, education, and the media. This cultural shift is closely related to the *confessional culture* that places significant emphasis on the expression of emotions in both private and public spheres. These two phenomena are connected to "intimate politics," defined as the use of emotive messages by politicians (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, pp.3, 20–30; Demertzis, 2013, p.1).

The rise in political activity accompanied by a discernible emotional appeal (see Webster & Albertson, 2022) has prompted researchers to examine the role and significance of affective states in political life with increasing frequency. In 2006, David P. Redlawsk (2006, p.1) wrote, "Politics is about feeling." In the book *Emotions in Politics. The Affect Dimension in Political Tension*, published in 2013, the authors already addressed post-communism, the "Arab Spring", the financial crisis in Greece and nationalist and xenophobic tendencies in Europe from this perspective (see Demertzis, 2013). Current examples that directly relate to emotional politics are even more spectacular: the migration crisis, Brexit, Donald Trump's policies and the accompanying emotional-ideological movements, right-wing and left-wing populism in Europe and Latin America. In response to the public display of emotions in relation to socio-political issues, works challenging the legitimacy of disengaging from emotions in politics have also begun to appear in the field of theory and philosophy. Consequently, a range of theories on emotional politics is emerging, encompassing both positive and normative approaches. The former aims to capture and explain the emotive nature of politics, while the latter proposes various solutions, both institutional and social, to address this phenomenon.

It is important to be cautious and not make assumptions about all political phenomena being dominated by what is commonly referred to as "emotional politics." Emotions, particularly in the reality of the aforementioned emotional and confessional cultures, are a prominent feature of the public sphere on a daily basis. This can lead to the view that the term "emotional politics" has become redundant, as if every policy is inherently emotional in nature. However, if we consider all politics to be a form of emotional politics, the term itself

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becomes meaningless. Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between emotional politics as a specific type of politics and more general expressions of emotions in the public sphere.

Considering the addressed issues, we can discuss emotional politics as:

1. Political practice, which is marked by a clear predominance of emotional narratives and activities driven by affect and emotion.
2. Interdisciplinary studies aimed at investigating the meaning and role of affective states in politics.
3. Historical studies, which examine both political practice and the history of ideas through the lens of emotive categories.
4. Theoretical and philosophical studies which recognize the primary role of affective states (emotions, affects, passions) in politics and, on this basis, propose conceptions of collective life.

All of these approaches are relevant to the theories of emotional politics, although studies are clearly more important for the development of theories than practice. The theory of affective pluralization, which we present in the final part of this report, draws on various types of theories, although we attach the greatest importance to the normative theories that inspired the ENCODE project. Therefore, in the next chapter, we will take a detailed look at normative theories of emotional politics. In the remainder of this chapter, we will discuss affective intelligence theory, a major descriptive theory of emotional politics. For better clarification of this theory, we will first place it among the main descriptive theories of emotions analyzed in a recent article by the proponent of affective intelligence theory, American political scientist George E. Marcus (2023). Marcus analyzes four positive theories of emotions which are used to study political phenomena:

1. Valence as a theory of emotion
2. Appraisal theories
3. Affective intelligence theory
4. Emotion regulation

In valence theory, emotions are regarded as conduits of information regarding reward or punishment, benefit or loss associated with a given object, thereby influencing our attitude towards it. This theory is employed in research involving so-called feeling thermometers, including affective polarization research. However, the valence theory is regarded as an overly narrow approach to emotions. In reality, the spectrum of emotions extends far beyond this bipolar system. Critics have also raised concerns about its inaccurate combination of fear and anger under the umbrella term "negativity," emphasizing that these emotions differ in their origins and implications for an individual. Furthermore, Marcus (2023, p.6) points out that "they employ methods of data collection that preclude securing data that could challenge its validity". In the ENCODE framework, emotions understood in this way are classified as affects rather than emotions in the strict sense of the term. Affects consist of valence, but also arousal, suggesting that using both affects and emotion codes allows for a more comprehensive understanding of emotive states.

Another group of theories is appraisal theories, which posit that "emotions are caused and differentiated by an appraisal process in which values are determined for a number of appraisal factors, such as goal relevance, goal in/congruence, un/expectedness, control, and agency" (quoted in Marcus, 2023, p.7). From this, Marcus points out, it follows that emotions arise as a result of the appraisal process, which selects discrete emotions in order to reveal

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them. In this approach, "emotions are subjective feelings expressed in consciousness" (Marcus, 2023, p.7). A disadvantage of this theoretical framework is that it is focused on the study of a selected emotion, which means that researchers who refer to it may overlook the important role of accompanying emotions.

Affective intelligence theory, developed by Marcus and his colleagues, is similar to appraisal theories in that it focuses on appraisal, but in a different context. The objective of this theory is to identify the role of preconscious affective appraisals and the significance of individual appraisals. A notable distinction between affective intelligence theory and other appraisal theories is that the latter approaches "select an emotion word, presume it to be an actual emotion, and further presume that it can be properly studied in isolation from other emotions" (Marcus, 2023, p.8). However, Marcus (2023, p.14) has identified a potential limitation in affective intelligence theory, noting its neglect of the subjective feelings aspect. Additionally, there is a lack of integration of subjective emotive states with preconscious ones in existing theories. Marcus also notes that affective intelligence theory is open to new appraisals, such as disgust or empathy (Marcus, 2023, pp.9–10, 14).

Emotion regulation theory posits that emotion is a state reflecting subjective feelings, and through emotion management, individuals can more effectively execute their actions. This theory is particularly relevant in achieving a desired emotional state, such as reducing anxiety, although emotion regulation can also be directed towards non-emotional goals, such as achieving success. Marcus summarizes this theory as follows (2023, p.11): "Essentially, emotion regulation holds that subjective feeling states serve as end-state goals to serve as means to achieve environment fitness and that people actively choose to manipulate them to achieve a desired affective state." According to Marcus, this theory has notable gaps, though it should be noted that it is quite new. One gap is the lack of knowledge regarding whether emotions are fully consciously manipulated, or whether they are preconsciously appraised, as in the affective intelligence theory.

4.2 THE THEORY OF AFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Marcus has discussed his theory in many publications and contexts. For the sake of brevity and clarity, we will mainly use the argument in *The Theory of Affective Intelligence and Liberal Politics* (Marcus, 2013), which deals with issues particularly relevant to the ENCODE project. We will also refer to other works by Marcus and his colleagues.

"The theory of affective intelligence – states Marcus (2013, p.17) – offers a new understanding of the citizen not as a political expert but as a human part of the body politic." This theory is polemical in relation to the models of modern democracy, which are derived from the ideas and practices of the Enlightenment. As Marcus (2013) describes, the universalist and cosmopolitan Enlightenment broke with cultural particularisms based on tradition and religion, proposing instead the order of reason, rational commercial cooperation, and democratic rule. The expectation was that the rise of democratic political authority would displace other forms of authority, leading to increased public participation and the adoption of modernity. The ideal citizen, according to this model, was expected to embody certain qualities. "Citizens, bolstered by the norms of autonomous liberality, given equal rather than deferential status to their fellows, would master and elaborate the skills of assertive consideration of the issues that rise within the domain of politics all within the commitment to justice equally meted out for one and all" (Marcus, 2013, p.18). In this scenario, reason was expected to overcome passions, and politics was to be less antagonistic through the institutionalization of certain conflicts. However, this ideal has not been fully realized

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because, as Marcus points out, citing other research, citizens are afraid of responsibility, they do not have the time or energy to delve into political matters, which results in a lack of systematic views, and they also avoid direct confrontations with opponents (see also Caplan, 2007). In short, the model of the citizen as a political expert has not worked.

Marcus proposes reorienting the prevailing citizenship model around emotive states, drawing on psychological concepts derived from neuroscience research of the 1960s and 1970s (see Marcus, 2023). The primary premise asserts that awareness of external stimuli is generated by the brain with a latency of up to half a second, despite the perception of immediacy. For instance, the brain processes danger and fear, preparing reactions before an individual becomes aware of them. This phenomenon underlies habitual actions, which depend on procedural (associative) memory. Semantic (declarative) memory, in contrast, refers to memory that stores information such as names, dates, and other important information. While both systems are crucial, they do not communicate with each other. We are not able to consciously access the memory that stores knowledge about how our body moves when playing basketball (Marcus, 2013, pp.22–24).

This prompts Marcus to challenge the conventional model that explains the relationship between thoughts, emotional states, and actions, as he describes cognitive (semantic) interpretations of emotional states as "suspect and incomplete" (Marcus, 2013, p.24). These interpretations are retrospective and actually based only on approximations. Nevertheless, Marcus emphasizes the necessity of conscious awareness for individuals. He references Jeffrey Gray's perspective, asserting that awareness functions as a corrective mechanism and a means of taking control in situations where the automatic system is not effective. According to Marcus, the insights from this perspective are particularly relevant to a liberal society. He emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive perspective—one that recognizes the self's reach beyond the information provided by introspective reports—as essential for gaining a deeper understanding of liberal society and its underlying tensions (Marcus, 2013, p.25). The focal point of this analysis encompasses "preconscious appraisal systems, their interactions among themselves, and their role in guiding both habituated action but also in enervating and initiating conscious deliberative strategies" (Marcus, 2013, p.24).

It is imperative to comprehend the operation of two preconscious appraisal systems. The first is the "disposition system," which utilizes: 1) somatosensory information (data regarding our body and energy), 2) memory system (information about typical activities and their possible variants), and 3) "fine-grained and swift access to the ongoing sensory stream that depicts the immediate context" (Marcus, 2013, pp.25–26). This system operates with greater speed and precision than conscious awareness, leading us to rely on familiar responses in familiar situations without considering alternative options. The intermediaries of this system are affects that inform the brain about the likelihood of success or failure of our current actions. These affects can remain outside our consciousness or, when they are strong and relatively long-lasting, become conscious. In the case of a positive verdict, the system generates enthusiasm, while in the case of a negative verdict, it generates a lack of enthusiasm or aversion (including anger, contempt, hatred, and bitterness). The second system is the "surveillance system," which works alongside the disposition system. Its task is to quickly detect, based on the current sensory stream, whether we are dealing with a known situation. If so, the surveillance system finishes its work and leaves the field to the disposition system. If not, the surveillance system takes over, recognizing a new or abnormal situation. As a result, the level of anxiety increases, as expectations do not correspond to the circumstances encountered. The disposition system is blocked, and we focus on the issue

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encountered and start looking for new solutions, not guided by preconceptions. This is the task of consciousness—to look for solutions in previously unknown situations, which is why consciousness is essential for living in a dynamic world, both in terms of nature and society (Marcus 2013, pp.26–28; MacKuen et al., 2010, p.441). **Therefore, enthusiasm and anger reinforce people in thinking and acting according to their political habits, thereby reinforcing existing political identities and encouraging collectively conditioned activity. Conversely, fear and anxiety encourage deliberation and independent consideration of problems** (Marcus, 2023, 10). As Marcus and Michael B. Mackuen vividly put it when commenting on the results of their empirical research: „[W]hen politics makes people anxious, people sharpen their eyes and pay careful attention; when politics drums up enthusiasm, people immerse themselves in the symbolic festival" (Marcus and MacKuen 1993, pp.680–681).

In light of these considerations, Marcus proposes two models of citizenship: deliberative citizenship and partisan citizenship. The first model emphasizes the impartial and open pursuit of information, consideration, and discussion of policy proposals, with an emphasis on justice and the public good. The second model, which is supported by a minority, views the citizen as a "partisan loyalist," with civic engagement being defined by allegiance to one side of a dispute or conflict in the country. The partisan citizen, according to this model, should avoid debates because their purpose is to weaken motivation and delay action. What matters is victory. Thus, the first model emphasizes the pursuit of new knowledge, while the second is rooted in established routines. The first model advocates for inclusivity towards individuals from diverse backgrounds, while the second emphasizes solidarity with one's network to overcome adversity (Marcus, 2013, pp.29–30). It is crucial to note that neither of these models negates the role of emotions. **In fact, the rationality of the deliberative model of the citizen is made possible by emotional states, as emotions trigger rationality and thus make it possible** (Marcus 2002, p.7). Marcus posits that citizens of democratic states should adhere to both models depending on the context. The disposition system and the partisan citizen model derived from it are suitable for direct conflicts between antagonistic groups. However, modern liberal and heterogeneous societies require individual groups to win over citizens who can ultimately support their cause. This is where the second model, deliberative citizenship, comes into play. **According to Marcus, the tendency to use the surveillance system arises when no group can count on a successful solution. In such situations, there is an opportunity for deliberation and openness to diverse viewpoints.** He posits that the theory of affective intelligence is flexible and therefore adaptable to contemporary democracies, making it a compelling option for modern political systems (Marcus, 2013, pp.31–34).

In some publications, Marcus also points to a third system, in addition to the disposition system and the survival system. It is a normative system that deals with monitoring compliance with norms, and the extreme emotions here are trust and anger (in Marcus 2013, included in the dispositional system, as an example of aversion). A low level of anger allows for cooperation and individual actions with the belief that everyone is trustworthy. The normative system enables a rapid assessment of others' propensity to adhere to norms under specific conditions. Anger is associated with the drive to fortify traditions, key norms, and practices, as well as the inclination to sanction those who transgress them (Marcus 2023, pp.9, 14).

According to Marcus, these findings enable us to assert that populism is not predominantly driven by fear, as is often assumed, but rather, it is "more commonly driven by grievances over challenges to traditions of hierarchy and identity" (Marcus 2023, p.14).

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This assertion is further substantiated by empirical research (see Marcus et al., 2019). **In this context, fear becomes an opportunity rather than a threat, as it facilitates the search for solutions to populism and the formation of new coalitions**. While the focus here is on democratic regimes, it is important to note that Marcus also asserts that emotional mechanisms responding to threat play a crucial role in autocratic regimes. Addressing both fear-based and anger-based threats is a cornerstone of effective governance (Marcus 2023, p.14).

To facilitate comprehension, it is advisable to organize this description of emotional states. As Tereza Capelos (2021, p.41) notes, within the framework of appraisal theories (as well as affective intelligence theory), negative emotions are classified into anxious affectivity and aversive affectivity. Anxious affectivity encompasses emotive states such as uneasiness, discomfort, and fear, while aversive affectivity includes hostility, disgust, and anger (generally referred to as aversion). Marcus does not prioritize conceptual precision, and as a result, he treats anxiety and fear quite freely. However, the position is well established that: "Whereas anxiety is a vague unpleasant and objectless emotional state, captured by uneasiness or worry, which often originates from indefinite sources and leaves the person in suspense, fear is a discrete emotional reaction which in most cases assumes a tangible and more or less realistic danger" (Capelos 2021, p.43).

Affective intelligence theory is a positive theory, but Marcus strongly supports it in a normative sense. He ends his book *The Sentimental Citizen* (Marcus 2002, p.148) with the following words:

> Democratic politics cannot be solely a space of calm deliberation. It must also be a sensational place, one that attracts and engages spectators... Only by doing so can it create the conditions for new possibilities. Though anxiety is a necessary and central player, its role has been ignored because we find it unpleasant. … Though the proposition violates presumptions of long standing, only by being emotional and rational can democratic citizens be at their very best *and* of the highest order. And they can do so because they can feel and think.

Affective intelligence theory is a significant contributor to the field, drawing from the psychological paradigm in a strictly scientific version that leverages the findings of neuroscience. This theory plays a role in the ongoing shift of the intellectual discourse on emotional states towards the realm of pure sciences. This transition has the potential to be critiqued by philosophers and humanistically oriented political theorists. However, it is important to acknowledge the value of neuroscience findings in demonstrating the influence and autonomy of affects, particularly highlighting their preconscious origins. This approach can serve as a crucial guideline for efforts aimed at achieving positive emotional shifts and addressing affective polarization. Furthermore, affective intelligence theory can play a pivotal role in initial assessments of the effectiveness of specific depolarizing strategies.

To better understand the applicability of this theory to political practice, let us quote a longer excerpt from Marcus's article (2023, p.13):

> As it has conventionally been assumed that fear is the response to a perceived threat, it would follow that strong leader should aspire to assuage fear and calm the public in the face of threatening events.

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> It might, however, be instructive to consider that naming fear as the primary source of our discomfort in response to threats—in both public/political and private realms—is ill-conceived. Why? As noted in the Introduction section, neuroscience research identifies the preconscious realm as one in which a multitude of analyses are concurrently, and very rapidly, executed. If so, when political leaders address the public in dire times, if they take it that their primary task is to quiet the public's fears, that may prove to be especially ill-advised if they do not also address anger when grievances are predominant.

According to Marcus, it is not constructive to suppress fear, especially in the presence of significant societal anger. To comprehend this perspective, it is necessary to briefly review the principles of the theory of affective intelligence. Marcus asserts that fear and anxiety, which he uses interchangeably, are not inherently detrimental to democracy. These affective states, he contends, stimulate the deliberative citizen model, propelling citizens to engage in discussion, seek information, and embrace new perspectives. Conversely, anger, he contends, is a slave to habit, leading to less rational decision-making in citizens compared to those experiencing anxiety or fear. This, in turn, contributes to affective polarization and poses a threat to social cohesion. According to Marcus, the elimination of fear without recognizing anger can have adverse consequences.

In anticipation of potential feedback regarding this approach, Marcus provides an example from Donald Trump's presidency. Initially, Trump was accused of appealing to fear; however, it became evident over time that he was actually eliciting anger. This strategy was employed to garner support and mobilize the electorate (Marcus 2023, p.13).

Marcus's proposal on models of citizenship should also be read in this context. The proposal seems valuable in that it bridges the gap between Enlightenment rationalism and theories that deny the role of deliberate and conscious policymaking. However, the attractiveness of the proposal seems limited. While empirical research supports the thesis that it correctly explains the functioning of a liberal democratic society (see MacKuen et al. 2010), it does not appear to provide practical solutions for improving the situation in conflicted societies. Marcus does not explicitly state this, but it seems that his theory would indicate that in situations of deep conflict in society, one should strive to sow anxiety. For anxiety can be a catalyst for reflection based on conscious awareness, which can lead to improvements in the country through discussion and openness to new ideas and positions. The question arises as to whether a positive emotional turn can only occur through anxiety. Anxiety is an unpleasant state, and experimenting with it on a social scale seems both unpredictable and unethical. Therefore, it is difficult to recommend such measures to politicians, NGOs, and the media. It is crucial to acknowledge that scientific theories are subject to scrutiny and can be falsified, as suggested by Marcus's reference to Karl Popper, the founder of falsificationism. If a theoretical conclusion appears counterintuitive, it is ethically questionable to attempt to implement it in society.

However, there is potential for further development of affective intelligence theory, particularly in the area of subjective perception of emotive states. Marcus acknowledges the significant influence of culture on these perceptions and poses key questions that have yet to be addressed by affective intelligence theory: "Does cultural specificity apply to preconscious affective appraisals? If so, to all or but some, and if so, to what end?" (Marcus 2023, p.14). Addressing these inquiries could lead to significant advancements, particularly in the realm of *metaphoric redescription* as outlined by Mouffe. This, in turn, could pave the

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way for the identification of conditions that promote emotional change, a key objective of the ENCODE project.

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5. MOUFFE'S AND NUSSBAUM'S THEORIES OF EMOTIONAL POLITICS: AN EXPOSITION

In the following chapter, we present Chantal Mouffe's theory of agonism/populism, and Martha Nussbaum's theory of political emotions. Both theorists emphasize the significance of emotive states in politics and attempt to show how they can be mobilized within liberal democracies. Both scholars are regarded as eminent authorities in their respective areas of specialization, with Nussbaum focusing on moral philosophy, ethics, and the theory of justice, and Mouffe specializing in democratic theory, populism, and conflicts in politics.

There is, however, another important reason for selecting this pairing. By adopting Mouffe's approach as the theoretical foundation for the entire project, we concluded that a key element of her agonistic thinking must also be reflected in how we juxtapose the theories. In other words, we have created an agonistic theoretical framework, comparing theories that, while addressing similar topics, present competing judgments and even ways of thinking in many areas. For example, while Mouffe asserts that the crisis of contemporary liberal democracies is endogenous—stemming from the tensions at the heart of modern democracies—Nussbaum emphasizes that this crisis has an external catalyst, such as the global economic crisis, climate change, or pandemics. While Mouffe seeks radical reform of existing democratic orders, Nussbaum looks for mechanisms to protect and stabilize them. Finally, while Mouffe critiques contemporary political liberalism, though she largely belongs to this camp, Nussbaum staunchly defends it, although she acknowledges its problems.

The spirit of agonistic politics, therefore, is, in our view, to also allow, at the theoretical level, space for debate and peaceful confrontation between different concepts. This task is particularly interesting because there are few well-developed examples of such direct comparisons in academic literature (see Leiviskä and Pyy, 2021). It is also challenging, as both scholars clearly differ in their affiliations to traditions and approaches to political theory and philosophy.

5.1 CHANTAL MOUFFE

In our analysis, particular attention will be given to Mouffe's two theories: the theory of agonism and, to some extent its continuation, the theory of (left-wing) populism. Both can be understood as a kind of *theoretical intervention*, highlighting their activist character and strong grounding in a specific historical moment (see Mouffe, 2013, p.xiv). Emotive states play a crucial role in both of them, although Mouffe defines them somewhat outdatedly as passions: "the various affective forces which are at the origin of collective forms of identifications," which are also "one of the main moving forces in the field of politics" (Mouffe, 2005, p.24). An explanation for this may lie in the fact that, while emotions and affects are typically attached to individuals, passions have a collective nature, forming collective identities (Mouffe, 2022, p.29). The aim of both theories is "to 'sublime' those passions by mobilizing them towards democratic designs, by creating collective forms of identification around democratic objectives" (Mouffe, 2013, p.9).

The theory of political agonism is both chronologically older and broader in scope. In this framework, Mouffe proposes a metaphorical redescription of the inherent competition within democracy, aiming to align it with liberal values (Mouffe, 2013, p.6). In other words, she argues that while conflict cannot be erased from democracy, it can at least be redefined:

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instead of antagonism—where political struggle is framed as a battle between enemies—agonism places adversaries at the center of political contestation (Mouffe, 2005, pp.20–21). In an agonistic framework, political opponents view each other as "somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question," meaning they are recognized as legitimate opponents (Mouffe, 2000, p.102). While they disagree on the application and interpretation of democratic principles, they share a fundamental commitment to their existence.

Mouffe's theory of populism largely stems from her reflections on agonism but is also a continuation of her earlier theoretical work with Ernesto Laclau (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), widely regarded as the foremost contemporary theorist and principal defender of populism (see Laclau, 2005). For Mouffe and Laclau, populism is a mechanism for (re)constructing "the people"—the political "We" whose will should be respected through democratic political decisions, as discussed in our previous report (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, pp.14–16). To reiterate, "the people" is not an objectively existing social entity but a deliberately constructed formation—something that is not a flaw but rather the essence of democracy (Thomassen, 2024, p.150). It emerges through a particular form of political struggle: agonism. Populist reconstruction is always a temporary outcome of political confrontation, forming a chain of equivalence in which various groups and their demands are united under a common banner. The strategic unity of such alliances is facilitated by shared slogans, iconic figures, and "empty signifiers"—broad, malleable symbols open to multiple interpretations—aimed at challenging the old hegemony and the existing, exclusionary political power structure (Mouffe, 2018, p.27).

To better understand both theories and the transition between them, it is useful to first consider (1) Mouffe's general theory of politics and (2) her characterization of neoliberal hegemony as a threat to liberal democracy.

First, Mouffe argues that political reality operates on two levels, which she terms *the political* and *politics* (Mouffe, 2000, p.101). The political refers to a deeper level of irreducible tension, rivalry, and struggle that underlies all societies. These conflicts arise, on the one hand, from the inherently antagonistic aspects of human nature and, on the other, from the existence of political moments—situations in which we confront dilemmas crucial to the formation of our self-identification (Mouffe, 2013, p.18). According to Mouffe, these are moments in which we decide taking a stance in disputes that cannot be reduced to mere rational calculation or ethical judgment. Such political decisions give rise to social divisions and the fundamental distinction between *us* and *them*, which she sees as the essence of politics (see Lefebvre, 2005).

The level of *politics* is shallower in the sense that it overlays this deep-seated conflictual dimension with an order of institutionalized political actions. Through discursive and symbolic mechanisms, politicians and political parties construct group identities and form alliances capable of temporarily stabilizing key fronts in social struggles. In this way, the fundamental antagonism is transformed into what Mouffe calls hegemony. This concept serves as a reminder that every political order is always a temporary outcome of political struggle, and the vision of the world it embodies is dictated by the victors (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, pp.51–52).

This might require further clarification, as Mouffe has a distinctive view of the condition of contemporary democracies. She understands them as a contingent combination of two elements: (1) the classical idea of a political system based on the principle of the sovereign

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power of the people and (2) a *symbolic framework* dominated by the values of liberal discourse, such as individual liberty and human rights (Mouffe, 2000, p.2).The core issue in modern liberal democracies lies in the tension between these two forces, which manifests in multiple ways. Democracy emphasizes the principle of citizen equality and majority rule, while liberalism prioritizes individual freedoms and the protection of their rights from excessive majority influence. Democracy requires boundaries, within which power is exercised by a specific *demos*; liberalism, by contrast, advocates the removal of boundaries and the universal application of its principles. Most importantly, democracy is inherently political—beneath the surface of the "will of the people" lies an essential struggle for political power. Liberalism, on the other hand, assumes—mistakenly, according to Mouffe—that it is possible to eliminate conflict from politics and establish a rational consensus (cf. Vasilev, 2015).

According to Mouffe, the historical balance between the democratic and liberal traditions has ended with the temporary dominance of the liberal element over the democratic one (Mouffe, 2022, p.3). Fukuyama's *The end of history* (1992) signaled the victory of liberalism, establishing a "consensus at the center," where all major political forces accepted liberal values. However, as Mouffe points out, *the political* must inevitably return. The liberal consensus has impoverished party competition in Western democracies, narrowing the real choice between different political visions and weakening voters' ability to identify with traditional political parties—both of which are essential conditions for effective pluralism (Mouffe, 2005, p. 86). As a result, this has led to the rise of extreme and anti-system parties. While Mouffe remains committed to liberal values, she views this situation with a sober understanding:

> It is high time to realize that, to a great extent, the success of right-wing populist parties comes from the fact that they articulate, albeit in a very problematic way, real democratic demands which are not taken into account by traditional parties. They also provide people with some form of hope, with the belief that things could be different. Of course it is an illusionary hope, funded on false premise and unacceptable mechanism of exclusion where xenophobia usually plays a central role. But when they are the only channels for the expression of political passions, their pretence to represent an alternative is very seductive (Mouffe, 2005, p.71).

One of the sources of contemporary democracy's problems is, paradoxically, the *over-effectiveness* of liberalism, which has reduced the realm of mainstream politics to "a neutral field of competing interests" (Mouffe, 2000, pp.30–31). The key to reversing this trend lies in recognizing the fundamental value of conflict as a mechanism for generating distinct political identities—ones that can channel political passions effectively.

At this point, both the activist nature of Mouffe's work and the gradual transformation of her theory—from agonism to a defense of populism—become apparent. From the outset, Mouffe explicitly states that the political force capable of realizing radical agonistic democracy is the left, which, in her view, has a deeper understanding of democracy's conflictual nature and carries, as part of its very DNA, the mission of including ever more excluded groups and individuals within the sphere of representation (see Thomassen, 2016). However, she clarifies that her intention is not "to defend traditional social democracy and to pretend that it provides the solution" (Mouffe, 2000, p.123). Instead, her agonistic concept seeks a different form.

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Over time, new themes emerge in her work, including ecology and the climate crisis. While even in her more recent writings Mouffe continues to advocate for traditional leftist socio-economic solutions—such as a strong role for state institutions in the economy—she ultimately supports, in her own terms, a *different articulation* of the leftist project. This new articulation is broadly understood *left-wing populism*, which, at a theoretical level, further develops the solutions she previously explored (Mouffe, 2018). The form has changed, but Mouffe's political objective remains the same: the construction of a new hegemony—an alliance of the excluded and social liberals—that would more effectively realize the ideals of agonistic democracy

5.2 MARTHA NUSSBAUM

As we pointed out at the beginning, within the agonistic theoretical framework, it is useful to juxtapose Mouffe's theory, which at many points critiques the legacy of liberalism, with the views of someone who identifies as a liberal. For this role, we have chosen Martha Nussbaum and her theory of political emotions.

In *Political Emotions*, Nussbaum grapples with what she refers to as "a problem in the history of liberalism," namely the failure to adequately recognize the role that emotions can play in supporting the principles and political culture of "an aspiring yet imperfect society" (Nussbaum, 2013, pp.1–24). Her concern goes beyond merely developing socio-political frameworks that can be deemed just—meaning frameworks that, in the tradition of political liberalism, do not unduly restrict the individual's right to pursue and realize their conception of the good life, provided it does not infringe on the legitimate rights and claims of others. She believes that it is also necessary to explain the processes by which the tenets of liberalism become embedded in public consciousness *through* emotions.

However, before delving into an assessment of Nussbaum's theory of political emotions, it is important to highlight how her approach is shaped by (1) her perception of the social role of philosophy and (2) her general theory of emotions.

First of all, it is important to note that, according to Nussbaum, philosophy should teach us how we should lead an "examined life" (Duarte, 2016, pp.472–473; Nussbaum, 2018, p.10). In this rather classical approach, understanding oneself, including one's own emotions, protects us from suffering and allows us to achieve eudaimonia, a happy and peaceful life. According to Nussbaum, since ancient Greece, social philosophy has had a therapeutic dimension: "dedicated to the relief of human suffering" (Nussbaum, 1996, p.485). What distinguishes it, however, from other "medical" practices is its broader understanding of the scope of human needs that condition the possibility of preventing suffering, also in the socio-political context. In this spirit, Nussbaum develops her "capabilities approach," an effort aimed at defining basic human entitlements or real opportunities that "all citizens must have up to some acceptable threshold level, if the society in question is to count as even minimally just" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.236). Among the list is also the capability for emotion, that is, the real opportunity to

> Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety (Nussbaum, 2008, p.237).

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There is, therefore, an important connection that fits into her theory of political emotions. Philosophy must be able to engage emotions in defense of the liberal social order because this order, more than any other, *in return* allows us to fulfill our emotional needs. This emphasis on the significance of emotional needs aligns well with what we outlined in D2.1 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.30).

The second source of her theory is more complex: the theory of political emotions stems from her general theory of emotions, which is based on a rather unintuitive assumption, namely, that feelings are fundamentally not related to sensation, but to thinking. As Nussbaum herself admits, "it might seem very strange to suggest that emotions are forms of judgment. And yet it is something close to this thesis that I shall defend" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.22). This assumption, though radical in its form, is nonetheless consistent with our general characterization of emotions, in which we emphasized that they have "meaning and focus, and they are intentional" (see sec. 2.1; Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.9). Of course, emotions are embodied and accompanied by bodily sensations, but in her view no such experience, no form of feeling, allows us to scientifically distinguish one emotion from another (Nussbaum, 2008, p.58). Therefore, from the Stoics, Nussbaum adopts understanding of emotions as a type of *evaluative judgment*, which has cognitive value because (1) it is always directed towards some object, (2) which is intentionally perceived and interpreted by the person experiencing the emotion, (3) based on the beliefs the person holds about the object, (4) and how they assess its value or importance (Nussbaum, 2008, pp.27–30). Nussbaum thus distinguishes emotions from objectless "bodily appetites" (hunger or thirst) or "objectless moods" (irritation and endogenous depression). In her view, true emotions are only felt towards objects that are significant to us, revealing that we hold some opinion about them (see Hunt, 2006, pp.553–556).

There are a few things worth highlighting here. First, Nussbaum refers to her approach to emotions as the "cognitive-evaluative" approach, but she also uses the term "cognitive view," in line with the typology of theories of emotions presented in D2.1 and in this report (see sec. 2.1). In her view, "cognitive" refers only to those thought processes that are "concerned with receiving and processing information," with Nussbaum emphasizing that "I do not mean to imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.23). Emotions are *thinking*, they "look very much like thoughts" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.33), and we can assess their validity and correctness by relating them to the current state of knowledge and the commonly accepted value system (Nussbaum, 2004, p.28).

Second, when Nussbaum says that emotions are directed at important objects, she means that we treat them as significant for our own flourishing (Nussbaum, 2008, p.30). Emphasizing the eudaimonic nature of emotions, she notes that this does not mean the instrumentalization of the objects of emotions – we can value them as endowed with intrinsic worth or value, but in a certain sense, the objects of our emotions are always ours. Indirectly, we acknowledge our limitations, showing "our own neediness and incompleteness before parts of the world that we do not fully control" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.19).

General theory of emotions also helps explain how emotions acquire a relatively lasting character, influencing not only our behavior and political actions at specific moments. From the philosophical tradition of the Stoics, Nussbaum adopts the belief that in the process of creating emotions, we first form a belief about the world, which we then accept or reject, thus creating a specific judgment-emotion. Let us now give the floor to Nussbaum herself:

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> Although initially there may be an act of acceptance, and judgment is defined in terms of that act, there is also an ensuing state, namely of having that content inside, so to speak; one accepts or assents to that proposition continuously. It seems that emotions have exactly this twofold character: we initially assent to or acknowledge a proposition, and then there it is, part of our cognitive makeup (Nussbaum, 2008, p.46).

For example, I might listen to a speech by a politician, and as a result, a thought might arise in my mind that this is a wise person, and for my own good, it is worth supporting them. If I accept this judgment, a relatively lasting emotion will develop within me, and it will become part of my cognitive makeup. Sometimes, such accepted judgment-emotions can also have a very primal character – they can occur at an early stage in life, but their influence may only manifest much later, to some extent conditioning our behavior.

And here, the general theory meets a specific political problem, which for Nussbaum is related to the emotional turmoil surrounding the rise to power of President Donald Trump. According to Nussbaum, a combination of unfavorable socio-economic circumstances and the controversial figure of Trump awakened a primal fear in American society, which, to some extent, everyone carries within themselves (Nussbaum, 2018, pp.8–9). It has evolutionary history, and its presence can be traced through the activity of specific areas of the brain (mainly the amygdala), but as Nussbaum emphasizes, emotions are not "hardwired from birth, but are shaped in countless ways by social contexts and social norms. That is good news, since it means that we have considerable room to shape the emotions of our own political culture" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.12).

Using an analogy to the development of each individual, Nussbaum argues that for proper development, society also requires a facilitating environment, in which hope and trust will help reduce antisocial fear (Nussbaum, 2018, p.34). However, to achieve this, we cannot limit ourselves to cultivating "idle hope," but must create real opportunities for the growth of "practical hope," which means building narratives and institutional solutions that will stimulate social imagination and commitment to action. In line with the spirit of liberal philosophy, hope is a "practical postulate," "is not a matter of probability calculation but is a choice" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.207; Plumb, 2014, p.158).

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6. MOUFFE'S AND NUSSBAUM'S THEORIES OF EMOTIONAL POLITICS: AN ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of two (sets of) **normative** theories developed by Mouffe and Nussbaum. The analysis is conducted in accordance with the criteria presented and discussed in section 1.2. We thus analyze both theories in terms of their scope and depth, adaptability, applicability, connectivity and validity. Further, we provide a brief evaluation of their theories in terms of their relevance to the general assumptions of the ENCODE project. This chapter concludes with a brief comparison of how both scholars frame emotions and incorporate them into mechanisms of social change.

6.1 CHANTAL MOUFFE

6.1.1 SCOPE AND DEPTH

One of the potential issues with Mouffe's theory is that it attributes a key role in politics to its national dimension. The Belgian scholar critiques cosmopolitanism and theories affirming globalization, arguing against the abandonment of the concept of state sovereignty. In her view, democratic politics requires a "moment of closure," a determination of who belongs to the *people* and who does not (Mouffe, 2000, p.40). She warns against an unrealistic vision of a post-political world free from classic political conflicts.

This is particularly evident when she writes about the future of a united Europe. According to her, we should accept the fact that, in the near future, national forms of allegiance will not disappear, and *people* will not relinquish "their national identity in favor of a post-national European one" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 44). Attempting to impose such a shift, she argues, could be very dangerous and lead to a negative attitude toward the European project.

However, this does not mean that Mouffe does not attempt to apply her theory to the level of international politics. In this area, she proposes the *pluralization of hegemonies*, which means abandoning the "illusory hope for a political unification of the world" in favor of constructing a *multipolar world*, composed of "regional poles, organized according to different economic and political models without a central authority" (Mouffe, 2013, p.22). Such a model does not exclude interstate conflicts, but at least it does not assume the *supposedly* objective superior rationality and morality of one state over others. In this vision, a united Europe would be one of these poles in a pluralistic world.

Mouffe's theory emphasizes that political phenomena occur at different depths, which has significant implications for understanding affective polarization in the context of ENCODE. On one hand, she shows that political representation, understood as the fundamental mechanism for constructing collective political identities, engages our emotions and provokes affective states at a level that lies beneath our conscious, fully controlled, rational political activity. In other words, political representation is not solely about the institutionalized aggregation of votes but, at its core, is a manifestation of an ontological feature of our nature—*the inescapable conflictuality* that defines what politics is.

On the other hand, the result of this process of creating collective political identities (representations) is that these identifications lack any claim to possessing an essentialist

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nature. Our political identity, the image, and sense of belonging to a particular community, is always just a social construct (Mouffe, 2000, p.17).

The strength of the impact of this identification process, as well as its effects, including affective polarization, will not depend on pre-existing social formations (e.g., nations), but rather on the active role of political leaders or political parties capable of structuring and channeling our natural emotional needs (Disch, 2021, pp.131–132). This depends on their skillful use of discursive and symbolic mechanisms (e.g., creating narratives, political imagery), which deepen the struggle for realizing certain political demands, embedding it in the framework of multidimensional political identities.

This makes her theory, on one hand, appear exceptionally radical due to the extreme social constructivism it assumes (there are only constructions, no natural political identities). On the other hand, however, her theory might seem—paradoxically—conservative, considering how deeply Mouffe is attached to the idea of classical political representation. Some far-left theorists, such as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2000), call for the complete rejection of political representation and a withdrawal from traditional institutional state structures (Mouffe, 2005, p.112). Commenting on their work, the Belgian scholar attempts to show, however, that while there are real problems with the current state of democratic representation, there is no possibility of an effective pluralist politics without representation (Mouffe, 2018, p.79). A deeper understanding of the essence of political phenomena, as Mouffe discusses, suggests that democratic representation should be strengthened, not abolished.

6.1.2 ADAPTABILITY

Mouffe's theory has limitations in terms of its adaptability, which aligns with her general understanding of politics, and the author is fully aware of this. As she acknowledges herself, the conclusions drawn from her theoretical reflections on new forms of left-wing populism cannot be freely extended even to all European countries because "although the question of populism is, no doubt, also relevant in Eastern Europe, those countries necessitate a special analysis. They are marked by their specific history under communism and their political culture presents different features" (Mouffe, 2018, p.12). She emphasizes the same limitation in the context of countries in South America, where left-wing populism is gaining ground.

This limitation arises from Mouffe's opposition to all forms of political and theoretical universalism. However, this does not mean, in her view, the necessity of "accepting a relativism that would justify any political system," but rather a readiness for discussion on the "plurality of legitimate answers to the question of what is the just political order" (Mouffe, 2000, p.62). This leads to an important lesson for ENCODE in how the experiences of Western European countries should not be seen as paradigmatic examples to be applied universally, but rather understood in context, with the awareness that different regions of the world may offer different political solutions based on their own unique histories and circumstances.

Mouffe agrees that the European Union is a good example of how excessive conflict (antagonism) can be reduced to a level of creative rivalry (agonism). She believes that this is what Western Europe experienced after World War II. However, as Mouffe points out, the mechanism used can also serve as a cautionary tale—the European project, as proposed by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, was deliberately devoid of affective dimensions. In other words, it purposefully excluded political passions, in response to the traumatic experiences

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of the past (Mouffe, 2022, p.33). However, this ultimately led to the failure to create strong identification ties among Europeans at a pan-European level.

The experiences of Western Europe cannot, therefore, serve as a model for a political community that effectively engages citizens emotionally. However, they can provide an important example for other attempts at supranational cooperation, *if* Europe makes use of the unique specificity of its historical experiences and understands their positive political message. The European Union could propose an agonistically competitive model with the Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism, if it reconnected with the European social democratic tradition that has been at the heart of European politics since the Second World War (Mouffe, 2013, p.60).

6.1.3 APPLICABILITY

Mouffe sees the possibility of reconstructing a more inclusive democratic order primarily in the form of classical (party-based) political competition. In *Towards a Green Democratic Revolution*, referring to Evgeny Morozov, she points out that in the contemporary world, "technological solutionism" has become fashionable, which holds that "all problems, even political ones, have a technological solution" (2022, pp.14–15). Mouffe is very skeptical of this approach, arguing that it serves as an ideological smokescreen for "the big companies," which often exploit traumatic moments for societies and individuals, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to increase their control over new areas of social life.

According to Mouffe, internet-based solutionism is just another version of the post-political conception that became dominant in the 1990s. The philosopher sees this as part of market-driven actions that inevitably clash with the principles of democracy, which, at its core, has a political nature. As she ultimately states:

> To be sure, the contradictions between the demands of the market and those of the citizens would remain, and the incompatibility between capitalism and democracy would not disappear, but this new form of digital post-politics would represent a serious setback for the forces of democracy (Mouffe, 2022, p.28).

In a surprising way, one could say (once again) that Mouffe's theory is conservative in this regard—attached to methods of action rooted in the traditionally understood democratic procedures (Mouffe, 2018, p.19). While, on a normative level (values and their implementation), she anticipates the need for a hegemonic transformation, this transformation does not become a revolutionary rupture. It seems this arises from her belief in the unchanging nature of the political, which translates into her skeptical stance toward the internet and new media.

6.1.4 CONNECTIVITY

Mouffe's theory intersects with many areas of social sciences and humanities. Broadly speaking, her reflections critically engage with the Marxist tradition, emphasizing the conflictual nature of politics. She is especially influenced by the approach of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, from whom Mouffe borrows and creatively develops the concept of hegemony as political struggle within the symbolic field. At various points in her work, Mouffe has also drawn on other classical philosophers and theorists (such as Ludwig Wittgenstein or Pierre Bourdieu), as well as the latest developments in the affective turn mentioned in the previous report (Mouffe, 2022, p.28). Additionally, two other points of

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reference in her work seem particularly important: poststructuralist philosophy and the psychoanalytic tradition.

From poststructuralist philosophy, Mouffe adopts the concept of politics understood as action within a discursive space, where communicative and symbolic processes hold a privileged position. In this context, she draws heavily on the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. From the latter, she borrows the notion of "irreducible alterity," which helps explain why the construction of (political) identity is always relational and requires engagement with a group perceived as foreign or hostile (Mouffe, 2000, pp.32–33).

From the psychoanalytic tradition, Mouffe derives her understanding of passion, which she compares to the concept of "libidinal investment," the positive power emerging in the process of an individual's identification with a group, as described by Sigmund Freud (Mouffe, 2022, p.30). Following Jacques Lacan, she emphasizes that this identification process unfolds across different registers (symbolic, imaginary), and its stakes involve what Lacan called *jouissance*—"the body enjoyment animating human desire," which arises from the imagination of one's identity as symbolic coherence and discursive closure (Mouffe, 2022, p.29; cf. Brockelman, 2003).

6.1.5 VALIDITY

In the context of the validity of the theories discussed, it is worth noting that in one of her works, Mouffe somewhat surprisingly emphasizes that "it is essential to distinguish between social theory and political praxis" (Mouffe, 2022, pp.26–27). Such a distinction is difficult to draw in her work, as highly abstract philosophical threads often intertwine with discussions of specific political practice. Furthermore, this distinction seems directly contradictory to the spirit of her work. In simple terms, we could say that her theory has a character of political praxis: it not only seeks to explain reality but also aims to change it (see Tambakaki, 2014).

For example, in trying to answer the question of how to increase people's allegiance to democracy, Mouffe controversially argues that: "Democracy does not require a theory of truth and notions like unconditionality and universal validity" (Mouffe, 2022, p.18). She logically explains this by suggesting that

> Abstract ideas, although they might be important in elaborating theories, are not what make people act politically and mobilize their energies, because they do not convey the affective force that is indispensable for acquiring real power. What moves people to act are affects and the identifications in which those affects are inscribed (Mouffe, 2022, pp.26–27).

In other words, to increase the chances of mobilizing opposing political forces, we need a shift in ideas and slogans that will resonate with broader masses. According to Mouffe, political theory itself is not suited for this purpose. However, in line with her theory, what blocks the possibility of change is the old hegemony, which is influenced by what (and how) philosophy and science define as possible or true. The vision of political theory as a social practice, detached from the influence of political disputes and divisions, seems to contradict the fundamental assumptions of Mouffe's work. This creates a significant challenge in assessing the validity of her arguments.

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Comprehensiveness

Chantal Mouffe presents a clearly defined ontology and epistemology rooted in the poststructuralist tradition, particularly in Derridean deconstruction. Ontologically, her approach is based on anti-essentialism, where she argues that political entities are constructed in a dynamically changing environment of social relations. Within her epistemology, Mouffe emphasizes that human knowledge is entangled in the prevailing frameworks of socio-political order, which she calls hegemony.

In general, Mouffe's theory aligns well with studies on emotions and affect in politics, though it seems that the author focuses more on their structural determinants rather than the psychological or affective mechanisms. As a result, it is not entirely clear whether her defense of passions as a source of individual engagement in politics fully aligns with her theory of hegemony, which is primarily symbolic and discursive in nature (Stavrakakis, 2014, p.118). While Mouffe underscores the importance of passion in politics, she does not develop this theme in detail, which could be a limitation when applying her work to the study of emotional depolarization.

The essence of both discussed theories is to expand the contemporary theoretical discourse on democracy. In the case of agonism, Mouffe paradoxically introduces the concepts of Carl Schmitt, the notorious critic of democracy whose collaboration with the Nazis tarnished his reputation (see Mouffe, 1999). In the case of left-wing populism, Mouffe defends a concept that is considered by many contemporary theorists to be a major threat to the liberal political order. Mouffe thus offers a comprehensive theory that introduces new concepts useful for analysis. However, her approach requires further development in certain areas, such as incorporating theories that more specifically explain emotions and affects in politics (Tietjen, 2023, p.228).

Logical Coherence

The key categories in Mouffe's theory are well-grounded, and the structure of her argument is logical and clear. However, the abstract nature of the concepts she employs may complicate their operationalization in practical research. Mouffe consistently demonstrates how *antagonism* is the starting point of social relations, *agonism* is the mechanism for transforming conflict in a constructive way, and *hegemony* provides stability but does not eliminate the potential for change.

However, there is a logical tension that emerges when we try to fit her proposed strategic actions into the broader tradition of democratic theory. This is particularly evident when we examine the central concept of "the people" in her theory (Thomassen, 2024, p.150). Her constructivist approach seems to diminish the weight and depth that the classical concept of democracy attributed to this category. There is a tension between the idea of the people as a sovereign subject of democratic power and the assumption of the people as a construct, a result of the strategic political activity of political parties.

The problem seems to be that such an approach limits the agency or even the subjectivity of the people themselves. Mouffe is aware of this issue but argues that this is precisely the paradoxical nature of democracy, in which the unstable construction is the source of legitimate power, allowing the system to remain open to attempts to include new social groups and different interpretations of the good life. By defending this paradoxical structure, Mouffe positions herself within the tradition of theorists close to the postmodern paradigm,

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although she does not explicitly categorize herself within this group. Her work may not contain clear logical contradictions, but she asserts that such contradictions are at the heart of liberal democracies, as she demonstrates in her critique of defenders of rational political discourse, such as Jürgen Habermas (Mouffe, 2005, pp.10–11).

Critical Stance

At the beginning of *For a Left Populism*, Mouffe clearly declares: "This book is meant to be a political intervention and it openly acknowledges its partisan nature" (Mouffe, 2018, p.12). This work is where the political commitment of the author is most explicitly expressed, but to some extent, all her works share a critical strategy of action—her theory simultaneously explains political reality and intervenes critically in it. She seeks to present her understanding of key concepts for democracy, while also suggesting an active change in how they are used and institutionalized within democratic political systems. Mouffe creates works that consciously utilize historical moments of rupture (later referred to as "populist moments"), exposing the shortcomings in dominant political theory frameworks, and at the same time, pointing out how her theories can, at a given moment, concretely influence the shape of the dominant political dispute. In the work cited at the beginning of this section, Mouffe justifies her active involvement by stating: "We are witnessing a crisis of the neoliberal hegemonic formation and this crisis opens the possibility for the construction of a more democratic order" (Mouffe, 2018, p.3). In her proposal, she does not hide her affiliation with the left-wing political camp. It is for them—left-wing political forces, parties, and social movements—that Mouffe's theory is meant to serve as both a source of advice and a critique of action.

6.1.6 EMPIRICAL POTENTIAL FOR ENCODE

Mouffe's theory holds empirical potential for ENCODE research in three aspects. First, based on her theory, a general directive or research guideline can be established:

- Hypotheses formulated within empirical research should address political phenomena occurring on two separate, yet interconnected levels: (1) the level of institutionalized political competition (politics) and (2) the level of primary forms of conflict, typical for specific communities (political).

Second, within ENCODE, it is also possible to empirically test various manifestations of the "democratic paradox," which in Mouffe's discussions takes the form of a general research hypothesis:

- Actions and mechanisms aiming to eliminate conflict from the political life of a community paradoxically (in the long run) lead to its escalation.

Such research can focus on the institutional design of the democratic public sphere (e.g., in the form of citizens' panels) and whether it allows for a certain level of conflict within deliberation, as well as how this affects the quality of its outcomes.

Finally, third, Mouffe's theory provides a rich set of research categories, particularly useful in analyzing new political phenomena, such as:

- New forms of populism: Her concept of the people allows studying how populist leaders mobilize emotions and create opposition against the "elites."

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- New social movements: Analyses of movements like Black Lives Matter or Extinction Rebellion can employ the theory of hegemony to understand how alternative narratives become dominant or are marginalized.

However, it should be noted that Mouffe's theory is often very abstract and does not provide clear guidelines for research methodology. This means that researchers must develop operational definitions for concepts like "agonism" and "hegemony" themselves. Additionally, although Mouffe acknowledges the significance of emotions in politics, her theory does not offer a detailed model for analyzing affective mechanisms in political reality.

6.2 MARTHA NUSSBAUM

6.2.1 SCOPE AND DEPTH

Considering the importance of emotions in politics, Nussbaum states that

> The primary unit of analysis is the nation, on account of its pivotal importance in setting life conditions for all on a basis of equal respect, and as the largest unit we know until now that is decently accountable to people's voices and capable of expressing their desire to give themselves laws of their own choosing (Nussbaum, 2013, p.17).

However, this sentence requires some clarification. Indeed, in her theory of political emotions, Nussbaum emphasizes that the way emotions influence politics is shaped by the socio-cultural context, which is most easily studied at the national level. However, her previously mentioned classical view of philosophy's role in an individual's life means that Nussbaum's political theory sometimes intersects with her moral philosophy, leading to claims for universal applicability – and, on the level of political imagination, the idea of cosmopolitanism (see Dallmayr, 2003). Nussbaum does note, however, that she is not in favor of simple globalization, such as the creation of a "world state," but rather advocates for "fundamental membership" of individuals in "the fundamental family of all human beings" (Nussbaum, 1996, p.506). In this sense, Nussbaum—as she herself observes—distances herself from, among others, the work of John Rawls, whose theory is an important point of reference for her. Nonetheless, she does not believe there is a logical flaw in her approach, as she explains elsewhere: "Emotions directed at the nation and its goals are often invaluable in encouraging people to think bigger and recommit themselves to a greater good" (Nussbaum, 2013, p.3).

The distinction introduced earlier between Nussbaum's general theory of emotions and her theory of political emotions helps to understand why Nussbaum argues that it is impossible to create a useful "general philosophical theory of the construction of political emotions" (Nussbaum, 2013, p.200). Nussbaum attempts to explain what emotions are, but this pertains to her general theory of emotions, which, to some extent, aims to explain the emotions of animals as well. In the realm of politics, according to her, we can only rely on a "semitheorized account," trying to maintain a balance between the unattainable level of universal objectivity and purely subjective observation, a balance between "too thick a theory and no theory" (Nussbaum, 2013, p.200).

Nussbaum also points out that a double distinction should be made: on one hand, between general and concrete emotions, and on the other, between background and situational emotions. Emotions can pertain to objects that are both highly general (e.g., world peace)

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and very specific (e.g., a particular candidate in an election). As evaluative judgments, they can persist through various situations (general emotions) or arise in the context of a particular situation (Nussbaum, 2008, p.69). Nussbaum emphasizes that especially significant are those emotions that are general and lie in the background, such as political justice, which she sees as an example (Nussbaum, 2008, p.72). These emotions form "the fabric of one's life and are crucial to the explanation of one's actions, though it might take a specific circumstance to call them into awareness" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.71). An important takeaway should be the conviction that some of these judgments may be fundamental to the durability of democratic systems. In this sense, Nussbaum argues that the task is to create "public emotions," which are essential "to keep at bay forces that lurk in all societies." In her view, these are mainly hope and love, which can be found in a wisely understood patriotism (Nussbaum, 2013, p.3).

6.2.2 ADAPTABILITY

Nussbaum's work, to a significant extent, represents a theoretical analysis of the possibility of realizing the American Dream—living in a specific American socio-political system that potentially allows individuals to freely pursue their own vision of a good life within the framework of universally respected and shared rights and values. On one hand, this stems from the fact that her philosophy fits within the tradition of liberalism, which draws its expression and form from American culture. Nussbaum frequently refers to specific moments in American history and culture and consistently intertwines theoretical assumptions with examples from American political practice. This method aligns with her theoretical approach to emotions, which she argues are, in a sense, always "localized." They are not only embodied but also grounded in a particular place and time (Nussbaum, 2008, p.31).

This does not mean, however, that Nussbaum fails to recognize the possibilities and value of comparative research or the applicability of her theory to different contexts. In fact, *Political Emotions* is based on a parallel analysis of two cases: the American and the Indian—another frequent reference point in her work. Moreover, Nussbaum remains in constant dialogue with European thought, which extends beyond her philosophical roots in classical Greek philosophy and Kant's work. As she herself acknowledges: "Many Americans right now don't agree with my view, which they will see as resembling European-style social democracy, for example, in its idea that health care is a basic social right" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.).

Nussbaum argues that this stems from a broader issue—the lack of a *sense of the common good* in American politics and the relatively low regard Americans have for public debates and the broader role of philosophy in social life. However, it is worth noting that the challenges facing the EU appear in her work only sporadically, often as a secondary point within her discussions on contemporary patriotism (Nussbaum, 2013, p.222).

6.2.3 APPLICABILITY

Nussbaum is particularly interested in how various cultural, artistic, and educational practices shape and influence political emotions—that is, how they affect the way we internalize different evaluative judgments about the world (Hunt, 2006, pp.560–561). She focuses especially on education, which she sees as a key element in the formation and defense of a pluralistic society. She emphasizes not only the need for access to knowledge essential for shaping informed citizens and fostering critical thinking but also the benefits of exposing young people to a broad range of experiences and the emotions associated with

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them. This includes initiatives such as "a national service program required of all young people that would put young citizens into close contact with people different in age, ethnicity, and economic level, in the context of constructive service" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.221).

Nussbaum relatively rarely addresses the potential of the Internet and, in particular, social media in this context. Instead, she warns about the price we pay for universal access to information. In her view, the main issues are "offensive speech" and "false reports", which necessitate a careful reconsideration of the limits of free speech (Levmore and Nussbaum, 2012). As an antidote, she advocates not only the commonly recommended approaches of fostering digital literacy (such as promoting fact-checking and informed public debate) but also, more broadly, the cultivation of an emotional climate she describes as a "spirit of dissent and independence" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.50). However, her work lacks in-depth analyses of how new media and the Internet might also contribute to fostering this very climate.

6.2.4 CONNECTIVITY

As already mentioned, Nussbaum's theory draws extensively not only from the world of science but also from other domains of human activity, particularly literature and music (Eldridge, 1992). Her theoretical works on the history and current state of liberalism are filled with references to Mozart's music, the writings of Walt Whitman, and the works of James Joyce. She treats these not only as illustrations of social change but also as its very source.

In the realm of academic research, Nussbaum develops her theory in an interdisciplinary manner. Among the philosophers she considers key to understanding what emotions are and how we can study and differentiate them, she lists Aristotle, Chrysippus, Cicero, Seneca, Spinoza, Smith, and even Descartes, as well as Hume to some extent (Nussbaum, 2008, p.34). As she points out, "all of these figures define emotions in terms of belief", which is crucial to her conviction "that the cognitive elements are an essential part of the emotion's identity" (p.34). In her view, philosophical influences are strongly evident in psychology itself, particularly in developmental psychology, and as she argues:

> The Hellenistic thinkers are in some ways the parents of modern psychoanalysis, but they have not done the empirical work with actual children that would make such a practice well grounded in a developmental way (Nussbaum, 1996, p.491).

In one particularly significant passage, Nussbaum asserts that "Politics begins where we begin" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.21), emphasizing the formative impact of early childhood experiences on our later perception of political events. As a result, her work contains numerous references to contemporary psychologists, therapists, and clinical researchers, most notably Melanie Klein and Donald W. Winnicott.

Nussbaum also acknowledges her intellectual debt to the cognitive school in psychology, from which she draws insights on understanding emotion as "appraisal", a process over which we are sometimes helpless to exert control. Another key point of reference for her is anthropology, which leads her toward the idea that, to some extent, emotions are indeed an evaluative "social construction" (Nussbaum, 2008, p.23).

6.2.5 VALIDITY

The problem with assessing the validity of Nussbaum's work lies in how it is embedded within the broader tradition of Enlightenment thought. Karolina Wigura argues that her

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rationalist theory is, in fact, rooted in "a deeply ingrained romanticism and a denial of ways of thinking other than the liberal one" (Wigura, 2019, p.266). In other words, her theory of political emotions is based on certain presuppositions in which rationality is defined as a positive and valuable state. When Nussbaum attempts to move beyond this framework—when her universalist philosophy seeks grounding in something other than the Western vision of humans as rational individuals—a tension emerges. As Lester Hunt states:

> There is the gap between Nussbaum's insistence that we accept and affirm our animality and (physical) humanity on the one hand and her strategy of condemning some (apparently perfectly natural) emotions as morally deficient in themselves on the other hand (Hunt, 2006, p.576).

In other words, Nussbaum's efforts to reveal the rational dimension of emotions seem understandable within a specific cultural and philosophical tradition. Anna Wierzbicka argues that the sheer breadth of Nussbaum's erudition and the multitude of cultural references she employs paradoxically highlight how little attention she ultimately pays to the extent to which language itself shapes our understanding of our emotions (Wierzbicka, 2003).

Comprehensiveness

In *Upheavals of thought*, Nussbaum describes her ambition in the context of the comprehensiveness of her general theory of emotions as follows:

> It is not to be expected that any explanatory theory will preserve all the phenomena intact; but my assumption will be that a criterion of correctness for a theory on this topic is that it should preserve the truth of the "greatest number and the most basic" of these experiences,' and that it should be able to provide a convincing explanation for any errors in classification that it eventually ascribes to experience (Nussbaum, 2008, p.24).

This objection, however, takes a slightly different form when we move to the level of a more detailed theory of political emotions. There, Nussbaum tries to select rather interesting areas of emotion impact, e.g. by discussing in detail a catalogue of the applicability of emotions such as anger, disgust, shame or envy in legislation. This catalogue is clearly not complete, so it is difficult to read this as a deficiency in her theory, although of course the question of the author's selection of the emotions she discusses is debatable.

More problematic from an ENCODE perspective is Nussbaum's decision not to focus on how emotions are felt, but intellectually processed. This coincides to some extent with the decision made in our project to distinguish between emotions and affects, but unlike Nussbaum such a methodological decision was made in order to be able to focus more attention on the question of the political meaning of affects and not to remove them from the field of consideration of the political meaning of emotive states. Consequently – contrary to what Nussbaum claims – they fail to "preserve the truth of the 'greatest number and the most basic' of these experiences". This is particularly significant when considering emotions in relation to social traumas, as we discussed in D2.1 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.29).

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Logical coherence

In one of her works, Nussbaum writes that her deliberations often seemed difficult even for those close to her to accept because of what she herself calls the "hyper-logic" she tries to maintain in her work (Nussbaum, 2008, p.75). Such a feeling may arise, especially when a detailed analysis addresses areas that we typically explain differently in everyday life—grief, for example (cf. Wierzbicka, 2003). Nussbaum assumes that the cognitive content of emotions allows for the construction of a typology of *type-identities* for individual emotions and enables their detailed assessment. This is why she states:

> For I have a very good idea what sorts of concrete beliefs and judgments to look for in a case of grief, and I have a very good idea which ones should be considered parts of the grief rather than other incidentally linked features of my makeup at the time. I do not have any such clear idea about sensations, since quite contradictory sensations seemed to me to be linked with my grief at different moments (Nussbaum, 2008, pp.76–77).

First, we might ask whether emotions truly have a discrete and distinct ontological character—whether we can differentiate between individual emotions not merely due to the precision of our measurement techniques but because of their very nature. Second, we could question whether, as Nussbaum seems to assume in the example above, we can identify which *concrete beliefs and judgments* belong to a given emotion at the very moment we experience it. This assumption appears rather doubtful.

Nussbaum acknowledges and discusses this issue in the context of unconscious emotions, admitting that it could undermine her argumentative strategy. At the time, however, she assumed that even if such emotions exist, they occur relatively rarely (Nussbaum, 2008, pp.71–72). In her more recent works, however, Nussbaum concedes that she was mistaken in this regard. In *The Monarchy of Fear*, while describing the shifting political atmosphere in America, she admits:

> But having worked for many years on each emotion more or less in isolation from others, I've come to realize that my previous strategy obscured some very important causal relations among the emotions. In particular I've come to realize, and I'll try to convince you, that fear is primary, both genetically and causally, and that it is because of infection by fear that the three other emotions [anger, disgust and envy] you named turn toxic and threaten democracy. (Nussbaum, 2018, pp.8–9).

Nussbaum acknowledges that experiencing—though perhaps not continuously—a primary unconscious fear is a common phenomenon. Crucially, when triggered at the right moment, this fear can also carry political significance. This raises questions about the extent to which a specific theory of political emotions can reliably draw upon the earlier findings of a general theory of emotions.

Critical Stance

As a philosopher herself, Nussbaum recognizes the necessity of a "partnership between philosophy and politics"—the connection between imagining an ideal world and actively building it (Nussbaum, 1996, p.506). She openly states that she envisions "a type of liberalism that is not morally 'neutral'" and that her theory is aimed at enabling its realization (Nussbaum, 2013, p.12).

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Writing directly about what she perceives as the current crisis of trust in American politics, Nussbaum seeks to identify "schools of hope"—spaces where social bonds essential for political renewal can be strengthened. Beyond the arts (poetry, music) and the activities of religious or solidarity groups (at least "insofar as they practice love and respect for others (…) focused on securing justice in a nonviolent and dialogical way"), she also highlights critical thinking, cultivated primarily in schools and universities (Nussbaum, 2018, p.220).

Moreover, for Nussbaum, theorizing about "what justice is" constitutes a school of hope in itself. In other words, she sees her theoretical work as a space where she actively engages in a form of political commitment. As she puts it: "So when I hope, I don't simply hope for justice, I focus on a theory I've worked on over the years, that has definite implications for what we should do. And I work to bring that about" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.239).

6.2.6 EMPIRICAL POTENTIAL FOR ENCODE

There are several levels at which Nussbaum's theory could potentially inform empirical research within the ENCODE framework.

Firstly, Nussbaum boldly claims that "each political ideal is supported by its own distinctive emotions" (Nussbaum, 2013, p.115). However, she does not fully elaborate on this idea, offering only general examples such as monarchies being supported by "childlike dependency," conservative systems by "solidaristic emotion," and fascist states by "pride and hero worship" (p.122). In the case of liberal democracy, however, the task is decidedly more complex. The emotions that support it must certainly be those that "conduce to equal respect and toleration" and prevent violence and fraud. Nonetheless, it is worth attempting to investigate how support for liberal democratic institutions is correlated with specific emotions.

Secondly, Nussbaum is interested in how narratives explaining common emotions become part of political culture through rhetorical strategies used by politicians, public ceremonies, rituals, and even poetry or architecture. She shows that, when studying the connection between emotion and political narrative, we can broaden the scope of analysis beyond political speeches or manifestos (see Eldridge, 1992). For instance, Nussbaum, a professional academic philosopher, provocatively suggests that perhaps the most formative philosophical text in the history of political liberalism was Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (Nussbaum, 2013, p.18).

6.3 SUMMARY

In the simplest terms, the confrontation between the theories of Mouffe and Nussbaum helps us better understand the significance of how emotions are operationalized in political theory. In fact, Nussbaum's theory of political emotions shows that the recurring accusation in Mouffe's work of liberal philosophers removing emotions from their areas of interest is somewhat exaggerated. Nussbaum's works provide a useful example of discussions on when "anger is a reasonable type of emotion to have," whereas the thought-content of disgust is typically unreasonable, as it embodies ideas of contamination and impossible aspirations to purity (Nussbaum, 2004, pp.13–14).

However, for the sake of fairness, it should be noted that Nussbaum also creates a convenient opponent for herself when she claims that her neo-Stoic view of emotions "has an adversary".

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> It is the view that emotions are "non-reasoning movements," unthinking energies that simply push the person around, without being hooked up to the ways in which she perceives or thinks about the world. Like gusts of wind or the currents of the sea, they move, and move the person, but obtusely, without vision of an object or beliefs about it (Nussbaum, 2008, p.24).

Here is no doubt that this view is aimed at philosophers, such as Mouffe, who define emotional states more in terms of passions. However, this description is a stylized and obvious simplification. Mouffe would not agree with the cognitive understanding of emotions as evaluative judgments, but that does not mean she assigns no cognitive value to emotions. On the contrary, for her, they are fundamental in the creation of social identities, and the emphasis on their symbolic rather than intellectual nature stems from her belief that, as with art, "it is through the affects that it can reach the intellect" (Mouffe, 2013, p.97).

There are obvious differences between the two philosophers in their methods of analysis and understanding the political nature of emotions, but the extent of these differences is often exaggerated in their narratives. Nussbaum is not an advocate of complete rationalism or the elimination of any form of conflict from public life (Mouffe, 2000, p.30), but she does suggest that emotions can be divided into "reasonable" and "unreasonable," and consequently, we can define "areas of reasonable disagreement" (Nussbaum, 2004, p.63).

Both agree that emotions can divide societies, but they disagree on the nature and function of these divisions. For Mouffe, these divisions are natural for a democratic state and stem from the inherently conflictual nature of politics. Nussbaum, on the other hand, is concerned with emotions when they become the basis for the politics of "othering," where politicians blame outsider groups such as immigrants, racial minorities, and women for the unfavorable state of affairs (Nussbaum, 2018, p.2). The American philosopher would not agree with Mouffe's radical leftist approach, arguing that the use of collective labels such as "elites," "bankers," "big business," or even occasionally "capitalism" itself often has no rational justification and can be driven by "envious malice" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.158).

Both agree that emotions reveal that, in some sense, we are incomplete, although they do so in different ways while drawing on similar research traditions. Mouffe, following Jacques Lacan and Yannis Stavrakakis, will argue that the key to understanding political passions lies in the "constitutive lack around which human experience is organized" (Mouffe, 2000, p.138). Nussbaum, on the other hand, states that "to expect to be complete (or continually completed) is to expect to be above human lot" (Nussbaum, 2013, p.173), drawing on a different tradition derived from psychoanalysis, mainly from Winnicott. Ultimately, they draw different conclusions from similar premises: Mouffe is more radical, maintaining that we are marked by a sense of inescapable emptiness both in individual and social life. For Nussbaum, it is rather an opportunity to realize that we need each other.

While Nussbaum's theory initially seems more precise and organized, paradoxically, in her later works, it is Nussbaum who begins to align more closely with Mouffe, rather than the other way around. In *Monarchy of Fear*, she describes emotions as unconscious feelings, as "the forces that move us" (Nussbaum, 2018, p.12). It seems that her assessment of the declining condition of American liberal democracy brings her closer to framing at least some political emotions as ancient passions, as she states: "Fear always simmers beneath the surface of moral concern, and it threatens to destabilize democracy" (Nussbaum, 2018, pp.61–62). While Nussbaum continues to maintain the typical optimism in her works, believing in

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the ultimate universality of at least some of liberalism's principles, she uncovers another important element of Mouffe's theory, albeit with a slight twist – the paradoxical nature of democracy in emotional terms. As she states

> So, we should reject the Stoic dismissal of both hope and fear. But we should acknowledge that they are correct that the two are cousins. Where you fear, there too you will hope (Nussbaum, 2018, p.204).

Thus, from the confrontation of these theories, we derive what seems to be the greatest strength of agonistic political theory – a deeper understanding through the acceptance of differences within the conflict. The following table briefly contrasts the two theories in accordance with the adopted analysis criteria.

CRITERIA	MOULFFE'S THEORY	NUSSBAUM'S THEORY
Scope and Depth	Focuses on the role of emotions in politics at the national level, emphasizing the importance of political representation.	Analyzes the role of emotions in politics at both national and international levels, without emphasizing the key role of representation.
Adaptability	Primarily addresses political passions within the European context, recognizing the specificity of Western European countries, but does not discuss the situation in Northern and Eastern Europe.	Concentrates on political emotions in the United States, using issues in EU politics as a contrast to American politics.
Applicability	Maintains a skeptical view of the potential of new technologies and their impact on emotions in politics, providing limited analysis of their influence on contemporary politics.	Primarily identifies the threats posed by the development of new information and communication technologies concerning political emotions.
Connectivity	Integrates insights from political theory, social movements, and cultural studies to promote an alternative to a "rational" concept of politics based on emotions.	Connects philosophy, ethics, and social psychology, grounding political discourse in human emotions and moral reasoning.
Validity	Presents a robust critique of liberal democracy, advocating for a reflective approach to pluralism and democracy, highlighting the crucial role of emotions.	Offers a coherent framework linking emotions to ethics and politics, encouraging critical reflection on democratic practices.

Table 2 Comparison of the theories of Chantal Mouffe and Martha Nussbaum

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7. TOWARDS THE THEORY OF AFFECTIVE PLURALIZATION

In this chapter, we present the theory of affective pluralization, which represents the culmination of the considerations made herein and in D2.1. In the first section, we address the theoretical framework of our theory, focusing on the relationships to the theories of Mouffe and Nussbaum and to the positive (descriptive) theory of emotion. We then address the theoretical basis of affective polarization, a phenomenon that serves as the empirical background and the rationale behind our attempt to develop a theory of affective pluralization. The subsequent section will formulate and discuss the theory of affective pluralization by explaining its different elements: polarizm, emodiversity, and affective pluralism. Finally, we address the potential of the theory for ENCODE.

7.1 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

7.1.1 RELATIONSHIP TO THE THEORIES OF MOUFFE AND NUSSBAUM

In this section, we briefly outline how the theories of Chantal Mouffe and Martha Nussbaum connect to the framework of affective pluralization presented below. Both theorists provide valuable insights into the relationship between emotions and political identity. While Mouffe emphasizes the role of passions in shaping collective identities, pointing to their fundamental impact on the competitive nature of democratic societies, Nussbaum introduces a more nuanced concept of political emotions, highlighting the importance of emotions in cultivating a healthy political environment.

Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism underscores that emotions are not only central to political engagement but also to the construction of hegemony, illustrating how much depends on political narratives and the effective *redefinition* of key political concepts (2000, p.9). Following Mouffe, we aim to explain how the result of affective polarization crystallizes as a socially constructed phenomenon, which, when entrenched in social discourse, can lead to antagonism. This understanding of polarization aligns with the idea that emotions, when manipulated or left unchecked, can deepen divides in society. From Mouffe's approach, we also draw on a discussion of various forms of pluralism as we develop our concept of *affective pluralism*.

Nussbaum, on the other hand, focuses on political emotions as a tool for creating facilitating environments that foster a more inclusive and empathetic society (2018, p.34). She argues that emotions like love and compassion can help establish a more just political system. However, her emphasis on rationality and a liberal framework can sometimes obscure the role emotions play in political conflict. Nevertheless, her work enables us to select an understanding of affective pluralism that acknowledges the *cognitive dimension* of our emotional needs.

By juxtaposing these theories, we can better grasp the complexities of emotional engagement in politics. Mouffe's work provides a critical perspective on how emotional polarization can emerge from hegemonic forces, while Nussbaum's theory offers a hopeful vision of how emotions can be nurtured to promote greater political solidarity. Both

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approaches, however, share a common recognition of the essential role emotions play in shaping political identities, engagement, and the potential for societal transformation.

7.1.2 POSITIVE THEORY OF EMOTIVE STATES

The analyses of Marcus's positive theory and Mouffe's and Nussbaum's normative theories indicate that it is difficult to clearly assign them to cognitive or constructivist theories. This may be due to the specificity of political science and political theory, which commonly draw on the achievements of other fields to create tools for analyzing political reality. In this context, the importance and benefit of adopting the distinction between affects and emotions in the ENCODE project is once again apparent, enabling the use of different theories to the extent appropriate to them. By operating with the concept of affect, we can adapt Marcus's theory of affective intelligence, while by adopting the concept of emotion, we can consider using Nussbaum's conception. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Marcus acknowledges the thesis of the socio-cultural influence on emotions/affects, while Nussbaum increasingly recognizes the role of unconscious emotive states that tend to escape the framework of cognitive theory. Mouffe's approach differs slightly, as her emotive conceptual framework is not clearly defined. Mouffe recognizes affects and emotions as states that accompany individuals, while she defines passions as states that characterize groups. However, she also recognizes the possibility of shaping emotive states, and this assumption is the basis of her conception of agonism.

Adopting such a broad perspective seems appropriate, especially in the social sciences. In the case of ENCODE, it is consistent, among other things, with our assumption of the existence of both individual and collective factors shaping social identity. Such an inclusive theoretical perspective prescribes great caution, both in terms of the use of concepts and the internal consistency of theory and research. However, the cognitive benefits generated by such an approach seem to far outweigh the aforementioned costs.

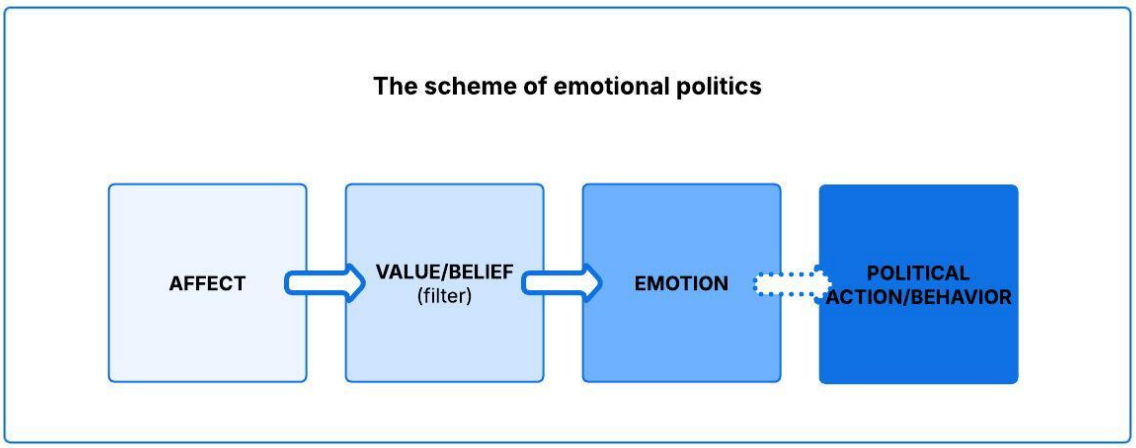

Figure 1 The scheme of emotional politics

Figure 1 presents the intersections between concepts related to emotional politics, including affects, emotions, values, beliefs, and political activity. This conceptual framework was adopted in Report D2.1 and remains relevant for affective pluralization theory, accommodating both cognitivist and constructivist approaches. Depending on the

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approach, the filter can be considered shaped to a greater extent by socio-cultural factors or subjective (appraisal) factors. It is important to note that this framework is also open to different theories on the origin of affect itself.

While the constructivist theory of emotion does not appear to necessitate further elaboration regarding the potential for the positive emotional turn—the relevant questions here are "how" rather than "whether"—it is worthwhile to examine the possibilities that cognitive theory offers. In cognitive theory, emotions are defined as intentional and shapeable due to their cognitive content. The theory also allows for the evaluation of emotions as ungrounded, for example, fear of a bear that turns out to be a pile of branches. The theory differentiates between emotions expressing moral judgements and ordinary emotions, the latter of which are subjective and personal in nature and do not necessarily stem from morality. Conversely, moral emotions, such as moral indignation, are characterized by their universal nature (Soniewicka, 2024, p.108).

This approach to emotions can be applied to the concept of affective pluralization. Emotions are dependent on individuals, meaning that people can change their emotional relationships with others. If this is possible at the individual level, there is no obstacle for such change to also occur at the intergroup and social level. Emotional change is all the more likely because, on a cognitive theory basis, emotions can turn out to be misguided. For instance, the fear of migrants from distant countries may be misguided, akin to mistaking a bear for a pile of branches in the forest. Finally, at the collective and social levels, cognitive theory places a high value on emotions of a moral nature, as they are seen as carrying universal claims, in contrast to more personal emotions such as anger. It can be argued that transferring the particularistic anger of affective polarization to the political level is a mistake that can and should be corrected. It is difficult to justify personal anger towards each member of a numerous and dispersed group of political opponents. However, this does not mean pushing emotions outside of politics. In politics, primacy would be given to emotions that have claims to universality, i.e., emotions based on moral judgements. This approach would allow for the continued expression of moral indignation regarding certain actions and decisions at the social level, while personal animosities, which often escalate into political problems involving entire communities, would be classified as unimportant in political discourse.

7.2 POLEMIC APPROACH TO AFFECTIVE POLARIZATION

The theory of affective pluralization is a response to the phenomenon of affective polarization, which was previously analyzed in D2.1 (see Nowakowski & Zielinski, 2024, chap. 7). We will not revisit this issue here, but we do need to recall the theoretical basis of this phenomenon and our polemical approach thereto (cf. Nowakowski & Zielinski, 2024, pp.47–49). The key point to consider is that in the ENCODE project we are guided by the conviction that affective polarization can be reversed, whereas a theory that explains affective polarization would do so—as we contend—an undertaking with little chance of success. The theoretical basis for affective polarization is the social identity approach, formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. This approach is the dominant, though also criticized, theoretical proposal for the formation of social identities. The theory posits that an individual's self-identification as part of a particular group is sufficient to favor this group and view other groups negatively, the process that also applies to partisanship (Nowakowski & Zielinski, 2024, pp. 31–32, 45). Shanto Iyengar and his colleagues state that: "the mere act of identifying with a political party is sufficient to trigger negative evaluations of the opposition, and

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exposure to prolonged media-based campaigns only reinforces these predispositions" (Iyengar et al., 2012).

Using social identity theory to explain political polarization was recently questioned by Andreas Schedler (2023, p.351), who presents three objections to viewing group differences as the main cause of polarization: first, **empirical variance**, as only a small subset of group distinctions lead to polarizing conflicts in liberal democracies; second, **conceptual overlap**, since emotional polarization without political relevance does not constitute political polarization; and third, **depoliticization**, where hostility, even if non-ideological, can still be rooted in political factors.

In contrast, one could argue that our behavior is shaped not only by conflicts between groups but also by internal conflicts *within us*, as our identity stems from our belonging to multiple groups. An approach that emphasizes the significance of this condition—known as *intersectionality theory*—is currently gaining traction. Further, the assumptions of social identity theory may need to be interpreted somewhat differently when discussing a specific form of social identity—*political identity*. While some scientists suggest that political identities may be a distinct part of personal identity—"something that cannot change without loss of self" (Prinz, 2021, pp.15–16)— they appear to be inherently social in nature. They are closely tied to *partisanship*, a politically motivated identification that solidifies "based on the individual's affective orientation to an important group-object in his environment" (Campbell et al., 1980, p.121). Moreover, political identity is not an objective fact reflected in the political sphere but rather the product of performative actions by political actors, shaping both emotions and cognition (see Disch, 2021, p.12). This interpretation aligns with the theory of Chantal Mouffe, whose work informs ENCODE, as she highlights "the affective dimension which is mobilized in the creation of political identities" (Mouffe, 2013, p.137).

Finally, emphasizing the constructed nature of social identity appears particularly valuable in the context of *European identity formation*. As noted in D2.1, European identity should not be seen merely as a matter of belonging to Europe as a geographical or even cultural entity but rather as the result of a specific supranational political project. In this sense, it is a *narrative construction*—shaped by how citizens self-categorize as European, evaluate their membership in the European collective, and develop "affective attachment to Europe and other Europeans" (Bergbauer, 2018, p.6). The success of this process depends on social engagement and the effectiveness of key political forces in driving it forward.

7.3 AFFECTIVE PLURALIZATION FORMULATED

7.3.1 DEFINING THE PROBLEM – POLARIZM

To fully illustrate the mechanism of discursive change—which, following Mouffe, we refer to as **metaphorical redescription**—we must start by defining the problem. To do this, we will complement the theoretical critique of affective polarization outlined in the previous section with a discursive analysis. Rather than focusing on how affective polarization is understood in academic research—where, as we noted in D2.1, significant confusion arises due to various approaches (top-down, bottom-up) and related concepts (issue-based polarization, ideological polarization, belief polarization)—we now shift our attention to its use in public discourse and the consequences of this usage.

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Affective polarization, when framed more broadly as a social issue, emerges from the intersection of multiple narratives, all linked by a shared underlying element. There are numerous ways in which the concept of affective polarization is deployed, each shaping its meaning in distinct ways:

1. **Affective polarization as "affective distance."** This usage is deeply rooted in findings from psychological and sociological research and aligns with the definition we adopted in the previous report, following Robert E. Talisse (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.39; Talisse, 2021, p.210). It defines affective polarization as the reported difference in emotions felt toward one's own group versus an out-group. This is a measurable, objective phenomenon that does not inherently require a value judgment and does not necessarily reach extreme levels. However, it tends to enter public debate when it reaches a "noteworthy" magnitude (Achenbach, 2024; Solomon, 2024).
2. **Affective polarization as a social process.** This usage aligns with a popular narrative that sees affective polarization as a defining feature of contemporary times, often linked to globalization, technological shifts, the rise of new media, and their evolving dynamics. It primarily concerns the perception of partisan divides within the political sphere and is generally viewed as having a negative impact on the functioning of democratic political systems (Paisley, 2016; Riccardi et al., 2024).
3. **Affective polarization as a political tool.** This usage assumes that affective polarization can be deliberately instrumentalized—that is, artificially intensified to achieve specific political objectives. It frequently appears in political rhetoric, with politicians accusing one another of deepening social divisions. In this context, affective polarization is closely tied to the state of a given political class (Edsall, 2024; Falkenberg et al., 2024).
4. **Affective polarization as a characteristic of the socio-political order.** This usage treats affective polarization as a general indicator of a political community's overall condition, reflecting not only the quality of its representative institutions but also the prevailing system of values and political culture. It measures the extent to which these align with the principles of democratic rule of law (Mac-Ikemenjima and Zaman, 2024; United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

We believe that this is not merely a case of terminological confusion. Rather, it represents the emergence of a dense web of interconnections and references within public debate—an expansive discursive formation that shapes how we think about politics. This formation defines what we perceive as common sense, natural, and universally accepted. Moreover, the widespread invocation of affective polarization creates a **political climate** whose alignment with the ideals of Western liberal democracies is not necessarily straightforward—a concern underscored by the very existence of the ENCODE project, commissioned by the European Commission to investigate this phenomenon.

The situation in which affective polarization becomes a constitutive social fact is what we propose to call **POLARIZM**. To better illustrate the significance of this transformation, one might recall the words of John Rawls, the renowned theorist of liberalism, who argued that for a liberal democracy to function, it must at least recognize *the fact of (reasonable) pluralism* (Rawls, 2011, pp.4–10). In other words, this ongoing transformation can be framed as follows:

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- When we say that we live in a **pluralistic society**, we mean that we live in **a society where the defining feature is the fact of pluralism**—the coexistence of diverse individuals and groups with differing interests and visions of the good life.
- When we say that we live in a **polarized society**, we mean that we live in **a society where the defining feature is the fact of polarizm**—the existence of deep social divisions separating broad social formations with conflicting interests and visions of the good life.

As we have mentioned both in this report and in D2.1, a key assumption of research rooted in social identity theory is that social categorization shapes self-concept, defining an individual's place in society. Therefore, the change we are discussing here will inevitably impact on this process by placing it within different, broader interpretative frameworks. Our understanding of ourselves as supporters of a particular political faction will shift depending on how central party competition is to the overall socio-political order.

On the one hand, it is undoubtedly important here to consider how we attempt to translate this **fact of polarizm** into our visions of how society should be politically structured—whether through the pursuit of broad **consensus** (as advocated by Rawls and Habermas) or by accepting the inevitability of political struggle, while seeking its **agonistic** form, in which adversaries do not perceive each other as an "enemy to be destroyed" (Mouffe, 2000, p.102). In this report, we lean towards the latter option.

As Mouffe points out, pluralism in liberal democratic societies "is taken to be constitutive *at the conceptual level* of the very nature of modern democracy and considered as something that we should celebrate and enhance" (Mouffe, 2000, p.18). From the perspective of ENCODE, the crucial issue is that **this situation alters our emotional attitude toward democracy itself.** As we mentioned in D2.1: "pluralism is oxygen for democracy" (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.45). If we accept that polarizm is the defining fact of our societies and associate it with democracy, the key concern is no longer the choice of institutional arrangements for politics but rather the possibility that we may no longer feel the need to "celebrate and enhance" democracy. **If we define our societies in a certain way, we will think and act within them in a certain way.**

Finally, we must address two more points. First, **polarizm is not antagonism**, it is not rivalry between enemies who wish to destroy each other. Viewing different social groups within polarization encourages calls for the "homogenization" of the political community by expelling – if not physically, then at least symbolically – the "enemy." However, a true shift from polarization to antagonism is not possible as long as political rivalry remains subject to the tempering principles of democracy, as we explained in D2.1 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.50). Within the framework of a democratic rule of law, it is not possible to "close" polarization within moral terms, openly combating political opponents as unworthy of sharing the political community.

Second, if polarization becomes an objective social fact, we must remember, as Mouffe teaches us, that it is still socially constructed: "any social objectivity is constituted through acts of power" (Mouffe, 2000, p.21). If we perceive polarization as a fact, it is not because it stems solely from our basic psychological mechanisms. Rather, it has been laboriously entrenched in social discourse, though not necessarily intentionally. It might serve certain political formations, especially if they manage to incorporate it into their mobilization strategy. In such cases, polarization is not just a reflection of division but a tool for securing power. As Mouffe puts it, "This point of confluence between objectivity and power is what we

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have called «hegemony»" (2000, p.21). If such hegemonic structures take hold, we risk moving closer to antagonism or, at the very least, encountering a new form of majoritarianism (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.46).

7.3.2 SEARCHING FOR SOLUTION – POLITICAL EMODIVERSITY

In this report, we argue that while seeking institutional solutions to address polarization is necessary, it is not sufficient. In D2.1, we mentioned various strategies for reducing polarization but also emphasized that our undertaking extends beyond that (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.46). We believe that a fundamental *redescription* of our societies is needed, one that would bring the positive emotional shift and allow us to once again truthfully assert that our societies are, above all, pluralistic. To achieve it, we propose returning to the root of polarization: the role of emotions in shaping how we perceive differences between social groups. In this regard, we suggest drawing on the tools and perspectives of contemporary psychology, particularly the concept of EMODIVERSITY.

The proposal to study emodiversity is part of the broader research trend on emotional complexity, which examines emotional dialecticism—"the experience of positive and negative states together"—and emotional differentiation—"the experience of emotions in a highly differentiated and granular manner, with a greater variety of negative and positive discrete emotions reported" (Grossmann et al., 2016, p.895). What the concept of emodiversity brings is a new research tool that allows for the analysis of the impact of emotional complexity on people's well-being, along with a specific perception of how we should think, especially about negative emotions.

In 2014, a research team led by Jordi Quoidbach proposed a novel approach to studying the impact of emotions on individuals' overall psycho-physical well-being. Instead of focusing on how often a person experiences positive emotions or the extent to which positive emotions outweigh negative ones, the researchers introduced a new metric called **emodiversity**. This metric is defined as "the variety and relative abundance of the emotions that humans experience" (Quoidbach et al., 2014, p.2057) and comprises two key factors:

- **Richness** – a measure indicating the number of different emotions experienced by an individual or group (e.g., whether someone feels only a few basic emotions or a wide range of them).
- **Evenness** – a measure determining whether different emotions are experienced in relatively equal proportions or if one emotion dominates (e.g., whether someone frequently feels only sadness and fear, or experiences all emotions in more balanced proportions).

The concept of emodiversity originates from the natural sciences, where the abundance and diversity of biological forms within an ecosystem are considered positive and desirable states. By analogy, researchers have proposed that for humans, the most beneficial life is one characterized by a high level of emodiversity, the richness and evenness of individuals' emotive states. From the perspective of the issue at hand, it follows that we should create "facilitating environments," to use Nussbaum's term (2018, p.34), that enable us to achieve emodiversity because

> experiencing many different specific emotional states (e.g., anger, shame, and sadness) may have more adaptive value than experiencing fewer and/or more global

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states (e.g., feeling bad), as these specific emotions provide richer information about which behavior in one's repertoire is more suited for dealing with a given affective situation (Quoidbach et al., 2018, p.2064).

From our theoretical perspective, the question of whether the Shannon entropy index proposed by the authors is a reliable measurement tool is less important—this can be addressed in the empirical part of the ENCODE research (Compare: Brown and Coyne, 2017; Quoidbach et al., 2018). We take an optimistic view of studies that indicate emodiversity, "whether positive, negative, or global, was associated with better mental and physical health across two large cross-sectional studies of over 37,000 respondents" (Quoidbach et al., 2014, p.2063; see also Benson and Ong, 2020). We are also intrigued by the positive impact of emodiversity on well-being in the context of everyday human-technology interactions (Yoon and Kim, 2024). Above all, however, we are convinced by the logic of the argumentation behind these findings.

In line with this, we assume that what we need is the pluralization of social emotions, an increase in the richness and evenness of individuals' emotive states, especially in confrontational situations—when they confront their sense of group belonging with the perception of other groups, what we have (to some extent) elaborated in D2.1 (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.42). In line with our observations, such a situation requires well-developed emotional competencies (Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.29). Therefore, policies addressing them must cover at least two areas:

1. The ability to experience a variety of emotive states in confrontational situations. Creating safe conditions that allow for emotionally rich meetings between individuals belonging to different social groups.
2. Awareness of experiencing a variety of emotive states in confrontational situations. Implementing an active educational policy aimed at recognizing, naming, and managing various emotional states when people from different social groups meet.

In this way, the intended positive emotional shift should encompass both "existential needs" related to safety and security, as well as "epistemic needs" concerning certainty, order, and structure (Jost et al., 2013, p. 236; see Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p. 40).

Furthermore, as the authors of the cited work hypothesize, by analogy, it can be assumed that just as „biodiversity increases resilience to negative events because a single predator cannot wipe out an entire ecosystem, emodiversity may prevent specific emotions—in particular detrimental ones such as acute stress, anger, or sadness—from dominating the emotional ecosystem" (Quoidbach et al., 2018, p.2064). In other words, we can assume that experiencing a variety of emotions at moderate intensities makes us less susceptible to extreme emotional reactions (both positive and negative). This could mean that increasing emodiversity may build social emotional resilience and permanently safeguard the pluralistic structure of society.

We do not claim that this will increase overall social wisdom, "morally-grounded excellence in social-cognitive processing" (Grossmann et al., 2020, p.113), although there are studies preliminarily confirming the positive impact of emodiversity in this regard (Grossmann et al., 2019). Our assumptions are more moderate and stem from the social constructivism paradigm adopted in this report. Promoting emodiversity can be a form of "cognitive reappraisal," a strategy that aims to change the affective impact of a stimulus—the very awareness of the fact of polarization—by changing the way one thinks about the stimulus

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(Gross, 2015; Nowakowski & Zieliński 2024, p.47). Polarizm is a fact *at this moment*, but it does not have to be in the future. We assume that if we experience and express the full range of emotions, the likelihood of any one of them reaching an extreme form will decrease.

7.3.2 ENVISIONING THE OUTCOME—AFFECTIVE PLURALISM

Affective pluralization theory posits that political emodiversity is a means and a prerequisite for moving towards a system of affective pluralism, but this also requires other criteria to be met. By affective pluralism, we refer to a socio-political metasystem that combines the assumptions of the emotive character of politics, liberal democracy, and agonism. It is not merely a political system, but rather a comprehensive socio-political framework, where we can differentiate between the institutional-structural and individual levels. At the institutional level, affective pluralism aims to establish conducive conditions for political life. At the individual level, it involves individuals expressing a variety of emotions towards one another, fostering more openness and civility in the public sphere. This approach aims to ensure that even in the face of significant disagreements, these interactions do not escalate to affective polarization.

Affective pluralism creatively alludes to the tension between the liberal conception and agonism in the context of pluralism. Mouffe's concern was the question of what institutional arrangements should be adopted in a pluralist system. Although affective pluralization theory assumes that the currently dominant system is not pluralism but polarizm, the mentioned tension remains relevant in our considerations. This is because, although polarizm does not represent pluralism, it might be seen as a distorted and truncated version of it.

According to Rawls's "reasonable pluralism" (Rawls, 2011, pp. 4–10), political relations in pluralism should be ordered according to the principle of consensus. This principle suggests the search for equitable arrangements of socio-political institutions that allow for the peaceful coexistence and realization of different interests and visions of the good life. According to Mouffe, however, the principle of consensus always unduly restricts pluralism; it removes real existing social differences by relegating them to the private sphere (see also Benhabib, 1992). Mouffe therefore proposes an agonistic pluralism embodying a creative rivalry, "a struggle between adversaries", instead of a destructive antagonism, meaning "a struggle between enemies" (Mouffe, 2013, p.7).

As previously stated, the distinction between liberalism and agonism appears somewhat exaggerated in the context of the purported absence of emotional reflexivity in liberalism (see also Banerjee & Bercuson, 2015). Furthermore, Rawls's conception of public reason does not preclude the possibility that, in the presence of significant disagreements among citizens, recourse to a democratic majority remains a viable option.

Affective pluralism employs both the consensus principle and the agonistic principle, rather than presuming a singular governing principle. We acknowledge the potential for diverse emotional expressions within a collective. In a pluralized society, the overarching political objective can be either to foster a space for consensus between key political forces or to embrace rivalry among major political forces while constraining its form to serious, peaceful, and democratic competition. Both principles are crucial and necessary because they address the diverse emotions inherent in plural societies.

Affective pluralism can incorporate both the principle of consensus and the principle of agonism. This constitutes the innovation of affective pluralism: it does not assume that a

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single principle should govern the political sphere. Instead, it acknowledges that individual emotions can translate into collective emotional states, which, in line with the concept of political emodiversity, require different modes of experience and expression. In a pluralized society, the overarching political objective may involve either fostering a space for agreement among key political forces or embracing competition between major political actors while ensuring that such rivalry remains serious yet peaceful and democratic. Both principles are essential and necessary, as they respond to the diverse emotional dynamics of pluralistic societies.

Affective pluralism differs from classical pluralism in that it is not a traditional pluralism of values, which was famously discussed as a problem of liberal political philosophy by thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin and John Gray. Rather than merely reiterating the premises of liberal democratic pluralism, affective pluralization seeks to recover its lost practice by emphasizing the significance of affects, emotions, and political contestation. **Affective pluralism entails a threefold demand: the pluralization of affects and emotions (the conception of political emodiversity), a return to actual pluralism itself, and the realization of liberal democratic ideas in a more feasible form**.

For a considerable period, citizens were expected to demonstrate political competence in accordance with the model of the deliberative citizen outlined by Marcus. However, the intricacies of political practice proved challenging for citizens to manage, given the demands placed upon them within this model. In this context, the concept of affective pluralization aligns with Marcus's postulation, which asserts that, in accordance with the theory of affective intelligence, both the deliberative citizen and partisan citizen models should be supported. The former aligns closely with liberalism, while the latter resonates more with agonism.

At the individual level, affective pluralism, stemming from political emodiversity, highlights several significant issues:

1. **Internal cosmopolitanism vs. political identity.** It has been noted that political identity can evoke strong emotions in modern democracies, which can have a negative impact on the functionality of the political order (see Mason, 2018). Concepts of political identity (see Nowakowski & Zielinski, 2024, pp. 44-45) are embedded in social identity theory (to which we have referred) or in the even more essentialist theory of Jesse Prinz, who argues that political identity is part of personal identity. Affective pluralism is based on a kind of internal cosmopolitanism—on experiencing the Other in everyday life, without being locked into real and virtual bubbles. Assuming that affects and emotions are shaped to some extent by culture, the creation of such microcultures within a national community will likely give rise to strong animosities. This has the potential to encourage belief polarization, that is "that regularity by which discussion with likeminded others turns us into more extreme versions of ourselves" (Talisse, 2021, p. 210). "The point is that belief polarization is less about intergroup relations and more about the in-group dynamics which can be found in various groups, including formalized assemblies as well as informal groups of citizens" (Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024, p.41).
2. **Affective in-group distance**. Affective pluralism is a system based not only on understanding the affective states of other citizens with whom we have socio-political disagreements but also on the willingness to express a broad spectrum of affects and emotions toward members of our own political groups and favored leaders. This primarily involves the readiness to experience negative emotions toward one's own group, party, or leaders when their actions contradict one's beliefs. Affective polarization stems not only from negative attitudes toward others but also

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from emotional attachment to one's own side. While such attachment may sometimes be justified, it is generally dysfunctional for political groups, as politics does not operate on personal relationships in the same way that family or close friendships do. Viewing a politician as an idol or friend and developing emotional attachment to them can lead to excessive leniency, as emotional identification may cloud critical judgment. This might result in "enthusiasm which can lead to endorsing extreme candidates who will polarize the public further" (Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024, p.43)

3. Affective openness. As mentioned in D2.1 (quotations from Nowakowski & Zieliński, 2024, p.49–50), "affective openness concerns the way individuals deal with the fact that the same things evoke different affects and emotions in different subjects which is related to their cognitions and, overall, their political views" For an affectively polarized individual "a mismatch in affective responses between him and the others will be an alarming signal calling for partisan-based animosity and the whole repertoire of negative affects and emotions." Instead, an affectively pluralized citizen will be aware of the difference between them and others in terms of affective and emotional responses. Even if it implies a wonder or dislike of the others, it will be far from hostility or disgust. "These differences are of great importance. Affectively pluralized citizens and groups may not like each other, but they do not (strongly) dislike each other either. This in turn creates a space for disputes, bargaining, and political competition."
4. Easy to change partisanship. Political sympathies or partisanship are not fixed; they can evolve over time. Affective polarization based on social identity theory makes it challenging to shift political views. This becomes even more problematic if one perceives the opposing side as irrational and unsavory. Such theoretical problems are not present in affective pluralism which allows for changing political identities (partisanship) with ease.
5. Emotional self-correction. As stated in Section 7.1.2, Nussbaum's cognitive theory suggests that emotions can be modified if they prove to be inaccurate. We have outlined the potential for emotional corrections, particularly in instances of unjustified fear, as referenced in the aforementioned section.

A general overview of the theory of affective pluralization is presented in Figure 2.

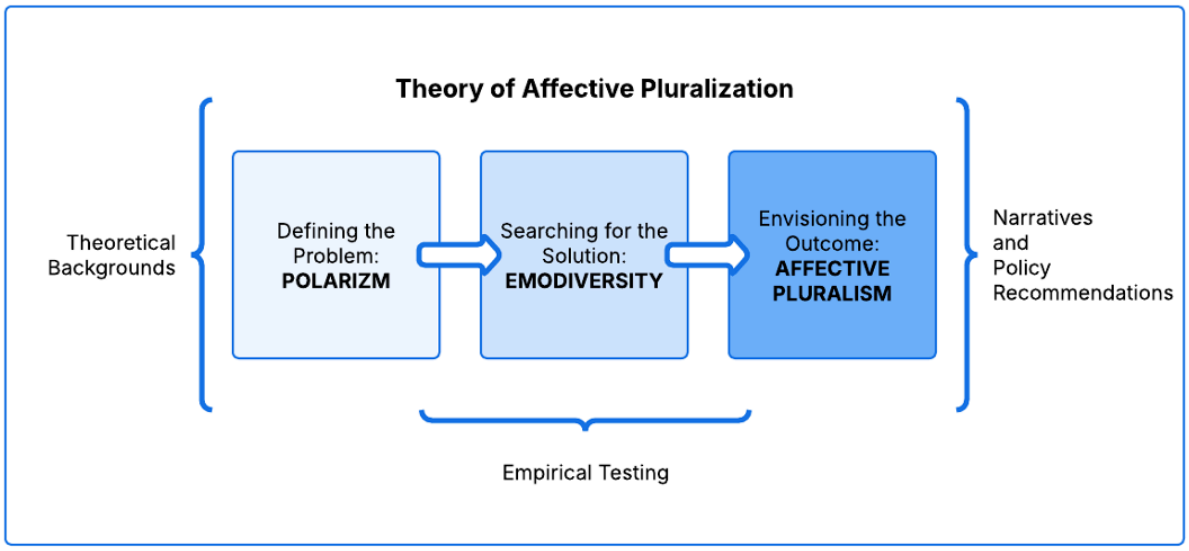

Figure 2 Theory of affective pluralization

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7.4 POTENTIAL FOR ENCODE

The theory of effective pluralization holds significant potential for the ENCODE project, offering a robust theoretical foundation for fostering positive emotional turn within European democracies. This framework can be utilized to craft narratives and visions for the future, as well as to develop workshops tailored for civil servants, politicians, and NGOs—ENCODE encompasses all these components.

Actions in this area should particularly take into account the necessity of **returning to pluralism**, as explained in the previous sections. According to ENCODE, our societies are no longer primarily defined in terms of pluralistic diversity. To counter this trend, we must begin by acknowledging the fact of polarizm and calling for a return to pluralism. However, **this return cannot be merely a reactive process**. We need to revisit certain ideas and values, but also *redescribe* them in light of our growing understanding of the political significance of our emotional states. In other words, we need **affective pluralism**.

Additionally, the research application of the theory of affective pluralization demonstrates considerable potential. The application of this theory and its empirical testing is possible within all research approaches used in the ENCODE project: qualitative, quantitative, and biometric. Since each of these approaches uses a different methodology, the application of the theory of effective pluralization must be adapted to the methodological specificity of each study. For example, in quantitative studies, it would be beneficial to apply multidimensional item response theory, which is promising for the diagnosis of emotive states and the relationship between different affects and emotions. This approach could be applied in particular to studying political emodiversity. Qualitative studies, with their focus on discourse, can examine the subjective understanding and shaping of emotions, as well as the perceived dimensions of the political character of individual emotive states and situations. Biometric studies can test and develop political emodiversity and affect theory. Given the presence of all these study types in the ENCODE project, it is essential to plan the application of the theory of affective pluralization in each case, taking into account the specificity of individual studies.

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CONCLUSIONS

Achieving an effective and purposeful shift in Europe's emotional culture—currently dominated by negative affective states—requires, as a first step, a thorough theoretical exploration of the role of emotions in politics. To this end, this report analyzes both descriptive theories, which aim to explain how emotions function in democratic practice, and prescriptive or normative theories, which outline the role emotions should play in democracy. We have developed a set of methodological tools to assess various parameters, including scope, depth, adaptability, applicability, connectivity, and validity. In the domain of descriptive (positive) theories, we primarily draw on George E. Marcus's affective intelligence theory, which underscores the importance of understanding how subjective emotive states interact with preconscious cognitive processes. In the domain of normative theories, we focus on the contrast between Chantal Mouffe's agonistic theory—which serves as a key theoretical foundation for the ENCODE project—and Martha Nussbaum's theory of political emotions. This juxtaposition allows us to outline two extreme conceptualizations of the role of emotions in the face of the crisis of liberal democracy: from the political passions that fuel competitive behaviors in Mouffe's framework to emotion-judgments that can contribute to the rationalization of public debate in Nussbaum's perspective.

Building on this theoretical foundation, we have developed our own theory of affective pluralization, structured around a three-stage model: problem → method of resolution → outcome. The first step involves redefining the very nature of the problem, which is commonly linked to the spread of affective polarization in European societies. We argue that this phenomenon should be understood within the framework of a broader meta-order of socio-political organization, which we term *polarizm*. The second step is to establish a primary method for addressing this problem. Here, we advocate for an approach based on the concept of *emodiversity*, which suggests that the optimal emotional state—both for individuals and societies—is not the mere avoidance of negative emotions but rather the richness and balance of all affective states. Finally, the third component is the expected outcome of these efforts, which we define as *affective pluralism*. We propose that fostering a supportive political environment can lead to the emergence of a new socio-political metasystem, characterized by greater societal openness to diverse emotional states. Consequently, this would result in a more flexible political system, rooted in what we call internal cosmopolitanism—the experience of the Other in everyday life, without being confined to real or virtual echo chambers.

We believe that the theory of affective pluralization presented in this report demonstrates that effective democratic practice requires both the acknowledgment of emotions' role and the deliberate shaping of affective dynamics toward communal engagement and resistance to manipulation. The solutions we propose have direct implications for emotion management strategies in politics, ranging from emotional education to institutional dialogue mechanisms and depolarization programs. While the vision of a new pluralism that emphasizes the significance of emotions and affects requires further development, its foundations have now been laid.

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