



Perception and Evaluation of Regional and Cohesion Policies by Europeans and Identification with the Values of Europe

PERCEIVE

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D 5.1 ‘Short contribution (report) to be used in dissemination events about the empirical relevance of a social constructivist and discursive approach to EU identity emergence and integration’

Table of contents

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	2
2.	THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION.....	4
2.1.	THREE PHASES OF INTEGRATION STUDIES.....	4
2.2.	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND EU INTEGRATION STUDIES: THREE AREAS OF CONTRIBUTION...6	6
2.3.1.	RULES AND NORMS IN EU GOVERNANCE.....	8
2.3.2.	INTEGRATION AS EUROPEANIZATION OF PUBLIC DEBATE AND DISCOURSE.....11	11
2.3.3.	EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE EU.....18	18
3.	TEXT ANALYSIS AS TOOL FOR STUDYING INTEGRATION: ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES.....24	24
3.1.	TOPIC MODELING.....	26
3.2.	MULTIPLE CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS.....	27
4.	CONCLUSION.....	29
5.	REFERENCES.....	29

AUTHOR/S

Vitaliano Barberio, Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien, vitaliano.barberio@wu.ac.at;

Edoardo Mollona, Università di Bologna edoardo.mollona@unibo.it;

Luca Pareschi, Università di Bologna, luca.pareschi@unibo.it

DEL 5.1 Short Contribution to be used in dissemination events about the empirical relevance of a social constructivist and discursive approach to EU identity emergence and integration

LEADING PARTNER : Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien [WU]

PARTNERS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS DELIVERABLE: Università di Bologna [UNIBO]

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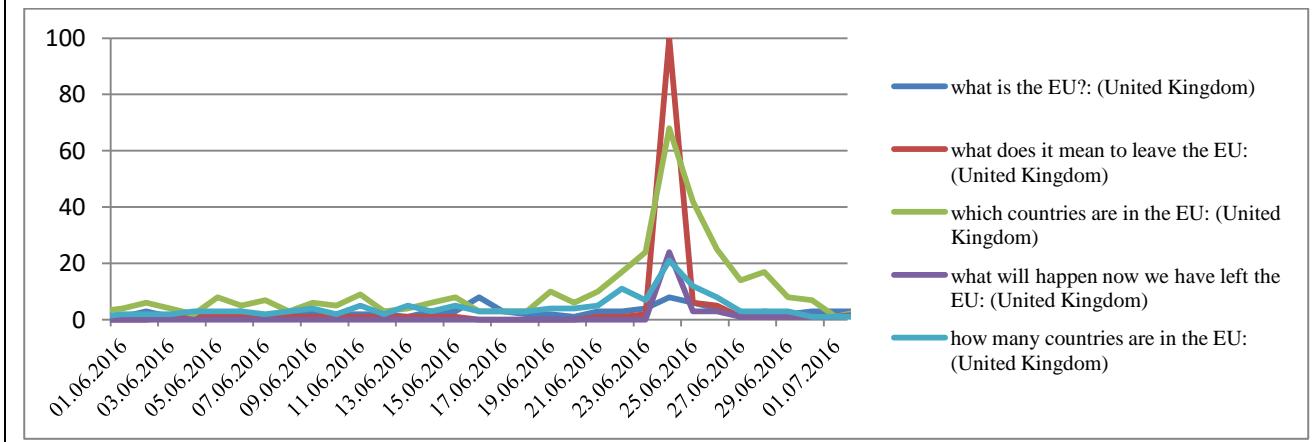
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1. INTRODUCTION

European integration has been a long and complex, at times problematic process ever since 1957, encompassing the emergence of new institutions and actors. In spite of the centrality that such institutions and actors play in all Europeans' everyday life, as of today the European project remains fragile and subject to eroding pressures from factors such as macro-economic cycles and anti-EU political movements, among many others. Other key factors are a lack of broadly sedimented knowledge about the EU among European citizens and, related to this, relatively low identification with the EU.

Box 1 – An example: What do citizens know about the European project?

On 23 June 2016, a European Union membership referendum was held in the UK where 52 percent of votes cast were in favour of leaving the EU. As a consequence, the UK government has started the formal procedure for withdrawing from the EU. Also labelled as *Brexit*, this constitutes the first act of European *disintegration* since the early days of the EU project that formally started with the Treaty of Rome in 1957. It is a fact that the Britons have democratically expressed their will. As reported by the British press¹, starting from two days before and until a few days after the referendum, Google reported a clear increase in the popularity of web search queries concerning not only the consequences of leaving the EU, but very basic questions about the EU itself such as Member States (see the picture below which uses [Google Trend data](#) for the UK; the Y axes expresses the popularity of a search in the considered time span).



¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/britons-are-frantically-googling-what-the-eu-is-after-voting-to-leave-it-a7101856.html>

D. 5.1. 'REPORT ON A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST AND DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO EU IDENTITY EMERGENCE AND INTEGRATION'

The information reported in Box 1 indicates how little European citizens might actually know about very basic aspects, such as what the EU is and which countries are included. Given the implications such lack of knowledge may have for European integration as well as for European identity, and, consequently, the future of the EU project, it is important to advance our insights into how citizens' knowledge of relevant aspects of everyday social, political, and economic life in the EU is shaped and how this impacts their identification with the European project and affects European integration more generally. We argue that citizens' understandings of the EU as institution are socially constructed and that communicative and discursive processes play an essential role in these construction processes. Identification and integration essentially depend on such shared social meanings.

European studies increasingly recognize the importance of social constructivism and discourse as perspectives to better understand different aspects of European integration – a process through which new supra-national institutions and social identities emerge as well as existent local institutions and identities transform. Different from previous approaches, both social constructivism and a focus on discourse entail that institutions, as well as the identities of social actors, matter in a particular way. That is, they are not given or easy for any political elite to manipulate, rather they get shaped through ongoing social interactions with language playing a central role. Paying close attention to the complexities of integration as a transformative and discursive process seems to be a more promising approach than regarding integration as an exercise of 'simple' institutional design.

We argue that in spite of the increased importance of social constructivist and discourse approaches in social sciences during the last 30 years, their applications in EU studies, which are more recent, continue to constitute a rather 'closed' scholarly field. Also much remains to be done to expand empirical research specifically dealing with the structural analysis of language and meanings – an area that characterizes contemporary developments of social constructivism in many other social sciences. In order to increase the empirical relevance of social constructivism and discourse in EU studies and beyond, we offer three contributions. First, we review extant literature in this scholarly domain. In particular, we find that work that has fruitfully utilised a social constructivist perspective has somehow spanned three main areas: a) integration as Europeanization of legal systems and norms, b) integration as the Europeanization of discourses on polity ideas and public debates about EU governance, and c) integration as the Europeanization of citizens' identities and definitions of what 'Europe' means. Second, in order to open up this literature to interdisciplinary research we highlight overlaps and parallels especially to institutional organization theory that shares with this

literature the social constructivist perspective and has been fruitfully used to analyse questions of institutional change and identity formation. Third and finally, we extend the analytical tool box by highlighting methods that can be used to explore integration and identification from a social constructive and discursive perspective.

The report is organized as follows: The following section provides a) a brief overview of the historical development of Integration Studies in three phases, and b) a literature review of the three main areas of social constructivist literature. The third section introduces a set of innovative multivariate methods to analyse discourse and meaning structures around European integration and identity. The fourth section concludes this report.

2. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

A common definition calls integration the process “whereby [the] political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states” (Haas, 1958: 16). Other integration theorists propose a less demanding definition whereby integration can be seen as “the creation of political institutions to which [the] member states subscribe” (Wiener and Diez, 2009: 3).

Since the very beginning of the EU project, integration and identification have received much scholarly attention. Below we briefly summarize three different phases in the study of integration and locate social constructivist studies within this development. Then, we ‘zoom in’ the social constructivist phase and highlight three main areas of Integration Studies focusing on norms, public debate and identity respectively.

2.1. THREE PHASES OF INTEGRATION STUDIES

Wiener and Diez (2009; see also Leuffen, Rittberger, and Schimmelfennig, 2012) suggest that integration research has developed in three broad phases, the last of which is a social constructivist phase. The authors (2009: 6) highlight that these three main phases in the development of Integration Studies are not meant to be clear-cut, but to indicate the predominance of different

approaches at a particular point in time. They distinguish an explanatory, an analytical, and a constructive phase.

A first *explanatory phase* roughly corresponding to the '60s and '70s of the last century was characterized by Liberalism, Realism and Neo-Liberalism. During these early years, two opposing approaches attempted to explain why the integration process would take place and have certain outcomes. *Intergovernmentalism* explained the creation of new supranational institutions as resulting from the bargains between governmental actors of different nation states with specific geopolitical interests (Hoffmann, 1966). Institutions then are created for specific purposes and remain under the control of their creators. A distinct position was held by *neo-functionalists* whose focus on the interactions between societal and market patterns allowed for theorizing institutional emergence as 'spilling-over' among policy areas – then less voluntary and under control of institutional designers (Haas, 1958, 1961, 1970; Haas and Schmitter, 1964; Lindberg, 1963).

A second *analytical phase* can be dated around the '80s and early '90s of the past century and was characterized by a broadening of the scope of both empirical and theoretical research on integration as well as a more interdisciplinary fashion. In this phase, researchers started to inquire the impact of Euro-polity on national and European policies and politics² (e.g. Jachtenfuchs, 2001; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006). *Governance* and policy analysis became central lenses for analyzing the integration process. *Multilevel systems* (Marks, Hooghe and Blank, 1996), *network governance* (Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch, 1996) and *policy networks* (Peterson, 1995) were some of the main perspectives in this phase focusing on the 'Europeanization' of rules, institutions and practices.

The third *constructivist phase* can be located between the late '90s of the last century and the present. It is in this phase that scholars start to challenge the ontological and epistemological assumption of traditional approaches. Europeanization remains a central topic, but research interests are shifting to the meanings of diffusing ideas, identities and political discourses, rather than rules and institutions. According to this approach, meanings, the social processes of their construction, and their sedimentation and institutionalization, constitute the key for understanding (the lack of) integration and identification. Social constructivism challenges basic, but fundamental, aspects of how we should understand social reality and institutions. For example, it emphasises the bounded

² We adopt a standard distinction between polity, policy and politics as follows: polity as the political community and its institutions, policy as the actual measures taken to tackle concrete problems, and politics as the processes of policy-making and the daily struggles and strategies of political actors dealing with each other.

rationality actors possess (e.g. Simon, 1982) and builds on the idea that actors rather follow a logic of appropriateness than a logic of consequentiality (e.g. March and Olsen, 2015) and act on the basis of shared understandings of the world around them – i.e. categories and identities – rather than on the basis of clearly defined preferences. According to such a perspective, social actors and social structures mutually constitute each other. Institutions are created through typification of social interactions and the sedimentation of their meanings in socially shared knowledge. With their seminal treatise on ‘the social construction of reality’, Berger and Luckmann (1967) provided the theoretical foundation for constructivist research in many areas of social sciences. Specifically, during the last two decades their framework has bridged areas of research such as International Relations, Comparative Politics and European Studies. Moreover, it has inspired sociological institutionalism and proliferated in organization research and has also been linked to discourse analysis. Constructivist approaches for understanding European integration are the focus of this literature review.

2.2. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND EU INTEGRATION STUDIES: THREE AREAS OF CONTRIBUTION

In the following, we will provide an overview of extant literature on EU integration from a social constructivist perspective. In sum, we collected and briefly summarized a sample of over 200 books, scientific articles, and reports published by the institutions of the European Union. This corpus of literature constitutes the backbone that we relied upon to analyse European identity and European integration and will constitute the theoretical foundations of the subsequent tasks within Work Package 5.

In order to provide a very brief glimpse into the literature, Figure 1 displays a word cloud created by analysing the titles of all the pieces of literature contained in our literature collection. In the sections below we offer a more substantive analysis of the content of this literature. However, the graphical representation already clearly shows that *identity, communication, discourse, and institutions* are central to this debate in addition to *integration, cohesion, regions, policy, and politics*. In the subsequent tasks of this Work Package, we will analyse with the help of more sophisticated analytical text analysis methods (see section 4) how the ideas of Europe, integration, and a European identity unfold within national cultures.



Figure 1 – Word cloud created from social construction literature on European integration

Following previous overviews of academic literature on European integration from social constructivist (i.e. Christiansen, Jorgensen, and Wiener, 1999; Risso, 2009) and discourse (Waever, 2009) perspectives, we distinguish three main areas of application for scholarly inquiry. These three areas focus on a) laws, rules, and norms in EU governance; b) polity and governance ideas, public debate on the EU and its policy; and finally c) social identity and citizens' identification with the EU. Risso motivates the use of this partition as follows (2009: 151): First and with reference to normative systems, "the mutual constitutiveness of agency and structure allows for a deeper understanding of Europeanization including its impact on statehood in Europe". Second and referring to public debates, the focus on communicative practices allows investigation of "how Europe and the EU are constructed discursively" and how a European public sphere emerges. Finally and with reference to identity, "the constitutive effect[s] of European law, rules, and policies enables us to study how European integration shapes social identities and interests of actors". For each of these three areas of scholarly contribution, we will highlight the academic background (i.e. International Relations, Comparative Politics, Organization Theory, Sociology, etc.) as well as core insights and contributions to explain European integration and identity.

2.3.1. RULES AND NORMS IN EU GOVERNANCE

The first perspective on European Integration Studies has been put forward mainly by EU law scholars. From such a perspective, integration is understood as a process unfolding primarily through law and, therefore, paramount importance is given to rules and norms. As pointed out by Christiansen et al. (1999), such rules and norms are not limited to treaties, secondary legislation and the case law of the European Court of Justice. They also encompass unwritten administrative procedures of the policy processes, common understandings and inter-institutional agreements as well as more informal modes of behaviour produced and reproduced every day in the political and administrative practice of the EU. Some relevant early research on the legal dynamics of integration has covered topics such as, for example, the ‘juridification of the EU’ (Bulmer, 1998; Joerges and Neyer, 1997) and constitutes a first attempt to bridge Legal Studies with Political Science (Armstrong and Shaw, 1998; Shaw, 1999; Stone-Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997), with International Relations (Checkel, 1999) and, more recently, with international organizations (Kerwer, 2013).

Mutual constitution of institutions and actors

This area of inquiry receives an important conceptual input from neo-institutional theory especially from Political Science and organization studies. Especially the notion of a “logic of appropriateness” (March, 1994; March and Olsen, 2015) is frequently referred to. In contrast to a logic of consequentiality where arguably boundedly rational actors evaluate and choose between alternative courses of action, within the logic of appropriateness, “actions are matched to situations by means of rules organized into identities” (March, 1994: 57). Actors then link particular identities to particular situations and approach “individual opportunities for action by assessing similarities between current identities and choice dilemmas and more general concepts of self and situations” (March and Olsen 1998: 951). Rule-guided behaviour differs from strategic and instrumental behaviour in that actors try to ‘do the right thing’ rather than maximizing or optimizing their given preferences. The logic of appropriateness entails that actors need to figure out the appropriate rule in a given social situation. As March and Olsen (2015: 478) summarize:

“The logic of appropriateness is a perspective that sees human action as driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behavior, organized into institutions. Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions”.

It follows that social institutions including the EU can no longer be viewed as ‘external’ to actors. Rather, actors including corporate actors such as national governments, firms, or interest groups are

deeply embedded in their social and institutional contexts, in fact, actors and institutional context co-constitute each other (e.g. Meyer, Boli, and Thomas, 1994).

This attention to the constitutive quality of social norms and institutions is echoed by EU integration researchers (Onuf, 1989; Kratochwil, 1989). They emphasise that social norms not only regulate behaviour, they also constitute the identity of actors in the sense of defining who ‘we’ are as members of a social community. In this context, Brunsson and Olsen (1993: 21) note that “[t]hese rules define legitimate participants and agendas, prescribe the rules of the game, and create sanctions against deviations, as well as establishing guidelines for how the institution may be changed. Institutions create a temporary and imperfect order. They influence and simplify the way we think and act, what we observe, how we interpret what we observe, our standards of evaluation and how we cope with conflicts”. The norm of sovereignty, for example, not only regulates the interactions of states in international affairs, it also defines what a state is in the first place. Accordingly, research concentrates on the social construction of actorhood and the social identities of actors in order to account for their interests (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000). Scholars in this tradition maintain that collective norms and understandings do not only define the basic ‘rules of the game’ in which actors find themselves in their interactions, they also constitute actors as ontological category. This does not mean that in a constitutive perspective, norms cannot be violated or not change, but the argument implies that we cannot describe the properties of social actors without reference to the social structure in which they are embedded.

Social learning

Within this view a relevant stream of research draws attention to the conditions and mechanisms through which EU membership fosters members’ socialization. In particular Checkel (1999, 2001, 2005) points to the opportunity of complementing more rationalist approaches with the recognition that social learning also matters for the integration process and European identity formation. Social learning entails “a process whereby actors, through interaction with broader institutional contexts ... acquire new interests and preferences” (Checkel, 1999: 548). Social learning is hypothesized to be more likely when: a) individuals share common professional backgrounds; b) during periods of crisis or policy failure; c) when a group meets repeatedly; and finally d) when a group is insulated from direct political pressure. The perspective on social learning also points to the relevance of persuasion as a mechanism through which identities can change and interests may be redefined. In particular the literature suggests three hypotheses on when persuasion is most likely to happen: a)

when the persuadees are in a novel and uncertain environment and thus cognitively motivated to analyse new information; b) when the persuaders are authoritative members of the in-group where the persuadee belongs or wants to belong; c) when the persuadee has few prior beliefs inconsistent with the persuader's message.

Social constructivists in this area view norms as shared, collective understandings that provide actors with behavioural codes and indications. When thinking about such norm in the context of the EU, according to Checkel (1999: 551) a first issue to be addressed is the process through which such norms are constructed at the European level. Here early research has focused on the role of well-placed individuals acting as social entrepreneurs (e.g., Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), the opening of so called policy-windows (e.g., Haas, 1992; Meijerink, 2005), and processes of social learning and socialization described above. When European norms emerge is of particular interest to theorize the mechanisms through which such norms diffuse to local (i.e. national) settings. In this context, social constructivist research has highlighted two main options (Checkel, 1999; Manners, 2006). The first diffusion mechanism is societal mobilization where non-state actors and policy networks promote norms together and then mobilize or coerce decision-makers to change local policy. The second diffusion mechanism is the social learning of political and decision-making elites that internalize norms and reproduce them through their subsequent behaviours.

Spill-over effects

An interesting dialogue between European studies and sociological neo-institutionalism on markets has emerged in the neo-functional analysis of integration. An exemplar work that captures this link is Fligstein and Stone-Sweet's (2002) analysis of the emergence of economic legislation in Europe. The analysis is an empirical study of the reciprocal relationships among three 'meta-variables': cross-border trade activity, litigation of EC law, and rule-making capacities and activities of EC organizations (2002: 1231). This study has two main findings: First, integration emerged as a gradual and self-reinforcing process which started at a slow pace to increase its speed along the way. Second, legislation was influenced by litigation, lobbying and trade; litigation depended on legislation and trade; and lobbying depended on legislation and trade. Theoretically, these findings bring about three groups of interesting issues. First, the role of macro-variables such as economic activity, trade, law-making and litigation, as well as political, rule-making activity points at a number of variables that may be helpful in the analysis of governance mechanisms. For example, it is interesting how the role of lobbying activity is brought to light. Second, 'spillover

effects' seem to well explain the empirically observed case reinforcing a central argument of neo-functionalism integration theories. Third, the analysis emphasises how neo-institutionalist sociology supports the investigation of EU integration by recognizing the "symbiotic relationships that form between rule structures, governmental organizations, and economic actors" (2002: 1207).

Meta-organizations

A final contribution that we want to include in this review proposes to understand EU integration and decision-making through the analytical framework of meta-organizations (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2008; Kerwer, 2013). A central argument of the still emergent literature on meta-organizations is that organizations whose members are themselves organizations suffer an autonomy paradox. That is, as in modern societies both the individual and the organization are constructed as autonomous actors (Meyer and Jepperson, 2000), being part of an organization making decisions on their behalf undermines such autonomy. The consequence is an eternal conflict over autonomy between meta-organization and organized members. This framework has been applied to explain how the EU may produce collectively binding decisions for its members (Kerwer, 2013). Contrary to the dominant image in European studies of the EU playing an ever-increasing role in regulation and decision making, a meta-organization perspective depicts a weaker agent, as it experiences authority conflict between supranational institutions (Commission, Parliament) and intergovernmental institutions (Council). Arguably, conflicts also exist between the European Court of Justice and national Courts of Justice. As far as policy making is concerned, one can observe that the EU does not often resort to 'regulations' that are immediately binding for Member States, but mostly adopts 'directives' that need to be transposed into national law before they can be enforced (Kerwer, 2013). Nonetheless, the EU as meta-organization is not without power as it might seem, it has a substantial impact on its members also due to their repeated interactions with each other – i.e. through mechanisms of social learning described above –, but also on non-members, in particular those with aspirations to join and therefore eventually ready to adapt their behaviours and norms to required inclusion standards.

2.3.2. INTEGRATION AS EUROPEANIZATION OF PUBLIC DEBATE AND DISCOURSE

Discourse is an equally powerful and elusive concept in social sciences with many different definitions and streams of research. In the following, when we talk about *discourse*, we mean a "structured collection of meaningful texts" (Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy, 2004: 636); and *discourse analysis* is the analysis of "how texts work within a socio-cultural practice" (Fairclough,

1995: 7). More specifically, Hager's (1995: 44) definition of discourse as "specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" covers our understanding. The theoretical foundation of discourse studies lies in the tradition of research on the 'power of discourse' (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1972, 1980). Language is seen a social structure that shapes individuals' meanings and actions. Thus, studying discourse allows capturing the influences of certain concepts on actors' behaviour. In general, the power of discourse lies in its capacity to produce representations that influence individual interpretations, and so constitute the social world (Contandriopoulos, Denis and Langley, 2004). According to this perspective, then, discourse constructs concepts (in so far as it offers meanings through which the world can be interpreted), objects (in so far as it contributes to reify those meanings, making them appear as 'reality'), and subjective positions (i.e. actors' expectations, rights, roles, norms) (Hardy, Palmer and Phillips, 2000). In particular, assuming that certain meaning structures can, albeit potentially only temporarily, stabilize, certain discourses are constructed and reconstructed as 'regimes of truth' (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). In this process, agents' behaviour tends to adapt to such regimes, even if subconsciously. The power of discourse is not a coercive one; rather, it is a more subtle power that, by influencing agents' interpretations, determines their practices too. Put differently, certain discourses impact actors' behaviour as far as they have the power to include or exclude determinate ways of thinking, and hence ways of being and acting. In this vein, in this report we consider discourse as a reproduction of a certain way of seeing things that conditions our way to relate to phenomena, thereby producing 'perceptions of truth', or 'truth effects' (Knights and Morgan, 1991).

Connected to the analysis of discourse, narrative policy analysis is another stream of research that focuses on the importance of stories as a means deployed by actors to stabilize meanings in the public debate. This line of research is, however, more interested in how actors use words rather than "how words use us" (Green and Li, 2011: 1671). In respect to the research on discourse, here, actors are more wittingly in command of the usage of language. The underlying idea, as stated by Roe (1994: 2), is that "stories commonly used in describing and analyzing policy issues are a force in themselves, and must be considered explicitly in assessing policy options". Stories have become a central object of the study of policies and narratives are explicitly considered within policy analysis. Some examples may be found in the Handbook of Public Policy Analysis (2007) which devotes chapters to argumentation (Fischer, 2007), rhetoric (Gottweis, 2007), and narratives (Van Eeten, 2007) in policy analysis and interpretive methods in policy research (Yanow, 2007).

This rich body of literature on communication activities, which takes different positions towards actors' ability to instrumentally using language, has diversely fertilized European Integration Studies. More specifically, Risso (2009) identifies three discursive approaches. First, scholars mainly from International Relations have applied the Habermasian theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; 1987). Researchers taking this approach tend to regard European institutions as discourses constituted and activated through communicative actions rather than as merely bargaining arenas for decision makers. As Risso (2009: 149) explains, "[a]rgumentative and deliberative behaviour is as goal-oriented as strategic interactions, however the goal is not to attain one's fixed preferences, but to seek a reasoned consensus". In the tradition of speech act theory, the focus is on 'politics through, not politics of discourse' (Risso, 2009). A second thread of research on the discursive construction of the EU focuses on the analysis of communicative practices which are assumed to foster the emergence of a transnational European public sphere. As Risso (2009: 150) underlines, "the emergence of a transnational public sphere is a social construction par excellence" and "the ability to communicate meaningfully across borders depends crucially on the extent to which the same issues are debated at the same time with similar frames of reference or meaning structures". A third line of discursive analysis in European Integration Studies proposes a more radical and critical version of social constructivism developing in line with the so called 'linguistic turn' in International Relations (Diez, 1999, 2001; Larsen, 1999, 2000; Rosamond, 2001). Here, discursive practices have been studied not so much to analyse practices of arguing and reasoning giving but to address discourse as a process of meaning construction allowing for certain interpretations while excluding others. It is important to notice that this work "focuses on discursive practices as means by which power relationships are established and maintained" (Risso, 2009: 150). As suggested by Waever (2009: 166), this last thread was the dominant one in Political Science, International Relations and European Integration Studies (EIS). In these disciplines, the concept of discourse analysis most often was coloured with a 'post-structuralist' character and found its intellectual roots in the work, among others, of Foucault (1972), Derrida (1992), Lacan (1966), Deleuze (1968), and Deleuze and Guattari (1972). This Foucauldian-inspired research emphasises the power of language to mould the understanding of problems in certain ways and to limit the range of alternative policy options. It is more radical than the speech act tradition in that more emphasis is put on the context and in its relation to the individual actor. "Although it is 'we' who impose meaning, 'we' do not act as autonomous subjects but from a 'subject position' made available by the discursive context in which we are situated" (Diez, 1999: 603).

According to Diez (2001), the discursive approach to the analysis of the European integration project brought about a key innovation in the intellectual landscape envisioned by both neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists. The innovation rests in the redrafting of the role of 'interests' in integration processes. From a discursive perspective, "interests flow from discursively generated subject identities" (Diez, 2001: 9). In the following, we address three areas of enquiry focusing on communicative and discursive analysis respectively and describe how these lines of enquiry contribute to the study of European integration and identity. First, we focus on the issue of the emergence of a transnational European public sphere. Second, we explore the role of discourse as a practice of meaning construction in moulding European polity and governance, and in building a European identity. Third, we link discursive practices to identity construction.

European Public Sphere and public opinion

In EU Integration Studies, the issue of communication invites to address the concept of *public sphere*. The public sphere is most commonly defined as a discursive social space where public opinion is formed; it is an arena where interpretations are formed and circulated. More specifically, the public sphere is "a system of communication where issues and opinions are being gathered (input), processed (throughput) and passed on (output)" (Neidhardt, 1994: 8; see also Koopmans and Statham, 2010; Peters, 2007). Frequently, the media is taken to be the closest proxy to public opinion.

A key problem in studying communication processes in Europe is the alleged 'public sphere deficit'. Such a deficit intervenes because the public opinion in the European Union is predominantly shaped at the national or, even more locally, at the regional level. Therefore the European Union is argued to be lacking "a singular, pan-European public sphere" (Adam, 2009: 9). The lack of a European public sphere is a problem in so far as it inhibits the so-called Europeanization of public debate. Even if issues of European policies are debated in parallel in national media, one cannot call such debates 'Europeanized' if the European dimension remains hidden from public view, or when citizens are unaware of the fact that the discussed issues have been generated in the supranational political arena and are similarly discussed in other Member States. In other words, if the debate appears to be a purely national, it cannot be considered Europeanized (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004: 101). In relation with the issue of discursive construction of European institutions, the debate on the formation of a European public sphere interacts with the interpretation of the EU as a supranational or intergovernmental institution. Indeed, to the extent to

which policies are intergovernmental rather than supranational, the issue of the existence of a Europeanized public sphere may take different nuances and the Europeanization of public debate may take different forms (Koopmans and Erbe, 2004: 101).

As for the forms that Europeanized debates may take, Koopmans and Erbe (2004; see also Koopmans and Statham, 2010) describe three dimensions. First, if we consider the EU as a supranational institution, a Europeanized public debate ought to take the form of *supranational European public sphere* in which interaction occurs among European-level institutions and European-wide mass media. Second, Europeanized public debate may point at a *vertical Europeanization* when communicative linkages occur between the national and the European level. Finally, in intergovernmental polities, Europeanization would not imply direct references to European actors and themes, but increased attention to public debates and mobilization in other Member States. This speaks to a *horizontal Europeanization* in which communicative linkages occur between different Member States.

Another issue related to the formation of a European public sphere is concerned with how European issues penetrate national public opinion. Along these lines, Peter and De Vreese (2004) performed a cross-national comparative content analysis of the coverage of European Union politics in British, Danish, Dutch, French, and German television news. The study identified key characteristics of the coverage and investigates influences shaping it. In the majority of countries, EU politics were marginally represented in national television news. EU officials, too, were mostly absent in the news. However, if the EU was covered, EU politics were more prominently presented than other political news. Three factors were found to positively influence the amount and prominence of EU news: it was more prominent in public broadcasting news programs, in countries with higher levels of public satisfaction with democracy, and during periods around EU summits. The visibility of EU officials in television news was highest in public news programs. The findings suggest that, with EU coverage being of limited visibility and without protagonists, the Europeanization of television news coverage is more an illusion than reality. Similarly, Adam (2007: 410) concludes that empirical research emphasises three points. First, Europe and European actors enter the national media in those 'issue fields' where competences have actually been shifted to the European level. Second, European issues gain a place in the national media outside routine politics during summit meetings involving national politicians or during political crises. Third, research has shown the role of specific types of media. For example, European issues and actors are more visible in the quality than in the tabloid press and in public more than in private television. Addressing country

variations, Adam (2007) produced a systematic content analysis of the debates on EU enlargement and a common constitution for the years 2000-2002 in the German and French quality press. This research revealed considerable variation in issue salience, actors' prominence and actors' responsibility attributions between and within the countries. Therefore, beside the problem of defining a Europeanized public sphere, in general, public spheres are fragmented at the national level as well. As Adam suggests (2007: 411), media debates do not only differ between countries, but also within countries. Segmented publics are studied, for instance, as *issue publics*, *policy domain specific subsystems*, or *Teilöffentlichkeiten* (Peters, 2007).

Discursive analysis of polity and governance

Discursive approaches have fruitfully addressed the concept of (multilevel) governance and investigated the legitimizing of European governance (Waever, 2009). Diez (2001) divides discursive research on European governance into two schools. A first school, labelled the *Governance school*, postulates that EU represents a political system in which binding decisions are made without a central decision-making point. According to this school, decisions emerge from interaction of territorially and functionally differentiated actors. Therefore, legitimacy, rather than associated to a specific organizational entity, is a "discursive phenomenon" (2001: 10). The second school is the *Copenhagen school*. The groups of scholars in this school analyse the meaning of European governance as built in national contexts and in connection to a "limited set of basic concepts on which the political debate rests" (2001: 11).

Another articulation of the discursive approach refers to Waever (2009), who highlights two main areas of research, which focus on *socio-economic models* and *layered structures* respectively. What associates the contributions of authors in the first area is the understanding that political battle lines are not located primarily between nation states or for and against integration as such but between different socio-economic models. Here, some research mobilized the concept of 'polity ideas' (Jachtenfuchs, 1995; 2001) as normative ideas about a legitimate political order. In a comparative empirical study, for example, Jachtenfuchs, Diez, and Jung (1998) analysed on what basis the development of a European polity was legitimized. The study revealed that the "development of polity-ideas with respect to the EU is characterized by a surprising continuity of the basic patterns of legitimization" (1998: 424). More specifically, patterns of legitimization depend on specific polity-ideas, which, in turn, are connected to specific party ideologies. Other research focused more on the idea of 'discursive nodal points' inspired by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) (see also Diez, 1999, 2001).

In this perspective, discourse is a structured totality resulting from articulatory practices. Articulatory practices build systems of differences, that is, systems in which social actors are defined in opposition to, or as different from, other actors. Consequently, articulatory practices suggest alignment or equivalence among actors. Such a construction of relative difference and equivalence shapes the very identities of the actors involved in the articulatory practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). 'Discursive nodal points' are central concepts in the political debate around which meaning is stabilized (Diez, 2001: 15). For example, in the dominant discourse on European governance in UK, the nexus between the concept of 'market' and 'Europe' stabilized the meaning and provided the basis for the legitimization of the European project (Diez, 2001: 16).

A second area of research, according to the classification of Waever (2009) is concerned with foreign policy and grounds on the pivotal concept of 'layered structures' (Hansen, 1997, 2001; Holm, 1997; Larsen, 1997a, b, 1999, 2000; Neumann, 1996a, b, 2001, 2002; Waever, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1996, 2005). The first layer, the deepest level, is the basic national concept of state-nation. The second layer crystallizes the relational conception of where the state/nation is in relation to Europe (internal, external, doubled, etc.). Finally, the third layers capture different concepts of Europe. This layered conception offers a comprehensive perspective to study stability and change "because from any specific point, one can see possible changes as being more or less radical, and therefore more or less likely, depending on whether they happen at the third, the second or the first layer" (Waever, 2009: 171). Research on 'layered structures' can be associated to the Copenhagen school (Diez, 2001), because of the dominant constitutive role played by the 'national concept of state nation' in both streams of research. This concept is located at the deepest level of the layered structures and provides the most resilient element in the discursive dynamic structure. For example, Larsen (1999) used discursive analysis to explain how within European states European policy lines are shaped by the different understandings of the state/nation. He shows how these different understandings have influenced the content and procedures of policy. In his study on British policy in the 1990s a neoliberal understanding of the state has influenced European policy lines while Danish policy was more shaped around welfare thinking. Similarly, focusing on Denmark in 2000, Larsen examines how Danish policy towards the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) changed from post Second-World War through the 90s. He suggests that the reported changes can be explained by looking at the dominance of specific discourses within the Danish political system.

Discursive practices and identity construction

In this section, we review a number of contributions that address the issue of identity building through discourse. In the next section (2.3.3), we will cover the analysis of identification processes in general, which is a much wider issue and whose conceptual roots are more in the area of social psychology.

In the field of political relations in general, and European identity and integration in particular, discourse analysis was widely used by Wodak, who has been active in defining the theoretical foundations, the methods (i.e. Wodak, 1990) and in applying discourse analysis to several empirical contexts. For example, in a recent paper, Wodak and Boukala (2015) tackle the concept of European Identity by analysing its boundaries in terms of cultural values and inclusion. Indeed, identity is defined in reference to 'others'. By focusing on the discursive analysis of a speech by Geert Wilders and another by David Cameron, the authors highlight how the definition of this 'otherness' and, conversely, of the 'real Europeans' is not fixed, as it depends both on the weight of traditional cultural norms and, especially after the 2008 financial crisis, on discourses regarding nationalism and national security. Another example of the use of discourse analysis to study the issue of national identities can be found in the work of De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak (1999). Here the authors focus on the discursive production of national identity in Austria. The authors identify topics, discursive strategies and linguistic devices that are deployed in order to construct the idea of 'national sameness', so that it becomes possible to identify 'others' by difference.

Other research on European discourse focused on the way the integration project as such is conceptualized and asks "what kind of identity it projects, how this interacts with more general changes in the European polity regarding legitimacy, history, medialization, concepts of citizenship, and politics" (Waever, 2009: 173). In a nutshell, this research focuses on topics such as, for example, "the inner dynamics of one attempt to structure discourse" (2009: 173), the "reflections on what kind of identity Europe might be constructing" (2009: 174) and how "discourse analysis helps us to understand how identity is constructed" (2009: 175). The work of Delanty (1995) on the normative foundation of European identity well captures this line of research. In his work, he addresses the nature of European identity not only as political, but as historically and culturally rooted, and "laden with unreflective normative assumptions" (1995: 15).

2.3.3. EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE EU

With regard to European identity and identification, Integration Studies mostly draw on the concept of social identity. Social identities are defined as: "that part of the individual's self-concept which

derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership" (Tajfel 1981: 255; see also Tajfel and Turner, 1986). As Citrin and Sides (2004: 165) explain, European and national identities are social identities in this sense: "They refer to a dimension of the individual's self-concept shared with some but not all other people (Herrmann and Brewer, 2004). A social identity originates in the act of self-categorization as a group member; the individuals answer the 'Who am I?' question by naming a subset of people 'I am like'". "Social identities are locations in social space; they position persons by virtue of placing them in power/dependency relations to other social categories of actors and associating with them a range of social expectations and capacities for appropriate actions" (Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006: 1001), and, hence, have a power component. As social categories, social identities are always constructed in relation and comparison to other social identities and shared understandings for inclusion and exclusion and considerable boundary work (e.g. Tajfel, 1981).

As the concept of European identity has been developed mainly in Political Science (e.g. Bruter, 2003, 2005; Laffan, 2004) and International Relations (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009; Marcussen, Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knopf, and Roscher, 1999) it mostly entails membership within a political community and, hence, resembles the concept of citizenship. In this sense one can, for example, recognize that the common meaning of the EU encompasses social inclusiveness, but not personally subscribe to that value. A common assumption across most literature is that identification is pivotal for integration, that is, a strongly identified membership fosters support for the collective, community or organization where the members belong. Policy makers know and empirical data confirms (see for example EUROBAROMETER) that citizens identifying with the EU support EU policy to a larger degree. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the EU has become an active identity builder (Laffan, 2004; Risse, 2009).

European and national identities

An important parameter of European identity formation is its relationship to national identities. Indeed, most research on European identities has focused on the Europeanization of national identities with a special attention to the 'compatibility' between the two. For example, in an early work, Marcussen and colleagues (1999) empirically explore the extent to which cross-country variations exist in the degree of Europeanisation of national identities in UK, France and Germany. These researchers propose that three conditions play a role in the eventual transformation of national identities to incorporate a European dimension. First, for the idea entailed in the new (i.e.

European) political order to be perceived as legitimate, it has to somehow resonate with core elements of the dominant old one (i.e. Federalism in Germany). Second, new visions about political orders can find better success when happening during so called 'critical junctures' when old ideas are being challenged or contested. Third, the degree of consensus around national identities in a given polity reduces the degree to which political elites are able to shape identity constructions. On a more conceptual level, Risse (2009: 153) proposes three different constellations of relations between European and national identities: First, identities can be nested. For example, Medrano and Gutiérrez (2001) found that Spanish national and regional identities did not conflict with European identity, on the contrary, they complemented and reinforced each other, since as Europeans the Spanish felt more 'modern' and members of a functioning democracy. Second, identities can be cross-cutting, meaning that some, but not all, members of one identity group are also members of another identity group. Third and finally, a so called 'marble cake' relation of multiple identities combines nestedness and cross-cutting identities and results in a blending of identities. Risse (2009) gives the example of Europeaness as being an essential component of a national identity.

The survey-driven research on identification of European citizens tends to highlight macro patterns of identity formation and social profiles. For example, studies based on EUROBAROMETER have long confirmed that those who identify with their nation also have a basic sense of European identity (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008; Fligstein, Polyakova, and Sandholtz, 2012). It has also been found that those who identify more fully with the EU tend to be a) members of the highest socio-economic groups in society; b) professionals and other white collars workers; c) speak a second or third language; d) young people who travel across borders for schooling, tourism and jobs; e) educated people who share common interests with their peers around Europe. Looking at how many identify with the EU, it has been concluded that the integration process did not greatly advance so far – i.e. only 3.9 percent of respondents identified exclusively with the EU in 2004, while another 8.8 percent identified with the EU and with their nation states. However, as pointed out by Fligstein and colleagues (2012), it should not be ignored that another 43.3 percent of respondents can be categorized as 'situational Europeans' or, in other words, view themselves as having primarily a national identity, but with European components. This makes Risse (2010) conclude that the sense of being European might not be incredibly deep, but it is nevertheless widespread and quite stable over the time.

Components of a European identity

Research has acknowledged the advantages of the EUROBAROMETER survey mainly in terms of its pervasiveness and longitudinal data. However, it has also been criticized for being ‘superficial’ when dealing with identity. While the social profile of EU supporters and skeptics has been extensively researched and tends to be agreed upon, little is known about the multiplicity of meanings and complex definitions of Europe ‘out there’ and what constitutes a European identity. Research in this area seems to converge on the recognition that two main components of European identity exist: a civic component and an ethnic or cultural component (i.e. Bruter 2003; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010; Risse, 2010). Civic forms of identity tend to focus on citizenship as a legal status conferred by acceptance of common institutions, laws, rules, political and social systems. Ethnic or cultural identification, instead, is defined by the feeling of commonality with others based on a shared history, language, values, ideals and religion and it is mostly understood to be acquired per birth. The idea is that some citizens might identify more with the political and legal elements of the EU (i.e. common institutions, free circulation of people and goods etc.), while others might identify more with the cultural elements of Europe (i.e. a common heritage and history, shared values and religion, etc). For example, through an experimental design Bruter (2003) has shown that: a) both symbols (i.e. the European flag) and news (both positive and negative) have significant impact on citizens’ identification in general, but also that b) symbols tend to influence more cultural identification, while news influence a civic identification to a larger extent. This apparently simple result is argued to have implications for integration policy (Bruter, 2003: 1171):

“... the most efficient line in terms of the integration policy would probably be the opposite of what is usually chosen by most Western countries. Many states choose to favor the sense of integration of newcomers by initiating them to the symbols of their new state (the United States, with its highly symbolic and organized process of induction of new citizens, is a caricature). Similarly, most attempts to fight racism and xenophobia of preinstalled populations usually use rational or scientific messages. Our findings suggest that, in an exactly opposite way, symbolic campaigns would be far more efficient at changing citizens’ perceptions of who are the “us,” whereas trying to appeal to citizens’ reason would generate a far greater sense of civic identity—and therefore of political allegiance—among newcomers, thus favoring their integration”.

Politicization of a European Identity

Another rather contemporary topic relevant for European integration is the politicization of a European identity that is centered around the metaphor of a ‘Fortress Europe’ (see Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). This metaphor is often promoted by Euro-skeptics and right-wing populist parties. Such imagery is based more on a cultural and ethnic-self component encompassing Christian-Judean culture while hostile to foreigners, immigrants and especially to Islam. The emergence of such imagery is one of the most important political trends of the last 20 years

(Mudde, 2007) together with an apparent revival of Nationalism of some sort (Fligstein et al., 2012). Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) frame the phenomenon in the context of the politicization of European identity. According to the authors, such politicization entails two opposing conceptions of EU: a populist conception reflecting the ideas of mass politics, and a cosmopolitan conception reflecting the ideas of elite politics (2009: 11). Beyond such opposition between cosmopolitanism and populism, the complexities of European identities also encompass the politicization of other spheres of social life such as, for example, religion. Religious Studies, and, on a practical level, for example, the public debate on Turkey's accession to the EU, remind us that confessional dynamics have important effects on the politicization of European identities (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). Several additional sources of EU-scepticism have been explored more widely in a double special issue of 'Acta Politica' (Hooghe and Marks, 2007).

Identity and Space

Finally, European identity and identification has a spatial component. According to Paasi (2001), it is important to bear in mind that 'regions', regionalizations and the representations of them are made by people and social groups. Regions, their 'boundaries' and symbolic meanings are always social constructs that have the capacity to fuel political processes of identification. This symbolic meaning of boundaries and borders may concretize into well visible material icons such as the Berlin Wall (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999), or the many fences that were built along the EU borders to bring the streams of refugees to a halt. These symbols are not the result of straightforward autonomous and evolutionary processes but are usually the expression of a perpetual struggle over the meanings associated with space and political systems. They may also be the result of a struggle over symbolic capital in different social fields, not least in academia. From this perspective, the work of Agnew (2013) documents the use of 'regions' as geographical classification devices in the discourse in social sciences. He shows how the explosion of regionalist and separatist movements in Europe has stimulated a discourse on 'sub-national regional identities' among social historians. This discourse was a reaction to the considerable interest in the roots of regional identities. What instead Paasi emphasises is the rhetorical use of a discourse of regionalization to mobilise identity. "The language of regionalism (and its capacity to fetishize space and territory) has always been an important strategy for nationalists and regionalists in constructing spatial oppositions, and it is the key medium when the spatialities of power are hidden in rhetoric" (2001: 14). With this aim, power-holding actors and organizations are involved in the production of the territorializations of space: "Politicians, business people, actors operating in

governance and media, teachers, and researchers are usually in a crucial position in defining, giving shape and meanings to space" (2001: 13). Psychology offers another perspective from which the relationship between space and identity is analysed. In particular, Dixon and Durrheim (2000) report on the parallel developments in Social and Environmental Psychology. They note how the former discipline has neglected the analysis of the place-identity nexus while the latter has pursued an ecological conception of the self and personality, fighting a disembodied notion of identity. Place identity as a concept emphasises how an individual's sense of "who she is" gets shaped by and incorporates the material environment. The authors propose a discursive approach to amend the limitations that, in their opinion, plague traditional research on place-identity in Social Psychology. They stress how places need to be re-conceived as dynamic arenas that are both socially constituted and constitutive of the social. In their opinion, the importance of place for the production of self is uncontested in current research. Nonetheless, they point at three limitations. First, research "has largely ignored the rhetorical traditions through which places, and the identities they embody and circumscribe, are imbued with meaning". Second, research "has disregarded how place-identity constructions, as deployed within everyday discourse, are used to accomplish discursive actions, including the justification of certain kinds of person-in-place relations". Third, "it has marginalized the political dimension of one's representations of place and of how one locates oneself and others" (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000: 28).

To respond to such limitations, the authors champion a discursive approach that challenges three assumptions. First, discursive psychologists question the notion that place-identities are best viewed as "cognitions in the individual" (2000: 37). Second, they dispute the notion "that place identities are [more than] forms of environmental 'knowing'". Finally, they fight the assumption of the absence of any political awareness. Against these notions, the authors put forward three fundamental ideas (2000: 32). First, they highlight "the collective practices through which specific place identities are formed, reproduced and modified". A discursive approach thus challenges the individualism that dominates research in the field and, instead, "shifts individual mental processes from inside the head into the interpersonal space of the conversation". It "reconstitutes place-identity as something that people create together through talk: a social construction". A second point that Dixon and Durrheim emphasise is the rhetorical nature of place-identity (2000: 33). A discursive approach would thus seek to map how varying ways of discursively locating the self may fulfil varying social and rhetorical functions. Therefore, place-identity discourse is not anymore a medium to elicit inner individual dynamics of self-categorization but a tool to put in place rhetorical strategies and to implement social practices. These authors caution against analyses that treat places

as innocent, depoliticized arenas in which people live and act. "Traditions through which people locate their selves and others are also ideological traditions that sustain relations of domination" (2000: 33). Finally, they champion a discursive approach to treat texts as "action-oriented accounts, designed to accomplish certain ends by presenting themselves as reasonable (defensive rhetoric) while undermining alternative versions of events (offensive rhetoric)" (2000: 37).

3. TEXT ANALYSIS AS TOOL FOR STUDYING INTEGRATION: ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

Social Sciences have long used qualitative content analysis (e.g. Krippendorff, 2004) in order to extract meaning from texts. This established methodology, used for studying human communication and performing analysis of the expressed intentions, attitudes and values of individuals as crystallized into the meaning of textual messages (Morris, 1994), was often applied together with theoretical approaches borrowed from Social Movement Studies. In particular, in this stream of research, frames and vocabularies play an important role.

Frames are interpretive compasses that organize experience and guide action (Goffman, 1974). They denote 'schemata of interpretation' that enable individuals to perceive, identify, and make sense of events throughout their social experience. They are "knowledge structure that can help individuals to organize and interpret incoming perceptual information" (Cornelissen and Werner, 2014: 187). Moreover, frames are not only compasses for making sense of reality, but tools that can be strategically deployed by actors. Indeed, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment and recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993: 52). The power of frames is connected to their ability to provide coherence to a set of idea elements loading different issues in public sphere (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989) and to the positions of their various sponsors and opponents within the national-political context (Meyer and Höllerer, 2010). In other words, frames provide a series of filters through which actors make sense of the world and that can be used rhetorically. Nonetheless, actors are not completely free to choose as frames are linked to certain positions in the discursive power/knowledge web. Media frames, that is frames displaced in the media, "organize the world both for journalists ... and ... for us who rely on their reports" (Gitlin, 1980: 7). Traditionally,

scholars use qualitative methods for reconstructing frames, that can be general or issue specific (Matthes, 2009).

Research on vocabularies provides an account of how sets of words are connected to specific institutionalized domains (Loewenstein, Ocasio, and Jones, 2012; Ocasio and Joseph 2005). In particular, vocabulary structure may reveal categories that reflect key dimensions of integration or differentiation of social fields. Vocabularies, as cluster of words, are the matter through which discourses are built, and can be used to grasp meanings deployed in discourse. Yet, research on vocabularies, beyond being wide-ranging and not integrated, currently relies mostly on simple statistical methods, such as word count, in order to make sense of great corpora of text and infer themes or frames (Loewenstein et. al, 2012).

The analysis of texts performed through qualitative methods and simple statistical tools has produced valuable and impressive results. Yet, thanks to the advancements in information technology during the last twenty years, automated and semi-automated methods are now available which can improve our understanding of large corpora of texts. In his fundamental paper, Mohr (1998) described formal algorithms and quantitative procedures which can be used for reducing the complexity of texts to simpler structural principles. This structural approach called for more systematic analyses of meaning structures that led to a number of empirical studies in the following years. For example, Mohr and Neely (2009) employ network techniques and block modeling on linguistic terms to conduct a Foucauldian analysis of power structures. Moreover, a special issue of 'Poetics' in 2010 on language and socio-cultural processes, presented several studies that applied automated tools dealing with meanings. In one of those studies, Krinsky (2010) applied structural analysis and network-analytic techniques in order to understand the creation of meaning in policy debates, the effect of actors' power and claims in shaping the boundaries of these debates, and the changeable structures of meanings over time. In another of those studies, Godart and White (2010) applied network analysis techniques to structure and culture which are seen as intertwined and interdependent formations. In particular, they define a structure called 'netdom' that is a concatenation of stories through networks. Meanings are, according to these authors, generated within these 'netdoms'. Another special issue of *Poetics*, in 2013, was devoted to the rising use of Topic Modeling in social sciences (see section 3.1. below). To sum up, as the number of papers adopting methods provided by information technology is rising and is producing valuable results, we argue here that semi-automatic ways of analysis are a promising tool for studying European integration and identification, one that has to deploy its full potential yet. Below we briefly

introduce two core analytical techniques that we will employ in the empirical analysis of this Work Package.

3.1. TOPIC MODELING

Automated and semi-automated techniques are promising as they permit dealing with wider corpora of texts than human interpretive analysis does. Among these new techniques, Topic Modeling has the great potential to relate research on vocabularies, words, frames, discourses and institutions (Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003). Topic Modeling provides a semi-automated way for coding the content of a corpus of texts into a set of ‘topics’ which are containers of meaningful words (Mohr and Bogdanov, 2013). As DiMaggio, Nag and Blei (2013: 570) point out “topic modeling provides a valuable method for identifying the linguistic contexts that surrounds social institutions”. The topics identified through this technique are sets of words that are clustered together as they co-occur together or co-occur in similar ways. To put it more simply, the model places together terms that appear in the same texts more frequently than one would expect by mere chance. Several features of Topic Modeling are remarkable: First of all, data models (i.e. topics) are explicit and other researchers may reproduce the analysis. Second, the extraction of topics is automated, and thus Topic Modeling can be used to model the meaning structure of large collections of texts. Third, the algorithm presents a good trade-off between automatic analysis and judgment by experts. Indeed, the inductive nature of the research leaves room for interpretation while at the same time Topic Modeling permits the discovery of unexpected results as it does not need the imposition of a-priori categories. Usually, in a first phase, topics are automatically created, but must then be interpreted inductively. In the subsequent interpretation phase, researchers must dig deep into data and use their knowledge of the context of application in order to make sense of the results. Third and finally, Topic Modeling recognizes the relationality of meanings as it treats terms as varying in meaning across different contexts and recognizes that the meaning of a word depends on the surrounding words (DiMaggio et al., 2013). The nature of topics varies, and it is up to the researcher to understand and define the nature of each topic. Some topics denote themes; other topics “shunt noisy data into uninterpretable topics in ways that strengthen the coherence of topics that remain (Di Maggio et al., 2013: 583); and “many topics may be viewed as frames … and employed accordingly” (DiMaggio et al., 2013: 578).

Topic Modeling was recently used in several sociological and cultural studies, for example, to analyse words to make sense of societal issues (Miller, 2013), analyse media attention for terrorist alert (Bonilla and Grimmer, 2013), compare the evolution of distinct disciplinary areas of research

(Marshall, 2013), perform humanities research in publishing studies (Tangherlini and Leonard, 2013; Jockers and Mimmo, 2013), or analyse 'grammar of motives' in National Security Strategies (Mohr, Wagner-Pacificci, Breiger and Bogdanov, 2013). Varieties of procedures and issues related to the use of Topic Modeling can be found in the work by McFarland, Ramage, Chuang, Manning and Jurafsky (2013) or in the work of Mohr and colleagues (2013) who blend a series of computational methods in order to show how social sciences can benefit from computer-based techniques. The authors analyse a sample of eleven U.S. National Securities Strategy documents, which establish "the strategic vision or grand strategic direction for the administration in power, provides the objectives, and include all the elements of national power. [They] also serves as the umbrella strategy for guiding a number of other national security strategy documents" (Stolberg, 2012: 71). The objective of Mohr and colleagues is to grasp the rhetorical strategies deployed in these documents as they are composed by semantic and poetic meanings. The former deal with analytic precision, the latter with passion, attitude and ambiguity anchored in human condition itself (Burke, 1941). For performing this complex analysis of texts, Mohr and colleagues use 'Named Entity Recognition' to identify actors, 'part-of-speech tagging' to identify acts and Topic Modeling to identify the contextual setting within which actors act. Another example of the interplay between diffusion of meanings in public spheres and policy preferences by citizen is the work by Bonilla and Grimmer (2013). The authors tackled the issue of how terror alerts affect media attention. For doing so, they collect about 50,000 newspaper stories and transcripts of stories from a 5-day time window around a terrorist alert. By analysing the prevalence of the different topics before and after the alerts, Bonilla and Grimmer highlight that the alerts changed the topic of conversation as media outlets allocate substantially more attention to terrorism after an alert but did not exercise direct influence on the public's policy preferences. Topic Modeling is indeed an umbrella term, identifying a set of algorithms that differ according to the underlying assumptions and to the supervision requested by the researcher. The most diffused implementation that requires no a-priori imposition uses an algorithm called Latent Dirilecht Allocation – LDA – that is based on Bayesian statistics (Blei et al., 2003). The basic idea of the output is that "documents are represented as random mixtures over latent topics, where each topic is characterized by a distribution over words" (Blei et al., 2003: 996).

3.2. MULTIPLE CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS

Another method for relating meanings and the social space in which they are used, contended and appropriated by different coalitions of interest groups (Meyer and Höllerer, 2010) is Multiple

Correspondence Analysis (MCA). MCA is an exploratory technique, similar to Principal Component Analysis, particularly suited for social science research that relies on qualitative data (Greenacre and Blasius, 2006). MCA elaborates contingencies tables with categorical variables and creates bi-dimensional topographic maps where it is possible to induce the categories' associations. In more detail, input for MCA is a contingency table where each row represents an observation and each column represents a categorical variable. Each observation is thus coded in several categories. Categorical variables used for MCA create a geometrical L-dimensional space where points (rows) and categories (columns) are placed according to how often they co-occur. In a nutshell, points associated with the same categories are put closely together in the output meaning space. At the same time, categories that co-occur frequently in the same rows are close together in the L-dimensional space. The algorithm reduces this L-dimensional space in a bi-dimensional one where, together with a statistical output, it is possible to induce relations and oppositions among categories. An example of the use of MCA for analysing the contestation of meanings in the public sphere is the study of Meyer and Höllerer (2010). The authors analyse the introduction of the concept of 'shareholder value' in the Austrian public discourse. They show how various sponsors and opponents struggle over the meaning of this concept using various frames to legitimate their own and de-legitimate their opponents' positions. The different frames are inductively developed from actors' statements in the media debate and then computed through MCA to reconstruct the meaning structures that underlie their usage. The study shows how, over time, labels and idea elements are employed to neutralize a heated public debate, enable discourse coalitions, and, eventually support the mobilization of consensus around the issue.

After having been introduced by Bourdieu in his famous study on cultural tastes (1984), MCA has been widely used in the field of sociology, and especially in the sociology of culture, where it was frequently employed to relate agents and the symbolic features of their cultural tastes. Yet, the richness of empirical studies in Sociology did not colonize policy analysis where Multiple Correspondence Analyses are still rare. An interesting exception is a study by Blasius and Scheuch (1996) that analyses Eurobarometer data (although not textual data) with MCA to depict and interpret differences and similarities between European countries. More recently, Gaxie and Hubé (2013) used MCA to explore the attitudes of elites toward European institutions based on their national and ideological backgrounds. Finally, MCA was also used to relate national identities and the attitude toward immigration (see for example Grbic, 2010; Chtouris, Zissi, Stalidis, and Rontos, 2014). Nonetheless, the ample potential of MCA to reconstruct meanings and meaning structures is of yet under-utilised in the context of European Integration and Identification Studies.

4. CONCLUSION

Social constructionism is by now an established perspective in European Studies of Integration contending that actors' preference and identities are not given but shaped, as shared meanings, through repeated interaction and communication. In spite of the relevance of language as a means to build shared meanings, research has only started to analyse communication and discourse in a systematic way especially when it comes to larger data sets. In order to promote further empirical developments in this area, we have reviewed literature spanning three main areas of academic inquiry – norms, public debates and identities – each of which we understand will benefit from more research focusing on the analysis of language and shared meanings. Consequently, we have pointed out a set of methods and analytical techniques which can be applied to the study of integration and identity from a constructivist point of view and yet make use of modern information technology and related analytical techniques. We believe that the application of such techniques to the reviewed areas of research can advance knowledge on some of the most relevant contemporary issues in EU constructivist studies such as, for instance, the regional level of governance and cooperation policies, the relation between media contents and support for EU and its policy, and the consequences of Euroscepticism and contested meanings of Europe. In the remaining tasks of this Work Package we will apply these techniques to investigate the impact of European cohesion policies on European integration and identification.

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