

Sociology of European Integration

Moodle page:

<https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=7256>

4. Sense-making, claims-making and
position-taking on Europe:
discourse analytical approaches

The limits of survey data for testing notions of justice

- Southern European states' debt crises tested Lisbon Treaty's solidarity clause and provided an opportunity to test public attitudes to solidarity as helping behaviour rather than as a more abstract feeling of closeness
- Survey evidence from EUCROSS data from 2012-13 indicates higher support in response to an abstract question "Do you support solidarity between the peoples in the EU?" or a hypothetical question about natural disasters than to a concrete question about solidarity in the debt crises.
 - But the rank order of countries also changes: e.g. Germans expressed more abstract and hypothetical solidarity than Brits, but less on the debt question
 - Transnational backgrounds, practices and human capital *do not explain* patterns of variation in support for EU-wide solidarity
 - Measures of European identification were *strongest predictors* of attitudes of solidarity
 - In fact "the correlation between [the measures was] not strong enough to warrant treating them as measures of one single concept" (Díez Medrano et al 2019)

Anecdotal evidence from qualitative research data

The notion of solidarity, in most languages, implies a gradation of worth: in-group members are more deserving of support than out-group members. Media in creditor countries framed southern European states as *undeserving* due to previous financial ‘irresponsibility’ or anticipated corrupt practices; media in debtor states *reversed the positions*, portraying north European lenders as irresponsible or arrogant. But *frames used by ordinary people* to justify attitudes more nuanced:

- Even Spanish respondents to EUCROSS shared *moral frame* that blamed their profligacy for the crisis. But they justified a claim to support on the idea of *contract*: wealthier members help poorer ones in exchange for benefits that flow from the single market (“solidarity out of obligation”)
- German respondents justified preferences for not helping out using ‘*charity begins at home*’ arguments (“you should mind your own business first”)

Claims-making in the public sphere

Díez Medrano used the Europub database (newspaper articles on European integration in 6 countries, 1990-2002) to analyse political claims:

“an act of strategic communication in the public sphere, entailing the expression of a political opinion or demand through physical or verbal action”

- Functional definition of public sphere as an “interface between elite views and citizen reactions to these views”
 - but he actually found that non-political actors other than trade unions and employers’ associations were not represented in the debate
- Study maps strategic statements on Europe as a political project:
 - “the ways in which social and political actors characterize the EU when making claims in the public sphere”
 - the sources of authority they invoke to justify their claims

Main findings

- What are political elites concerned about?
 - “The surrender of sovereignty, the transfer of competences to supranational levels of government, and the subsidiarity principle are the three major traits of this polity about which public actors seem most concerned”
- Institutional design not a matter of much concern:
 - Only rough and vague ideas get aired in the public sphere, which means these are the forms to which citizens were exposed leading up to constitutional reform
- EU’s values were invoked, but only when threatened or in conflict with values imputed to actions by member states:
 - e.g. Haider affair (need to justify interfering in Austrian politics)
- Constitutional crisis often framed as European versus national identity, but according to Díez Medrano the problem was different concerns:
 - elites’ descriptions of the European project as market, democracy and polity fail to talk to citizens’ concerns about e.g. cultural diversity or impact of globalisation on social security

Systematising discourse analysis: 1. SKAD

Schünemann analysed pre-referendum debates in France & Netherlands on Constitutional Treaty (May/June 2005) and Ireland on Lisbon Treaty (June 2008)

SKAD (= sociology of knowledge approach to discourse) “brings the actors back into focus” as speakers adopting speaker positions in discursive formations

- Actors coalesce into discursive coalitions (not always intended)
- Bipolar structure of persuasion: in referenda arguments are explicit or implicit directives about how to vote
- Distinction between:
 - treaty-arguments (supporting or opposing specific clauses)
 - meta-arguments (e.g. “voting no will have bad consequences for us”)
 - counter-arguments (negating arguments from the other camp)

Main findings

Counters the claim that no-voters were just ill-informed by treating knowledge as socially constructed (connected to practice, situated in discursive universes): “Yes, knowledge is key to understanding the campaigns and, indirectly, the results of EU referendums. However, the knowledge elements must be analysed in their complexity and *specificity*.”

- Irish (no) arguments indexed to country’s neutral status (opposition to militarisation) whereas French (no) speakers opposed ‘submission’ to NATO while committing to a strong military Europe
- French and Dutch (yes) arguments indexed to story of peace in Europe, Irish (yes) arguments to Celtic Tiger narrative, with Europe as helper
- (Yes) advocates used environmental arguments in all countries, but only in Netherlands were there also strong environmental counter-arguments

2. Sociology of critique / pragmatic sociology

Blokker demonstrates a way of studying “discourses of justification of European democracy” inspired by Boltanski & Thévenot:

- Shows how to classify claims based on B & T’s typology of “orders of worth” or “civic grammars” (derived from political theory)
 - What orders of worth do actors invoke, explicitly or implicitly, to legitimise or criticise the EU?
- Shows how “forms of critique” can be:
 - Reformist 1 - practices don’t live up to the principles of legitimation they are founded on
 - Reformist 2 - confronting one civic grammar with a different one, e.g. criticising the EU as a market in the name of Europe as a civic order, often framed as a restoration of ‘original’ ideals
 - Radical - formulating “meta-political critique” of the very foundations of the existing order: here the ‘old order’ is not to be rescued but destroyed and reconstructed on a different basis
- Uses examples from the pronouncements of grassroots pro-European counter-movements

Blokker's orders of worth for EU legitimisation

Table 1 Different justificatory orders of European political integration

The EU as a:	Market order	Industrial order	Order of commonality	Civic order	Deliberative order	Cosmopolitan order	Bottom up order
<i>Principles of legitimisation</i>	Profit, wealth generation (through competition)	Efficiency; productivity	Cultural unity	Collective good	Inclusiveness	Recognition	Self-government
<i>Main democratic rationale</i>	Individual choice	Mastery, increased capacities	Construction of collectivity, demos	Equality	Standard of non-domination	Inclusiveness	Public autonomy
<i>Institutional imagination</i>	Common market	European area of progress (e.g. Europe 2020)	European or national community of belonging	European constitutional order; Charter of rights	Deliberative arenas; plural forms of authority	Differentiated integration	Plurality of channels of civic input; various forms of basic guarantees
<i>Scope of politics</i>	Limited, regulatory politics	Instrumentalist, regulatory politics	Elite politics; national politics	Political participation based on rights	Politics as discursive interaction	Inclusive, post-identity politics	Politics beyond formal institutions

Source: Own elaboration; Boltanski and Thévenot 2006.

3. A communication approach to claims analysis

Guiding principles of the *communicative constitution of organization* approach:

- Communication is the means by which organizations are talked, written, and acted into existence (constituted)
- Not just people but feelings, concerns, principles, collectives, texts, interests, artefacts, etc. participate in communication events

Matters of concern and authority

- Participants in negotiations or disputes want to show that their *matters of concern* don't just matter for them, but also for their interlocutors and their organization. Negotiation is about alignment and disalignment between participants' matters of concern
- Result: some matters end up mattering more, become privileged over others, while others become marginalized
- The matters that matter more become *matters of authority* and become *consequential*. They literally *co-author* actions and decisions (*auctor* = authority OR author, derived from *augere* = to augment)
- So what we do when we invoke sources of authority is multiply the number of authors of a claim. This makes it more persuasive ('it's not just me that says')

Matters of concern and authority in discourse

Operationalised for analysing strategising or claims-making more generally:

- *Matters of concern:*
 - a/ things that are positioned as making us want to do something
 - b/ the things referred to when speakers try to defend or evaluate a position, account for or disalign from an action, or justify or oppose an objective
- *Matters of authority:*
 - a/ things that are positioned as authorising us to do something (that we want to do)
 - b/ things that are positioned as making us do something in a particular way (i.e. setting standards and steering our actions by imposing various kinds of consequentiality)
 - a concern that *co-authors* (directs) actions is a matter of authority
 - matters of authority can set dependencies and incompatibilities between matters of concern

Examples of phrases introducing matters of concern

When speakers and writers use these kinds of introductory phrases, you're usually in the vicinity of matters of concern. Look especially for instances where they are used to say what matters and to align or disalign with a proposed action or move:

- Should be / ought to be
- I am concerned / I am worried / I am uneasy about
- I am interested in / It's in our interests to
- It's important / What's important
- It's vital / What's vital
- What we need to do / What we must do
- For me / For us
- It matters [to us/me]
- I / we believe in

Examples of phrases introducing matters of authority

The principles, rules, laws, conventions and procedures that people convoke to justify their concerns are often introduced as follows:

- In the name of
- On the basis of
- According to
- In the interest of
- In conformity/accordance with
- Founded on
- Because
- As laid out in

Or these phrases can be 'heard' (paraphrased) even when they are unsaid:

How matters of authority co-author our choices

EU leaders invoke Union's highest principles to justify a claim that Britain cannot be offered a bespoke arrangement after Brexit. They say the consequences of Britain's choices depend on their compatibility with these *matters of authority*:

“How close that partnership will be depends on decisions that are still to be taken. Because *every choice has a consequence*. Without [paraphrase: in the name of] *the free movement of people*, there can be no free movement of capital, goods and services. Without [in the name of] *a level playing field on environment, labour, taxation and state aid*, there cannot be the highest quality access to the single market. Without being a member, you cannot retain the benefits of membership.”

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/01/31/a-new-dawn-for-europe-op-ed-article-by-presidents-charles-michel-david-sassoli-and-ursula-vo>

Seminar assignment for session 3

On 4th March 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron published an open letter to the citizens of Europe, in the run-up to the elections to the European Parliament ([English](#) version, [Czech](#) version).

1. Identify the *political claims* in his letter. List his *matters of concern* as well as the *matters of authority* he invokes to justify them.
2. Conduct a search for reactions to his letter in the public sphere (you can search Czech or English-speaking mass media and/or social media). Identify the *counter-claims* in this 'dialogical network' using the same approach.