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Narrative and Europeanization: bringing together two processual notions

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1. State of the art – subjects and range within contemporary research

Narratives and the notion of Europe are closely interconnected, both by cultural frameworks of what constitutes Europe and 'being European', and by EU-related stories crafted for political purposes. In a broader, much more paradigmatic perspective, narrative inquiry suggests that stories, as constructed and reconstructed by agents, are to be considered constituents of social interaction and phenomena, in general. Narratives construct and constrain individual and group identity (Hyvärinen et al., 2010; Loseke, 2007; Somers, 1994; Weick, 1995). What is more, they do construct phenomena agents perceive as reality (Bruner, 1991) by organizing identities into cultural or political institutions (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Through the use of narratives and stories humans create a sense of meaning and purpose between fragmented events and experiences. Experiences are meaningful parts of shaping humans' stories about themselves (Johansen, 2012; McAdams, 1996) with regard to the social context they relate to. In exactly this sense, narratives contribute to the construction of 'Europe' and its political representation, the European Union (EU), as meaningful entities, and they appear in various forms in relation to the process of European integration, thereby shaping and permeating countless dimensions of social life (for an overview of European narratives and counter-narratives cf. Bârğaoanu et al., 2017). This has been clearly demonstrated by an abundance of research literature coming from scientific disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, economics, geography, history, law, literary studies, political science and sociology (although the latter, we would argue, to date plays a somewhat minor role in this field). Thus, corresponding narratives have been crafted and construed, passed on and modified by various intellectuals, writers, artists, scholars and politicians (Chenal & Snelders, 2012; Dittmer, 2014; Forchtner & Kølvraa, 2012; Petrović, 2017) as well as by newspapers (Rovisco, 2010). Sometimes, this occurs in a professionally fabricated manner as in the case of the European Commission's attempt to foster a 'new narrative for Europe' (European Commission, 2014; cf. also Bouza García, 2017b; Kaiser, 2015, 2017), but it also takes place 'from below', that is, within the general population (Antonsich, 2008; Armbruster et al., 2003; Scalise, 2015). Equally, such narratives find their way into material objects such as films (Clemens, 2016), bank notes (Sassatelli, 2017), museums and exhibitions (Hilmar, 2016; Krankenhagen, 2011; Radonić, 2017; Van Weyenberg, 2019) as well as monuments and buildings (Perchoc, 2017). Narratives shape organizations (Lueg, 2018) and policies (e.g. Maricut, 2017) and constitute, more generally, the constructive pillars of Europe as a cultural and geographical entity in terms of belonging and not-belonging (Larsson & Spielhaus, 2015; Tietze, 2013), as well as its borders (Andrén et al., 2017; Eder, 2006; Leontidou, 2004; Strüver, 2002). Furthermore, research has repeatedly pointed out (and criticized) how narratives provide sense to,

sustain and justify – even if only temporarily and with varying success – the European Union as an institution and European integration as a political-economic project (Della Sala, 2016; Gilbert, 2008; Larat, 2005; Manners & Murray, 2016; Mayer, 2019; Rosoux, 2017; Schünemann, 2017; Smismans, 2010). Finally, narratives play an important role in creating general representations of Europe, including its alleged (cultural) particularities, internal divisions and place in the world (D'Auria & Vermeiren, 2018; Domnitz, 2010; Fornäs, 2017; Heller, 2006; Koschorke, 2013; Nicolaïdis & Howse, 2002). Overall, narrative research on Europe, European integration and the EU thus abounds, uncovering narratives that range from 'small' stories to organizational narratives or various master – or 'grand' – narratives of what Europe is supposed to represent (see also Cloet, 2017; Franzius et al., 2019). On all levels, these stories contribute actively to the ongoing meaningful construction of 'Europe' as a social entity.

2. A narrative approach to Europeanization: conceptual frame and motivation

While some authors have already outlined the specific value of bringing narrative inquiry to the study of Europe and, in particular, of European integration and the EU (Ächtler, 2014; Bouza García, 2017a; Kaiser & McMahon, 2017; Koschorke, 2019; Manners & Murray, 2016), it is surprising to find that this strand of research only rarely, and without greater detail, links up with one of the most prominent concepts to be found in social science research on these issues, i.e. the notion of Europeanization. Most often, this concept is used – particularly within political science, economics and European studies – to refer to the various processes through which standards and directives, originating at EU level, are implemented at and adapted to the national level, as well as their wider effects on national economic and political structures (Olsen, 2002; Radaelli, 2003). Besides this dominant understanding, the term 'Europeanization' has also been employed more recently (especially within sociological work) to denote how societies change as a result of European integration and how, in turn, this process rests on specific socio-structural foundations and is affected by the European population itself, particularly with regard to the various forms of cross-border (inter-)actions and relations that have formed over the years (Favell & Guiraudon, 2009; among others, see also Beck & Grande, 2007; Carlson, 2020; Fligstein, 2008; Recchi et al., 2019). Given these understandings of Europeanization, its connection to the notion of narrative may seem obvious. However, except for Jones and Clark (2008), Krankenhagen (2011) and Trenz (2015, 2016), it is actually seldomly argued for and motivated as a theoretical and methodological perspective, including its epistemological logics: how does a narrative perspective on Europe help us understand social processes? Why is it appropriate to select a narrative perspective when we discuss Europe and agents invested in Europe as our object of inquiry?

Against this background, this special issue aims to make the case for combining both notions more explicitly in further research. In so doing, we argue, first of all, that a narrative perspective – that is, including stories of Europe as an object of inquiry as well as a method of research – is appropriate, because Europe, as a social construct, does relate to several similar parameters as narratives do: it is, in its core, a temporal, and processual, notion referring to continuous changes (Moumoutzis & Zartaloudis, 2016; Salvatore et al., 2013), it is reliant on plots, and on citizen discourse as language-in-use (for an overview of stories of Europe in national contexts cf. Lacroix & Nicolaïdis, 2010), and it needs agents to advance its storyline (Eder & Carlson, 2020 in this issue).

Second, both Europeanization and narrative entail the notion of being an ongoing process, with various pathways to various endings being envisioned (Eder, 2009). In consequence, we suggest that 'Europe' can be called what Boje has termed an antenarrative – a fragmented story in the sense that it is a story in the making, a bet on how it could look like from a potential, retrospective look into the future (Boje, 2001a, 2008; Henderson & Boje,

2016). Europe has a (strategic) storyteller in the form of the EU, and there is also a decided recipient, that is, EU citizens and all those interested in European matters. However, there are many more actors and social groups involved in telling additional, sometimes alternative, parallel or counter-stories of Europe, as Gärtner (2020, in this issue) points out with her research on the story of 'paradise Europe' as told by Cameroonian migrants. The story of Europe, quite clearly, is hinged upon morale and a framing of the right thing to do – if political reasoning seems to lose acceptance (such as emphasizing the peace-keeping effect of having a strong economic union), common European values are conjured (Vidmar Horvat, 2012). Such 'EU values', equated with a 'European way of life' by the EU (European Commission, 2020), often lack definition but seem to cater to an essentialist understanding of what the cultural core of Europe is – leading to practices of othering as well as inner- and outer-European exclusion, as shown in culturally biased questions by the Eurobarometer or by EU ads (Watt, 2012).

Third, Europe and the EU – both organizations from a perspective grounded in communication theory (Schoeneborn, 2011 for an elaboration on communication as constitutive for organizations) – shape meaning and provide sense-making on all levels of social observation, just like narrative itself. On the micro level, people in and relating to Europe tell stories of belonging or not-belonging, making sense of their own and others' identities. On the social meso level, researchers have examined various types of group processes and interactions ('group' implying communities and any type of organization). It is at the meso-level of intersubjective organizing and organizations that institutionalized cultural narratives are being negotiated and transformed into policies, rules, laws and structures – a process that is embodied, nearly ideal typically, by Europe as a cultural tale and the EU as its structural institutionalization. Finally, on the macro level Europeanization can be understood as a changing force towards societal processes in larger interrelations and more general patterns, such as intra-European patterns of social class or structure, systems or the power of culture and religion. Europe, as a notion, impacts on all these levels, and all these levels can be researched by making use of narrative inquiry (Lueg et al., 2020, 7). To further stress our argument about the inherent connection between narrative and Europeanization and highlight the added value of the former for analyzing the latter, we lay bare several features and core notions of narrative as well as their interconceptual dynamics.

3. What is narrative and what does it have to offer for Europeanization research?

Narrative research vastly goes above and beyond the analysis of 'a story': narrative inquiry *may* focus on researching one precisely definable storyline but can also move far beyond this. Constructionist narrative research tends to refer to the basic definition of narrative merely to have a blueprint to deviate from. Such a definitory approach to narrative, however, helps to understand, and in consequence to deconstruct and extend, the elements that built it. A narrative is often described as 'having' the following characteristics: it has a temporal order, arranged along the elements beginning, middle and end. Also, the story has a "teller" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, 200), or, at least, one agent mediating the story as the "*one who speaks*" (Barthes & Duisit, 1975, 261; emphasis in original) and a "recipient of narrative" (Barthes & Duisit, 1975, 260). Third, the story 'has' emplotment: many episodes or sequences are connected to each other. A narrative, in sum, is often described as grasping together characters, plots, actions and events into a meaningful, coherent whole in a logical temporal order (Bal, 1997; Barthes & Duisit, 1975; Kvernbekk, 2003), this grasping together being told by someone to someone else (for an overview see Pentland, 1999).

3.1 Morale, power structures, and narrative

We emphasize, amongst all those features, the moral interpretation of a story (White, 1990) as being of vital relevance for social narrative inquiry. A narrative can represent powerful mental models that are being fought about socially. Stories entail propositions about what is 'the right thing to do', who is 'in the right' (see the notion of 'European values') and often these moral assessments provide subtle directions for social conduct in general, having implications beyond the plot at hand. Narratives, thus, are instruments, consciously or unconsciously, to produce a normatively laden social order (Frandsen et al., 2017; Giddens, 1991). Consequently, narratives do have the potential to reproduce or challenge "existing relations of power and inequity" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, 197). There are social rules for "when, what, how, and why stories are told" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, 197), and 'narrating' means relating to these rules, be it by being cooperative or by deviating from them. Understanding patterns of consistent social interpretations and representations of certain events as narratives, in consequence, is highly useful for being able to criticize power relations. Understanding narrative(s) means being able to answer the question of how social groups intersubjectively account for social life. One example of this is Lueg's (2018) study on how different groups of university members understand and appropriate the concept of Europeanization in relation to educational and organizational changes, leading to intra-organizational power struggles as a result. Another example would be Hilmar's (2016) analysis of the role of symbolic power in discussions of curators of the House of European History about the way to present European history to the public. Finally, one may think here of Nicolaïdis and Howse (2002) who engage with the issues of power and morale by pointing out how specific narratives serve to project 'Europe' (implying the EU) as a civilian power to the wider world and the implications deriving from this.

3.2 Master narrative

Though all narratives can be argued to imply a certain social morale, there are some narratives that are more durably successful at this than others. Such narratives that then serve as blueprints or guidelines for other stories are called master narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004, 360). Master narratives are those stories that are, at least to a certain point in time, autonomous from those agents they impact on. Czarniawska highlights this by stating that "[o]ther people or institutions sometimes concoct narratives for us, without including us in any conversation […]" (Czarniawska, 1997, 14). A master narrative, in consequence, is a typical story with a normative appeal and it is one that has a certain level of autonomy from, and power over, the 'agents' involved in the very story (similar notions with each of their own, slightly different characteristics, however, would be 'cultural model', 'figured world' or 'discourse', for example; for an overview cf. Gee, 2009, 89). A master narrative can thus guide beliefs and cultural-social behavior of social groups, and it is entirely possible that these patterns of behavior are simply accepted as social institutions, internalized and remain unquestioned. A master narrative is one with or without resistance; resistance, however, is possible (McLean & Syed, 2015, 323). In this vein, emphasizing morale and power, Lueg, Graf and Powell (2020, 272) propose these three features as applicable to a master narrative (viz. hegemonic narrative): they are "told in favor of those holding power over social matters relevant to that story, told by those agents who actually are in power or benefit from this power structure, and outlining moral rules (if subtly) that prevent and oppose the imagining of any other power structure". It has to be considered that such power concentration and use is not inherently negative and oppressive, just as a counter-narrative (see below) cannot automatically be considered a liberating and justified force. Europe, and more so the EU, could be argued to be representing such a master narrative: it does impact the lives of citizens and non-citizens, it is often perceived as being detached from individual agency and influence and it clearly

permeates, and thereby shapes, inter alia, law, politics and educational systems. Another example for a master narrative in relation to Europe is outlined by Heller (2006), who suggests that there are specific master narratives, grounded in European culture, in relation to the notion of freedom.

3.3 Counter-narrative

Like master narratives, counter-narratives also suggest a certain morale and normativity. However, it is one that may temporarily hold less power in the field the story relates to than the master narrative. A counter-narrative does not necessarily oppose the master narrative; it may also slightly deviate from this, or merely relate to a storyline that is perceived as worthy to counter and relate to. "Counter-narratives only make sense in relation to something else, that which they are countering. The very name identifies it as a positional category, in tension with another category" (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004, x). Counter-narratives are instruments for sensemaking for agents who cannot identify with the narrative of the given context, often perceived as hegemonic (Lundholt et al., 2017). Counter-narratives can oppose master narratives, but they can also counter another counter-narrative. They are always subject to social perceptions and assessments – in no case do they automatically represent objective and static power relations. The normativity underlying the notions of master narrative and counter-narrative entail a slippery slope for researchers operating with these notions: counter-narratives are more often than not being equated with liberating, creative forces rebelling against the oppressive 'systematic' force of the master narrative, obviously because counter-movements, their linguistics, discourses, their formation etc. are interesting and worthwhile phenomena to investigate. A vast body of research is dedicated to counter-narratives as being liberating tools for marginalized agents, thus coining this notion as the legitimate force of 'the little man'. However, counter-narratives can be hostile, and destabilizing, and they can very well be harnessed by powerful agents to be turned into master narratives. This has been pointed out by several recent studies focusing on how Eurosceptic and right-wing groups of actors engage in the construction of counter-narratives in order to yield political and symbolic power (Conrad et al., 2019; Petrović, 2019; Volk, 2019; see also Lucchesi, 2020 in this issue).

3.4 Antenarrative

Between, and alongside, such master narrative/counter-narrative dynamics lies a narrative status that has been termed 'antenarrative': as mentioned before, an antenarrative is a notion that is supposed to grasp the concept of communicative acts that are not yet a fully developed story. Rather, they are an imagination of the future (Henderson & Boje, 2016) or a story in the making, where narrators and other story stakeholders hope for, presently uncertain, outcomes of this story (Boje, 2001b; Lueg et al., 2019). Europe, and more so Europeanization, is an antenarrative in that it clearly envisions a specific ending of the story (whether this entails a tragic or happy ending, however, is highly contested and depends on the narrative structure of the specific story told; cf. Eder, 2009; Forchtner & Eder, 2017), and it does employ features of narrative in order to engage citizens. However, it is not clear how this narrative, culturally and politically, will play out. The uncertainty of the storyline and the visibility of competing forces trying to impact on the storyline (e.g., European counter-movements) make Europeanization a storyline with potentially numerous endings.

4. Narrative inquiry into Europeanization: this issue

The six contributions to this special issue, coming from various scientific disciplines, all aim to contribute further to our understanding of European integration and Europeanization processes from a narrative perspective. They do so by drawing on insights coming from narrative theory and/or by shining a light on empirical instances of narrative constructions regarding 'Europe'. Along these lines, **Antoinette Fage-Butler** and **Katja Gorbahn** (2020) start with their empirical study *Europeanness in Aarhus 2017's programme of events: identity constructions and narratives* in which they focus on the meaning of 'Europeanness' as manifested in the events and storytelling of EU culture events. Their analysis draws on the case of Aarhus, the 'European Capital of Culture' in 2017, which is a title awarded annually to one city taking part in a designated competition within the European Union. This title, and the corresponding program, are installed with the purpose of fostering citizen approval and identification, as one of many examples for EU cultural initiatives. A 'Capital of Culture', by mandatory rule, has to include a 'European dimension' in its event program. However, interpretation of what this might entail, is left to the program hosts. Against this background, Fage-Butler and Gorbahn analyze Aarhus' program of events, employing Foucauldian discourse analysis to identify two main identity narratives: competing in the program were narratives of a) a "categorical identity discourse", constructing identity as homogenous and different from "the other", and b) a "relational identity", where identity is constructed as a dynamic network. By combining the various perspectives, the authors conclude that the construction of Europeanness could seem arbitrary, contradictory and sometimes muted to event attenders, thus pointing out the problems connected with such top-down installed narratives.

Next, **Dario Lucchesi** (2020), in his research article *The refugee crisis and the delegitimization of the EU: a critical discourse analysis of newspapers' and users' narratives in Italian Facebook pages,* provides insights into his study of social media discourse (here: Facebook) ensuing between newspaper article postings and user comments. In particular, Lucchesi focuses on social media narratives of Italy as a nation state versus Europe during the so-called EU refugee crisis between 2016 and 2018. His analysis finds that both newspapers and users, in their core storylines, shared a perception of a general cleavage between national and EU interests. Though not necessarily negative or defensive towards the EU, newspaper stories reconfirmed this basic dichotomy. Anti-immigrant and anti-EU comments ensued regardless of the normative perspective brought up by the newspaper report itself. Lucchesi argues that this is a recontextualization of discourses and finds the 'crisis'-related sentiments of being anti-EU and anti-refugee as essentially embedded in an old historical model of the nation state vs. transnationalism.

Iulia Patrut (2020), in her article *Reciprocal reinforcement of entangled narrations on outer and inner European borders. Romanies, nation states and Europe*, analyses the narration *Die grosse schwarze Achse* by author Herta Müller against the backdrop of European history behind the Iron curtain. In particular, she focuses on liminal figures, in particular the Romani, and the narrative strategy of "liminal view". Her article provides general considerations on what literary and journalistic narratives contribute to the construction of European borders (both outer- and inner-European borders). She also describes practices of inclusion and exclusion fostered by a European space conceived of as being homogenous. She argues that European border regions are predestined to function as settings for reflections on border regimes. Literature, she emphasizes, has largely contributed to questioning the interdependencies between cultural borders on the one hand and political borders on the other hand: thoughts on Europe and Europeanization, in literature writings, can be considered an archive of such perspectives over time. The narration *Die grosse schwarze Achse* is portrayed by Patrut as being situated in the context of opposition towards censorship and totalitarianism. Patrut emphasizes the "liminal figure", especially that of the

so-called "Gypsie" as part of the narration. A typology of this and other liminal figures in the texts by Herta Müller is brought together with the suggestion that the characters' potential for resistance hinges on their liminal status. In sum, Patrut lines out how the narration by Herta Müller, in general, and the highlighting of lives and living conditions of Romanis as "Gypsies", in particular, outline vital European narratives of borders, belonging and not-belonging, and the tensions between those narratives. Similar to Van der Waal (2019), Patrut's analysis thus alerts us to how such liminal and more vulnerable groups of people within the EU play an important role in the construction of 'Europe'.

The next article, *Visualisation of the 'Balkan road': media representations of the refugee crisis at the periphery of Europe* by **Ksenija Vidmar Horvat** (2020), also focuses on narratives as artistic products, albeit mediated by journalistic outlets. She observes and analyses visual representations, published in Slovenian news outlets, pertaining to narratives of Europe and Europeanization. These visual representations are selected from two cases: Vidmar Horvat collects and analyses her data from a newspaper series, including artistic drawings, and one single photograph that has garnered attention. She argues that these visual representations deviate from a conventional, rather stereotyped and othering view on the subject of visual representations, namely refugees. Overall, the investigation is set in the context of the so-called 'refugee crisis' of 2015, more precisely, in the national context of Slovenian media discourses and politics. The two cases of visual representations are analysed as counter-narratives that struggle for legitimacy in view of hegemonic narratives. Such hegemonic narratives are in this case framed by historical stories, as induced by Western discourse. Local counter-narratives, as represented in the visual art pieces, may help in advancing the European project.

Marlene Gärtner (2020) then contributes an empirical study of how narratives and the perceived 'crisis' of migration from the Global South are interrelated. She contributes the text *Narrating migration in terms of the Global North: Institutional attempts to counter the "Paradise Europe" narrative in Cameroon*. The focus of her analysis are EU awareness campaigns in Cameroon, meant to discourage migration. These campaigns, Gärtner shows, are focused on invalidating a rose-colored dream of Europe. She identifies two main narratives running parallel to each other. First, there is the "Paradise Europe" narrative she discovers in interviews with Cameroonians. This narrative is the imagination of immediate success abroad and a crucial factor for migration to Europe. Second, there is the "You can be happy at home" narrative as launched by EU member states, an institutional counter-narrative, failing however, in telling a valid counter-story. Gärtner finds deterring campaigns by EU member states "naïve" in face of the powerful narratives of migration, success and an adventurous road to success. The misbelief that the mediation of "facts" and "information" can counter a "guiding dream of Europe" dooms the campaigns to fail and shows, at the same time, European self-righteousness with a view to North-South power relations.

Finally, the contribution *Europe as a narrative laboratory. Klaus Eder on European identity, populist stories and the acid bath of irony* by **Klaus Eder and Sören Carlson** (Eder & Carlson, 2020) gives an overview of essential propositions in Eder's work on Europe, identity and narrative. The authors summarize Eder's sociological approach to a European identity, seen as emerging by means of narrative processes, and, based on that, then engage in a conversation about central propositions arising from this work. Thus, they discuss, inter alia, the concepts of narrative resonance and isomorphism, the relation between narrative and network structures, and they touch upon the (neglected) role of narratives in social-scientific thinking, thereby taking up many of the issues addressed in this special issue.

In addition to the papers selected for this themed issue, we are glad to be able to include **Niels Exner**'s *A century with and against the market. The ILO and 'global social justice'*, which reviews Daniel Maul's research monograph *The International Labour Organization. 100 Years of Global Social Policy*, and **Georg Vobruba**'s reflection on the basic income

debate, entitled *The way out of Basic Income's utopia trap. Making sense of the basic income debate.* We thank Christian Möstl and Karl-Julian Zapff for their help in carefully compiling and prestructuring the extensive research literature that we draw on in this article. Furthermore, we would like to thank CPE's editorial team for their generous support in the production process of this special issue.

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Europeanness in Aarhus 2017's programme of events: Identity constructions and narratives

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According to EU cultural policy, European Capitals of Culture (ECOCs) should include a 'European dimension' that promotes cultural collaborations across EU countries and highlights the diversity and similarity of European cultures. However, the European dimension has been underplayed in ECOC events (Lähdesmäki, 2014b) and has not been particularly visible in official communication about ECOC events (European Commission, 2010). The purpose of this study is to investigate narratives of Europeanness that provide templates for identification in the official programme of events for Aarhus 2017, using a qualitative discourse analytical approach and computational tools. The findings reveal that 'Europe' is linked to other spatial/geopolitical levels, and that narratives of Europeanness draw on discourses of categorical identity and relational identity. The various representations of Europeanness in Aarhus 2017's programme of events are discussed with respect to existing empirical studies and theories of European identity, as well as the evolving aims of ECOC.

Keywords: European Capitals of Culture (ECOCs), Narratives, Europeanness, European identity, Discourse, Digital text analysis, Aarhus 2017, ECOC programme of events

1. Introduction

The European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) project has been in existence since 1985. It has been described as "a flagship cultural initiative of the European Union" (Barroso, 2009, 1), which should further civic identification with the EU, and political integration (Shore, 2000) by winning over EU citizens' "hearts and minds" (Patel, 2013, 2). Although ECOCs have been described as passing through three phases in their ongoing evolution and with respect to various cultural policy amendments (García & Cox, 2013; Staiger, 2013), the focus from their inception has been on presenting the "unity in diversity" of European culture (McDonald, 1996; Sassatelli, 2009). For Melina Mercouri, the Greek minister of culture who proposed the concept of a European City of Culture which later became the ECOC project, culture should be as important a strand in European Community affairs as trade and economics, and culture was envisaged as central to the political aim of European integration (García & Cox, 2013, 37). ECOCs can thus be considered manifestations of what Vidmar-Horvat (2012, 30) has described as the "'cultural turn' in the European politics of integration" that started to gain prominence during the 1980s.

In EU cultural policy that applied for the recent ECOC Aarhus 2017 (European Parliament and Council, 2006), it is stipulated that ECOCs include a mandatory "European dimension" whose aim is to promote artistic and civic collaborations across the EU and present the

unity and diversity of European culture. The main concern of this policy is to generate grassroots support for European integration (Lähdesmäki, 2014a, 192), appealing to "hearts and minds" (Patel, 2013, 2) using the Trojan horse of culture (Sassatelli, 2009, p. 100). Of course, the Europeanising function of ECOCs should garner support for the political integration of the EU rather than for the continent of Europe: culture is used, as it often is, to "fix" a problem (Bell & Oakley, 2015, 58) – in this case, weak or lackluster support for European political integration.

The European dimension is obligatory in ECOCs, and bids for future ECOCs are assessed in relation to whether the European dimension is sufficiently present (European Parliament and Council, 2006, Article 10). However, despite its mandatory status, what is meant by the "European dimension" is not clearly specified. This means that the "European dimension" can be flexibly interpreted at local ECOCs, which can help embed understandings of Europe locally, a process dubbed "Eurocalization" (Fage-Butler, 2020). It also permits greater refraction of the European dimension through local and personal interpretations, and this, coupled with weak appropriation of overt European symbolism or banal Europeanism (Cram, 2009) can result in the mandatory European dimension not being apparent to ECOC event attenders (Fage-Butler, 2020). Its absence from cultural events from the point of view of event attenders is at odds with ECOCs' aim of generating greater awareness of a common, yet diverse European culture and mustering support for the EU as a political project.

A growing body of evidence indicates that the European dimension in ECOCs is underplayed at the expense of local, national and international concerns (European Capital of Culture, 2015; Fischer, 2013; García & Cox, 2013; Lähdesmäki, 2014b; Sassatelli, 2009), with Lähdesmäki (2012, 193) summarizing that, on the whole, "the 'European dimension' or Europeanness cannot be perceived in the contents of ECOC events". The problem of translating European cultural policy into practice in ECOCs is also evident in studies that show that the European dimension tends to diminish as ECOCs move from the early proposal stage to being realized as actual events (Palmer, 2004, 88). Moreover, programme developers of ECOCs often disagree about where the emphasis between the various spatial and geopolitical layers (global, European, national, local) should lie (O'Callaghan, 2012; Palonen, 2010).

The European Commission has criticized the muted European dimension in ECOC events (Immler & Sakkers, 2014) as well as communication *about* the events: e.g. "In some cases, the cities did in fact have a good European dimension in their projects, but did not make it visible enough in their communication material" (European Commission, 2010, 6). The present article takes its starting point in this second point, exploring not the events themselves, but the less investigated aspect of how the European dimension is represented in communication about the events. In focusing on Aarhus 2017, whose motto was "Let's Rethink", it takes Aarhus 2017's official programme book (Aarhus 2017, 2017) as its case in point. Aarhus 2017 (2017) was produced for consumption by multiple audiences, including Danes and the broader European/ international public (it consists of parallel, translated texts in Danish and English), as well as interested stakeholders in the EU. The programme of events book is highly relevant to explore how Europeanness is narrativized by those involved in staging the event, as it reflexively presents the European dimension of the ECOC in question to its various publics. To explore the narrativization of Europeanness in the programme of events book, we will analyze the discursive constructions of European identity. We start with a quantitative approach that characterizes the text in terms of relevant features. Then we undertake a three-layered qualitative analysis that identifies qualitative constructions of Europeanness, characterizes the identity discourses that underpin those constructions, and discusses the discourses in relation to broader narratives of Europeanness.

2. European Capitals of Culture (ECOCs)

2.1 ECOCs and european cultural policy

ECOCs have evolved over the decades to reflect more integrationist intentions (Fage-Butler, 2020). Lähdesmäki (2014a, 192) has described the main objective of ECOC's current policy (European Parliament and Council, 2006) as that of cementing closer cultural ties across Europe, a point that is also acknowledged by EU politicians and political bodies (Barroso, 2009, 1; European Union, 2015, 1). Patel (2013, 2) explains this concern with forging deeper cultural ties as reflecting an attempt to address the EU's "lack of 'cultural legitimacy'" as part of the wider debate on its democratic deficit, a point also made by Karaca (2010, 123) in relation to the EU's involvement in cultural projects more generally. It is believed that greater legitimacy for the EU can be achieved through "a shared and coherent identity" (Lähdesmäki, 2014b, 78).
ECOCs may also promote support for the EU because cities often experience regeneration after becoming an ECOC (Campbell, 2011; Chambers, 2017). Aarhus has also benefitted economically from having been an ECOC in 2017 (Aarhus 2017, 2018).

2.2 Empirical studies of ECOC programmatic literature

Although the European dimension of official material on ECOCs has not received concerted research attention, relevant empirical studies have been undertaken. Aiello and Thurlow (2006, 158) explored the production of a "pan-European identity" in visual discourses in the promotional texts of 30 cities that were either nominated for or competed for the title of ECOC. They found that the visual idiom facilitated an efficient integration of local and global/European themes, and they suggested that visual representations of a pan-European identity could promote narratives of Europe that influenced people's sense of Europeanness (Aiello & Thurlow, 2006, 159).
Turşie (2015) explored the narratives used by two cities she characterizes as peripheral in Europe: Marseille-Provence (ECOC in 2013) and Pecs (ECOC in 2010), focusing on how they reflect the "European dimension" of the ECOC project. In her analysis of the applications (bid books) of the two cities, official web pages and ex-post European Commission's evaluations, she identified narratives of internationalization and multiculturalism in the communication about both cities' events.
Immler and Sakkers (2014) explored how 'Europe' was articulated in ECOC programmes and bidbooks from 2008-2018 using qualitative content analysis. They found increasing use of discourses of postnationalism, transculturalism and diversity. Immler and Sakkers (2014, 23) asserted that recent communication about ECOCs showed "increasing interest in bridging experiences between different groups, local and global themes, and transnational shared stories". They found that the European dimension was largely deflected to other geopolitical levels, and they questioned to what extent Europe was defined in terms of what it was not, rather than what it was. Because the European dimension may be sublimated to other levels (e.g. the local and global), it can be a cultural-political tool for achieving a more profound sense of a common humanity. Immler and Sakkers (2014) noted these trends as implicit features in their data, which suggests the importance of further investigation in this area.
Also worth mentioning is a report that explores the narratives of Europe evident in Aarhus 2017 bidbooks and interviews with managers of specific events (Nørkjær Therkelsen, 2017). This report points out that it was recommended during the bidding and planning stages of Aarhus 2017 that the European dimension of Aarhus 2017 events should be enhanced (Nørkjær Therkelsen, 2017, 13). Also, event managers emphasized youth and the future, as well as linguistic and ethnic diversity as ways of highlighting the richness of

European diversity. The empirical focus of the report was not on the programme of events, however, hence the relevance of exploring it in this article.

3. Narrative, discourse, identity and Europeanness

In this article, we draw on a poststructuralist narrative framework (e.g. Tamboukou, 2013), where "narrative" is understood as an account of an event or experience that draws on discourses that have cultural currency. The definition provided by Vaara, Sonenshein, and Boje (2016, 496) of organizational narratives as "temporal, discursive constructions that provide a means for individual, social, and organizational sensemaking and sensegiving" also highlights that narratives draw on discursive meanings, can act as screens through which we interpret, and can evolve over time. A master-narrative is culturally coherent and politically powerful; it is a way of organizing powerful meanings. It involves "a set of coherent communication acts and embedded ideas. It is dominant in a given cultural context and emerges over time via the repetition of structures, ideas, and policies" (Lueg, 2018, 487).

Given narratives' indebtedness to discourses, one way of gaining analytical traction on narratives is through discourse analysis (Fage-Butler, 2020, forthcoming), also the approach adopted in this article. Our approach to analysing narratives of Europeanness as represented in Aarhus 2017 (2017) is inspired by Foucauldian discourse theory (Foucault, 1972). Discourses are:

> *"practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe." (Foucault, 1972, 49)*

Thus, discourses are not merely descriptive of meanings in society; they are performative, shaping realities. Moreover, discourses are not value-neutral; instead, they represent cultural forms of "power/knowledge" (Foucault, 1980), and are the semantic meanings at the disposal of societal narratives.

Narratives of Europeanness draw on constructions of "identity". "European identity" started to become an issue in political and public discourse from the 1970s onwards, reflecting the increasing popularity of the term "identity" (Gleason, 1983) and the process of European integration. Although the term "Europe" and the history of its discursive constructions reach back to antiquity (Schmale, 2000), the European Community/ European Union as "identity builder" (Bee, 2008, 437) has had a crucial impact on these debates. Different phases of identity as defined by the Commission have been analyzed (Bee, 2008) and discourses of "unity" and "diversity" in the EU's motto "united in diversity" have been investigated (Lähdesmäki, 2012). In her analysis of EU cultural policy and the ECOC-initiative, Sassatelli (2008, 226) argued that "the minutiae of cultural policy-making are never far removed from far-reaching discourses on European identity".

Working within a social constructivist framework, we assume that language constructs knowledge about groups and group memberships that individuals may identify with or reject, shaping their "social identity" as defined by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, 69). For Hall (1992, 292-293), discourses provide meanings for national identity:

> *"A national identity is a discourse – a way of constructing meanings which influences and organizes both our actions and our conception of ourselves […]. National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it."*

The Aarhus 2017 programme of events thus produces discursive meanings that provide material for narratives of Europeanness. This includes constructions of space ("Europe"), attributes ("European"), political institutions ("European Union"), time (e.g. "European history", "future of European culture") and group members (e.g. "Europeans"). Europeanness is, moreover, related to specific discourses of "identity". In the following, we differentiate between two discourses of identity: a categorical and a relational discourse of (European) identity which also represent two contrasting perspectives and traditions in European identity research. In doing so, we draw on a distinction by Brubaker and Cooper (2000, 15):

> *"One key distinction is between relational and categorical modes of identification. One may identify oneself (or another person) by position in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example, or of friendship, patron-client ties, or teacher-student relations). On the other hand, one may identify oneself (or another person) by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)."*

This distinction contrasts identification with others through social bonds (relational identity), on the one hand, and identification based on pre-determined attributes that determine one's inclusion (or not) in a class of persons (categorical identity), on the other hand. The two modes are by no means mutually exclusive, but can be accentuated differently.

Regarding the "categorical" understanding of identity in identity studies, categories such as the nation, ethnicity, culture, and gender have been important focus areas. Many scholars have demonstrated the role of the construction of difference, otherness and boundaries (e.g. Barth, 1969; Krossa, 2016) and of common culture and history (e.g. Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995) for shaping "identities". Exemplifying this approach, using Critical Discourse Analysis, Wodak et al. (2009, 35) explored the construction of "homo austriacus", of a common political past, a common culture or a 'national body', focusing "primarily on lexical units and syntactic devices which serve to construct unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness, origin, continuity, gradual or abrupt change, autonomy, heteronomy and so on".

At the same time, the idea of identity as a closed container has been challenged by post-structuralist thinking and postcolonial studies that highlight more relational understandings of identity. Many researchers have described "identity" as blurred, fluid, hybrid or fractured (e.g. Hall, Bhabha). Moreover, the impact of globalization and migration on identity has been the subject of many considerations. For example, "transnational(ised) identities" in a multi-local life-world have been investigated (Vertovec, 2001, 578), and Beck (2000) has connected plural and transnational identities with cosmopolitanization. The metaphor of the network has proven to be especially powerful, as it seems particularly well-suited to conceptualize identification processes across national borders. Although transnational networks can strengthen ethnic boundaries (Prinsen et al., 2015), the network metaphor can also shift focus towards the local, since, as Castells argues, the "key spatial feature of the network society is the networked connection between the local and the global" (Castells, 2010, xxxv).

From the start, debates on "European identity" have been entangled with general identity discourses and reflect the categorical and relational approach to identification. For instance, Quenzel distinguished in EU cultural policy two basic patterns of European identity construction. First, the tree structure, which conceptualizes unity and homogeneity and in which subjects are invoked as part of a larger community, and national cultural goods, where European art and values and so on serve as material representations of Europeanness. Second, the network structure, where European identity is formed through the establishment of a Europe-wide communication community (Quenzel, 2015, 200–207).

While earlier attempts at establishing a European identity often draw on the first pattern (Bee, 2008), the narrative of a networked Europe has been particularly relevant during the last decades. Castells (2001), for example, described the European Union as the clearest manifestation of the network state to date, and the network metaphor has been increasingly important in European integration studies (Axford, 2015). Likewise, recent studies on the discursive construction of European identity have taken this dimension into account. In his analysis of the discourse of “Europeanness” of members of the NGO “European Alternatives”, Zappettini (2019) approached his data from a transnational stance and discussed topoi such as (inter)connectedness and network diversity.

4. Method

When analyzing narratives in the Aarhus 2017 programme of events qualitatively, we drew on Foucauldian discourse theory (Foucault, 1972, 80). Foucauldian discourse analysis rests on the idea that statements – which he calls the “atoms” of discourses and are usually around a sentence long, though they may be longer (Fage-Butler, 2011) – construct objects of discourse. For example, a news item including statements about immigrants constructs “immigrants” with respect to various societal discourses (e.g. immigrants as a boon to society, as economic opportunists or in relation to a racist discourse). These discourses in turn become the material for narratives relating to immigrant identity. In a similar way, the texts in the Aarhus 2017 programme construct Europe with respect to different identity discourses, which in turn providing meanings for narratives of Europeanness.

In our qualitative analysis, we approached the Aarhus 2017 programme both inductively and deductively. We were open to the discursive meanings in the text, but we were familiar with existing theories of Europeanness and identity. Openness to the data was important, as narratives of Europeanness are likely to draw on a range of different discourses. Given the large data set, we found it valuable to supplement our Foucauldian (qualitative) approach with a quantitative approach that used digital analysis tools. Digital tools can support qualitative analyses in many ways (Bick et al., 2019). In this article, the digital analytical tools helped us to identify features relating to Europeanness in the long document (492 pages in its online pdf form) that we otherwise might not have observed. We present these findings in Section 5.1. We present our qualitative discursive approach which forms the basis for the narrative analysis in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Both authors of this article were involved in qualitatively coding the data using NVivo (2017). This involved undertaking an initial coding of references to Europe; descriptive codes were derived using an inductive approach where we were highly attentive to the meanings as they appeared in the programme. After this inductive approach, we re-examined the initial coding and looked for patterns in the codes, noting similarities between the nodes and theoretical literature, where relevant (the deductive approach); this helped us to derive broader categories from the initial nodes. Parallel to this analysis, we used AntConc, Voyant Tools and Sketch Engine which are informed by corpus linguistic approaches, e.g. for frequency analysis, key word analysis and identification, as well as investigating other relevant search terms and text sequences. These allowed us to characterize the text in more general terms.

We analyzed all of the English text in the programme, which was approximately half of the complete text. We worked with the bilingual, multimodal pdf-file of the program when we coded in NVivo, and with a txt-file of the English text when we used the other computational tools. In that version, we removed irrelevant elements such as repetitions of headings at the top of pages. All quantitative results included in the following refer to the English txt version.

5. Analysis

In Section 5.1, we characterized the programme with respect to the occurrence and frequency of different geopolitical or spatial categories to see if "Europe" and related forms were present and to what extent, given our literature review which showed that "Europe" often was missing in ECOC programmatic literature. When presenting quotations from the programme of events (in Sections 5.2 and 5.3), we include page numbers in brackets.

5.1 General aspects

5.1.1 Structure of the programme, characterisation of the first part

The programme includes three main 'sub-genres' 1) an introductory part that includes messages written by different representatives and a foreword by the CEO (1,809 words), 2) interviews to explore the thoughts of key players of Aarhus 2017 (13,174 words), and 3) presentations of each ECOC event (48,515 words).

Part 1 is the programmatic part; it includes strategic statements on the vision for Aarhus 2017. A keyword analysis in AntConc revealed that the pronouns "our" and "we" are characteristic of the introductory part compared to the rest of the programme. This suggests that group identity is at stake, although the word "identity" itself is not included. Interestingly, the representatives' messages emphasize different geopolitical or spatial categories. The Queen does not discuss the European dimension, but describes Aarhus 2017 mainly as a source of national pride. Bertel Haarder, the then-Minister for Culture, links the national, European and global dimensions with the concept "culture" as art. Not surprisingly perhaps, the European Commissioner for European Capitals of Culture represents the most "European" approach, calling ECOC a meeting place for European citizens. He refers to European values and Europe's diversity, and mentions the local, regional and global, but not the national. By contrast, the Mayor of Aarhus omits mentioning Europe, focusing instead on the local dimension with respect to regional, national and global frameworks. The representative of the Central Denmark region adds a regional perspective. Finally, the Aarhus 2017 CEO integrates all of the perspectives, starting at the local and regional and proceeding via the national and European to the global.

5.1.2 Frequency analysis

In the programme, the European dimension is referred to as a noun ("Europe"), an adjective ("European"), a demonym ("Europeans"), an abbreviation ("EU") and sometimes obliquely using the term "continent". Besides this, it is present in references to the European currency and in the names of some of the events ("eutopia", "euroinvasion"). The results of the word count are presented in Table 1; note that the figures for "European", "European Capital of Culture" and "Europeans" are exclusive of each other. To assess these results, we compared them with those of other spatial/geopolitical categories in Table 1: the European dimension by no means stands out as more important than the local, regional, national and global categories – quite the contrary. The local dimension was by far the most frequent (again, note that the figures for "Aarhus" and "Aarhus 2017" were exclusive of each other), and both the national and global dimensions occur more frequently than the European one. Besides, the term "international" is widely used. These results become even clearer if one differentiates between the different parts of the programme: the European dimension is most frequent in the programmatic introductory part, while it is far less relevant in the description of the events and the interviews. Apart from the very frequent local dimension ("Aarhus"), we find a stronger focus on the global (in the interviews) and the national dimension (in the events). What is more, even in the programmatic part, only some of the representatives discuss Europe or Europeanness, while others replace "European" with "international" or focus on globality, or the local/regional. These findings

are interesting, given the ongoing calls for more evident inclusion of European aspects in ECOCs, described earlier.

Table 1: Overview of quantitative findings of total number of mentions of spatial/geopolitical elements in Aarhus 2017 (2017) programme of events, ordered by frequency of occurrence

Local dimension (Total number: 641)	**local* (85), Aarhus 2017 (151), Aarhus (405)**
National dimension (Total number: 363)	Danish* (147), Denmark* (147), nation* (69)
Global dimension (Total number: 270)	world* (221), global* (49)
European dimension (Total number: 261)	*Europe (80), European (91), European Capital of Culture (61), Europeans (3), EU (7), continent / continents (5), euro / euros (2), eutopia (8), euroinvasion (4)*
Regional dimension (Total number: 175)	Jutland* (32), region* (143)
International dimension (Total number: 110)	international* (110)

Source: own elaboration

5.2 Europeanness as constructed within a discourse of categorical identity

In this section and the next, we present the results of the qualitative discourse analysis, where we identify elements and principles of construction in the Aarhus 2017 programme of events that contribute to constructing Europeanness and are connected to European identity discourses. Since the programme is a compilation of many different texts and text types by different authors, our approach was to identify elements and principles that reflected the range of discursive constructions and narratives of Europeanness, while acknowledging that they may be interlinked in the text.

We found discourses of categorical identity and relational identity in the representation of Euopeanness in Aarhus 2017's programme of events. Regarding the first of the two ("categorical identity) that we present in this section (Section 5.2), we found that "European identity" was constructed as homogenous and different from the "other" (Wodak et al., 2009). This was achieved in five main ways, as highlighted below. These have all been derived inductively; some resonate with previous findings.

5.2.1 Europe as a layer

Europe is constructed as a distinct outer layer in the following passage:

> *"And in our year in which we examine our Danish DNA within the European context, artists help us reflect upon society in flux through transient gestures and atmospheric installations." (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 31)*

In this passage, the metaphor "DNA" from the field of biology establishes – despite professions of fluidity – a rather essentialist understanding of national identity. Although the focus in this passage is on the nation, it does not reject a homogenous Europe. Rather, Europe is understood as a layer as in the Russian doll or "onion model" of multiple identities, suggesting a hierarchical relationship between different group categories (Risse, 2010, 24–25) where the European dimension is the middle level between the nation and the global. Europe is thus constructed as a supranational entity, a Europe of nations, in which the European countries are placed.

5.2.2 Contrast as a principle of construction

Sometimes, however, the boundaries between understanding Europe as a layer and as the national "other" seem fluid, as in the CEO's foreword: "This programme has its roots deep in the Central Denmark Region but looks ever outward to Europe and the world" (8). In this example, Europe is referred to as the region's and the nation's exterior, indicating the skeptical Danish attitude towards its European neighbour states and European integration (Giordano, 2018), as reflected, for example, in the still frequently used Danish phrase "ude i Europa" (outside in Europe). As a result, Europe appears as a homogenous unity, reflecting a fundamental mechanism of categorical identity construction: differentiating between "us" and "them" (Wodak et al., 2009). This principle of contrast is also employed in a global context, when Europe is described as a continent or world region in contrast or addition to other continents or regions, such as Asia, Greenland or the Middle East. Compared to the USA, "Europe" even seems to be addressed as a state: "In both Europe and the US, new political parties have arisen" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 98).

5.2.3 European commonalities

Europe is also constructed as a unity with respect to having shared values, culture and history (Delanty, 2002). In his address, the Commissioner refers to "the shared values on which our Union is built: respect for human rights, democracy and freedom of expression" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 5).

Examples of expressions of European unity and homogeneity in the programme include "European culture" (ibid., 272), the Europeans' "common cultural traits" (4), "our common European cultural heritage" (81), "our common European roots" (81), "the shared history of Europe" (92), "European history" (260) or "Europe as it was in 1950-2000" (104). The strategy of creating a sense of unity by constructing a collective history and common culture is well-known from the construction of the nation state (De Cillia et al., 1999, 158). In the programme, we find some examples that point in that direction.

5.2.4 European demos

"Europe" is a category of space and as such does not refer to a group. Particularly relevant for the construction of a specific homogenous European identity are passages that combine the demonym "Europeans" with the use of "we", as in the following interview by the CEO of Aarhus 2017: "We need to open the gates and enter into the historical and cultural communities that we are part of as Europeans" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 23). However, this occurs rarely.

5.2.5 Europe as a political unity

Another way of constructing a united Europe with which individuals can identify is by referring to institutional aspects of European political integration such as the European Union/EU. Besides this, we find examples where the term "Europe" seems to refer to the European Union as in the following example from the description of the film project "The dissidents" by Jeppe Rønde: "What is the future of Europe? Will the tipping points of the refugee crisis, civil wars and economic disparity mean the end of the European Union dream?" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 324). Passages that construct Europe as something animate and capable of reflection and volition also seem to relate to the European Union and go one step further. For instance, Aarhus 2017's CEO, states: "Europe is living through a rather challenging time at the moment" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 22). However, such passages are rare.

We find a connection between an integrated Europe and the discourse of crisis (Büttner & Bernhard, 2018; Eigmüller, 2016) also, for example, in an interview with the Danish television presenter and editor Clement Kjersgaard, when he states: "Look at the EU's crisis,

which is gradually coming to look like a permanent condition” (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 96). However, though the European Union is constructed in some passages as being in crisis, the more characteristic construction is “challenge”, which occurs frequently in the programme. We will return to this in the following section.

5.3 Europeanness as constructed within a discourse of relational identity

The programme presents a series of events in Gellerup, an Aarhus neighbourhood that has been classified by the government as a so-called ghetto because of poverty, unemployment and a high percentage of immigrants from so-called non-Western countries. The following citation is one of the passages from the programme that highlight the European dimension:

> *“Gellerup goes global! EUTOPIA means a beautiful place full of the new energies of youth and hope, mixing peoples and cultures from around the world. EUTOPIA International Festival 2017 is a series of events presenting the diversity of European culture as a force of change. […] Experimenting with the cross platforms of theatre, music, circus, dance, performance and sport, EUTOPIA will be a lively and leading force in the future of European culture. Amateurs and professional performers are co-creators in this thriving cultural hub and together they embark on a new cultural journey towards a vital new Europe.” (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 272)*

This passage integrates several elements that are characteristic of a relational identity discourse, namely, transnational interconnectedness, transformation and diversity.

5.3.1 Transnational interconnectedness

Strengthening ties across Europe but also within local and national communities is, as already noted, an important concern of the whole ECOC-initiative and fundamental to the Aarhus 2017 programme of events. It is promoted explicitly in some events, as in the following:

> *“Working with children, youth and adults through activities that allow for skills development, knowledge sharing and the exchange of experiences and ideas at the local and European level. The project will develop European cooperation and dialogue, helping to strengthen European identity and diversity.” (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 453)*

Besides this, the programme names a variety of European events and associations (such as European Championships, European Conferences, European networks, European festivals). This reflects ECOC’s official description that it should, according to the European Parliament, “promote greater mutual understanding between European citizens” (European Parliament and Council, 2006).

Transnational nodal points in networks are local which fits well with the local focus of the programme and the ECOC-initiative in general. At the same time, the concept of transnationality also strongly relates to the global dimension: “We can only have a better, safer and more peaceful world if we build strong cultural connections that transcend religious, national, gender or ethnic boundaries” (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 23).

5.3.2 Transformation

As highlighted above, we find Europe and the EU connected to a discourse of crisis and challenge. However, the programme is also characterized by a discourse of transformation, which relates to Aarhus 2017’s motto “Let’s Rethink”. This discourse is reflected in words such as “new”, “future”, “create”, “change”, “innovate”, “transform / transformation”, “vision”, “flux” and by a focus on young people. The discourse of transformation is connected to many topics and also to the European dimension. For example, we read that “Europe's greatest thinkers will attend the conference, which uses our common history as an

inspiration to think about visions for our collective future" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 416). Especially against the background of the discourse of crisis, the discourse of transformation through connectedness can open positive perspectives for the future. Accordingly, Aarhus 2017's CEO discusses the potential of transnational interconnectedness in a situation of change, underlining the power of culture and replacing "crisis" by "challenge", which is more directed towards future solutions:

> *"We are living in a time of extraordinary change and flux, an age of uncertainty in many ways. Look around in Europe. Economically, socially and politically challenging times. So I look to culture, projects and programmes of international understanding as incredibly powerful ways to attach, to relate and to associate. Culture is much more than books, paintings, monuments and plays – culture is who we are. […] Put two people from different countries, religions or cultures together in a room face to face, and ask them to create something together and they will find their points of similarity and congruence and not their points of difference." (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 22)*

5.3.3 Diversity

As we have argued, essentialist categorical constructions of identity such as national identity focus on homogeneity. By contrast, diversity is often emphasized in the context of transnational, multiple or network identity discourses. Diversity, however, is a complicated and ambiguous concept. Diversity, alongside sustainability and democracy, was chosen as one of the core values of Aarhus 2017. This reflects ECOC's mandated purpose - that it should "highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share" (European Parliament and Council, 2006). This description also reflects the EU motto "United in diversity", which, according to the EU website, "signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages" (European Union, 2019). Mentioning Europe's "cultures" (in a plural form) suggests an understanding of "diversity" as "national diversity", without this being entirely clear. This fits well with the original function of the discourse of "diversity": emphasizing diversity between the European nations, at the same time as European unity signals the possibility of reconciling national identities with a European identity.

In the programme, "diversity" is mainly constructed as a positive concept, though its use is ambiguous; it can, for example, relate to social differences such as in income or age, differences in sexual orientation, or the diversity of Nordic food. "Diversity" gets especially fuzzy when it relates to "culture" or "Europe" as it becomes unclear whether "diversity" describes differences between or within Europe's different national cultures. Although "diversity" can mean national diversity, it sometimes seems to construct ethnic diversity as a common European experience. For instance, the artist Anohni discusses "the prospect of racial diversity in Europe" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 47) and states:

> *"Touring Europe for the last 15 years, I have observed people across the continent struggling to open their hearts to the reality that their countries are no longer a series of insulated monocultures. The tectonic plates are now returning children and adults of the colonized worlds back to Europe."*

Similarly, EYC 2017, a "summit of young people in Europe", was going to examine "the importance of cultural diversity in the pursuit of democracy and the upholding of right" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 316). In these cases, the discourse of diversity is interwoven with the discourse of immigration, transforming "diversity" from a signifier of difference to a signifier of similarity. This shift in meaning is striking in the following: "EUTOPIA International

Festival 2017 is a series of events presenting the diversity of European culture as a force of change" (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 272). Here, "culture" is used in its singular form, implying one European culture characterized by (ethnic) diversity.

6. Discussion and concluding remarks

In our analysis, we identified two narratives of Europeanness that rested on two identity discourses: 1) the categorical identity discourse which constructs identity as homogenous and different from the "other", and 2) the relational identity discourse which constructs identity as a dynamic network. With the help of inductive coding and informed by our theoretical understandings, we identified the elements and principles that supported the respective constructions in the Aarhus 2017 programme.

We found a somewhat stronger emphasis on Europeanness as dynamically networked, characterized by diversity, transformation and transnational interconnectedness. This narrative promotes a sense of fluidity and relations, and is strongly connected to Aarhus 2017's motto "Let's rethink", its promotion of the value of "diversity", and an emphasis on connecting the local and the global. A similar finding is evident in Immler and Sakkers (2014, 23) who "identified in the latest programmes a tendency to emphasize interculturality and values" and "an increasing interest in bridging experiences between different groups, local and global themes and transnational shared stories" (Immler & Sakkers, 2014, 23).

However, although the narrative of Europeanness as dynamically networked seemed to be somewhat more strongly represented in the programme, we also found a more traditional narrative, based on the construction of a homogenous European identity. The fact that a diverse discursive repertoire was employed can be explained by the character of the programme itself, as it is a patchwork of different texts by different authors, as well as in relation to the EU's criteria for the cultural programme where cooperation and cultural diversity are emphasized as well as the "common aspects of European cultures" (European Parliament and Council, 2006, Article 4.1).

Interestingly, the combination of various discursive elements and principles sometimes seemed arbitrary and could result in contradictory combinations. For example, emphasizing transnationality and influences or transfer as a result of cross-border connections may support the idea of European commonalities, leaving the question of Denmark's affiliation unclear, as in this passage:

> *"For centuries, owners of manor houses looked towards Europe, they travelled and brought European fashion, art and culture back home to their estates. European encounters re-examines these historical European networks and museums, manors and country houses across the region as venues to present this unique cultural heritage. The manor and country houses in Jutland exhibit a historical diversity like few other places." (Aarhus 2017, 2017, 64)*

Thus, "Europeanness" becomes a blurry concept caught between the categorical and the relational, between the reified and constructivist, between the national and the "glocal". In particular, "diversity" appears to be a nodal point positioned between the construction of European identity as categorical and relational: the discourse of immigration can transform "diversity" from being a signifier of difference to a signifier of European similarity.

Methodologically, digital humanities tools supported the analysis of a large, polyphonic text. The combination of quantitative approaches, which captured aspects such as important presences, muted presences and absences of concepts relating to "Europe" in the 492-page programme, and qualitative discourse analysis helped to enrich understandings of how European identity and Europeanness were present and discursified in the text. Moreover, the three-part qualitative analysis allowed for a useful scaling up, starting with

statements (the unit of discourse analysis) to identifying the discourses reflected in the statements, and finally, the identification of two narratives of Europeanness that provide scope for identity and identification, both of which are endorsed by ECOC.

To conclude, despite the mandatory status of the European dimension in ECOCs, our analysis of Aarhus 2017's official programme of events revealed a pattern where 'Europeanness' is underplayed, e.g. by being characterized with respect to values that have been associated with other layers (the local, national or global), or by the nation being linked directly to the global, thus sidestepping 'Europeanness' as a superordinate concept. Significantly, the sublimation of Europe at the expense of the global was also identified in interviews conducted with Aarhus 2017 attenders who generally struggled to see a European element in the events they attended, pointing to global elements instead (Fage-Butler, 2020).

Interestingly, new ECOC policy directions from 2020 (European Parliament and Council, 2014) connect the European dimension to the global; the aim of future ECOCs will be to develop a "European agenda for culture in a globalizing world". In the light of these new policy directions, it will be valuable to investigate the narratives framing this "global Europeanness". Will a narrative prevail that constructs a homogenous Europe in contrast to other continents or regions of the world, such as Asia, China or the USA? Or will the narrative, in which globality is understood within a framework of cosmopolitism, and "Europeanness" may fade behind terms such as internationalism, continue its onward progress? To explore that, further research will be needed.

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The refugee crisis and the delegitimisation of the EU: a critical discourse analysis of newspapers' and users' narratives in Italian Facebook pages

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This contribution intends to highlight how narratives of Europe are discursively constructed in online public arenas of Facebook pages of Italian newspapers. The main aim is to analyse newspaper posts and users' comments which foster narratives that exhibit the Eurosceptic discourse in the refugee crisis scenario between 2016 and 2018. The case study focuses on Italy as a core player in terms of anti-European sentiments which are increasingly present in public opinion. Critical Discourse Analysis has been applied to posts and comments, aiming at identifying the strategic discourses and the patterns of convergence or divergence that contribute to narratives of Europe. Firstly, findings show the discoursive recontextualization of common patterns between newspapers and users. Secondly, results also highlight that users' comments diverge from newspapers showing anti-immigration positions and hostility towards the EU even when newspapers adopted a neutral narrative. Finally, the study underlines the importance of the hybridization of communicative practices that both enrich the media system and discursive construction of narratives of Europe.

Keywords: Refugee crisis, CDA, Social media narratives, Euroscepticism, Users' comments

1. Introduction: the refugee crisis and social media narratives

The so-called refugee crisis represents a highly mediatised topic that has defined and, in fact, redefined the level of European integration. Indeed, refugees and asylum seekers are recognised as actors that exist at the centre of identity politics and social cohesion discourses in Europe (Krzyżanowski, 2010).

Therefore, the refugee crisis, specifically the issue of its representation and the debate surrounding it in the public sphere, is a topic in which a substantial amount of sociological literature has expressed interest in recent years. A large number of studies focused on the role of traditional media in the coverage of the issue, particularly the news-making process (see, e.g., Chouliaraki et al., 2017; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017), the polarisation of the debate, the emergence of populist, and anti-democratic positions (Wodak, 2015; Krzyżanowski & Ledin, 2017), and the ongoing politicisation of the issue (van der Brug et al., 2015; Krzyżanowski et al., 2018).

However, less attention has been paid to the refugee crisis debate on social media as a public arena, where different actors play a role in the discursive constructions of narratives of Europe. The emergent, collaborative, and context-rich qualities of social media contrast with the structural facets of a prototypical story's narrativity while differencing to the canonical forms, and they offer significant opportunities for a contextualised approach to narrative analysis (Page, 2012).

Within the field of European Studies, the 'narrative turn' expresses the need for new contributions dedicated to the prospects of existing and future narratives concerning European integration. The term 'narrative' frequently emerged in broader discussions on European enlargement and integration, and it received much attention over the last two decades (see, e.g., Sassatelli, 2012; García, 2013; 2017). Within the narrative literature, stories as complex artefacts are characterised at least by three components: "selective series of past events and forces, a temporal sequence and, more importantly, an 'emplotment' that establishes causal links and communicates, possibly, moral lessons" (Sassatelli, 2012, 3). Moreover, García (2017) recognised that "Narratives are collective stories and representations, which are made of people's memories of the past, experience of the present, and above all imagination of the future" (García, 2017, 288), and they "can have diverse aims and goals, either to justify or to criticise European integration" (García, 2013, 52). Therefore, one of the major goals of the empirical investigations of narratives of Europe is to "explore the many different ways in which ordinary citizens, politicians, and public intellectuals have conceived and represented 'Europe' and the 'EU'" (Snelders, 2012, 2).

For the purpose of this study, narratives are intended as a discourse genre, an important social and discursive resource that creates identities for their audiences in the social media context (Page, 2012). Following the approach introduced by De Fina and Johnstone (2015) specifically, which is situated in the discourse-analysis research tradition, we can capture the need to account for new forms of communication and extend the study of narratives to a variety of media.

Starting from this approach, the primary objective of this study is to conceptualise and identify the various strategies employed in the discursive construction of narratives of Europe in the context of the refugee crisis debate, taking into account a dynamic notion of discourse involving different actors. Specifically, we investigate the relationship that binds the discourse in Facebook pages of Italian newspapers, starting with the digitalised press and then focus on the discourse (re)produced by users, observing the general flow of narratives. Indeed, the analysis is carried out centring the attention on two different actors: newspapers and user' comments. On one hand, newspapers represent a professional journalistic elite characterised by a traditional model of news production and communication intended as a top-down dimension (Graham, 2012); users' comments, on the other hand, represent a characteristic of the participatory web (Unger et al., 2016) and a form of citizen engagement (Ruiz et al., 2011) that gives voice to users who do not belong to the professional journalistic elite.

Within this research framework, and due to spatial restrictions, we focus on Facebook narratives intended as a discourse genre that can redefine the EU integrity. In fact, in contrast with the main approach which characterised the literature of EU narratives, this study does not focus on EU institutions and political actors in building a plurality of narratives aimed to European integration. We pose the attention on discourse that shows the increase of distrust towards the EU, highlighting the importance of digital spaces and practices in shaping and disseminating Eurosceptcism narratives. For this reason, the study intends to adopt the tools of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a field that proves a solid tradition on the analysis of European discourse (see e.g.: Krzyzanowski, 2010; Wodak & Boukala, 2015; Wodak, 2018; Zappettini, 2019b), anti-migration and right-wing populist rhetoric (see e.g.: Wodak, 2015; 2017; 2019). Starting from these assumptions, the final aim of the study is

to highlight convergences and divergences in the narrative patterns used by the Italian press and users' comments through a comparison between the representations of the EU made by the main national newspapers, with discursive reactions told by the users in the comment sections. However, given the small dimension of the data corpus, the purpose of this study is not to provide definitive answers but to open up and enrich discussion on the relation between different actors performed by social media.
We focused on the Italian context because of its specificities concerning migration flows, political dynamics, and the media coverage of the refugee crisis which has occupied Italian public opinion since 2015. Since 2013, for geographical reasons and as a result of the effects of the Dublin Treaty, a large part of the migratory flows of refugees and asylum seekers directed toward Europe follows the Mediterranean route with its main destination on the Italian coasts. Italy has, therefore, assumed a primary political role in the process of "securitisation" and "externalisation" of European borders (Mitsilegas, 2016). In Italy, the peak of landings was in 2016 (181,436 people landed), while the phenomenon reduced in size during 2017 (119,369 people) and further in 2018 (23,370 people) and 2019 (11,471 people). Moreover, in recent years Italian migration policies registered a progressive shift from humanitarian intervention to the fight against illegal migration. Between 2018 and 2019, the Italian government implemented a series of measures openly contrary to international law and human rights. Nevertheless, Eurobarometer surveys place Italy among the most hostile European countries towards refugees (Eurobarometer 2017; 2018). Moreover, between 2018 and 2019, the EU was considered by Italian public opinion the main actor responsible for the refugee crisis, and the level of trust in the EU by the Italian public is still very low. The European election in May 2019, consolidated this trend: the first Eurosceptic, nationalist-populist party *Lega* has redoubled its consensus concerning the 2018 national elections.

2. The discursive construction of European identities: a brief state of the art descriptions of top-down and bottom-up narratives in the polarised debate

Literature in social science recognises that narrative is central to the formation of projects of political identity construction (García, 2017). Specifically, for this work, we refer to the vast amount of literature on the discursive construction of European identity that proves useful in introducing the theoretical approach of this work. A major part of these studies adopts a constructivist approach for which 'Europeaness' is socially constructed through discourse as the core of the constructed or contested legitimacy of the EU (Crespy, 2015). For example, in the field of CDA, 'Mythopoesis' is recognised as a discursive legitimation strategy achieved through storytelling: small stories or fragments of narrative structures (Wodak, 2015) able to discursively (de)legitimise the construction of European identity that is thus characterised by discursive projections of the future, constructing the "imagined" (Krzyżanowski, 2019). Therefore, 'Europeaness' is narrated in different dimensions that are national, international, and European. The cultivation of these identities depends on the discursive forms of inclusion and exclusion which contribute to create an 'imagined community' of 'Us' which excludes the 'Others' (Wodak, 2007). This idea shows who is perceived as belonging to the "same community" (Wodak & Boukala, 2015): the 'Others' can be defined by ethnicity, religion, language, or may constitute by elites or other EU member states (Triandafyllidou, 1998).
Moreover, within the field of CDA, European identities are framed from two opponents' perspectives. The first, common one is focused on a top-down and institutionalised discourse, such as the official European Union policy documents (Johansson, 2007), collective identities in the European Parliament (Wodak, 2009), and consulting groups of high-level experts reporting directly to the European Council (Wodak, 2007). These studies have in common the idea that European identities are constructed through reifying, figurative

discourses continually launched by politicians, intellectuals, and institutional media (De Cillia et al., 1999). The second perspective regards the narratives produced by civic actors from a bottom-up point of view which are contributing to existing work on the discursive construction of European and national identities in the public sphere (Zappettini, 2019b). Indeed we highlight the citizen's initiative rather than only top-down discourses of European identities produced by institutional or governmental sectors (Zappettini, 2019b).

Literature about discursive construction of European identities is also useful for interpreting the refugee crisis as a highly politicised issue (van der Brug et al., 2015). Certainly, the contemporary migration phenomenon is influencing the debate about the European project and reinforcing opposing political views in a polarised framework of discussion. More in detail, the ideological polarisation oscillates between a conservative stance, which endorses national sovereignty and uniqueness, and a liberal and pro-EU position, which supports transnational identities (Krzyżanowski, 2019). The conservative view opts to redefine the EU as a primarily economic, nationalistic federation of states, calling for a "normalization of (symbolic) borders and the relegitimation of national identities" (Zappettini, 2019a, 28). On the other hand, the liberal and openly pro-EU view fosters a "transnational project of solidarity and social justice" (Zappettini, 2019a, 28) based on a supranational dimension "remaining a bulwark of liberal democracy and human rights, and fighting for solidarity, diversity, and more equality" (Wodak, 2019, 65).

According to the main aim of this study, we decided to focus only on one side of the polarised debate of the refugee crisis. This approach serves and intends to highlight discursive dynamics that allow spreading anti-migration and Euroscepticism narratives between different actors identifying the patterns of reproduction which how the EU is constructed during crises.

In the next paragraph, we explain and describe the different media actors' roles and how they can contribute to shaping the EU narratives within the contemporary media system.

3. The hybrid media system and the relationship between discourse and power

It is broadly recognised that media employ an interpretational lens in their reporting by emphasising certain aspects of an issue while omitting others, thus influencing how people think about social phenomena (Entman, 1993). Specifically, media provide audiences the semantic tools for interpreting and discussing events that are packed and presented by journalists within frames that influence individuals' responses (de Vreese, 2012). However, ever since the tradition of Cultural Studies, the role and practices of audience reception in different 'moments' of the media content production process have been recognised (Hall, 2005). Inspired by the seminal field of audience research, social media context emphasises the active role of users in a model defined "many-to-many" with a flow of texts more interactive, participatory, and horizontal than the traditional broadcast media which is characterised by the linear and unilateral data flow defined "one-to-many" (Khosravinik & Unger, 2015). Online public spaces, such as social network sites, changed the basic rules for discourse (Wodak, 2007), reconfiguring the relationship between discourse and the power of traditional mass media and establishing new challenges in the understanding of the role of different discursive practices (Unger et al., 2016).

Indeed, the digital fruition of media content is not limited to the experience of reading news, but it represents the encounter of voices, reactions, and opinions that contribute to the negotiation of meanings and formation of public opinion.

Also, within the field of narrative analysis, it has been noted that "internet forums of all kinds have strong disruptive potential in undermining established forms of discussion and the hegemonic narratives transmitted by more traditional media" (Kaiser, 2017, 16). Professional media organisations, such as traditional newspapers, tap into the participatory online media culture, involved in a process of convergence and hybridisation. The resulting

outcome often is a competition of what can become more important or attract more attention between traditional news-media organisations and user-generated content. In other words, both the role of the press and its effect on public opinion must be contextualised within the contemporary hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013) in which makes the dynamics of information production and consumption more complex, allowing to look at the general flow of narratives between different actors.
In this context, Facebook users' comments analysed by this study are considered a people-centric practice (Engesser et al., 2017) that allows those who do not belong to the narrow circle of journalistic elites to challenge and overturn, in real time, the framing proposed by traditional media, re-articulating the relationship between democracy, public sphere and communication flows. In relation to narratives of Europe, Kaiser (2017) has analysed citizens' comments concerning the *New Narrative* project website developed by the EU Commission. The study reveals that the narrative of the EU integrity was challenged by citizens through web comments in which they held more radical views, blaming the EU to focus more on Europe's own socio-economic problems than its global role in spreading norms and values (Kaiser, 2017). However, if online comment sections can be understood as a central space for the digital public sphere in a journalism context (Graham, 2012), it must also be recognised that there has been little scholarly attention paid towards the nature of these contents and their implications for the public sphere (Ruiz et al., 2011; Graham, 2012).

4. The case study and data collection

Starting from the political and social scenario introduced in the first paragraph, the case study focuses on Facebook pages of Italian newspapers, taking into account the different threads of posts from newspapers and user comments concerning the refugee crisis news concerning the EU between 2016 and 2018. The first step in the construction of the data corpus has been to individualise nine pieces of news about the refugee crisis that explicitly concern the EU (tab. 1). These items of news were selected based on the reports of the Italian press carried out by the *Associazione Carta di Roma* (2016, 2017, 2018), and they include news items about summits and agreements, measures to regulate and limit the free movement of people and plans for repatriations.
For each of these nine news items, we then selected related posts published on the Facebook pages of three Italian newspapers possessing the highest engagement numbers and representing best the current political scenario in Italy: *la Repubblica* (left-wing newspaper), *Il Giornale* (right-wing newspaper), *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (reference newspaper for the *Movimento 5 Stelle,* a populist party currently participating in the Italian Government). From the 27 individual posts, the analysis was limited to titles and texts, while images were generally not included. Then we extracted 10 comments produced by Facebook users that collected the most number of reactions for a total of 270 comments.

Table 1: list of 9 news items concerning the refugee crisis selected for the case study between 2016 and 2018.

2016	2017	2018
European discussion about Schengen Treaty	Tallin Meeting	Italy refused Migration Compact
UE-Turkey Pact / Deal /Settlement	EU Commission on repatriations	Brussell Meeting
Barrier between Austria and Italy	UE Court on asylum status	France Police trespasses Italian border

Source: own elaboration

5. Methodology

The methodology adopted matches different tools from the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to distinguish major narratives shown in systematically different grammatical ways within the Facebook pages both in posts and comments. Within the tradition of CDA, discourses (re)produced by media are interpreted as a social practice that constructs meaning assuming the power to shape socio-political orientations (Fairclough, et al., 2011). CDA is characterised by the common interests in demystifying ideologies that can help reproduce unequal power relations through a systematic investigation of linguistic categories. Specifically, the analysis is conducted following an argumentation-oriented approach (Krzyżanowski, 2019), and it is deployed in order to discover the key arguments that are used to construct narratives of Europe.

In conducting the analysis, we first refer to the general framework elaborated by Wodak and Weiss (2005) concerning the Europe-discourses and constituting the specific form of the speculative talk on European identities. This scheme consisted of the interplay of three dimensions:

a) 'Making meaning of Europe' (ideational dimension): refers to the idea of Europe, the essence, substance or meaning.

b) 'Organising Europe' (organisational dimension): reflects the question of how Europe shall be organised, which institutional forms of decision-making and political frameworks are appropriate for the future.

(c) 'Drawing borders' (geographical dimension): concerns the question of border-construction: who is inside, who stays outside?

These three discursive dimensions are related to legitimation strategies and several standard 'topoi' concerning refugees and asylum seekers figured especially prominently in the construction of narratives of the EU. Previous studies in the field of Discourse Analysis matched these forms of debating the EU to different discursive legitimation strategies and relative 'topoi' (see, e.g., Wodak & Weiss, 2005; Wodak, 2007; 2018). Specifically, 'topoi' refer to rhetorical schemes employed by tellers to persuade their audience of the validity of their opinions and they offer an opportunity for a systematic in-depth analysis of the strategies which guarantee the transition from argument to conclusion (Wodak, 2015).The scheme of discursive legitimation strategies (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) focuses on the typical linguistic logico-rhetorical module used by text-producers to overcome text-consumers' operations (Hart, 2010), and they can give reasons as to why comments could be accepted as plausible assertions. According to van Leeuwen and Wodak, these strategies are composed of four major categories of legitimation:

1. 'Authorisation': legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and/or persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested.
2. 'Moral evaluation': legitimation by reference to value systems often using adjectives without further justification.
3. 'Rationalisation': legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action and to the knowledge that society has constructed to endow them with cognitive validity. There are two main types of rationality: instrumental rationality and theoretical rationality.
4. 'Mythopoesis': legitimation achieved through narratives and the telling of stories.

Supported by and using the software Atlas.ti, we analysed as follows: the first step was to identify different 'topoi' and legitimation strategies both in posts and users' comments. Then, any text was catalogued and filed in a heuristic unit and subjected to a process of progressive coding, inspired by the methodological principles of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The second step consisted of the understanding of how 'topoi' and legitimation strategies served for and/or contributed to shaping the framework of Europe-discourses and each specific form of discussion (Wodak & Weiss, 2005). Finally, we

conducted a quantitative frequency that focused on the numerical distribution of the three forms of debating the EU, both in newspaper posts and users' comments. In the next paragraph, we first introduce the quantitative data, and then we offer significant examples of the connection between posts and comments in the discursive construction of EU narratives for each of nine news selected for the case study.

6. The results

From a general overview, the first evidence of this study shows that the three Facebook pages of Italian newspapers connected large audiences with the issues of the refugee crisis as a topic able to (re)produce and spread a spectrum of narratives of Europe told by newspapers and users. Interestingly, posts and comments were largely characterised by discursive content that generally constructed 'meaning and essence of the EU', followed by 'organising Europe' and 'drawing borders' (see tab. 2).

Looking at the posts, and due to the few news items selected, the analysis did not reveal significant differences between the newspapers.

Table 2: Number of comments refers to different forms of 'debating Europe' in the newspaper posts and users' comments. (2016-2018).

Newspapers posts (N= 27)	Il Fatto Quotidiano	Il Giornale	la Repubblica	Total
Making meaning of Europe	3	6	5	14
Organising Europe	4	2	3	9
Drawing borders	2	1	1	4

Users' comments (N=270)	Il Fatto Quotidiano	Il Giornale	la Repubblica	Total
Making meaning of Europe	59	55	63	177
Organising Europe	26	19	19	64
Drawing borders	5	16	8	29

Source: own elaboration

A more interesting comparison can be made if we look at the specific narrative style adopted by each newspaper in the construction of its posts. Indeed, the three forms debating Europe offer interesting hints for the analysis of the language adopted by the newspapers. The 27 posts analysed were mainly comprised of short titles with a few words of introduction and an image. The general style adopted by the three newspapers was partly informative-descriptive and partly connotative in ideological terms by using effective phrases or sensationalistic titles that fit into a rhetorical-persuasive style. While comparing the three different newspapers, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (supporter of the populist movement) and *Il Giornale* (right-wing newspaper) often shared similar strategies in their post construction, including fostering a conflictual relation with the EU, applying a nation-centric stance, and using alarmist tones and an emotional register to their narratives. The left-wing newspaper *la Repubblica*, instead, adopted a less conflictual narrative concerning the EU giving space to a more informal and neutral communication concerning the crisis. Therefore, the first result that emerged from the analysis confirmed that posts selected showed a coherent narrative about the EU in line with the general political outlook of each newspaper.

Looking at the 270 comments selected, analyses reveal a similar pattern in the frequency of the three forms of debating the EU (see tab.2). Users mainly constructed the 'meaning and essence of the EU' (177 comments), followed by 'organising Europe' (64 comments) and 'drawing borders' (29 comments). From this point of view, we noted a general continuity between posts and comments in the discursive construction of the narrative of Europe. However, the most interesting insight emerged from the comparison between the

newspaper and users' comments regarding 'topoi' and legitimation strategies that highlight the ideological positions assumed by different media actors in the construction of narratives. CDA led to noticing both elements of consistency and differences between the newspapers and comments. Specifically, the analysis showed that we cannot assert a clear ideological alignment occurring between users from the three different newspapers. We noted in detail that the initial form of discussion given by the newspapers has been confirmed, evolved, and enriched by users who often took it to extremes through comments clearly filled with Euroscepticism sentiment, frequently using harsh language and racial discrimination. Although this tendency was present in each newspaper comment sections, users from *Il Giornale* showed a strong homogeneity with the narratives given by posts. Generally, this continuity did not only discourage the debate and fostered extremist content but also created an echo chamber effect that was capable of influencing the general discourse within the comment sections. In contrast, the left-wing newspaper, *la Repubblica*, hosts in its comment section a more inclusive and transnational discourse concerning the EU which delegitimised sovereignty politics of exclusion. There emerged on this page the pattern of the polarised debate that shows the opposite ideological positions and thus a less homogeneity between users' interactions.

Finally, we point out that during the selected period of time, the main Eurosceptic narrative analysed tends to be stable and recurring. Specifically, political 'topoi' played a central role in shaping users' narratives: comments included the attribution of blame and opposition to the left-wing Italian government during 2016-2017 and supported the sovereignty measures adopted by the new government in 2018. These elements pervade the users' comments narrative over the three years and reinforcing the politicisation of European narratives analysed by this study.

In the following pages, we report significant examples of the main 'topoi' and legitimation strategies used by newspaper posts and users' comments highlighting the interplay of recurring anti-immigration rhetoric that have significant importance for the cultivation of narratives of the EU. Any text translated from Italian to English is a direct translation reporting original grammatical errors made by users themselves in their comments.

In relation to the first news theme selected concerning the UE-Turkey Pact signed in March 2016, we point out the discontinuity between newspaper titles and users' comments that shows a change from an impartial narrative to the ideological one. The three newspapers adopted a similar approach in their posts' construction choosing short titles containing basic information: "Migrants, the EU signs the pact with Turkey" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*); "There is the settlement between EU and Turkey for migrants" (*Il Giornale*); "Migrants, signed the settlement EU-Turkey" (*la Repubblica*). The narrative register was factual, the representation tends to be impartial and the style is narrative-descriptive with a denotative use of words without explicit references to more complex categories of meaning. In the comment sections, the narratives are matched with content that discursively expresses the substance of the EU. However, due to the impartial titles presented by the newspapers, the majority of users that comment on these news items contributes to establishing a narrative characterised by evaluative categories of meaning strongly connoted in ideological terms:

> *"We cannot even say that we were sold, because actually we lose. It sucks, this EU is with no future"* (*la Repubblica*, 18/03/2016, 4 reactions)
>
> *"Since junker is the president and Schulz is the vice the EU is a joke, we are submissive to the CIA, Mossad and Zionist backers and now also submissive to the Turks"* (*la Repubblica*, 18/03/2016, 2 reactions)

The expressions "this EU is with no future" and the EU is a joke" define the negative essence of the EU definition. Although these are short and simple texts, these comments

construct a meaning of the EU through the 'topos of EU Political and Identity Crisis' (Krzyżanowski, 2019). The pact with Turkey is largely considered by users in terms of losing European and national interests ("we are submissive"), establishing a negative representation of the essence of the EU institutional role.

The news concerning the (re)discussion of the Schengen Agreement in 2016, newspapers focused their titles on 'drawing borders', evoking the risk of their closure within the so-called Fortress Europe, such as "EU countries request for borders closures for two years" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*). Users, shifting the form of discussion given by newspapers, discuss the EU primarily to 'make meaning of it'. Indeed, users reacted to this news in terms of which actors are responsible and who are, or should be, accountable for solving the crisis, both at the national and European level ('topos of political responsibility'), focusing on the political world as a field where they can express a systemic distrust of national and European politician actors:

> *"European political class is made up of overpaid bureaucrats who just seek to maintain their positions, they don't care about the future of Europe …. otherwise they would have avoided the barbarian invasion .. and the Italian political class is even worse!"* (*Il Giornale*, 25.01.2016, 5 reactions)

This comment is a clear example of what Wodak called Anti-elitism as the anti-intellectual attitude shared by populist parties who support a strong Euroscepticism based on "arrogance of ignorance" (Wodak, 2015). The EU as an institution is seen as a Dictatorship-elite project in which politicians are blamed for intentionally provoking the "invasion" and using it as a common metaphor to depersonalise migrants as a dangerous mass of people. The invasion is marked by the dehumanising term 'barbarian' which frames migrants as a 'dangerous other', evoking both the 'topos of number' and 'topos of threat' (Khosravinik, 2010) thus emphasising the negative perception of migrants and constructing the traditional division of 'Us'-'Them'. Finally, users contributed in the discursive construction of the meaning of Europe also by the 'topos of transnational Economic Crisis' (Krzyżanowski, 2019) through the evocation of economic elements and the evaluation of the EU based on a cost-benefit analysis:

> *"I only observe that this Union is born in a bad way and it will end in a worse way. It has miserably failed all challenges, it's united only by a fixed rate change that chokes mediterranean countries, it doesn't have any political ideal, and it is governed by a bank (BCE) that does not work as a bank"* (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 25.01.2016, 1 reaction)

The latter comment supports the idea that European integration remains anchored only by economic agreements, highlighting the problems arising from what has been called a closeness deficit between the EU and its citizens (Wodak, 2007) which underlines the fact that the EU can no longer derive its legitimacy solely from the economic dimension currently perceived as the only 'essence' of Europe.

The news concerning the building of a barrier between Austria and Italy in April 2016 was presented by three newspapers using different strategies anchored to the frame of 'Drawing borders'. While *Il Fatto Quotidiano* and *la Repubblica* opted for a short, informative, and neutral title: "It has begun the construction of the barrier at the Brennero" (*la Repubblica*), the right-wing newspaper, *Il Giornale,* emphasised the conflictual element between the two countries: "Now Austria is challenging Italy". From the users' point of view, also when the newspapers give an informative title, the common form of discussion coincides with 'Drawing borders', but it was marked by a discursive strategy of legitimation called 'instrumental rationalization' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). The latter evokes the usefulness of the barrier by resorting to similarities with other States and can justify arguments based on expected or presumed benefits:

> *"Austria wants to protect their borders. And the discourse that walls do not work is a joke. In Hungary they work, as well as in the balkans and they worked also in Israel etc."* (*la Repubblica*, 11.04.2016, 55 reactions)

Users present the 'people' in a semantically vague way that permits representing themselves as authentic and trustworthy (Zappettini, 2018). In this way, the so-called will of people is used by users as a pseudo-democratic source of legitimacy for the drawing of spatial borders and the meta-distinction of inclusion/exclusion. According to these comments, democracy should essentially be reduced to the majoritarian principle: the rule of (arbitrarily defined) people without the need for experts (Zappettini, 2018). Thus, users support the subtype of Euroscepticism defined as sovereignty-based, which reacts to the transfer of political power from the national state to the supranational centre. Follow this pattern, comments tend to discursively construct the meaning of the EU with a critical approach: its political system function is accused of a democratic deficit that presents non-transparent forms of decision making (Rydgren, 2005).
The news items selected for 2017 are characterised by a narrative which oscillates between 'making meaning' and 'organising Europe'. Regarding the news of the EU Court and the request for asylum, the three newspapers share a conflictual narrative concerning national and European interests. Specifically, using the notion of 'scolding', the posts seem to highlight the superior legitimacy hierarchy role of the EU Court with respect to Italy creating a conflictual relation between national and EU interests: "Scolding from EU Court" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*). In this case, although comments generally refer to the form of discussion given by newspapers, users added the identification of different policies deemed necessary to regulate and solve the migration phenomenon. The following comments share a sense of urgency for intervention on a European political level to reacquire the national sovereignty perceived as lost:

> *"Immediate closing and Immediate repatriation of all asylum seekers… from first to last."* (*la Repubblica* 26.7.2017, 7 reactions)

> *"The first ground that migrants touch is the one of the boats that save them and, if I am not wrong, on each boat flaps the flag of an european country …. so, each boat has to bring home the refugees that it saved."* (*Il Giornale*, 26.07.2017, 16 reactions)

In these comments, we find different forms of discursive legitimation through rationalisation. Interpreting these discursive tools, users tend to define the migration as a (trans)national crisis that requires the intervention through concrete, solid, and strong policies that operate first on a national sovereignty-based level. The 'topos of the burden' of giving hospitality to refugees is now considered by commentators as a natural sign of the political weakness of the Italian elite while stopping migrants and suspending any adherence to international law is intended as a method used to regain national sovereignty against other competing national entities. A mechanism useful in reinforcing these narratives concerns its repetition. Looking at users' interactions in the comment section of *Il Giornale* specifically, users shared and amplified similar content showing a substantial absence of the contrary views:

> *"You are right!; Rightly so! Who goes to take them has to keep them, It is seems logic; It's true, indeed we must not land them; Just don't let them get there"* (users' interaction from *Il Giornale*, 26.07.2017)

These recurring comments prove an echo chamber effect for which people are inclined to discuss topics in a certain direction and make arguments tending in that same direction with the risk of increasing a more extreme position (Sunstein, 2007).
For the news concerning the Tallinn meeting in June 2017, both *Il Giornale* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano* shared a similar style in their Facebook posts: "Migrants, Tallinn meeting has a

bad start for Italy. From Germany to Spain every country is against opening their ports" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*); "Landing, the EU sinks us" (*Il Giornale*). These titles make explicit the conflictual frame between Italy and other EU countries, thus judging and referring to the essence of the Union. Starting from this frame, we found it notable that users tended to reinforce this EU meaning concentrating the most of their Eurosceptic sentiments: they proposed or requested to leave the EU, and they also expressed clear opposition to the process of European integration:

> *"Europe Union .. wouldn't it be better to stop this joke and finally go back to the full sovereignty starting with the monetary one?…."* (*la Repubblica*, 06.07.2017, 13 reactions)

Also related to this news item, we found interesting insights looking at users' interactions. In responding to the latter comment, it is possible to note a common dynamic in *la Repubblica* users' interactions. On the contrary to *Il Giornale*, and as mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, the left-wing newspaper frequently hosts a more presence of the contrary views in its comment section. In this case, a user directly expressed an opposite position about the role of the EU:

> *"Sovereignty? It has nothing to do with it. Italy has trying to save people in the middle of the sea involving other countries. We are free to close our ports but Europe and the Euro are not involved. What bothers me is to mix up the topics and saying that we would stay better without the Euro currency"* (*la Repubblica*, 06.07.2017, 0 reactions)

The news concerning repatriations planned by the EU in March 2017 was presented by newspapers reporting the citation of the EU Commissioner for Migrations Dimitris Avramopoulos: "More than one million of migrants to repatriate" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*), "Illegal immigrants are one million" (*Il Giornale*). If reporting the citations of political actors serves as a communicative device of objectification, the newspapers adopted the 'topos of burden and numbers' creating titles with alarmist content. Moreover, the term 'illegal' suggests the criminalisation of refugees and asylum seekers by creating an improper association between their condition and that of 'bogus' refugees and also acts to distinguish migrants who deserve humanitarian protection from those who have no rights. This narrative is frequently reproduced in the comment sections highlighting the relation of continuity between newspapers and users narratives:

> *"Before throwing money away ..it was better to stop landings.. we knew that they were not asylum seekers…but vulgar clandestine.."* (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 02.03.2017, 3 reactions)

An interesting element concerns the terminology used by the newspapers compared to the one used by users. While newspapers talk about 'Illegal immigrants' or 'migrants' citing the EU Commissioner, comments often use 'clandestines'. The latter was defined as a term legally wrong and characterised by a negative a priori judgment suggesting the idea that migrants act as evildoers. However, the general distinction is realised by a discursive strategy of legitimisation that appeals to the impersonal authority. This strategy provides a call for laws and serves to legitimise the illegality of migrants and thus, the securitarian politics such as repatriations planned by the EU. Generally, this 'topos of law' is characterised by a narrative of deservingness by following the principle that "some people do not deserve to be treated equally or in the way we (the 'host' society) treat human beings" (Vollmer, 2016, 4).

With the government formed in June 2018, users showed different forms of support for the measures adopted such as with to the news items concerning the EU Meeting in Brussels in June and one concerning the Global Migration Compact in November. In the

changing Italian political scenario at the time, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and the leader of the far-right party *Lega* Matteo Salvini introduced the basic principles of Italian politics regarding the regulation of migration flows. The newspapers reported these news items as a moment of changing and political reorganisation for previous governments setting up new conflictual relations with EU institutions. In relation to the EU Meeting in Brussels, newspapers titled articles: “Global Migration Compact: Salvini says no” (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*), “Salvini, Italy will not sign the UE Global Compact” (*la Repubblica*), emphasising the politicians’ words. The major discursive reactions posted in comment sections show the appreciation towards the new Italian political agenda on the European level, confirming the conflictual relation with the EU. These reactions were expressed by users through a comparison between the former subordinate role of Italy in the EU provoked by left-wing governments and the new securitisation politics which allowed a ‘taking back of control’ (Zappettini, 2019a):

> *“Before there was a party that has reduced Italy to the dump of Europe, staying on its knees in front of France and Germany. Now there is someone who is not afraid to lay claim to Italian sovereignty and the respect that we deserve because we are not second to anyone”* (*Il Giornale*, 15.10.2018, 3 reactions)

The last news piece selected for this case study concerns the episode when French Police trespassed across the Italian border in October 2018. Also, in this case, *Il Giornale* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano* emphasised the conflictual element between France and Italy: "FRANCE INVADES US AGAIN” (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*). Both newspapers adopted stylistic choices which enhanced the spectacularisation of events through the use of provocative language and an emotional tone of denunciation, scandal, and moral condemnation with the explicit purpose of persuading the audience. Thus, the narrative given by newspapers echoed in the comments sections where users shared vulgar content aimed at discursively constructing an external enemy through the ‘Us’-‘Them’ distinction:

> *“Its not possible that a nation like ours is fooled by 4 dickheads like the French people ?? this is thanks to the past governments”* (*Il Giornale*, 16.10.2018, 16 reactions)

By using the expression ‘nation like ours’, this user revealed the positive self-presentation and the negative other-presentation used to construct a collective identity that reinforces nationalist sentiments. This rhetoric strategy emphasises the clear distinction from Italy and other nations based on the presumed superiority of one’s own nation to the other one (Wodak, 2015). Thus, the weak role of ‘our nation’ in the EU composition is legitimised by the perception of a state of disintegration of the EU that would cause imbalances and harmful effects on ‘our’ country.

7. Conclusions

This chapter gave new insights into the discursive construction of Eurosceptic narratives of the EU. Adopting a qualitative approach based on Critical Discourse Analysis, the study explored the process in which Eurosceptic narratives were (re)produced and circulated within the Facebook pages of three Italian newspapers in the context of the so-called refugee crisis. Specifically, we investigated the relation of continuity-discontinuity between posts and users’ comments. Both present challenges for narrative analysis because they are embedded in the level of discursive texts where narratives represent a way of constructing events and identities giving them meaning (De Fina & Johnstone, 2015).

Analyses have focused on ‘topoi’ and discursive strategies which allowed us to describe the interplay of three forms of ‘debating Europe', determining the specific (re)production and circulation of narratives of the EU. By making a comparison between newspapers and users’ narratives, both common patterns and discrepancies emerge from the analysis. Although the study has been based on a small set of data, examples reported in the results

proved that both newspapers and comments shared a general narrative marked by a conflictual relation between national and EU interests and also between Italy and other countries. In other words, although these media actors are characterised by different linguistic features and textual functions, they are linked with each other and they resulted in a general coherent narrative of the EU. This general uniformity can be interpreted as a recontextualisation of discourses (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). It shows the process which incorporates the discursive dynamics and modification of arguments, themes, and *topoi* that are exchanged and altered to adapt them to new interlocutors (Wodak, 2007).

Although we observed general coherence between newspapers and users, data analysed do not allow us to assume that the newspapers directly affect the users' reactions, providing a systematic correlation between the two levels. Rather, analysis proved that comments were characterised by discourses that promoted anti-immigration positions and a strong hostility towards the EU even when newspaper posts adopted a neutral narrative. These results lend support in substantiating previous findings in the literature: the main *topoi* used by both newspapers and users are related to anti-immigration rhetoric which includes the 'topos of numbers, danger, and law' intersected with different 'political topoi' (such as political identity crisis and political responsibility). The use of strong, emotionally-charged and often vulgar expressions by users aimed to communicate political danger and present enemies as dangerous (Fuchs, 2018). Based on the concept of 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2016), users reified Italy's 'imagined enemies' both externally (immigrants, other countries, the EU), and internally (the national corrupt elite) (Zappettini, 2018).

Thus, findings suggest that we are not facing new ways of perceiving and interpreting the refugee crisis and its impact on the EU, but rather we noted a national and transnational recontextualisation of historical models (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). In other words, Eurosceptic narratives of the EU are based on the proliferation of available discourse converted into symbolic resources. Thus, this work has demonstrated that narratives result from a process built by the hybridisation of different media actors and their communicative practices which enrich the media system and discursive representations. However, if it is possible to recognise a pluralism of 'topoi' and forms of debating Europe, this study provided further evidence that we are faced with a substantial absence of sophisticated or theory-based argumentation in the comments analysed which do not introduce linguistic tools capable of enabling discussions of alternative solutions within the UE (Zappettini, 2018). This lack of sophisticated arguments in the comment sections can be seen as a result of the basic function of social media platforms which prioritise relevance over significance (Khosravinik, 2018), supporting the spread of this discursive regime. Indeed, Facebook pages of newspapers seem to be designed to follow the logic of visibility and popularity of contents, rather than promote a serious political debate based on meaningful argumentation (Khosravinik, 2019). In fact, newspapers discursively construct their posts following what they predict will be liked by their audience, thus encouraging like-minded users to aggregate in the same echo chamber which intensifies their belief systems (Sunstain, 2007). Through the repetitive campaign, users can contribute in real time to confirm Eurosceptic narratives and emphasise ideological discourse to increase its level of importance and gain more exposure.

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Appendix: list of the 9 Facebook newspapers' post links

1. European discussion about Schengen Treaty – 28.01.2016
https://www.facebook.com/ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/%201292789024068674
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010153838609112459
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/%2010153879929581151

2. UE-Turkey Pact – 18.03.2016
https://www.facebook.com/%20ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/1333670796647163
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010153975577387459
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/%2010154057159976151

3. Barrier between Austria and Italy – 11.04.2016
https://www.facebook.com/%20ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/1359281984086044
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010154067991532459
https://www.facebook.com/%20Repubblica/posts/10154133161506151

4. Taillin Meeting – 06.07.2017
https://www.facebook.com/%20ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/1901654913182079
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010155514372262459
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/10155002133081151

5. UE Commission on repatriations – 02.03.2017
https://www.facebook.com/%20ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/1714914551856117
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010155072245582459
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/%2010155192620466151

6. UE Court on asylum status – 26.07.2017
https://www.facebook.com/%20ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/1933444570003113
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/%2010155584424242459
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/%2010155887111176151

7. Italy refused Migration Compact – 28.11.2018
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/10158415053286151?__tn__=-R
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/10156941433017459?__tn__=-R
https://www.facebook.com/ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/2726646337349595?__tn__=-R

8. Brussell Meeting – 29.06.2018
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/10156560342977459
https://www.facebook.com/ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/2438431186171113
https://www.facebook.com/Repubblica/posts/10157960883006151

9. France Police trespasses Italian border – 16.10.2018
https://www.facebook.com/ilFattoQuotidiano/posts/2645652692115627?__tn__=-R
https://www.facebook.com/ilGiornale/posts/10156835846482459?__tn__=-R
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Reciprocal reinforcement of entangled narrations on outer and inner European borders. Romanies, Nation States and Europe

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This article has been accepted for publication, and is to be published as soon as possible as a part of this issue. Thank you for your patience.

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Visualisation of the "Balkan road": Media representations of the refugee crisis at the periphery of Europe

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This article investigates visual representations of refugees in the Slovene public sphere at the time of the opening of the "Balkan Road" refugee route in 2015. The article begins with a comparative historical view of media depictions of refugees after the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia. It is argued that the early depictions were region specific and dependent on European Union (EU) integration discourses of a post-socialist transition state. In contrast, in 2015 public memories of World War II and transnational solidarity were invoked. The paper then focuses on two cases, a newspaper series *I Am a Refugee* and a photograph entitled *The Path*, which diverge from the conventional institutional framing of the refugee. The analysis draws on critical theory of visual counter-narratives to investigate these documents' potential for re-humanizing the figure of the refugee in the EU.

Keywords: Refugee crisis, Balkan road, Counter-narratives, Trauma, Visual culture

1. Introduction

In autumn 2015, the Mediterranean region witnessed a major influx of refugees from war-torn Syria, followed by continuous refugee movements from Iraq and Afghanistan from September 2015 onwards. Their journey stretched across the Eastern Mediterranean area, along what quickly became known as the "Balkan Road". This corridor (Lunaček Brumen & Meh, 2016) was a newly established passageway, forming a part of, in the FRONTEX classification, the "Western Balkan Route". This route had already been active prior to the critical year of 2015. In 2009, for instance, there were 3090 detected illegal crossings. In 2015, however, the number reached 764,033 illegal passages. As previously, the main entry points were the Eastern Mediterranean portals of Greece and Bulgaria, with follow-up pressure on the borders of Northern Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and Croatia. The intended final destinations for most of the refugees were Germany, France and Sweden.

A decisive moment occurred on 15 September 2015, when Hungary closed its borders with Serbia, which rerouted the exodus through Croatia, the southern neighbour of Slovenia. At the Slovenian border with Croatia, the situation was exacerbated when, faced by the pressure of large numbers of incoming refugees, Croatian authorities set up organized transport from Serbia to Slovenia. On 18 September, a convoy of buses ended its journey at the border crossings of Rigonce and Obrežje, while the train wagons with the refugees continued their travel to the railway station at Dobova. The Slovene police closed the border and allowed passage only to a small number of people. In despair, some tried to cross the border across the Kolpa River. For several hours – even days – people were kept in the open. At Šentilj's crossing to Austria, they were left in cold and wet weather on the muddy

grounds, at first with no sanitary or food assistance. In the following days, humanitarian help was organized, but non-registered organizations or individual volunteers were prevented from entering the sites unaccompanied. Communication with the refugees was close to impossible, thanks to fences and the police presence. As one volunteer reported, “We have offered food to tens of thousands of people without knowing who they are, where they come from and why they are here” (quoted in Lunaček Brumen & Meh, 2016, 30).

The worrying reports from the sites reached the mainland thanks to various testimonies from the campsites. In this article, though, I focus on two cases of representation by authors who witnessed the events at the border and later reconstructed them into visual narratives of the trauma of the refugees. The first example was created by two authors, visual artist Vesna Bukovec and writer Widad Tamimi, who both volunteered at the camp sites. Their joint work evolved into a series of twelve refugee tales, published in early 2016 in the major Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo*. The second example is a documentary photograph entitled *The Path*, taken by Borut Krajnc at the Croatian-Slovenian “green border” at Rigonce. The photograph first appeared in the Slovenian weekly magazine *Mladina,* and was later presented in a gallery context as an autonomous work of (documentary) art.

In my analysis, I treat both works as counter-narratives. Each of the two presents its own sets of challenges to the mainstream, conventional way of thinking of the figure of the migrant – paradoxically, the first by defeating and the second by employing a convention of representing the refugee. In both cases, the mobilization of the counter-ideology of the text demonstrates a possibility for critical engagement beyond humanitarian help as the only possible action at hand; and indicates a way of how, concerning the discourse of migration, European public sphere can be challenged and redefined in a more emancipatory narrative construction. In the paper, the challenge is formulated first through a comparative historical perspective on media depictions of refugees in Slovenia after the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia; and, second, in light of recent calls for a “new narrative of Europe”, by underlining the role of public memories of solidarity at the periphery of the EU.

2. Media images of the migrant

Media coverage of the 2015 refugee crisis could be categorized as emergency news (Chouliaraki, 2006). As described by Chouliaraki, emergency news focuses on representation of human suffering, which results in pity from the audience. Faced with troublesome images of human trauma, such as those captured by news reports on rescue missions of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea, the viewer is inserted into the representational domain, which Chouliaraki describes as “perceptual realism”. This concept frames the news in a way that stirs an emotional reaction and, by means of dramatization suggesting urgency, mediates between the on-screen drama and the viewer’s moral response. However, perceptual realism may not suggest just the need for an action that is based on the assumption of the viewer’s sense of pity; it may be equally effective in triggering resentment (assigning to the victim a reckless adventurism) and demands for action that require a repressive intervention. Moreover, as Chouliaraki claims, visual dramatization of the suffering, combined first with the images of dangerous seas and overcrowded boats, and second with the follow-up scenes focusing on the aid workers in protective clothing, paints the figure of the refugee as both a subject in need of help and a subject presenting a threat – whether to security, health or culture. In this semiotic mapping of the suffering, racial connotations interfere with humanitarian discourse. “This is the primordial and unreflexive belief of our culture, that the racial ‘other’ contaminates and threatens our own ‘purity’.” (Chouliaraki, 2006, 130). Such a scenario is a “robot like machine of humanitarianism”, to quote one volunteer at the Slovene refugee camp (in Lunaček Brumen & Meh, 2016, 30); this depersonalized contact between the aid worker and the

person in need draws a line between "us" and "them", in the process dehumanizing the vulnerable as dangerous and contaminated "masses".

In his own analyses of media spectacles of rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea, de Genova (2013) argues that the humanitarian spectacle serves the purpose of racist inclusivity, to be followed as the next stage of integration of migrants into the dominant European societies. Moreover, he argues, visual spectacles suspend spectators' potential resentment towards global injustice: as they follow reports about victims (especially women and children), these spectacles divert their attention towards the humanitarian activities of the West. As other scholars of migration (Andersson, 2014; Calavita, 2005; Carr, 2015; Dines, Montagna & Ruggeiero, 2015) argue, the humanitarian narrative of refugees broadcast by mainstream media is used to divert attention from political, economic and other causes of expropriation and deterritorialization of people, ultimately shadowing the implication of the West in the misery that appears to have a universal character – making it a "global state of affairs".

However, if the above discussion emphasizes that the implied racist discourse of the emergency news is pertinent to the hegemonic Western media, symbolism of suffering may take a different route when observed in the context of peripheral or semi-peripheral EU states such as Slovenia. Here, too, we are faced with attempts at racialization of the suffering "other", by which the viewer of the emergency news is reaffirmed in a position of racial and cultural superiority. In fact, as Mihelj's (2004) comparative study of news coverage by Slovene news media of Bosnian refugees in 1992 and "illegal migration" in 2000–01 suggests, the rhetorical framing of the migrants served the purpose of elevating the Slovenian public to the image of a European nation. Henceforth – especially with regard to the Bosnian refugees – a common past with the suffering people fleeing the war-torn region was effectively erased from the narratives while the role of Slovenia as the "threshold of the West" was emphasized. As Mihelj (2004) comments, calling the people in need "Bosnian refugees" was not just "a matter of instituting a difference between two nationalities, but much more a matter of drawing a distinction between different civilisations and, inter alia, between 'Europe' and 'the Balkans'" (Mihelj, 2004, 11). However, in the 2000–01 representations of "illegal migration" – a term used to cover a diverse body of asylum seekers and economic migrants from Africa, Asia and the ex-Yugoslavian region – news coverage created a more ambiguous discourse. At the turn of the century, Slovenia was positioned closer to the East (and the Balkans), as was also the case immediately after the collapse of the federal Yugoslavian state. News media depicted the country as a double victim, on the one hand under the pressure of requirements regarding migration control coming from the West, but on the other under the pressure of migration from the East: "As a future member, obliged to follow the rules set by 'the West', Slovenia was presumably forced to become a 'sanitary cordon' of 'fortress Europe'" (Mihelj, 2004, 11), which redirected the politics of the emergency news. Instead of focusing on the migrants' tragedies, national media embarked on self-victimization. A study by Pajnik, Lesjak-Tušek and Gregorčič (2001) of 2001 public discourse on immigrants conveys a similar, yet slightly more disturbing picture of racialization, which occurred once the refugees – victims of "security measures" – were placed in the inland detention camps.

3. The Balkan road in Slovene media

Media coverage of the 2015 refugee crisis shows a similar tendency to depict refugees as a threat lurking from behind the borders to invade, destabilize and disrupt the peaceful cultural landscape of the country. The narratives presented through both visual and verbal language indicated anticipation of "flows", "waves" and "tides" of strangers "flooding" the lands of the states along the Balkan Road. In a critical discourse analysis of several Slovene print and electronic media, a group of scholars showed how a common thread running

through a diverse body of news outlets, ranging from quality to tabloid formats, was the polarizing view of the divide between "us" and "them". Whether dressed in a "moral dilemma" (Vezovnik, 2017), or "moral panic" engulfing the discourse of cultural threat (Pušnik, 2017); governed by conventional codes and neutralism as a constitutive element of professional self-presentation in political journalism (Luthar, 2017); through legitimation of migration policy (Pajnik, 2017); or portrayed as humanitarianism (Jontes, 2017), a sharp line of demarcation was drawn that suggested an intrusion on the part of the refugees, disturbing the "normalcy" of national life. In contrast to the previous two settings of the European context as the backbone of legitimation of anti-migration sentiment, in 2015 a different concern was mobilized. As shown by Vidmar Horvat (2017), media paranoia coincided with the fear that if it were unable to stop the illegal crossings, Slovenia would be left out of the EU power centres at Brussels. This struck a chord as news about a proposition to create a temporary "mini Schengen", containing only the core circle of Western EU Member States, trickled out through the media (Vidmar Horvat, 2017).

Consequently, in August 2015 Slovenia joined the EU Brussels chorus, which condemned Prime Minister Victor Orban's announcement of wiring Hungary; in November, the media could already follow the military units that had begun to install the fences. As the razor wire was installed at a "speed of 150 meters per hour", as one report put it, manipulation of the numbers of refugees approaching Slovenia, as well as fears of "back-flows" from Austria and Germany, turned public attention to migration hysteria. An already available tool within the Schengen border industry (Carr, 2015), hysteric anticipation of flows and floods of people to invade the lands and homes of the peaceful Western world was used to expedite the legitimation process for wiring the borders while attaching itself to the image of the nation victimized by troops of migrants.

While the image of masses of refugees pressing their bodies (and fortunes) against the fences of the Schengen West dominated the conventions of media coverage of the crisis, an oppositional solidarity bloc of voices emerged, raising a different public mirror to the scenes from the borders. Letters written by readers begun to arrive to the media headquarters, issuing protests by invoking memories of the twentieth century. In "Concentration Camp Slovenia", a reader wrote, "It is sad to see that we are using the same methods as were used during the war by the aggressor." In December 2015, public protests against the fences at the borders culminated in a newspaper's front-page title, "This is Incomparable Even to the War Times". People spoke of "sad, terrifying scene, reminiscent of the last war" in a reference to the wired zones of Slovenia during World War II that appeared in the newspaper column "A Wired Mind". One newspaper comment suggested that closing the borders at the Balkans would revive painful memories, while titles such as "Again, Europe with Iron Curtain" and "Refugee Holocaust", and comments such as "I hope that they do not raise a concrete Berlin wall again" referred to concrete past episodes of border and containment violence that occurred in the twentieth century (all quotes in Vidmar Horvat, 2017).

The emergence of this alternative public voice warrants a sociological investigation of the counter-narratives and their power to contest and destabilize the dominant narratives. However, presented in the form of readers' letters, critical commentaries or coverage of groups of protests, they may appear to be marginal, unfolding at the fringes of the public sphere and demonstrating a "narrow" segment of an oppositional view of the crisis. Yet when presented as part of the "core" – that is, as an integral or even central site of institutional setting – the registers of meaning and power shift, as my case studies will demonstrate.

4. Counter-narratives between Western theory and Cold War reality

Counter-narratives simultaneously inhabit an ambiguous place of being within and outside the dominant discourse. As argued by scholars of the field (Bamberg, 2004; Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Andrews, 2004), the focus on counter-narratives provides an insight into ideological struggles triggered by dominant cultural discourses. This is because counter-narratives are relational: they only make sense in relation to what they are countering. However, by the very virtue of their oppositional character, they also contain the aspects of hegemonic narratives, which they try to contest, critique or refute. The dominant and the oppositional are therefore mutually constitutive, "unveiling in their opposite the attempts at meaning production which define the ideological frame of the narrative" (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004, x). In Andrews' (2004, 2) words, "Counter-narratives exist in relation to master narratives, but they are not necessarily dichotomous entities"; they may be running against the dominant stories, but they are also shaped by them.

Studies of narratives have been associated mainly with discourse analysis in the field of psychology. As argued by Bamberg (2004, 354), "narratives provide the possibility of a format that has become the privileged way of fashioning self and identity". The method delineates a biographic approach to understanding how people construct their selves, as well as allowing us "to dissect how selves and identities are constructed in both spatial and temporal terms" (2004, 356-357). As Bamberg (2004, 356-357) also notes, this may be especially valuable to apprehend transformations of the self when people are crossing into new spatio-temporal territories, in terms of both intimate biography (such as parenthood) or socio-economic repositioning (such as immigrating to a new country). The implication here is that narrative analysis provides an insight in how people reconstruct themselves in relation to experiences and in anticipation of new life developments. In brief, the focus is on individual psychologies and the constructions of life stories, which mediate between the expected, "normalizing" discourses of change and the individual attempt to define oneself in both compliance and opposition to the norms and social routines.

When studying the refugee crisis, the narrative approach could be an important tool to gather insights into transformations of personal biographies and the notions of self of the people who were forced to leave their homelands. In this research, however, I employ a sociological approach, with the method of counter-narrative providing a tool to observe the construction of the collective self of the dominant society when met with the challenge of the migration crisis. As the above quoted reader's letter suggests, memory plays an important role in the articulation of the narrative of collective identity. By using media narratives, I follow Bamberg's argument that by studying oppositional narratives, we can open up a space for more plural and emancipatory "biographies" of the public:

> *"If it is possible to delineate more clearly where and how discourses that run counter to hegemonic discourses emerge, and if it is possible to describe the fabric of these counter discourses in more detail, we should be able to make headway in designing alternative strategies to public, institutionalized power relations, resulting in more egalitarian reciprocity and universal moral respect." (Bamberg, 2004, 353)*

Bamberg's approach is to focus attention on the interaction between master narratives and oppositional narratives, or counter-narratives. Master narratives set up interpretative routines; they are "'frames' according to which courses of events can easily be plotted, simply because one's audience is taken to 'know' and accept these courses" (Bamberg, 2004, 360); they tend to naturalize and normalize the meaning to the point where we accept the proposed reading as the only option. Counter-narratives oppose routine meaning construction by suggesting alternative readings and courses of action. The interplay between the two, as Bamberg strongly underlines, is not settled in advance: neither master

nor counter meaning exists prior to their mutual interaction, and both are contingent on and defined by heteronomous social settings – both biographic and institutional.

When transferred to sociological analysis of collective narratives of identity, this approach demands a historical perspective, which considers the narrators' social and political identity as well as their positioning within the institutional networks of power. This suggests a further division: that counter-narratives may operate at different levels of social life. For the purpose of simplification, I will consider these levels as macro, meso and micro fronts on which power is being resisted. To illustrate, a counter-narrative at the macro level may entail a broad historical turn (away) in the realm of ideas and notions of truth. The postmodern turn represents one such counter-narrative, undermining the "grand narratives" and claiming to objective truths of modernity. Postmodern counter-narratives, as Peters and Lankshear (quoted in Giroux et al., 1996, 2) state in an earlier contribution to the topic, aim at disturbing "foundational myths concerning the origins and development of an unbroken history of the West based on the evolutionary ideal of progress". Regardless of how we actually theorize the postmodern turn – as a radical break or a cultural logic that continues to be defined by capitalist mode of production (Jameson, 1991) – it has achieved a broad enough academic as well as popular status to be considered a shift in narrative with the power to intervene in macro institutional as well as micro levels of cultural life of the West.

Counter-narrative at the meso level indicates institutional support for or a backup of the counter-narrative coming from a place of hegemonic power. For the purposes of this article, this could be illustrated by a historical case of the socialist state involved in Tito's non-alignment movement, which was a consequence of Yugoslavia's breakup with Stalin (and, some would argue, its colonial communist rule). It therefore originated in a previous act of resistance to imperial power and, through further development, became a global alternative to modernization as it was implemented by both the West and the East (Balibar, 2004). As critical scholars and public institutions in the ex-Yugoslav region have recently turned their interest to this legacy (MSUM, 2019; Štiks, 2019), new generations of readers of socialist history are now able to become acquainted with a different version of the past. In this version, the resistance to the communist regime coexists with civic loyalty to ideas of transnationalism; as a consequence, it is concerned less with the repressive aspects of party rule and is more sympathetic to the non-aligned state of Tito's Yugoslavia. This case is relevant as it partly frames the debate in Slovenia regarding how to treat immigrants throughout the transition (Vidmar Horvat, 2009) and has shaped the solidarity discourse in recent years (Vidmar Horvat, 2012).

At the micro level, it may seem that the counter-narratives hold the least power to make changes at the broader social level. In many instances, the cultural theory of counter-narratives indeed exposes everyday resistance, articulated through narrating counter-stories, including memories, as being "only" of the "self". Scholars of post-socialist memories unveil how counter-narratives of the past may become a mobilizing force to resist hegemonic narratives of the post-socialist transition. Here, counter-narratives struggle with historical revisionism, including the twentieth-century history of Europe, to elevate from the debris of censorship and official amnesia the evidence of past values, embraced in notions of global justice, solidarity and human rights (Velikonja, 2014). Again, this is relevant to civic engagement as it relates to the fate of the refugees in Slovenia.

In summary, when using the conceptual tool of counter-narratives in sociological analysis, attention should be paid not only to how resistances are organized in relation to dominant, official, hegemonic narratives, but also to what are the distributive powers of intervention into history – both biographic and social – when involved in mutual contests of representation. With the following case studies of newspaper and photographic counter-narratives, I will explicate the interplay between the two, arguing that the historical contact between

biographic and cultural counter-narratives has a considerable role to play in the articulation of resistance to the mainstream regimes of truth. Instead of focusing on the reader and their memories of past solidarities, the attention will be on the image of the refugee, presented as a biographic subject with memories and as a site of an alternative encounter with the trauma.

5. Case One: *I Am a Refugee*

I now turn to my two cases of counter-narratives. Both cases provide a valuable insight into the power of the counter-narrative when playing around, against, and with the convention of representation – the on-site media coverage of the crisis through the voices of the subjects in trauma in the first case, and by employing the convention of the documentary photography in the second case – while still appearing in the cultural setting of the mainstream institutions. In their combined effect, the two media interventions indicate the possibility of changing the dominant cultural relation with the other in a peripheral border state; as well as contributing to the reformulation of the notions of (global) solidarity and hospitality in the European public sphere.

The first concerns a newspaper series *I Am a Refugee (“Begunec_ka sem”*), published by the Slovenian national daily *Delo* over twelve Mondays in a row, beginning in January 2016. The authors, Vesna Bukovec, a visual artist, and Widad Tamimi, an Israeli born writer who lives in Ljubljana, volunteered in the two refugee centres at the border with Croatia, where they gathered the stories for the series. Though documentary in nature as far as credibility of the setting and its protagonists is concerned, the series fictionalized the testimonies, merging the life stories of various refugees into a fictional narrative. Instead of including documentary photographic material, Bukovec contributed hand-drawn illustrations.

I Am a Refugee was an artistic project with a reportage value. While concealing the real identities of the camps’ inhabitants, the personalized voices used by Tamimi added the anthropological dimension of the people behind the fiction. In the original texts, the split between fictive and biographical voices was indicated by the change of font (here, passages without emphasis refer to the off-voice of the narrator as reporter:

> *My father is a handicapped person and you took him away, where is he? Tell me, where is he? He is all I have left in the world, I promised to take care of him, tell me, where he is!"* Ahmad is 17. He came to Slovenia by foot. In front of him he was pushing his father in a wheelchair. After crossing the Slovenian border police offered him a ride. The father was loaded onto an ambulance and Ahmad continued walking. (*I Am a Refugee*: Ahmad, 17 years, *Delo,* 25.1.2016)

> *“I hate you for making me leave alone with two children … We said goodbye in the harbour, after you helped me to put life-jackets onto the kids, while they were hugging you and pleading with you to stay with us.”* (*I Am a Refugee*: Fatima: “I hate you, my love”, *Delo,* 1.2.2016)

> *“I was hugging my little sister Lina … Lina is my first sister, the others are children of my father’s new wife. My real mother stayed in Syria with her new husband.”* YZN is eleven years old. In Croatia he was separated from his family with whom he escaped from Syria. He arrived in Brežice at two in the morning, cold and wet from the rain. (*I Am a Refugee*: YZN, eleven years, *Delo*, 7.1.2016)

> *“Dear Ava, I arrived to Europe in good health. I miss you, little sister, I think about you a lot and in the night, before I fall asleep, I look at the photograph of us together. We had it taken just before I left. How good it is that we went to the photographer.”* (*I Am a Refugee*: Jusef, *Delo,* 14.3.2016)

> *"We arrived to Slovenia, my love. Why do you not smile? Slovenia … that's right."* (*I Am a Refugee*: Sami, *Delo*, 7.3.2016)
>
> *"I'm sorry to have made you sad too. This is my story and it's not right that I made you sad too."* (*I Am a Refugee*: Jusef, *Delo,* 14.3.2016)

In Western media conventions of representation, refugee-related news is brought to the audiences in two main, interrelated forms: one revolving around depersonalization; the other, in contrast, using techniques of over-humanization of human suffering (Chouliaraki, 2006; Rosler, 1999). As they both rely on the legacies of documentary – that is, realistic depictions of human deprivation, they work in tandem without creating a tension or contradiction of meaning in the reader. The refugee is both a subject with no name and, as the ultimate embodiment of "bare life", the representation of the human essence. In addition, the refugee stories usually begin in an empty "now". As Wright (2000) indicates, the refugee's life seems to begin only when arriving to "us"; there is no concern for the immediate past that has made someone into a refugee, nor any genuine interest in knowing the refugee as a human being who, like "us", embodies emotions, memories, passions and sorrows.

I Am a Refugee confuses the voice of the biographic and the universal subject, rendering it impossible for the reader to smoothly embark on the drama of humankind. This is done at the level of both the verbal and visual set-up of the narrative. In the verbal setting, the family-related contexts of the refugee stories prevail. It is this context that frames the loss of intimacy, safety, love, future (growing up and growing old). These are universal themes of human life, but fictional names with real family backgrounds make it difficult for the reader to easily choose either the conventions of fictions or the news-related conventions of identification. If siding with the option that this is only fiction, into which the first-person voice of Widad Tamimi translates different biographies of actual people, composing out of them a single "refugee story", then this setup for the identification precludes the possibility of blaming the actual refugees for self-imposing the injury of expulsion. If opting for a real person's autobiographic story, resentment towards actual refugees may arise, but it is harder to ignore the emotional contents (of fatherhood, sisterhood, spousal love) of their refugee condition. *I Am a Refugee* contains the voice of the refugee as a biographical person, the refugee as a fictionalized person and the writer as the author of the media narrative. This merger in genre and temporal heteroglossy (time of witnessing, time of writing, time of publishing) places Tamimi in the role of the reporter, thus allowing her to give authenticity to the voice and at the same time taking away its power to fascinate as an authentic document of a particular life story. The confusion of voices unsettles the possibility for one-directional sentimental response, or the reader's comfort to attach the empathy to the subject in the story, who the reader knows – despite appearing in the newspaper – is wholly fictional.

Visual images of migrants in print and electronic media by default operate as texts of anonymity; by stripping the subjects in the pictures of their names and life stories, they acquire the legitimacy to speak of universality. As Martha Rosler (1999, 319) comments on the (in)famous image of the *Migrant Mother*, the subject in the image is degraded to the status of an object – a voyeuristic site to observe the ahistorical narrative in the making, contained in the eternal topic of the "suffering of mankind". The visual representation of the series – the use of illustration – paradoxically leans towards de-objectification. Illustrations in the *I Am a Refugee* project invoke Art Spiegelman's two-volume novel *Maus*, where he uses illustrations of animal characters of cats (Nazis) and mice (Jews) to present his father's memorial narrative of Auschwitz. As Leventhal (1995) notes, reduction and compression of images in a graphic novel serves the function of distancing – not only from the brutality of Nazi extermination plans but, above all, to prevent evoking a simplified response from

the reader. In this way, the text forecloses the possibility of historic catharsis. The illustrated image in Haideri's story in *I Am a Refugee* recreates a similar situation. Haideri escaped while heavily pregnant and gave birth in Greece, then lost any trace of her newborn. The picture in her story depicts a live body of a baby lying in a spiral reel of razor wire. Attached to the baby's hand is the paper tag with the inscription "Refugee" (Figure 1).

Figure 1: I Am a Refugee*: Haideri – illustration.*

Source: *I Am a Refugee*: Haideri, *Delo,* 29 February 2016.

The image reiterates the image of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old refugee from Syria who, together with his mother and brother, drowned in the Aegean Sea. The photography which first appeared on social networks and later in all major media in August 2015, has acquired the status of flag-bearer for the trauma of Syrian refugees stuck on Europe's doorstep. In *I Am a Refugee*, the reduction of the wholesome subject to lines and streaks in illustrations could never become an iconic image, as was the case with the photograph of dead Kurdi. This is precisely for the opposite reason than is usually the case: the image of Alan Kurdi became "famous" not because he had no name but because his body was inscribed with history of a known family. The name grants public (legal, political) status to naked life – thus revealing a person who we are able to mourn (McRobbie, 2006). The image is no longer a display of an unjust death of a child refugee, but rather a depiction of deceased Kurdi. The fact that his mother and brother died with him triggers the formation of a story behind the image – a story of a family who will never reunite. Based on this public display, a spectator can imagine their own feeling if they were to be placed in the role of the parent of a dead child – the narrative opens up to allow for identification and mourning.
The baby refugee with no name, when taken in isolation from the context, belongs to no concrete mother but rather tells the destiny of a whole generation. Moreover, he is alive, lying on his back, which – in dramatic opposition to the dead child lying on his belly in the photograph – suggests a history still occurring, with no closure and no actual death to mourn. The illustration is with us, a living testimony of suffering that faces us directly, in the eternal present. However, because the image is also an illustration of the (hi)story of

concrete motherhood behind it, it cannot be easily depersonalized – its raw and object-like presentation of a newborn baby's body notwithstanding.

6. Case Two: *The Path*

In her discussion of the relationship between visual and verbal aspects of media realism, Lillie Chouliaraki (2006) differentiates between indexical, iconic and symbolic modes of news coverage. The indexical meaning is based on the correspondence between the news story and the reported events; the iconic and the symbolic meanings move the realism of the event away from "pure" description to a more abstract level. The latter triggers psychological realism – a representation of reality that "appeals to our sense of humanity and justice" (2006, 120). In this capacity, Chouliaraki argues, both iconic and symbolic meanings are in fact more effective – they bring the reality of suffering to us in a way that is imposing and compelling more than the indexical news. Aesthetically, this is carried out through the juxtaposition of a mise-en-scène of suffering and the public appeal of the news.

In photography, the functions of the verbally and visually disseminated meaning may merge. As Barbara Harrison (2004) discusses in relation to the photographic images of the everyday shots taken by ordinary people, photography can be read as containing a visual narrative. She argues that:

> *"If we wish to use the visual within narrative inquiry we must examine if, and to what extent, the visual can be used to construct narratives, the relationship to or dependence on written or verbal narration, and the ways in which visual narratives can provide us with data on experience." (Harrison, 2004, 115)*

In her focus on everyday photography (for instance, photographs taken on holidays, at family reunions and so on), she suggests that, "Photographic images have a material and symbolic significance that act as important vehicles of communication: communication that contributes to the fabric of social relations" (Harrison, 2004, 133).

In *The Path* by the photographer Borut Krajnc (Figure 2), the narrative emerges from the image, which is split into two halves. The upper part includes a woman in pink shawl around her head, carrying in her arms a child whose face is covered in cloth. The woman looks upwards, into the sky. Her image is fully illuminated. Behind and on her right side is a crowd of people in grey blankets, apparently refugees like herself, non-illuminated, their bodies multiplying out of camera focus and into the darkness of the night. On woman's left side is a man in a light-brown jacket, also standing in bright light. The bodies in the upper part of the image are visually contained within a space demarcated by the police belt stretched vertically across the photograph. Just underneath this visual bar, a woman in a red hood is sitting with a younger child in her arms; she is looking downwards. An older girl in a red hood stands next to them, turned left and with her head tilted up, again towards the sky.

Figure 2: Borut Krajnc, The Path*, 2016*

Source: the author.

Borut Krajnc, the creator of the image, explains the background to the photo. The image was shot on 25 October 2015, at six in the morning, at the border of Rigonce. "In the middle, we see faces, illuminated by the fire. The refugees made the fire to keep themselves warm. The other light comes from police cars." He titled the photo *The Path*, following the lyrics by local musician Drago Mislej Mef, himself dedicating the poem to the refugees. In the image, he saw a painful testimony of the suffering of the refugees, which he followed on their Balkan Route in autumn of 2015. He also wanted to present the photo individually, as a testimony to our times.

In June 2018, at the height of the tourist season, he accepted an invitation by a local parish to present his work in the Slovenian coastal town of Piran. Krajnc exhibited his work as the only item on display, in the setting of the small church of Marija Zdravja, itself seriously "wounded" in construction by weather and seawaters. He said:

> *"Now the photo is in the context which I wanted from the beginning – in the silence of a spiritual place, which is damaged, hurt as the people in the photo. Here, one can look inside himself while facing the suffering of the other. It is right that this is placed next to the sea – we know how many refugees had to cross the inferno of the Mediterranean Sea" (Gombač, 2018).*

The exhibited photo, 155 by 225 centimetres in size, reiterates a biblical scene. As described in the leaflet accompanying the exhibition, it shows the mass of immigrants who could stand in for angels and priests, with garments as sacred clothing that covers "the wounded, vulnerable and scratched body"; a man in a light cardigan is a witness (Joseph, the carpenter); the woman (Mary) carries the "Child, with a hood that covers a white, obscured concealed face"; and a forbidden arrival in Jerusalem". It is a powerful allegorical image, which could easily become another iconic photograph of the 2015 refugee crisis; however, I would argue that it defies the possibility of an iconic fame (at least in the West) as it is narrated in reverse to the biblical reference.

Terence Wright (2000) argues that visual representations of refugees frequently invoke Christian iconography: viewers, Wright (2000, 2) writes, "find accord with such images (with which they are already familiar)" and, furthermore, "may evoke a familiar story-line". Joseph and Mary's "Flight into Egypt" and "Madonna and Child" are regular connotative references by which refugees are depicted in contemporary media, contributing to both a stereotypical image of "the refugee" as an expelled person (but, as we have seen, with no real interest for their prior lives) as well as inviting a Christian ethics of compassion. *The Path* may be classified as a case of a visual counter-narrative, despite the fact that, at first glance, the photograph reiterates what appears to be a visual convention. This can be argued because the photograph employs the conventions of documentary photography. In news documentary photography, the subjects in the picture have no say about how they will be portrayed. They may have access to the camera and voice, but only as contributing to the non-obtrusive, objective view of the camera. Often, as was the case with Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, or, for that matter, *Afghan Girl*, shot in the refugee centre by Steve McCurry for *National Geographic* in 1984, the subject in the picture may remain unknown and nameless for decades. The convention of anonymity, as Chouliaraki (2006, 65) argues, leads to the mobilization of a meaning that is predetermined – namely that the narrative behind the image is one of suffering and distress – and is thus predicated on the invocation of pity.

When a photograph acquires the status of an iconic image (as both *Migrant Mother* and *Afghan Girl* have), it begins to create public memory. The naked and napalm-burnt Phan Thi Kim Phuc is the iconic image of the Vietnam War, Richard Drew's *The Falling Man* is the iconic image of 9/11. As Lev Kreft (2010, 267) points out, however, "icons make up memories that are tailor-made for the desire for oblivion". One might argue that especially

traumatic images – that is, those that are supposed to leave the deepest and most irreversible impressions in public memory – become iconic precisely because they pre-guarantee oblivion. Their iconic force originates in the assurance of the numbness that such traumatic images carry with them (since it is perfectly clear that something similar was bound to happen eventually). Hočevar (2010, 82) says that, "Photography is the perfect medium for the depiction of traumatic events. It conflates something cruel, a premonition of a disaster that has inevitably already happened." At the same time, photographs of trauma "refine" this numbness through moral satisfaction – "I endure in the face of terror and keep on looking" as Susan Sontag (2006) points out.

This is not the case with *The Path*, which uses photography as a site of iconic recognition. However, when exhibited in a church, it triggers an analytical (not the emphatic) reading. It asks the reader to re-memorize the cultural tradition and, precisely because of its placement in the institutional context of the church holding the name of Mary (Mary Health of the Sick), legitimizes the call for making the links between the two women. Hence the refugee woman looking into the skies, like Mary, is an icon of human suffering who, through reference to the biblical imagery and not because of the genre of documentary, does not need to have a name of her own. Her depersonification, a staple of documentary photography, in fact works in the opposite way. Referring to a symbol of abstraction (of suffering) pins the viewer down to the realization of the actuality of the past scene involving Mary as an earlier embodiment of the refugee mother. Psychological realism induces perceptual realism, not the other way around! The reaction may be moral (an outrage, shame about one's own culture, a political protest) but, via rearranging the politics of memory, it is also a historical rearrangement of the iconic heritage of the West. Now, through the continuity between the viewer's time and the image's time, it is Mary who becomes iconically connected to this woman's actual scene of suffering. In other words, the perceptual realism of Mary's maternal suffering in the past erupts through, and is confirmed by, the psychological realism of this refugee mother's trauma in the present.

Shuman (in Bamberg, 2004, 369) argues that the empathy that arises from the trajectory of the personal and the human has the potential to destabilize meaning from the personal to the allegorical, so that the "allegorical understandings can become challenged". In *The Path*, the reversal of legitimation of iconic and symbolic power both disturbs and undermines the path of memory, making the present the historical reference for past abstractions. This means a political shift, whereby abstract signs of human tragedies, implanted in Western imaginaries through icons and symbols of the past, no longer stand in a secure position as universal references but are instead seeing their meaning being negotiated in every single instance of their invocation of the present.

7. Discussion: Image as a site of traumatic encounter

In a time defined by multiplication of spectacular images that drain our sense of history – so-called compassion fatigue (Chouliaraki, 2013, 34) – photography preserves the possibility of memory by saving images (2013, 142-143). The 2015 media coverage of the Balkan Road was replete with traumatic images but, as we have also seen, the traumatic images are often placed in an (involuntary) role to bring a sense of closure. Through resorting to icons of time, they are invested with hope to reconcile with both history and memory. They address the viewer's capacity for empathy, but foreclose the sense for a history of morality.

The two counter-narratives selected here for analysis defeat this role. The moral response that they both instigate in the viewer is closer to what Patricia Violi (2012) discusses in her work on trauma site museums. As she argues, focusing on the indexical politics of representation, presentation of trauma in the memorial museums, erected in actual places of

past crimes against humanity, lies in the spatial continuity between the horrors of the past and the visitor's museum experience in the present:

> *"The experiential efficacy of re-presentation or indexical trauma sites does not lie in their alleged "realism" but elsewhere, more precisely in their being a trace linking past and present through persistency of material elements over time. In other words, it relies on the supposed authenticity of traces, not the implied truthfulness of the representation." (Violi, 2012,41)*

In a similar sense, *I Am a Refugee* could be read as a media trauma site where the experiential power of the stories comes from the sense of biographic authenticity of the fictional narratives of suffering. Of course, the original trauma site is replaced with a fictional one, but the continuity erupts through identification with the suffering subject, who is both alive (in a biographic sense) and dead (in fictional sense), or rather where the biographic fate of the actual refugee becomes one with the fictional subject – a subject with no legal existence. The traumatizing aspect of the series lies in the very "traces" of human life that one can recognize and sense as familiar; via identification with that "authenticity", the viewer understands the horror of undermining the common value of life.

In *The Path*, the traumatic site is represented by two actual places, which reconnect with each other through the act of exhibition: the border site at Rigonce and the church site at the coastal tourist zone. As Mieke Bal (2006, 226) explains in the case of migrant video projects, what distinguishes fictionalized documentary formats from purely documentary ones is that they do not present us with the facts of the truth, but rather its essence – its very substance. In this sense, they possess a special power to transform memories into the now-time: "Fiction is deployed, then, to propose prophetic memory as a tool for political action" (Bal, 2006, 226). The image is not, cannot, be frozen and forgotten in the very moment when it is consumed. It resists iconic status and claims symbolic presence. In Krajnc's own words, "This spiritual space of the exhibition could become symbolic in the sense that it opens up a possibility for an intimate humanist gaze at the refugee and migrant agony" (Gombač, 2018). To recount, this is precisely what John Berger (2006) expects to be a political mission of photography. In its official role, photography is a testimony about the depersonalized human condition. This unfortunate task, he argues, can be contested by bringing the public closer to the private. The goal must be to establish photography together with its context, to place it back into time and simultaneously historicize that time – to make it present in the now. In this way, its iconic status can become part of personal, intimate memory of history. In a retrospective way, *The Path* has revived an earlier context and re-sensitivised the visitor to the historicity of the suffering through its exhibition in the local church.

8. Conclusion

Since the 2007-2008 financial crisis, the European Union has faced a repeated series of challenges to reconstitute itself in a direction that would fuel trust and loyalty among its citizens. Indeed, in the last decade, several manifestos have been drafted, sometimes signed by the political leaders, sometimes by the intellectuals, sometimes by both. *A New Narrative for Europe*, first signed by Manuel Barroso, calls for a "new Renaissance" (Battista & Setari, 2014, 128). It issues a warning that the EU does not merely entail economic growth but also the values of "dignity, freedom, democracy" (European Union, 2013). In the manifesto *We are Europe* signed by Ulrich Beck and Daniel Cohn-Bendit (2012), the authors remind us of the heritage of popular irony and self-ridicule that could give back to Europe some of its former energy. Further on, Beck (Brown & Gilson, 2013) and Habermas (Limone, 2012) argue for a confrontation with European nationalisms and a reform of European modernity. We need a new vision, Beck states, "a vision for a social Europe" (Brown

& Gilson, 2013). Beck alludes in particular to the austerity measures and their impact on Greece and Spain, and calls for a revitalisation of European modernity by which to bring European nations back into the global arena and to assure less insecurity to European citizens. But does the call for a refreshed modernity not imply drawing on the inequality between those with political lives and those who have nothing but their naked lives? Can European modernity really be reset as a European project, i.e. a project taking place inside the borders of the EU, without taking into account the fact of global migration as its internal feature?

The 2015 refugee crisis unveiled the fragility of the European project, in part because collective biographies of the EU are multiple, often inconsistent, and, above all, defined by local memories and visions of the past. To mobilize the counter-power of these local, peripheral memories, it is first necessary that we recognize them as such – as local counter-narratives that struggle for their place of power and autonomy in relation to the hegemonic centers. In the concluding remarks to his contribution to the referential volume *Considering Counter-Narratives*, Michael Bamberg (2004, 369) brings to the fore an important critical emphasis: that by focusing on narrative analysis, we gain access to a broader picture than the personal: human, shared, universal (2004, 369). This has to be implanted as a daily challenge, where the representation of others collides with representations of ourselves – not as demographic, cultural or identity categories, but as evidence of a common life that needs to be inspected through history, memory and rational morality.

In the case of Slovenia, popular counter-narratives are defined by resistance to the post-socialist state and its servitude to the Schengen apparatus of exclusion. Equally important are the memories of WWII, however, which provide the narrative content by which refugees' traumas could be translated into a non-allegoric discourse of global human solidarity. Local media have played a potent role in providing interpretative frames that have mediated between the "master" (Western) discourse of the refugee as the "other" and popular calls for solidarity and help. When embarking on the platform of established institutional frameworks, such as daily news media or the local church, as was the case in our two examples, and populating them with stories that look like our own lives, our symbols of goodness, our hopes – up to the moment of abrupt rupture in the biography, caused by war, famine, or other disasters of nature or politics – the lineage of humanity may become more present and more familiar, but also more historical.

This may be seen as a minor advance in the history of morality at the periphery. It may also be seen as a peripheral, but nonetheless counter-narrative advance, by which European biography can also be rewritten in regard to the master narrative of the Balkan road; as well as all of the other migration routes to the EU.

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Narrating migration in terms of the Global North: Institutional attempts to counter the 'Paradise Europe' narrative in Cameroon

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Within the policy framework of external migration management, the EU and its member states are increasingly funding so-called awareness campaigns in Africa, in order to discourage irregular migration. Based on an empirical approach derived from cultural narratology, this paper analyses two campaigns implemented in Cameroon. The two-fold choice of material, namely official campaign material and interviews with Cameroonian migrants, reveals that two master narratives are at play: Informed through political convictions of the Global North, the campaigns are designed to counter and invalidate the local imagination of Europe as 'paradise'. The paper evaluates the effectiveness of this counter narration on the level of its content, its structure and the credibility of involved narrators. The findings uncover basic misjudgements of the structural nature of narratives, the role of facts in migratory decisions and the social inevitability of migration in Cameroon. These flaws are not surprising as both, the local and the institutional approach to migration, are not based on complete and rational knowledge but rely on the narrative steadiness of deeply rooted imaginations. In their respective context they fulfil the criteria of a good story – when confronted, underlying collective storylines unfold.

Keywords: Awareness campaigns, Cameroon, Counter narratives, Migration management, 'Paradise Europe'

1. Introduction

Evoking strong emotions, South-North migration is a highly discussed topic today. The guiding image of media coverage in the Global North is the prototypical photo of a half-sinking, overcrowded boat filled with refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. Within the restrictive interpretative framework of migration as a 'crisis', migrants are often exclusively narrated as threatening enemies or helpless victims. This objectifying process of othering is embedded in a non-reciprocal 'we'/ 'they' schema, where the other becomes an "inverted image of the familiar" (Schneider, 2017, 117). The rhetoric of a threatened 'we'-group rarely allows space for self-narrations of migrants: How they became migrants – hence "the imaginations, expectations and motivations that fuel the pursuit of migration" in countries of origins – stays unexplored (Graw, K., & Schielke, 2012, 11). This kind of oversimplification can also be observed in the institutional portrayal of ways of migrating: In the spotlight is the figure of the migrant who is confronted with European border

regimes when trying to enter the continent irregularly. Through deportation and exposure to the forces of nature, migrants are often "pushed into a sphere of mere biological survival", as Estela Schindel points out (2016, 221). Following Giorgio Agamben's concept, the appearance of the absolute other becomes one of "bare life", deprived of rights (Schindel, 2016, 222). The polarization and unique focus on the crossing of the desert and the sea distorts a reality in which migrants travel in various legal ways facilitated by migration brokers (Atekmangoh, 2017, 172-175). How migrants are perceived is not simply an interpretation of prior social facts but constitutes the world as we understand it (Friese, 2017, 18). Narrations around migration reveal a European self-understanding which is constructed in contrast to a non-European other. These perceptions influence European policy approaches and are strengthened by political actions.
In addition to border securitization, the EU and its member states are developing various strategies and instruments of external migration management. Within a framework of African-European relations, these new approaches are largely funded by the *European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa* (EUTF for Africa), established in 2015. The name of the trust fund reflects to what extent the perception of migration is dominated by a "sense of urgency to stop irregular migration to Europe" – as Oxfam points out in a briefing note titled "An Emergency for whom?" (Kervyn & Shilhav, 2017). In this paper I will take a closer look at the public face of migration management, so called awareness raising campaigns which make up for four per cent of the 400-million-euro budget allocated to migration management (Kervyn & Shilhav, 2017, 4). I will focus on the narrative structure of these campaigns, specifically in the Central African country of Cameroon. The biggest player in this field of migration management is the *International Organisation of Migration* (IOM) who promotes awareness as one of its pillars of action. The EU funds these projects in 26 Africans countries through the *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration*.

2. Empirical narrative research

2.1 Research questions

Previous research and policy analysis have shown how awareness campaigns are designed to counter local perceptions of irregular migration as an opportunity by depicting these channels as a "source of danger and vulnerability" (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, 1675; Alpes & Nyberg Sørensen 2015). In the Cameroonian context, Maybritt Jill Alpes (2012, 45) elaborates on the interpretation of available knowledge by looking at "flows of information and their respective evaluation as trustworthy or not". This leads her to an explanation of "why and how migrants' hardship abroad and cases of failure cannot become visible in a place of departure" (Alpes, 2012, 12). The methodological implementation and the online presentation of the awareness campaigns reveal confidence in the power of storytelling. Thus, an empirical approach derived from cultural narratology is promising to add insights to the existing doubts about the institutional key assumption that more information will prevent people from migrating irregularly. I use the role of the imagination in migratory decisions as a point of departure for an in-depth analysis of the content and the structure of the 'Paradise Europe' narrative in Cameroon. It is precisely this influential master narrative of immediate and all-encompassing success abroad that the EU-funded institutional narratives are designed to counter and invalidate. In a broader sense the results will lay open implications and ambivalences of how Europe represents itself and how it is represented in today's post-colonial Africa. In this paper, I focus on the following questions: How does a counter narrative need to be structured in order to be successful? Which functions does it need to fulfil in order to replace an existing master narrative? And how far does the institutional narration around the dangers of irregular migration fulfil these

criteria and where does it fail? After a theoretical and a methodological outline, I analyse the effectiveness of the counter narrative on the level of the content, the structure and the narrators' positions – and I do so in constant comparison with the 'Paradise Europe' narrative: What is actually narrated, how is it narrated and who narrates it? The answers to these three questions lead us to the ambivalent underlying storylines of both master narratives, the local imagination of a better life abroad and the institutionalized political narratives of the Global North. I show that both approaches to migration are not based on complete and rational knowledge but rely indeed on the narrative steadiness of their structure and the fact that they fulfil the criteria of a good story in their respective contexts.

2.2 Narrative theory and the question of knowledge

Nowadays, narrative is a potent and widespread concept which is used in a variety of fields and disciplines. Through this broad transdisciplinary interest, the subject has been expanded to a point where a clear positioning becomes necessary to produce meaningful interpretations. As a cultural scientist I build my analysis on cultural narratology, particularly on Albrecht Koschorke's attempt to outline a general theory of narrative and its interwovenness with our perceptions of reality:

> *"The drive to model the world along narrative lines does not come to a stop at the boundaries between various systems of social function. This is the case at all levels – from daily stories to scientific theories and onward to the master narratives through which societies understand themselves as living entities. And it is the case with all forms, from the commonplaces within which smaller narratives hide themselves, settling into a vernacular grammar, to the most elaborate narrative labyrinths, only decipherable by specialists. Wherever socially significant material is negotiated, narration is in play" (Koschorke, 2018, 9).*

The term narrative is frequently used in the media and its claim of validity makes the concept appealing for strategic political purposes. The German Federal Office, for example, wants to intensify efforts in strategic communication and justifies this enhancement of public diplomacy with challenges arising from a "global competition over narratives" (GFFO 1). This statement reveals the ambivalence of the political appropriation of narratives: Their instrumentality as a medium to foster the visibility of particular interests and values is clearly recognized and cherished. At the same time, the Federal Office claims narratives as a tool to provide putatively objective and reliable information (GFFO 1). Awareness raising campaigns targeted at potential migrants are a result of this ambivalent strategy, and an example for what Sujatha Fernandes (2017) calls "curated stories". She criticises the contemporary storytelling boom for a "utilitarian approach to stories that seeks to reduce experiences and histories to easily digestible soundbites in service of limited goals" (Fernandes, 2017, 3-4). Although factual narrations obviously contain a referential as well as a constructive element (Klein & Martínez, 2009, 1), narratives are not simple mediators of facts but cultural modi of world construction (Nünning, 2013, 18). They can offer sense and orientation and thus help to cope with contingency. I show in this paper, that the narrative of Europe as 'paradise' fulfils these functions in the Cameroonian context. It is important to note, however, that narratives can also dismantle efforts at sense-making and blur the lines between truth and falsehood:

> *"Like thinking and speaking in general, narration does not have a sufficient intrinsic truth-sign at its disposal. As in a vortex, mixed within it are elements of truth, semblance, hearsay, ignorance, error, lies" (Koschorke, 2018, 4).*

The role and structure of facts in countering established narratives lies at the core of the academic discussion about awareness campaigns. Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud have raised concerns over the basic assumptions that "migrants lack information on migration; second,

that their behaviour is based on available information; and third, that information on migration is dark enough to discourage them from leaving" (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, 1683). My paper further challenges this institutionalised view of the "economy of migratory knowledge" (Alpes, 2012, 46) by stating that – on the contrary – narratives actually generate "stabilization in the mode of incomplete knowledge" (Koschorke, 2018, 244).

2.3. Research methodology

In Cameroon, awareness campaigns are realised through different forms of public outreach, for example discussion rounds in schools, photo exhibitions in public markets or concerts with popular local artists. The preferred medium is personal testimony of discouraged return migrants and its written variations, for example in a comic magazine for the youth called *Molaa* (Molaa 1). In order to materialize and decode these manifestations and semiotic configurations of migration narratives, I developed a methodological bricolage. Based on qualitative research methods from the social sciences and the three key questions of literature analysis ('What is narrated, how is it narrated and who narrates?'), I focus on the specificities of narrative interaction. Storytelling is a broad and dynamic process, therefore the range of material I use is wide. To derive the dominant institutional patterns forming a counter narration, I examine campaign materials and policy publications of the involved actors in Cameroon. I concentrate on two recent examples, one implemented in 2017, the other in 2018. IOM cooperates with two local NGOs, namely SMIC (*Solutions aux migrations clandestines*) and OEMIT (*Organisation pour l'Eveil des Jeunes sur la Migration Irrégulière et la Traite de Personnes*), funded through the *EU-IOM joint initiative* (IOM 1). In addition, I look at *Molaa. Look I am back*, a campaign implemented by a diaspora Cameroonian living in Germany in cooperation with the local Cameroonian NGO ARECC (*Association des Rapatriés et de Lutte Contre l'Émigration Clandestine*) and funded by the German federal foreign office (Molaa 2). The campaign materials are supplemented by semi-structured interviews I conducted in Yaoundé with an IOM official, a local mediator who temporarily cooperated with IOM's community outreach programme and a European journalist covering IOM's reintegration efforts.

Applied empirical research is particularly suited to analyse processes of meaning-making in dynamically changing migration contexts. The eligibility of such an interdisciplinary approach to permeate imaginations of migration and their consequences, has been shown by pioneer projects such as "La migration prise aux mots" (Canut, 2014). In order to outline the 'Paradise Europe' narrative which serves as a target to the campaign countering efforts, I selected interview extracts from my PhD research in Yaoundé and with the Cameroonian diaspora in Germany and South Africa. The oldest material is from explorative fieldwork in 2016, but most interviews were conducted between September and December 2018. This article reflects a polyphony of voices ('Who narrates?'): Officials, non-migrants, potential migrants, former irregular and regular migrants share their stories and perceptions. The names of all interview partners have been anonymised. The multiplicity of actors reflects "narration as a democratic art" where "stories thrive in the medium of socially shared knowledge" (Koschorke, 2018, 23). It is the nature of this shared knowledge that I bring to light by first categorizing the transcribed content according to key terms and concepts and then identifying general patterns and individual variations. This leads to insights into dominant content lines ('What is narrated?') as well as a better understanding of the structural stability and incompatibility of the two master narratives ('How is it narrated?').

3. Local realities and global horizons of possibility

3.1 Self-narrations of migrants: The power of imagination

When speaking of narratives, it is indispensable to recognize that narration intervenes into the world: storytelling can trigger actions and has political consequences. A narrative, as I understand it, is not made up of a single story but based on the continuous presence of similar stories and resembling storylines (Müller-Funk, 2008, 160). It is a generalization and an abstraction that has to be distinguished from the multitude of individual stories. Nevertheless, the effect and communicability of a story depend on the degree to which it adheres to the structure of a conventional narrative. This key thesis of narrative theory guides the paper on multiple levels. Arjun Appadurai (2010, 31) foregrounds the importance of the imagination by describing it as "an organized field of social practices, a form of work, and a form of negotiations between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility". The influence of the mass media, per his argument, constitutes the particularity of contemporary migration movements. The imagination of an elsewhere becomes more immediate and the depicted life seems more accessible. Migration becomes a routinely imagined social project, put into practice by many ordinary people (Appadurai, 2010, 4-11). John, a 35-year-old Cameroonian living in the United States, summarizes this shift as follows:

> *"There is a huge cultural difference between those actually of my age group and those younger to myself. I am talking the coming of the internet today, the mobile phones. They see a lot of big dreams on their phones, on the TV and they think they must go there to be able to live…live it live (John, Yaoundé, 2018)."*

The inclusive promise of migration to "live it live" informs the understanding of local realities as being intertwined with global horizons of possibility. This highly influences local definitions of success and the degree of expectations towards migrants who left for the Global North (Nyamnjoh, 2011, 707). Considering imagination a major factor at play, Knut Graw and Samuli Schielke (2012) claim the necessity to conduct research on migration from the Global South which goes beyond the public discourse on socioeconomic or political causes. They illustrate this change of perspective with the house built by the migrant, an iconic imagery which underlines the social visibility and omnipresence of the promise of migration in emigration contexts:

> *"[The houses] incorporate the very social effects of migration […]. A whole set of possibilities and expectations that mark the path of social arrival. They tell stories of success that are compelling, not only for the power of the path they open up, but also because of the increasing difficulty of pursuing any other path" (Graw & Schielke, 2012, 8).*

Many interview partners insist that these success stories of the diaspora lie at the heart of a narrative depicting Europe as 'paradise'. John concludes: "People have seen the success stories and they think that that success, they also have to go and get it!" (John, Yaoundé, 2018).

3.2 The 'Paradise Europe' narrative

In one of my first interviews conducted in Yaoundé, Nina, a 36-year-old mother of five, revealed the potency of the imagination of Europe when she said: "Life is not easy here. When I see someone who wants to leave I encourage this person. It's better to suffer in paradise than to suffer in hell" (Nina, Translation from French (TfF), Yaoundé, 2016). Europe becomes "paradise" while Cameroon is "hell" (Atekmangoh, 2017, 135). The historical roots of this narrative reach deep, and its inherent binary opposition composes a stable cultural semantic. This thesis can be illustrated by the actualization of the master narrative

through daily media input from the Global North. Wilson, a 42-year-old who ended up in South Africa after several failed attempts to travel legally to Europe and Canada, points this out:

> *"They tell you how Londonians are living. And show you a street for example in Berlin! […] So those are the things that tell you ‚No, I want to live in an organized community like that'. Because Cameroon of course, it's not so organized and structured like societies in Europe. – I know what TV does sometimes. If this TV wants to show a part of Africa, then they go to where the mosquitos are living. The bidon villes and the shanty towns. […] So you always have this feeling ‚Oh, Africa is hell. It's not a place to live!' (Wilson, Pretoria, 2018)."*

This quotation shows how the European gaze, perpetuated through the media, leaves its mark on the Cameroonian self-image. Structurally, these ideas of the self and the other are stabilised by powerful binary oppositions of European superiority and African inferiority. Achille Mbembe (2015) explains that this internalised sense of Africa as hell draws from a European colonial discourse which painted – and by means of the development industry still paints — Africa as deficient and improper:

> *"First, the African human experience constantly appears in the discourse of our times as an experience that can only be understood through a negative interpretation. […] It is this elementariness and primitiveness that makes Africa the world par excellence of all that is incomplete, mutilated, and unfinished […]" (Mbembe, 2015, 1).*

Due to the weakness of local media infrastructure, Cameroonian TV consumption perpetuates these affect-loaded notions. Wilson concludes by saying: "With Europe you did not need experience from people. You just knew that the place is beautiful, there is so much employment" (Wilson, Pretoria, 2018). This reveals the vague nature of the conventional success story which is based less on concrete knowledge about the realities in specific European countries than on a socially shared imaginary and a truth claim which is vouched for "through the belief that everyone else believes in it" (Koschorke, 2018, 22). Moreover, a hierarchization between potential migration destinations becomes tangible throughout the interviews: Destination countries like South Africa need personal testimony, while the imagination of European countries feeds from the idea of an indisputable 'paradise' – a master narrative that the awareness campaigns try to counter.

4. Collective storylines of success: What is locally narrated?

4.1 The function of the promise of Europe in the Cameroonian context

As we have seen, storytelling does not stand for itself but influences practices of society. Therefore, it is central to comprehend narrative theory as a theory of culture. Within this framework, cultures can be seen as narrative communities which are marked by a common narrative stock (Müller-Funk, 2008, 14). In Cameroon, these collective storylines are highly contested: After 36 years under the quasi-dictatorial regime of president Paul Biya, a continuous economic crisis since 1987, dramatic youth unemployment and a civil war raging for three years in the two Anglophone regions, the Central African country finds itself "at the verge of social explosion" (Gabriel, Yaoundé, 2016) – as one of my interview partners puts it. Such a context is well-suited for applied narratological research, because fundamental narrative operations become particularly visible and traceable. In Cameroon, the overall crisis leads to a fight over the official self-representation of the society. The propaganda of the Biya government with its surreal promises of a better future for all can no longer bind the majority of a population starved of political and economic participation. This "unbearable discrepancy that exists between publicly announced reality and that other constantly changing, unstable and uncertain, quasi-elliptic realm" (Mbembe &

Roitman, 1995, 342) demands constant negotiations of belonging. Confronted with a highly corrupted and increasingly absurd environment, the youth loses the belief in education and hard work as a guarantee of success and starts to look for alternative trajectories (Jua, 2003, 15-22). Seen from this “position of detachment within their own society” (Jua, 2003, 27), the idea of Europe carries a powerful promise of inclusion. Going abroad promises a path to maturity because at home the youth “could neither satisfy some of the social obligations of manhood, such as providing a social security to their parents, nor guarantee their ontological security” (Jua, 2003, 19). In comparison, life in Europe seems to master contingency and to offer an open future full of possibilities. Success abroad is perceived as immediate and encompassing, as Wilson explains:

> *“It was not like that in all the countries, just in key countries like Germany, Denmark, Norway, the UK, France at a certain point. […] We always knew that immediately your family succeeds in getting you a visa, it’s an immediate achievement and a success. When we are going to see you off at the airport, the only story we tell you is that ‘Go and then make for us a way’. Because we know that there is nothing that will stop you from succeeding. That is how we perceived it” (Wilson, Pretoria, 2018).*

The sharp contrast between this imagination and the elusive and ephemeral hustle at home is of major consideration for the analysis of awareness campaigns. Alpes points out how they put a sole focus on the risks of the dangerous journey, overlooking that “migration often functions as a means to alleviate local risks” (Alpes & Nyberg Sørensen, 2015, 2).

4.2 “You can be happy at home”: The institutional counter narration

Janine, a 30-year-old European journalist who wrote a number of articles on the basis of interviews with Cameroonian return migrants, shares an observation which leads to the central problem of the institutional counter narrative: “There is this big push of people. For instance, there was this big concert, rap concert. […] A big Cameroonian rapper telling the youth of Cameroon ‘Don’t go to Europe, it’s dangerous’. But without an alternative being presented to them, what are you actually giving” (Janine, Yaoundé, 2018)? Slogans like “My future is also in Kamer” (IOM 2) are little effective because they lack what Koschorke calls “reality-validation” (Koschorke, 2018, 203). The following interview of Alain, a 36-year old return migrant, offers insights into this factor. He first describes the long preparation phase which preceded his journey to Europe: “[…] it was a project which has taken ten years. More than 10 years I did nearly nothing in Cameroon, everything…I was completely focused on leaving, yes leaving” (Alain, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018). Even after he was deceived by a migration broker and lost all the money intended for the journey, he did not give up on his plan to leave for Europe: “I needed to regain [the money] again because we were focused on leaving. All my being was about leaving. I didn’t see myself in Cameroon anymore.” It becomes clear how the dream of a better future in Europe completely preoccupied his life in the Cameroonian present. After having invested a lot of time and money into this project, it was basically impossible for him to give up on it. This is a potent example of what Koschorke describes as “‘highly endowed’ collective narratives” which “press for their realization, meaning validation of their reality” (Koschorke, 2018, 203). If this validation fails, like in Alain’s case, who was repatriated from France after a very short stay, it leaves a feeling of futility and despair: “I want to say that I felt very very bad. Very very bad. It was even necessary that I was always with someone close to me. Because they were afraid that I could commit suicide. Because it was not easy to accept. After ten years of perseverance for one thing and then you get the thing and in a short while…”(Alain, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018).

It is in this context of extreme social and emotional pressure on potential migrants and return migrants, that the efficiency and simplistic approach of the institutional counter narrative should be questioned. The IOM official I interviewed, partly recognizes the circumstances and suggests the following counter strategy:

> *"The challenge is that there is quite a strong amount of social pressures and the fact that you have to succeed and succeed is economically succeed. […] I mean it's something that we try to address during our activities by presenting the fact that 'Yes, you succeed if you are happy actually, at home! Not if you have the last watch or the most expensive shoes that you can find'" (IOM official, Yaoundé, 2018).*

The promotion of "happiness at home" is a conscious attempt to reduce the definition of success from a global point of reference to a not further elaborated local level. This idea of happiness remains a hollow catchphrase because it does not account for the complexity of the Cameroonian crisis experience. Furthermore, the emphasis of individual happiness ignores the degree to which success needs to be collective in Cameroon to be seen as such (Nyamnjoh, 2013, 6). Structurally speaking, this approach is not able to fulfil the necessary requirements for a promising counter narration which Koschorke outlines as follows: "The dismantling of such reality-validation is only possible when complimentarily to this, we have a new narrative realization that takes over functions and in altered form, some of the contents of the preceding figuration" (Koschorke, 2018, 203). Janine describes the drastic void which occurs when giving up on the project of migration: "Every time I write an article, I get this phrase: 'We are starting again from zero […]. Over and over again'. Someone said 'It's like being a new born again, I have to learn everything a fresh'" (Janine, Yaoundé, 2018). The reintegration strategy within the *EU-IOM joint initiative* tries to address this despair by offering an economic alternative to the hopes put into migration: People who return voluntarily to Cameroon can apply for money to start a business or to pay for further education (IOM 3). Recipients of this aid are portrayed with short personalized stories on social media, unanimously promoting a "happy-end" (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, 1685). On the occasion of the programme's two-year anniversary, IOM released "mini videos of returning migrants expressing their gratitude" throughout the month of June 2019 (IOM 2). These reduced and framed testimonies are a paradigmatic example of what Fernandes calls a shift away from underlying political structures in curated storytelling: "If there is a shift to the political in these stories, it is usually a predetermined slogan or a campaign messaging, and not an interrogation of the structural conditions that shape one's life story" (Fernandes, 2017, 6). The EU-funded institutions have no interest in presenting more nuanced migrant stories, as they might reveal the deep paradoxes and flaws of European migration politics. Despite some migrants benefitting from the reintegration programme, the high demand regularly exceeds capacities. In some cases, long and insecure waiting periods render migrants even more vulnerable to discrimination by their home communities: "They are coming back to the same reality. Same old, plus they added stigma of being here, of being pointed at and laughed at. No jobs, they are in debt with their families, some people don't even go back home!" (Janine, Yaoundé, 2018). In such transitional zones the old master narrative easily regains ground by suggesting that a variation of the migratory route or the means of transportation might this time bring the desired outcome.

5. The structure of the master and counter narrative: How is 'abroad' narrated?

5.1 "To be successful you need to travel to Europe": The master narrative

As Achille Mbembe and Janet Roitman (1995, 326) point out, the crisis is a prosaic lived experience for the Cameroonian youth – permanently present through the "routinization of a register of improvisations". In contrast to the unpredictability of everyday life, the narrative schema of success in Europe forms a simple and steady tale: A classic adventure story which contains fixed narrative components of departure, unknown adventure, successful return and social recognition by the community. Gabriel, a 30-year old Cameroonian start-up entrepreneur and dedicated observer of his society, describes this pattern as follows:

> *"Most often you will have a guy that didn't graduate from high school travel to Germany, to France, to Canada or in any European country. He goes there, five years later he comes back with a lot of money. […] like 10.000 Euro, […] here in Cameroon it's a lot of money. So now when he comes back, he becomes like a local role model […]. That influences other families who now begin thinking that in order for their children to be successful, they need to travel to Europe" (Gabriel, Yaoundé, 2016).*

In Anglophone Cameroon this schema is known under the concept of 'bushfalling', a metaphor of hunting: "Bushfalling is the act of going out to the 'wilderness' (bush) to hunt down meat (money) and bring the trophies back home" (Alpes, 2012, 43). The return component is essential because without being present at home, the 'bushfaller' is not seen and not rewarded (Nyamnjoh, 2011, 706). A characteristic of adventure narratives is the continuous subordination of dangers to a successful endpoint (Eming & Schlechtweg-Jahn, 2017, 25). For many Cameroonian migrants, the travelling risks are worth to be taken temporarily, as there seems to be a success guarantee of some sort, upon arrival. Potential migrants are focused on these "fruits of migration" as Franklin, a 45-year old post-doc researcher, explains: "People are not blind, they see. And that is the reason why many people still want to migrate. […] Other people are progressing; they have seen the fruits of migration. And nobody can stop them, nobody can tell them 'Don't go'" (Franklin, Yaoundé, 2018). This inevitability and the sense of urgency attached to the migration project becomes clear through the formulation of the master narrative as "In order to be successful, you need to travel to Europe". Highly visible success is transmitted as the norm, failure on the other hand is individualized as bad luck or laziness (Alpes, 2017).

The institutions generally emphasize that they do not want to prevent people from travelling. The *Molaa* campaign even seems to offer a valid alternative by promoting "Travelling is good. But travel legally" (Molaa 3). But in the Cameroonian context this argument is specious because, in reality, legal options are scarce and not affordable for most people. Although, the enhancement of safe and legal migration options now and then appears as a bullet point in European policy declaration, it is clear that fear of domestic pressure inhibits unity and determination amongst European states (Kipp & Koch, 2018, 12). A good part of those who consider travelling 'par la route', do so after failed attempts to get a visa: "Cameroonians perceive the world as closed off. Possibilities for air travel out are referred to as lines, openings and programmes" (Alpes 2012, 45). When migrants describe themselves as adventures, travellers or conquerors it can be understood as an attempt to challenge this feeling of abjection (Ferguson, 2006; Pian, 2009). The newest conjoined campaign (EU, IOM and local NGOs) is titled "Cameroun, mon aventure" (IOM2): This framing shows us how institutions capture, undermine and decontextualize local concepts, leaving empty shells deprived of meaning.

5.2 #WillNotDieAtSea: The institutional counter narrative

Within the described schematization we observe an inviting openness: How did the migrant travel? Where did he go exactly? And how did he earn the money he comes back with? These are the gaps in the common storyline that the awareness campaigns try to fill: They do this through twofold information concerning the dangers of the overland route and to a lesser extent, the probability of failure abroad. The majority of the slogans are formulated in negation to the positive imagination of Europe and in direct opposition to the perception of migration as "openings": "Say no to illegal emigration" (Molaa 4), "I do not expose my life" (IOM 2) or hashtags such as "#WillnotDieAtSea" or "#WillNotDieInTheDesert" (IOM 2). Tellingly, the comics in the magazines are dominated by images such as the burning sun, sharks, overcrowded boats, migrants in chains or swimming coffins (Molaa1). Besides descriptions of the difficult domestic situation for youths, the campaigns are heavily focused on the life-threatening risks of the overland and Mediterranean route – feeding into the European perception of irregular migrants as "bare life" (Schindel, 2016, 222). Raphael, a mediator for community outreach who temporarily collaborated with IOM, expressed his profound discomfort with the morbidity of these slogans: "I personally find this campaign degrading, it doesn't humanize. It is nearly without a soul […]" (Raphael, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018). Scholars have criticized the display of drastic images through the argument that most aspiring migrants are aware of the possibility to die or to be exploited if travelling on the Sahara-Mediterranean route (Alpes & Nyberg Sørensen, 2015).

But the more interesting question for this paper is a structural one: How is this knowledge adapted and integrated in order to maintain the validity of the success narrative? Alain, the return migrant, points out that even horrible experiences during the journey could not discourage him:

> *"We didn't see all those risks. It was about arriving. […] And it was just when I arrived in Spain that I realized that it was nonsense to take all those risks. There were people who died in the water and even then, it didn't tell us anything. We still wanted to go further. And we went. Thank God we are alive" (Alain, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018).*

To actually see people dying did not tell Alain and his fellow migrants anything. The formulation reveals that before arriving in Europe this kind of information was irrelevant to them. This has to do with the schematized structure of the expectation they departed with. The dangerous nature of the way is part of the narrative void inherent to stable patterns. It can easily stay unfilled as long as it is constantly overshadowed by the highly anticipated events of arrival and successful return. The positive outcome of migration is mostly perceived within the local Cameroonian context, prior to departure. The omnipresent story of a neighbour who has made it, continuously strengthens the affective ties with the migration project. It fulfils the major features of a good story: It reduces complexity by ascribing agency to a local hero, emits appeals to take personal action and is therefore believed and retold (Koschorke, 2018, 59-60). Increasingly, migration becomes socially inevitable and can no longer be countered by facts (Graw & Schielke, 2012, 12).

6. Narrators in the field of awareness campaigns: Who narrates migration?

6.1 The precarious position of the diaspora

The question 'Who narrates?' seems to be less significant than the adherence to common storylines. This is an experience that Samuel, a 30-year old local Cameroonian, often has when he tries to advise people who approach him in the quartier. When Samuel asked his brother, who is pursuing a PhD in Germany to pay a broker for him to kickstart his soccer career in Europe, his brother's blunt refusal angered and confused him at first. Over the

years and with more exposure to Europeans he ended up convinced that travelling with shaky documents and prospects should be discouraged:

> *"If someone wants to get information before taking a decision, if I tell them that for me abroad is mostly about studying, it isn't sufficient for him! Because he doesn't want to hear that. So he will go and see someone else to be reassured. Because not everyone sees it like me, for the majority it's Europe at all costs…If you approach such a person, the person will tell you 'No, just try your luck!'. We have this expression 'Tente ta chance'. 'You can arrive, it will work out'. And when the person hears that, voilà, he is motivated" (Samuel, TfF, Yaoundé, 2016).*

Samuel's differentiated advice is easily dismissed because flexible phrases like "Just try your luck" confirm the predisposition of the person seeking advice. This rejection of "deviant" narrators becomes even more obvious with people who have succeeded to arrive in Europe and try to dismantle the positive imagination. In many cases, these Cameroonians are no longer considered a "trustworthy source of information on bush" (Alpes, 2012, 53). Those who feel left behind assume motives such as selfishness behind the negative stories, as Trevor, a 33-year old master student studying in Germany, recounts: "The way they look at you, your pictures or social media […]: 'Oh I also want to be like you! You are just trying to fool us not to come over there to experience the same thing like you!'" (Trevor, Yaoundé, 2018).

Once arrived abroad, the master narrative of immediate success cannot withstand the realities on the ground and the pressure to keep in touch with the Cameroonian home context is high. The local ideas of the good life in Europe considerably restrict the diaspora's narrative leeway (Atekmangoh, 2017, 265) as Fanny, a 23-year old master student studying in Germany, recalls:

> *"You have little sorrows like the integration not being easy. And you can't explain them little details like that. This bothers you; it stays in your head and your heart for a long time. But you are obliged to play along" (Fanny, TfF, Nürnberg, 2018).*

Under the pressure of her parents' expectations to live her best life and to support her family, she adapts her storytelling: She leaves out unsuitable material such as difficulties or failures. Moreover, she modifies her account of reality according to the convention. "For Africans, if you've arrived in Europe, it means you are already in paradise. […] If you are not doing well here, you might have to lie" (Fanny, TfF, Nürnberg, 2018). So, she occasionally lies, makes excuses or falls back on half-truths.

These processes of adaptation, elision and completion also influence migrants' strategies of action – especially in their self-representation on social media and during home visits. If adaption to the material expectations is not possible because of a lack of means, migrants returning home have to fear sanctions by the community, as Joel, a 30-year old master student in South Africa, confirms:

> *"I was telling [my friends] 'As far as I am concerned, whether I have money or I don't have money, I am going home'. And they told me 'When you are going home people are going to insult you'. I was like 'I don't care'. So I might going to be a slave because I cannot meet up with peoples' expectations" (Joel, Stellenbosch, 2018).*

Joel's defiant assertion of his own agency is met with sanctions by the home community. Francis B. Nyamnjoh describes how migrants' act of subverting boundaries puts them into a specific liminal state: "Bushfallers simultaneously belong and do not belong, are a present absence and an absent presence" (Nyamnjoh, 2011, 707). The constant pressure can lead to drastic response strategies such as silence and temporary disappearance which both rather stabilize the existing narrative as no serious counter narration is positioned: "I have distanced myself completely from everybody […]. […] The pressure from it is just too

much! […] It‘s like everybody is dying! ‚We need money! ‘. […] I just assume God knows I have my own issues” (Wilson, Pretoria, 2018).

6.2 Local and international actors in migration management

Most migrants I spoke with use vague descriptions such as ‘hustling’ or ‘se débrouiller’ to nevertheless emphasize their agency within the twofold constricted quest for belonging: “It is not enough for bushfallers to define themselves. They are often defined and confined by others who feel more embedded and entitled” (Nyamnjoh, 2011, 707). Besides the pressure from home, European actors play a major role in determining definitions of desirable and undesirable migration. This can be observed in recurring magazine sections such as “The wrong way” or “success story” (Molaa1). At first glance, the question ‘Who is actually narrating?’ in those awareness raising campaigns is rather confusing. Cameroon’s numerous players reflect a general competition of interests in migration management, negotiated on an uneven global playing field. The traditional constellation of the European Union as funding and international organisations such as IOM as implementing party, is more and more extended by individual EU member states enforcing their particular interests through independent campaigns (Kipp & Koch, 2018, 14). As we have seen, the EU policies of external migration management have little to offer in return for the renunciation of irregular migration. Why is it then, that since the first implementation of such campaigns in the early 1990s, the conceptual framework has stayed remarkably unaltered by time or changing social and geographical context (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, 1677)? The answer lies within the tenacity of institutional narratives: Their formally anchored structure offers “relief from subjective motivation and continuous improvisation of decision” (Arnold Gehlen as quoted in Koschorke, 2018, 233). Moreover, I suggest that the question ‘Who narrates in those campaigns?’, should be broadened to include the question ‘For whom are they narrated?’. The simplistic framework of ‘good migration management’ works for a European audience because it feeds into established clichés about the Global South, as this EUTF mission statement reveals:

> *“The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) aims to foster stability and to contribute to better migration management, including by addressing the root causes of destabilisation, forced displacement and irregular migration” (IOM 4).*

This broad ‘root causes’ rhetoric fulfils the criteria of an effective narrative: It speaks from a position of power, and stabilizes this claim, by linking unrelated phenomena such as forced displacement and irregular migration, into a seemingly comprehensive plan of action (Kervyn & Shilhav, 2017, 14). The ‘root causes’ metaphor is clearly directed at the European population. It suggests an attempt to address the problem of irregular migration at its roots, far away from the comfort zones of the domestic electorate. The narrative framework of external migration management offers Europeans a relief from immediate concern as the measures happen in a considerable geographical distance. This helps politicians to shape and channel domestic social energies with regard to migration.

A systematic strategy within the framework of migration management is the cooperation with local NGOs and mediators for community outreach, locally based or brought in from the diaspora (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007, 1682). The following argumentation of the IOM official is paradigmatic in its attempt to legitimize a largely standardized campaign and considerable power imbalances by referring to the relatability and local insights of its intermediate narrators:

> *“Among these civil society organizations there is one that is made up of returned migrants. So, they can testify what their experience was and they can really relate to the people because if they have left, they have left for the same reasons. And now that they are back, I think it is very inspiring to see how committed they are to help to succeed in the country” (Yaoundé, 2018).*

We have seen that local non-migrants ascribe unreliability to those who have crossed borders. Therefore, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution to simply let discouraged return migrants show deterrent photos from Libyan refugee camps or speak about their experiences in public places. The assumption that mediators can connect with non-migrants simply because they have once shared the same social context reveals a naive understanding of narrative communities: It masks processes of inclusion and exclusion on various levels. An example is the service of diaspora mediators who try to discourage migration while being “visibly much better off” than their audience (Alpes & Nyberg Sørensen, 2015, 3). Moreover, the relation between clients and migration brokers is not just one of simple exploitation. It is often nourished by the migrants’ respect and admiration for the broker’s power to enable mobility (Alpes, 2013). Furthermore, numerous local authorities such as teachers, pastors or even police personnel profit from this business. They actively encourage migration and therefore constitute a considerable counterbalance to the institutional prevention efforts.

In the shadow of the powerful development industry, European governments can position themselves through migration management projects as principled, yet assertive sponsors. The established nature of their policy justifications, reliefs them from having to acknowledge colonial continuities and exploitation contributing to migration today (Bakewell, 2008, 1355). Stating “that the root causes of exploitative migration rest with human smugglers and traffickers” deflects from European policies forcing migrants to take ever more dangerous routes (Alpes & Nyberg Sørensen, 2015, 1).

7. Conclusion

My empirical research has shown that the imagination of immediate and encompassing success abroad is a crucial factor for migratory decisions. The ‘Paradise Europe’ narrative is difficult to refute because it offers alternative trajectories for the disillusioned Cameroonian youth and promises access to a good life, as measured by global standards. As an omnipresent and “‘highly endowed’ collective narrative” (Koschorke, 2018, 203), the idea of Europe triggers action. A successful counter narration would have to cover similarly massive dimensions: “disabling one story means telling another” (Koschorke, 2018, 203). For the Cameroonian context, the EU-funded institutions involved in the awareness campaigns fail to tell a good story. The incentives for staying in Cameroon are either ignorant towards the local social structure (“Happy at home”), overwhelmed by logistical difficulties (reintegration efforts) or politically unwanted (legal migration options). Moreover, the one-dimensional emphasis on dangers and risks of the journey to Europe, underestimates the structural power of the ‘Paradise Europe’ narrative: The intuitive structure of a simple adventure story seems to guarantee a good ending - for which considerable risks are temporarily worth taking.

From a narratological point of view, the basic misjudgement of the campaign design lies with the naïve assumption that stories are an effective medium to convey facts. The claim to provide “quality information” is all the more contestable, as the instrumentalization of fragmented and curated migrant stories towards European interests lies at the heart of the two examined campaigns. Generally, the diffusion and communicability of a story does not depend on its truthfulness but on its suitability for the context and its adaptability to common sense. Successful stories are those which are believed based on familiar expectations and then retold. The credibility of the narrator can also play a role and members of

the diaspora are generally evaluated as rather unreliable narrators. The assumption that migrants lack knowledge is incorrect: What I have shown is that the provided information is irrelevant for the motivation of potential migrants. The adamant conviction that a better life awaits them is not based on detailed information but on affect-loaded common sense. Intriguingly enough, it is precisely this mode of incomplete knowledge that also allows the institutional awareness narratives to stay unaltered for the past 30 years, despite their obvious flaws. The power of the underlying European master narratives about the self and the African other even allows to unite apparent contradictions within the same policy framework. Raphael, the community mediator, expresses his deep unease in view of this power:

> *"Because it is the decoding that allows me to always question the impertinence of the approach of these international institutions. I am really worried because those are the same people who write reports every day about Africa being a place where one cannot live – where everyone dies […]" (Raphael, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018).*

The longstanding and deeply rooted European imagination of Africa as deficient and in need of development helps to preserve the self-image of the European Union as a humane, yet rightfully hegemonic patron. For many aspiring African migrants however, it is precisely this imposed feeling of incompleteness, maintained through continuous exploitation, which keeps the guiding dream of Europe alive. In this context, the campaign approach fails because it does not lead to an open and self-reflective debate on the positionality of Europe within fundamentally unequal power relations.

> *"And those are the same people who just tell you tomorrow 'No, you should not come [to Europe], it's appalling patati patata'. You feel like asking 'Why it is that they want to present this place as hell on earth and at the same time they want to prevent people living in this hell from moving by blocking them on the spot?'" (Raphael, TfF, Yaoundé, 2018).*

The vagueness and considerable historic underpinning of globally spread European master narratives absorb ambivalences and contradictions in migration policies and thus succeed to stay acceptable, but only for a European public.
My paper has shown that narrative theory offers a lot of potential for the study of migration. The premise that all socially significant material is negotiated through narration allows us to look at migratory imaginations, expectations and motivations through the analytical category of narratives. Storytelling is an essential tool for migrants to constantly negotiate their identity, longing and belonging. Therefore, the methodological toolkit of cultural narratology is well-suited to decode migrants' narrative strategies and the respective political counter initiatives.

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Europe as a narrative laboratory. Klaus Eder on European identity, populist stories, and the acid bath of irony

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After an introduction by Sören Carlson that summarizes key aspects of Klaus Eder's theorizing regarding the role of narratives for the symbolic construction of "Europe" and European identity, the ensuing conversation between the two addresses some of the subsequent issues arising from this work. It thus deals, inter alia, with the concept of narrative resonance, the relation between narrative and network structures, and the (neglected) role of narratives in social-scientific thinking. It also discusses the potential of irony vis-à-vis other narrative genres – such as tragedy, romance or the comic plot often used by populists – within a process of collective identity formation in Europe.

"Europe turns out to be a narrative laboratory in which narrative plots are struggling with each other. These narrative struggles offer elements for the reconstitution of a European 'we' beyond the model of a national 'we' [...]." (*K. Eder, in this interview)*

1. Introduction

The following interview with Klaus Eder, retired Professor of Comparative Sociology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany, and a prominent sociological voice amid the various disciplinary contributions to the narrative study of Europe, addresses his theoretical work on the role of narratives in the construction of "Europe". Eder has used the notion of narrative in theorizing about Europe's borders (Eder, 2006), the making of a European society (Eder, 2014) and the nature of the social bond (Eder, 2009a), but most notably in his work on European identity (Eder, 2009b, 2011; Forchtner & Eder, 2017). For those less familiar with Eder's work, a short summary of his main theoretical ideas on the role of narratives in relation to Europe and Europeanization processes follows, based on his publications on this subject. Obviously, such an approach risks creating the impression of a theoretical undertaking that is more or less finalized while, in fact, it has evolved over some time, and is still ongoing. Nevertheless, in order to provide some background to the ensuing colloquy – which results from an email exchange between July and November 2019 –, it seems justified to highlight a couple of points.

Similar to other researchers interested in the link between narrative and identity (e.g. Somers, 1994), Eder's starting point is the assumption that narratives provide a form of symbolic construction that ties people together by equipping an entity (e.g. "the nation" or,

possibly, “Europe”) with meaning; this allows people to recognize each other as being part of one group, thereby creating a shared sense of togetherness and reciprocity, a form of collective “we” (Eder, 2009b, 2011; Forchtner & Eder, 2017). In contrast to socio-psychological and normative conceptions of identity, Eder (2009b, 2011) thus argues strongly in favor of a sociological approach that conceives of identity as a form of collective identity. Furthermore, rather than perceiving identities as given and “fixed”, Eder assumes that processes of identity construction and reconstruction need to be seen as an ongoing evolutionary process, fueled by narratives contradicting each other; only in specific instances – as has happened historically with the idea of the nation –, is this process blocked, so that distinct collective identities can emerge (Eder, 2009b). Building on this, we can distinguish four central theoretical propositions:

First, contrary to the (postmodern) idea that narratives exist somehow on their own, more or less detached from any “social base”, Eder insists that narratives and the social relations or networks, which people pertain to, are linked to each other. Thus, in order to provide the ground for a collective identity, narratives need to be embedded into social networks, so that these stories can circulate through these networks and be shared and retold among people (Eder, 2011). Applying this idea to the case of Europe, this means that emerging (transnational) networks of social relations among people in Europe serve as a base which allows the dissemination and telling of different stories, creating in effect a “narrative network” upon which the process of European identity construction rests (Eder, 2009b). Insisting on the link between narratives and social networks as a precondition for European identity formation also helps to explain why certain ideas that are often treated as a possible foundation for a European identity (such as the human rights discourse or the idea of a “social Europe”) actually do not seem to work very well: such narratives are more part of intellectual, elite-based circles and, thus, rather disembedded from wider social networks (Eder, 2011, 50).

However, there is yet another side to the proposed link between narratives and social networks which goes beyond the former idea of embeddedness. Social relations also need to be seen as mediated by symbolic forms (in this case, narratives) as Eder (2009a, 77) argues, referring to Durkheim, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Thus, social relations are produced through the process of communicating narratives (Eder, 2007a, 189; cf. also Eder, 2009a, 74, 76). The link between narratives (as ways of bringing forth identities) and people’s social relations therefore has to be perceived as two-sided: “[…] the network structure linking a people shapes the construction of the identity of that network which then is used to reproduce this network structure. Thus, collective identity constructions are a central building block of social relations” (Eder, 2009b, 430).

The second proposition is that for narratives to have an effect – that is, for identities to emerge –, such stories do not only need to be shared and retold among people, but they also have to make sense to them. This is what Eder calls (with varying terminology) “narrative plausibility”, “narrative resonance” or “narrative fidelity” (Eder, 2006, 257). Such “resonance” or “fidelity” can be said to exist if the elements of a narrative are organized in a meaningful sequence, so that the claims made by this narrative (e.g. in terms of identity) appear as more or less self-evident to people. One of the factors Eder (2006, 258) mentions that enable such “understanding” is a shared language, but possibly one may also think here, for example, about socialization, or shared memories, as further ways of providing a common ground among people.

Third, Eder assumes that narrative forms differ with regard to their degree of connectivity with each other: narratives following a tragic or ironic plot structure tend to allow more easily a retelling and connecting of different stories about “us” and “them”, thereby keeping the formation of collective identities ongoing. Comedic and especially romantic narratives, on the other hand, are prone to be less compatible with other narratives, due to

their inbuilt tendency towards resolving antagonisms, unambiguousness and toward a happy ending. By blocking the retelling of different stories, identities can be fixed, thus contributing to the constitution of self-contained and more or less exclusive social groups (Forchtner & Eder, 2017, 81).

This can be clearly seen in the case of national identities where "[t]he idea of the nation has succeeded in blocking the future of collective identity construction, for some time at least" (Eder, 2011, 48). This persistent salience of national identities is linked to the fact that they are usually based on narratives with either romantic or comedic structural plots. Since such plots are difficult to connect with others, identity formation beyond the national is hampered (Forchtner & Eder, 2017, 95-97). At the same time, it seems that there are a lot of stories circulating through Europe – e.g. the story of the common market, of a unique European culture, of European integration as a way to preserve peace among formerly hostile nations, etc. However, "[a] robust narrative of the citizens in Europe connecting the stories of different individuals, groups, nations or cultures into a good new story with a good end, a story that can block the future, does not exist as yet" (Eder, 2011, 49). Nevertheless, by highlighting the role of the structural properties of narratives and their ensuing (non-)compatibility, Eder provides an (empirically measurable) way to identify those elements that might contribute at some point to the formation of such a "robust" European identity that blocks further story-telling (Eder, 2011, 49). Yet stories do not stop at some point, they encounter other stories, thus fueling the process that underlies identity construction.

Based on these previous propositions, Eder finally makes the theoretical suggestion that specific narrative structures might correspond to, and unfold in, specific network structures, thus constituting a form of "isomorphism" or "Wahlverwandtschaft" (Forchtner & Eder, 2017, 81, 92; cf. also Eder, 2009b, 438-440). Drawing on one of the examples that Forchtner and Eder (2017, 92) provide for this, one may think here of the "Eurostars" (Favell, 2008), i.e. European professionals who create through their commuting activities transnational social networks in Europe, while also still being embedded into "traditional" national networks (e.g. when they return home for the weekend). According to Forchtner and Eder (2017, 92), such clique-like networks lend themselves as sites for the circulation of romantic stories, that is of stories about national particularities which can give rise both to the idea of (renewed) friendship between nations as well as to a rekindling of (past) hostilities. Both authors mention, however, that this suggestion of isomorphism needs to be seen, as of yet, as more of a theoretically open question (Forchtner & Eder, 2017, 92).

Based on these theoretical propositions, Eder concludes that, given the aforementioned variety of stories currently circulating in Europe, two conditions seem to be especially important for whether these different narratives might come together at some point, thus allowing for the symbolic construction of "Europe" as a meaningful entity: the further evolution of social relations across Europe and the structural properties of these narratives since these affect their narrative connectivity (Eder, 2009b, 437).

2. Interview

Sören Carlson: Looking at your work, one can see a long-standing interest in the sociological analysis of Europe and European integration, as is apparent in your earlier research on European citizenship (Eder & Giesen, 2001) and a European public sphere (Eder, 2000; Eder & Kantner, 2000), for example. However, how did you become interested in the notion of narrative and its application to "Europe"?

Klaus Eder: The issue of identity arose quite early in my research career at a time when few scholars (including my own colleagues and teachers at the Max-Planck-Institute I worked at at the time) took it as an important theoretical issue. This interest was raised when doing research in the 1970s on national identities in France and Germany and the implications for French-German relations after the war. This was the time, when the story of a new friendship was told while carrying in the background the ambivalences of the past. The German-French "folie à deux" told two stories: one of understanding and one of disciplining emotions and mistrust. The lesson I drew in the course of time has been that no rational debate can decouple itself from the identities that are the product of the past. Identities always interfere with rational communication, and the conceptual apparatus of theories of rational communication, dominant in different versions at the time, was systematically distorted by these theories' inability to take into account the narrative basis of rational communication. This idea evolved further and ended in the assumption that any form of rational argumentation is embedded in narratives that provide the basis for seeing our ways of engaging in rational communication as natural. Thus, without looking into these unspoken naturalistic assumptions, we cannot understand why rational communication succeeds or fails. It succeeds best when those communicating with each other share a narrative that is fixed (by blocking the narrative course of events), i.e., by constructing a collective identity. It fails when such an identity is not given. These extreme cases point to the role of narrative underpinnings: since narratives evolve, identities dissolve and are remade, and the conditions for success or failure of communication change.
The application of this theoretical perspective to Europe is obvious: Europe is based on competing narratives, many of them blocked and fixed as national stories of being a "we", and there are attempts to impose another narrative hoping to fix it as a European identity. Yet these attempts did not succeed so far in superimposing themselves upon the existing narratives circulating in Europe. On the contrary, if you take the citizenship narrative as an example (i.e. the idea of creating a shared sense of togetherness via the institutionalization of European citizenship), it opened the door to competing stories of who is a citizen and who is not, who is a good citizen and who is not, thus opening Pandora's box of multiplying narratives of being a citizen (Eder, 2017). The effect of this pervades the Europe of today, undermining the world of rational politics of the EU and rational debate about it.

Sören Carlson: To me, the specifically sociological angle in your theorizing on narratives is, as described above, your insistence on the relationship between social networks and narratives, that is between the structural and the symbolic dimensions of social life (which reminds me to some extent of Bourdieu's efforts to overcome the division between "objectivism" and "subjectivism"). While it seems obvious to me that a) the diffusion and retelling of narratives depends on social networks (or a shared communicative space, cf. Eder, 2007b, 2011, 44) and b) social relations are shaped by symbolic processes, maybe you could still elaborate a bit on how exactly you perceive this relationship?

Klaus Eder: The difference between stories and networks is an analytical one. People enter social relations not by their mere physical presence, but by sense-making activities (communicating that you are a friend, that you are coming from somewhere, etc.). Sensemaking requires words that circulate. These words can be organized as arguments (but you normally do not enter social relations by forcing the other to take a stance on an argument) or as stories (that give sense to the words exchanged with others). Then stories (or, in some cases, arguments) can widen the circle, diffuse to other members of a network (people tell other people of the story that the newcomer has told, etc.). In some situations, these words are organized as political stories (or, in some cases, arguments) that establish or destroy social relations. What is important is that these stories or arguments are not

invented ad hoc, but that they follow in form specific rules and in substance definitions of what is right or wrong or true or false in the social world people live in (such as a village, a nation, or a culture). The important point in my writings for two decades has been that storytelling is underrated theoretically in terms of making sense of social reality and that it might be constitutive for being able to argue with each other. In the theory of communicative action, this idea is taken for granted or, more exactly, it is argued that such narrative bonding is dissolving increasingly in the course of the rationalization of life worlds. Yet, it is not dissolving. On the contrary, it continues to shape human social relations as ever. Thus, in short, one may say: there are no social networks that can decouple themselves from narrative presuppositions. On the contrary, networks are the medium for the permanent processing of its narrative foundations.

Sören Carlson: Your idea that narratives must have some kind of "narrative resonance" with people in order to have an effect intuitively makes sense, and it also provides a good antidote to the idea that just any narrative can be "sold" to the people. However, this still raises a number of questions: how can such "narrative plausibility" actually be determined? How can we understand its origins and "production" – without generically referring to "culture"? And, finally, how might such "narrative resonance" change?

Klaus Eder: The concept of narrative resonance risks fostering a simplification that threatens to undermine the theoretical intention of taking seriously the narrative dimension in social life. It insinuates that there is a storyteller who provides stories that people like. But narrative resonance means that those talking to each other "resonate" to the story (not to the storyteller!) that is circulating (see Schudson in a famous article of 1989, media resonance studies in general, and social movement studies focusing on the aspect of framing). If there was no narrative resonance, no social relation could be established or upheld. Then it makes sense to argue that participants in narratively grounded social relations start to make instrumental use of such stories trying to mobilize followers (the social media are based exactly on this mechanism). Whether they do it because they want power, or because they want to proselytize the other, is secondary here. Narratives can always be used for strategies to bind people into narrative echo chambers. Resonance is an indicator for the degree to which people follow particular stories, be they populist, religious, conservative, racist, and so on. When a specific story starts to attract more people, then public opinion shifts, producing ruptures in the way social relations are reproduced. The narrative model simply claims that the type of narrative genre that gains in importance determines the pathway for the further evolution of social relations.

Sören Carlson: This clarifies the idea of "narrative resonance" to a certain extent, but I am not fully satisfied yet. To me, there still seems to be something missing that could account for how and why the resonance of some stories changes over time. After all, throughout history rather different stories about, for example, who is part of society, and what its legitimate order is, have circulated and differentially resonated with people. Your previous answer implies that this change should not be simply ascribed to the (rational) exchange of arguments, but how can we then explain shifts in narrative resonance or why some stories assert themselves over others? What about societal relations of inequality or power in this context?

Klaus Eder: This is the most difficult question, since it asks for the role of narrative structures in processes of social change. We do not have to explain social change, since it happens permanently. Events such as wars, economic exploitation and symbolic violence (racism) provide particular moments of disorder that provoke repair. Repairing social

relations is thus the process to be explained. A strong theoretical argument (which I would like to defend) is that narrative structures shape the paths of social repair. The problem is not that narratives change. Rather, the problem is which narrative wins over others, thus changing the conditions for further social repairs. A narrative explanation starts with the assumption of a limited number of genres that shape the way social relations are ordered and reordered. And it claims that narratives provide a way to look into the mechanism producing the outcome of social repairs.

In this version, the theory is still naked ("merely" structural). But narratives do more than just provide a form for telling stories. Narrative genres are like grammars that organize the way people tell each other about the world. Genres organize stories on what moves social actors, i.e. on ideas and emotions; they are about actors helping and fighting others, doing good or bad things, being betrayed or betraying others, being altruistic or egoistic. Narratives tell about the way how these ideas and emotions are processed over time and tell about the outcome of conflicting ideas and emotions. Thus, tragic stories relate how actors are confronted with tragic choices, keeping open the outcome of social repair. Romantic narratives generate stories which tell how actors will finally overcome disorder, reaching collective salvation from disorder by fighting the devil in their ranks. Comic narratives bring forth stories that tell how people succeed to live together in peace after turmoil; they differ in defining the hero leading the people to such an outcome, be it good kings, democratic assemblies or solidary communities, yet the plot remains the same. Finally, ironic narratives tell stories that undermine established stories, thus opening the social world to thinking of better worlds.

Linking narrative theory to collective learning (in the Habermasian tradition) offers an important addition to enhance the explanatory power of the mechanism of social repair (beyond the program of advancing a theory of collective learning). Learning and non-learning are cognitive processes that happen when social actors engage in storytelling. Learning, the theory holds, happens when rational debate and reciprocal recognition guide the resolution of conflicting ideas and emotions. Non-learning occurs once emotions such as hate or ideas such as racist superiority enter a narrative. Both, learning and non-learning, are part of the mechanism of social repair. The social world consists of both, rational debate and symbolic violence, reciprocal recognition and racist superiority claims. Even the story of the Enlightenment does not escape this double nature of human sociality, as Horkheimer and Adorno (1947) have pointed out by highlighting the dialectic nature of cognitive processes occurring in this context. Obviously, such ideas have an equal force in social life. Yet, narrative genres are differentially conducive to learning or non-learning: the basic theoretical hunch here is that romantic narratives are the most immune to learning, while ironic narratives are the most open. Learning happens when heroes are not sure about what to do best, and when the outcome is disconcerting. However, if the hero is "pure" and the outcome is beyond doubt, non-learning is the more likely outcome.

Thus, the theory that narratives are a mechanism of social repair (or social change in an old-fashioned language) simply states that, in times of social disorder, repair follows a path that is determined by two factors: cognitive input (good and bad) and its genre-specific narrative organization. And then we can make conjectures about the type of repairs that will be enacted. For example, democracies enact repairs by mobilizing the will of the people as the legitimating ground for political action. This collective will can foster either learning or non-learning, depending on the way this collective will is "narrated". This means that the popular sovereign (as the legitimating ground of democratic politics) does not escape this ambivalence which points to the basic vulnerability of democratic forms of social repair. It depends, I would argue, on the narrative organization of the conflict between good and bad, whether learning will be fostered or blocked – and not on the built-in goodness of the good (the crux of normative theories of social life).

One might detect here a "normative rest" in narrative explanation, which is to say that learning is better than non-learning. But there is a self-defeating mechanism at work here: learning might end in tragic choices, and we do not know in advance how to proceed. Any cognitive reassurance or even claim of superiority, based on "having learned" something (be it lessons of the past or lessons of the present), is basically undermined by the ironic genre (an excellent discussion of such self-defeating learning is found in Forchtner, 2016).

Sören Carlson: Looking at the four theoretical propositions mentioned in the introduction, the last one, i.e. the assumption of a form of isomorphism between specific narrative and network structures, seems theoretically the most far-reaching, but also the most tentative one. Therefore, let me ask you more principally: why assume such an isomorphism at all, why is it theoretically deemed as necessary? And how would such an isomorphism relate to the aforementioned issue of narrative change?

Klaus Eder: It is theoretically clear how the proposed isomorphism works. It is a simple feedback effect: ideas shape social relations, and social relations shape ideas. The interesting theoretical issue is how this feedback unfolds in time and the cumulative effects over time. The theory is that social relations are constituted through storytelling and therefore the form of the story (the narrative structure) is expected to be "reflected" in some way in the form of social relations. In a recent paper (Forchtner, Engelken-Jorge & Eder, 2020), we argued that we can distinguish four forms that structure stories. These forms are shaped by two parameters, the purity/impurity of the hero and the reassuring/irritating course of the story line. Combining these dimensions, we arrive at four types of narrative structures, i.e. "genres". These genre-specific stories provide models of social relations: they define boundaries of the group sharing such stories and they define hierarchies within that group. In these social relations, stories continue to be told and retold, adding new events/actors to the stories, and at times even redefining the boundaries of a group (be it more inclusive or more exclusive boundaries) and/or its internal hierarchies (be they flatter or steeper). There is a reciprocal link between narrative forms and social forms.
This reciprocal link is not fixed in time, however. The narrative reproduction of given social relations can succeed or fail (as it happens with mutations and selections in biological reproduction processes). Stories are retold, while social relations (such as a stable postwar middle-class culture) in which these stories circulated (such as postwar individualism) actually break apart. The reproduction of an isomorphism can thus be confronted with either a narrative shift which social relations no longer accommodate or with a change of social relations that unmakes the resonance to the old stories into which people were socialized. It is to be expected that such ruptures are less common than re-adaptations. We will always find examples of both order (stable isomorphism) and crisis (unstable isomorphism), if we expand the time frame and the spatial range of analysis.
Based on this, two implications for explaining the dynamics of present-day societies can be identified. The first is that the narrative foundation of modern societies varies – as it did in premodern societies. On the one hand, it can be based on stories that link the figure of the "pure" hero and reassuring outcomes with highly (hierarchically) ordered social relations that do not allow for deviance. On the other, modern societies may rest on stories that combine "impure" heroes and irritating outcomes with social relations in which people live in more egalitarian and open forms with each other, allowing larger fringes of self-determination and subjectivity. The second implication concerns the question of explaining the consequences of narrative shifts that point either toward the pure or impure end of the realm of possible narratives. The hypothesis deriving from this and to be tested empirically is as said above: narrative orders are reconfigured given social disorders and it

depends on the type of narrative shift what kind of social world emerges. Taking seriously the idea of isomorphism, we can thus conjecture that a return to romantic genres in modern societies will lead to social relations characterized by rigid hierarchies and strong divisions between the "pure" and the "impure" people. Intuitively, we know that. But to explain why this is so, the narrative approach might give an answer.

Sören Carlson: Within your work, you have argued for a structural approach to the analysis of narratives, thus for a focus on structural characteristics (e.g. reconstructing plot structures or genre types such as romance, tragedy, comedy, or irony), rather than on content or the discursive strategies used in order to achieve a compelling representation (Eder, 2011, 53; Forchtner & Eder, 2017, 80, 98). Why do you give preference to such a structural approach or, rather, where do you see its specific advantage(s) vis-à-vis a more content-oriented analysis?

Klaus Eder: When we look only at content, then the complexity of the world is hard to disentangle. People tell so many different stories varying in situations, scale, etc. that research will end up in theory-free compilations of stories varying in time and space. Since I assume that the production of stories is not an anarchic creation of words and word combinations, but that it rather follows specific rules (not only of grammar, where this is obvious), we have the possibility to avoid getting lost in the err-garden of mere words. The theoretical hunch is that narratives not only correspond to a specific type of social relation linking individuals and separating them from other networks of individuals (this refers to the dimension of being inclusive or exclusive), but also to a specific type of the evolution of social relations (open versus closed futures, progressive versus conservative ways of imagining the future). That content matters, I would never contest. On the contrary: structural analysis without concrete content remains a glass bead game. Already the "Mythologiques" by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964-1971), one of the finest examples of structural analysis, lives of its contents, i.e. the stories of the Indians. The ideal form of analysis is to show the variety of contents within structural narrative patterns, thus providing information on which story content is possible, given a finite set of narrative structures.

Sören Carlson: In one of your more recent publications on narratives and European identity (Forchtner & Eder, 2017), it seems that you favor to some extent the narrative genres of tragedy and irony, since these could provide a way out of the current impasse in Europe created by traditional "national" stories that follow a romantic or comedic plot and thereby tend to reproduce national perspectives and exclusion of "the other" (cf. also Eder, 2009b). Tragic and ironic plots, in contrast, open up possibilities for self-reflection and collective learning, thus allowing the connection of different narratives, and can help to overcome (national) self-righteousness – so goes your argument. At the same time, you assume, however, that tragic and ironic stories are not very good at blocking ongoing processes of identity formation. If one also looks at current social and political developments in Europe – whether Euroscepticism, populism, right-wing extremism or corresponding countermovements –, it seems that there is not much space left for irony. Thus, how do you think the further narrative construction of European identity might unfold?

Klaus Eder: National stories follow the comic plot, in some cases the romantic plot. Romantic plots give to comic plots a wider time dimension, claiming to tell how the past will move toward an unavoidable future. Romantic plots are particularly prone to what we could call reactionary or racist stories. They define clear boundaries within which people – as the story says – "live forever in peace". The historical experience has not been sufficient to undermine the belief in such romantic stories – they regularly return when a horrible

past tends to be forgotten. European identity constructed along the national model will certainly not be different: it promises to provide peace and happiness forever for the people living in this space. As a story promising a closed space over time, it must collide, however, with other non-European identities, be they American, Chinese, etc. or from migrant people who are forced to move. Therefore, the search for a European identity continuing along the lines defined by the nation-building process is a highly ambivalent project.

This raises the question of whether there are alternatives to comic stories turned into romantic stories. I have ventilated the idea of the citizenship story as an open story that could be the basis for a European identity based on fluid boundaries and fostering the permanent unblocking of the future, allowing to engage in the permanent reconstruction of a collective identity (Eder, 2017). But this is theoretically not very satisfying, since this story does not prevent European identity formation from ending up as a supra-national story, as a national story on a higher scale.

Given the fact that people do not necessarily have to live in the national container (they can live in enlarged families, in diasporas, in migrant communities), theory needs to provide a framework to think of alternatives to the national experience of constructing a "we". Narrative theory offers two alternative genres for this: the tragic and the ironic genre. The tragic genre produces stories in which morally appropriate deeds turn into morally disastrous deeds (the classic case is Oedipus). After the tragic event, the participants (to the extent that they survive) might learn from the tragic event. Thus, tragic narratives contain equally the option of failure and the slim option of a new beginning, thereby adding a reflexive dimension, namely of redoing things differently. An example in today's Europe would be the story of Brexit, that could be seen (beyond the dominant "comic", at times "romantic" story of liberation from the claws of Europe) as a tragic story of colliding ways of doing the good. "Tragic" does not mean that the hero of a story is a morally bad actor. What counts is the morally disastrous outcome of good-willing actors. Tragic means that what we want clashes with the will of what others want, and both wills are legitimate. Tragic is (quoting Amos Oz) the clash between right and right. It forces us to see that, for example, wanting to be good Britons, good Europeans, or both, entangles actors in a situation that nobody wants. Such experiences enhance the chance for reflexivity and learning, but they cannot guarantee such outcomes; instead, people might return to the comic story. Such narrative moves, dissolving the tragic moment into a comic one, in fact fuel public debates, not only in the British case, but even more so on the European level. Europe emerges as a space for a cacophony of comic (and romantic) narratives. The comic genre is the generative logic of the stories told by Emmanuel Macron or Angela Merkel (to use names as proxies for stories), while the romantic genre organizes stories with heroes such as Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán or Matteo Salvini. At times, Europe also invents new tragic stories, e.g., in the stories told by people identifying as European Jews or European Muslims. This is still a rare case of retelling the tragic elements in European history, reopening the issue of how "we" want to live with the "others" for the time to come. "Never again" means learning from past events and creating a new bond among the people constituting a "we".

Europe turns out to be a narrative laboratory in which narrative plots are struggling with each other. These narrative struggles offer elements for the reconstitution of a European "we" beyond the model of a national "we" as told in comic or romantic stories. Tragic stories add something new to the making of a European identity: to see Europe as the outcome of a tragic story being involved in a kind of Odyssey.

However, there is still another way of telling events that goes beyond the limits of the romantic, comic and tragic genres which is – linking back to your question – irony. Irony provides not only a way of undermining the strong belief in the final salvation of the people (which is the message of stories based on the romantic genre). It also provides elements

for learning from the failures that are built into the stories emerging from the comic genre, thus guaranteeing a permanent retelling of the story as a "comic story". Irony helps to continue living together after the tragedy, since it can create imaginaries for new bridges between the past and the future. Irony thus helps to bear the tragic past and to open up new modes of experimenting with living together.

Finally, irony also allows us to look at storytelling as a not so serious thing. The ironic point of view makes existing stories easier to acknowledge, tolerate, and criticize. In this sense, Brexit – turning from a potentially tragic story back into a comic one (or even into a romantic story as some public utterances by Boris Johnson in 2019 indicated) – can be looked at with an ironic eye: from playing ironically with the tragic images such as the Brits sacrificing themselves for the good in the world to the bright future that is promised to continue a wonderful past. Stories using ironic plots, including jokes, tell events in such a way that people laugh and look at each other less seriously. Irony also fosters the reciprocal acknowledgment of differences (see as a provocative narrative analysis pointing into this direction Nicolaïdis, 2019).

Overall, we can thus observe that the making of a European identity today takes place in a narrative space, where comic and romantic stories (mainly as nationalist stories) grow, and where tragic stories carrying the burden of the past retreat. Circulating ironic interpretations of comic, romantic and eventually tragic stories could create a space of communication, however, where irony enables us to play with stories. This undermines stories that assume a clear boundary of the people in Europe and a final future of this people. Playing with stories also allows us to continue to live after the tragic events. Constructing a European identity in such a narrative space opens a chance to unblock the future of the people living in this space. European identity in this sense would then be constituted by a reciprocal mirroring of stories, exposing the tragic self-interpretation of comic and romantic stories to the ironic eye, and thus opening the comic stories toward shifting boundaries and futures. In one word: European identity is based on a "we" which acknowledges the competing stories circulating within this "we", by introducing the ironic eye. The outcome would be a learning process transcending the false promises of romantic stories, the banality of comic stories, and the limits of tragic stories. The outcome would be a people capable of living with shifting boundaries and open futures, constructing its collective identity as a never finishing process.

Sören Carlson: Independently of the question of narrative forms, it is often argued nowadays that Europe needs a "new narrative" in order to provide social cohesion among EU citizens, as the "old" stories of peace and prosperity for all, resulting from European integration, are seen as insufficient or having lost credibility (cf. Bouza García, 2017). Despite your critical attitude towards the idea that narratives can simply be implemented in a top-down fashion, the idea of a missing narrative that could bind people together is mirrored to some extent in your article on the societal effects of the different crises in Europe (starting around 2008 with the so-called economic and financial crisis): here you state that we can indeed observe an increasing interconnectedness among the European people (thus satisfying the precondition of existing social networks through which narratives can circulate), but that "there are no ideas that flow through these emerging social relations that could provide the sense of togetherness of a highly diverse people" (Eder, 2014, 228). In contrast to that, Bouza García (2017, 346) argues that there is not really a shortage of narratives, but rather that the very structure of segmented European public spheres limits the circulation and generalization of these stories. These are rather contrary conclusions. Thus, what do you think: do we still lack a (convincing) European narrative, or is it something else entirely?

Klaus Eder: The issue here is what we understand as "ideas". Narratives of peace and prosperity as well as narratives of order permeate Europe today, and they articulate needs and hopes that probably are universal. National narratives promise this, religious narratives have always done so and continue to do so, and "European" narratives certainly will do so, too. There is nothing in these "new" narratives, however, that could provide a sense of togetherness beyond the old promises offered by nations or religions. I was talking in the quote above about an idea that could provide a sense of togetherness among the diverse people in Europe. This idea must be more than a repetition of what religious or national narratives have told us. We can search for such an "idea" in terms of different contents, something going beyond order, welfare, or peace. This search has nourished narratives telling us about the values that Europeans share and that others do not share (at least not to the extent that Europeans do). Such ideas are either very general such as "freedom", "human dignity", and the "recognition of the individual" or more concrete, e.g., about the way in which the family and relations among the sexes should be organized. Furthermore, the idea of a "social Europe", an "ecological Europe", or of Europe as a "normative power" have turned up, "ideas" that circulate through the media in the midst of a cacophony of voices throughout Europe. However, the search for a European identity based on such "ideas" is a dead road. You can share or contest ideas. Yet, constructing a "we" requires more than shared ideas.

Following the theoretical lead proposed above, it is not ideas as such, but narratives that contextualize ideas. The narrative plot that dominates, at least in Western societies, is the comic plot. Comic stories tell that "we will make it" if we are good to each other. This is the plot of standard EU-Europe. Romantic plots narrating an unavoidable future in which the people become one people across generations exist, such as the story of a Europe without war or a Europe without injustice (and today a Europe producing a sustainable world). Tragic plots mark a point in the past which needs to be "overcome", thus constructing a tragic Europe, capable of reflecting upon and rectifying its past. These options for a European identity differ from religious or national identities by identifying a different "we", yet they do not escape the logic of the plot that underlies these constructions. Then there remains the theoretical idea of irony as a plot for constructing a "we" that goes beyond the "serious" narratives of who we are in Europe.

My statement that you cite – that there are no ideas that could circulate – therefore needs theoretical specification (it is too simple when formulated in this way). I would argue that there are a lot of ideas around and that there is even a space in Europe where ideas can circulate. There is a clear node in the network of social relations in Europe that links ideas such as peace, order, or welfare to social relations that exist beyond the local or national container. This node is the political system (the "state"), the EU legal and administrative machinery. Beyond this obvious node that affects (positively and negatively) most Europeans, there is a public space (including its digital extensions) emerging in Europe in which a lot of voices refer to Europe. But there are few narratives that focus on Europe as such. One of these is the narrative of the "Islamization of Europe", another is the Europe of the Enlightenment, still another a Europe suffering and overcoming its horrible past. Thus, there are narratives that circulate in Europe, and the problem is not one of segmented public spheres that do not communicate. In fact, the opposite is emerging if we look at the intensity with which the European neighbors (i.e. nation state publics) observe each other. Most people in Europe can associate a specific story with names like Viktor Orbán. Then the issue is not the lack of ideas, the lack of narratives, nor the lack of social relations transcending the national container. The issue is which narrative will win over others. The options and their respective costs are clear. The process of further Europeanization will be shaped by which of the many "ideas" circulating in European society are organized into a narrative, defining the boundaries and futures of the people in Europe. The right-wing

parties in Europe try these days to create a European narrative based mainly on the idea of order, whereas the left-wing parties in Europe fail in making prosperity the core of a transnational story; the left seems to be fixed to the national level and its comic or romantic stories. Counter-stories against the right-wing narratives emerge too, mainly in the context of the ecological issue, and their narrative success and potential hegemony must be seen.
In any case, the confrontation of many stories circulating in Europe offers the possibility to invent narratives of reciprocal acknowledgement and recognition. This language is certainly not found in the new romantic plot that has made Europe the (normative) telos of the world. It is not a comic plot that makes Europe the best place to live in the world. Neither is it a tragic plot since tragedies do not tell what to do afterwards. What remains? The ironic plot? Theoretically a possibility to test, yet from a normative point of view a provocation.
Nevertheless, the idea of an ironic plot can hook upon a series of observations of present-day digitally mediated political communication. We are normally geared to see public responses to political events as "shit-storms", reacting with moral denigration and devaluation. On the other hand, there are equally communicative counter-mobilizations that try to hold against shitstorms. They have a hard time holding the moral positions they defend. Mobilizing support for fair treatment and appropriate ways of solving conflicts do not impress the other side, which often consists of large parts of national electorates. The moral cudgel no longer works to get out of the irreconcilable positions people have run into. Telling a moral story collides with the moral story of the others.
The ironic plot offers a different way of communicating irreconcilable positions, however. We find it in the new digital counter-publics, a site that so far has remained at the margin of political discourse. Comments on what the new "stars" in political discourse – be it Donald Trump, Matteo Salvini, Boris Johnson, or any other of the new "authoritarians" (or sovereigntists) – are doing, become successful when couched in an ironic language. We know how in the past irony has been perceived as dangerous by authoritarian regimes and how harsh the attempts of suppressing irony have been. In the digital age, irony can become a force of undermining the new comic stories of the non-liberals (see Trump's twitter stories of who the heroes and who the losers are) and the romantic stories of the new nationalists (see Johnson's way of legitimating Brexit), a force much better suited to keep talking with the "enemy" than the moral cudgel that dominates the liberal critique of non-liberal political positions. Furthermore, irony is not only to be found in social media. It is also in traditional mass media where it serves the function of opening up political communication about often irreconcilable discursive positions.
For all these reasons, the ironic plot deserves closer theoretical attention when looking at Europe and at processes of constructing collective identities. It could be a way to reopen blocked constructions of collective identity and provide collective identities that are neither substantialist, nor random, nor fluid. To be both at the same time, fixed and fluid, is conditional for making and remaking collective identities, and irony provides the reflexive distance to playing with these contradictory modes of existence of collective identities. Europeans in this theoretical perspective know who they are by going through the acid bath of ironic relativization of who they are.

Sören Carlson: On the one hand, we can generally observe a revived scientific interest in narratives, as a result of the (not so recent) "narrative turn" in the humanities and social sciences (cf. Kreiswirth, 2005; Hyvärinen, 2010), and also a noticeable interdisciplinary interest in working with the notion of narrative specifically in relation to Europe. Even the EU itself has become interested in narratives as it is assumed that these might provide a way of increasing social cohesion among EU citizens (cf. Bouza García, 2017).

On the other hand, however, it seems to me that sociology, especially the so-called sociology of Europe (or "Europasoziologie" in German), has so far shown only little interest in analyzing "Europe" from a narrative perspective – apart from your own work and that of a few others (e.g. Forchtner & Kølvraa, 2012; Trenz, 2014, 2016). How would you account for this apparent mismatch?

Klaus Eder: The lack of concern with narratives in the context of the social sciences dealing with Europe has to do firstly with the dominance of a normative perspective. This characterizes the political science perspective as well as the sociological perspective in which narratives appear as an expression of deviance from the liberal model of talking politics. They are considered to foster irrational forms of talking about politics. The narrative appeared as the enemy of rational and/or reasonable action. It was seen just as "literature". This certainly is no longer the case (see as a provocative reinterpretation the argument for lyrical sociology by Abbott, 2007a). Yet this anti-literary (or in my parlance anti-narrative) stance has hampered the narrative turn in the social sciences. Secondly, the individualistic premises of the social sciences (well explicated and criticized by Abbott, 2007b) have not been conducive to the idea that collective identity might become more than the sum of individual preferences. Conventional analysis still looks at identity in terms of quantifiable identifications of individuals (of individual motives) and is happy with such information. To really push the narrative turn, methodological innovations are needed to make the collective character of social life visible, ranging from the structural analysis of talking to the structural analysis of social relations. So far, the methodological dominance of individualistic analyses can easily dominate the hand-made style of doing a different type of analysis, which is therefore much less legitimate than established methodological creeds. Accepting this, the costs for doing social theory are high, notwithstanding some theoretical side streams such as systems theory, a Bourdieu-style field theory, and similar closed theoretical schools. Theorizing going beyond individuals having social motives is waiting for new methodological strategies to show the collective character of "things" such as collective identity, emerging in open spaces or in echo chambers and stabilizing them in turn.

Sören Carlson: Linked to the previous question, do you think sociologists should then be (more) interested in the notion of narrative when studying "Europe"? If so, which specific advantages does a narrative approach provide to the study of "Europe" from your perspective?

Klaus Eder: If we want to understand and explain the present upsurge of ideas of the last century and before in public/political debate, and the readiness of significant parts of the population to share such ideas, we need different tools than those that are standard in sociology/political sociology/political science. A social-scientific look at Europe is more than to take the normative point of view and deplore what is happening. Looking at Europe today, we have a historical laboratory for theorizing and analyzing the discursive waves, the narrative resonances, in one word: a laboratory of how "the people", this fundamental category of the analysis of modern societies, come into being, how it divides itself and how it reproduces social relations of power and inequality. Europe would be a good opportunity for producing better theories and more appropriate methodologies.

Sören Carlson: This leads me to ask you finally which future research directions and (theoretical) issues you see in relation to the narrative study of Europe?

Klaus Eder: Making sense of the nationalist rhetoric in a transnational situation, explaining the rise and fall of the liberal rhetoric, and providing a theory explaining the making and unmaking of the people's will.

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A century with and against the market. The ILO and 'global social justice'

Review: Daniel Maul – The International Labour Organization. 100 Years of Global Social Policy, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019

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The author's project is ambitious. As the subtitle of Daniel Maul's *The International Labour Organization* hints, with his recently published book the author intends to take a close look at no less than "100 years of global social policy". The consideration of such a broad period (the ILO celebrated its centenary in 2019) makes Maul's book stand out from the field of numerous publications that have discovered the ILO as a research object in recent years. These include among others the three anthologies organized by the ILO, namely *Globalizing social rights. The International Labour Organization and beyond* (Sandrine Kott & Joëlle Droux, eds., 2013), *The ILO from Geneva to the Pacific Rim: West meets East* (Jill M. Jensen & Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., 2015) and *Women's ILO: Transnational networks, global labour standards and gender equality, 1919 to the present* (Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker & Susan Zimmermann, eds., 2018). Also, worth mentioning is the special issue *La justice sociale dans un monde global. L'Organisation Internationale du Travail (1919-2019)*, edited by Sandrine Kott for *Le Mouvement Social*, which addresses 100 years of ILO history. While the vast majority of studies focus on specific fields of ILO activities, such as unemployment, food policy or children's welfare, Maul widens the perspective distinctly. His background as a historian, who has most notably been concerned with the history of development aid, decolonization and internationalism, is clearly visible. In fact, this very perspective proves to be particularly fruitful, as Maul addresses several blind spots of ILO research: He does not only point to the scarcity of studies targeting the ILO after 1945 (and even more so from the 1970s onwards) but also regional or spatial omissions, such as the history of the ILO in Africa or East/Southeast Asia.

Daniel Maul's book is published at a time when international organizations striving for co-operation and harmonization of standards are under enormous pressure. The strengthening of nationalist politics and the return of unilateralism in international affairs also pose difficult challenges for the ILO. At the same time, the issues addressed by the ILO could not be more relevant today. The question of the effects of trade liberalization on working conditions, deregulation and flexibilization as a result of the internationalization of production are just some of the keywords pointing to the social dimension of globalization. On the one hand, the history of the ILO has given expression to the various interests of trade unions, companies and governments. On the other hand, the organization mirrors both the power struggles and the global socio-economic transformations these players are confronted with. The ILO's special tripartite structure through which decisions are taken by

governments, employers and workers has made the international organization a forum for direct debate and deliberation. At the same time, the actors themselves pursue their own economic and (geo)political interests and also follow ideological motives. Daniel Maul shows how this context of competition between power and influence has always shaped the struggle to define what the ILO is and what purposes it should serve.

These questions affected the entire centennial history of the ILO and are therefore consequently present throughout the book, which follows a chronological structure. It starts with an introduction to the prehistory of the organization and is then divided into four major phases: 1. the inter-war period (33-108), 2. the period from 1940-49 as the “second founding” (Maul) of the ILO, with the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 as central event (109-57), 3. decolonization and Cold War (158-214) and 4. the new insecurities and challenges of the ILO, or as Maul points out, the ILO’s “shifting ground” from the 1970s onwards (215-64). At the end of the book, Maul refers to the recent period and draws possible lines that could be used to write future accounts of the ILO (265-76).

The book is highly accessible and well written. Readers benefit from three guiding questions that are taken up repeatedly throughout the chapters: Whose organization was and is the ILO? What characterizes the ILO as an international organization? What has been the ILO’s specific contribution to the social justice debates in the 20th and 21st century? Through these questions, the various periods – ultimately different ‘political’ epochs – are connected or held together. Most importantly, Maul thereby draws attention to the central negotiating processes of the ILO, which had to assert itself again and again both to the out- and the inside.

Maul shows that – although the ILO itself did always uphold a universalist aspiration or approach – it has never represented ‘work’ in all its dimensions and multiple aspects. The question of ‘who’ was always connected with the question of ‘what’: Who could be found in the ILO mandate depended on what activity was identified as ‘work’. This discussion is ongoing, which becomes apparent in the recent discussions surrounding an inclusion of domestic work (and domestic workers) into the ILO’s field of expertise (269-72). Maul clearly shows how the history of the ILO has been shaped by dichotomies: industrialized and developing countries had different conceptions, economies were organized as free markets or planned economies, and also the contrast between formal and informal work, the work of men and women, and industrial and rural work could not be clearer.

The question of what characterizes the ILO as an international organization is ultimately also a question of whether and to what extent the ILO is an international organization among others. Maul situates the ILO within the context of a broader history of internationalism. According to the author, the ILO’s internationalism emerges not only as an idea, but also as a strategy grounded in two internationalist traditions: the socialist labor movement and the transnational network of liberal social reformers at the turn of the century (15-30). At the center of these discussions was the International Association for Labour Legislation (IALL), both as a testing ground for ILO practices and in terms of personal continuity. Also, IALL and ILO shared the nation state as crucial point of reference. But Maul also illustrates how the ILO often served as a platform for alternative approaches to internationalism and how it created space for the debate of alternative ideas at the regional level. For states of the global South and transnational movements, the ILO after 1945 was therefore also a forum for international solidarity. However, Maul also shows how the dissolution of the European colonial empires ultimately strengthened national sovereignty as a guiding principle for international affairs.

Emerging directly from the Paris Peace Conference, the ILO began its work as part of the system of the League of Nations (33-84). While the ILO was thus institutionally linked to the larger network of international organizations, it was able to maintain a certain degree of autonomy. Maul shows that the ILO’s unique position within this framework was

primarily due to its special tripartite structure, which turned into a unique characteristic feature: Tripartism worked as a corrective to the influence of the nation states, enabled the ILO to adapt to changing historical circumstances and provided a certain degree of flexibility regarding structural and technological transformations. The author shows how the democratic approach of tripartism was maintained throughout the decades after its foundation – through wartimes, the ideological struggles of the Cold War and the phase of decolonization. Ultimately, Maul argues, tripartism proved to be an advantage for the ILO at the national level as well, as it allowed to adapt to the particular situations of trade unions and employers.

While the book's subtitle seems to suggest a sense of continuity in a hundred-year history of global social policy, it quickly becomes clear that *social justice* has been interpreted quite differently over the course of the organization's history. Maul himself uses mainly the (more normative) term of social justice, and not the rather sociological one of *social (in)equality*. Also, the ILO had used "social justice" in the preamble of its founding document in 1919: „[...] peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice [...]". By adopting this term, Maul, on the one hand, expresses the political ambition and agenda-setting of the ILO. On the other hand, from an analytical viewpoint it might have been at some points more convincing to contextualize this term stronger along the lines of recent approaches regarding a new history of ideas. As Maul himself underscores quite correctly already in the introduction: The fact that social justice has been the ILO's central point of reference may have to do with the fact that the term evokes and contains very different (normative) sets of ideas (6).

Unlike other anniversary publications, Maul's analysis demonstrates that the ILO has never been a blessed stronghold of pure internationalist ideals. This becomes apparent in the ILO's compromises regarding definitions of 'work' in the colonies (especially due to pressure from France and Great Britain; 79-84) as well as in the use of the United States' strong power position, who demonstrated with their temporary withdrawal (1977-1980; 219-25) also the ILO's dependence on its financial contributors. Nevertheless, Maul shows that the ILO was (and still is) an important player in the debate on how broad the scope of social policy should be defined and on how practical fields of activity should look like. Many of the 190 conventions and over 200 recommendations of the ILO turned out to be milestones in the improvement of working conditions for laborers around the globe.

The profound consideration of technical assistance and training provided by the ILO is definitely a distinguishing feature of the book. Maul shows how, in the interwar period, the ILO started accumulating expertise in this field and sent technical assistance missions to Latin America, Southeast Europe, Asia and North Africa (103-08). The Second World War served as a catalyst and strengthened the ILO's position as an important source of technical knowledge in this field. Here, again, the book benefits from the authors background as a historian; Maul highlights that it was the very specific historical context of the immediate post-war period that formed the basis for the practical implementation of this mandate (144-53). He then shows how the ILO advanced to become a development agency from the early 1950s on and how its Technical Assistance Program (TAP) was based on the assumption of a modernization theory, in which the so called *developing countries* should repeat the development of the industrialized at an accelerated speed (159-67). Here, Maul also describes how for example at the first Asian Regional Conference in Delhi (1947), states such as India and Burma (both were just shaking off colonial rule) demanded support to overcome their „state of underdevelopment" (143); additionally, now losing its colonial connotations, the new working area of "indigenous labour" was seen, at least for South America, as a chance for a „modernization beyond development" (167-71). Ultimately, and triggered by decolonization processes, technical cooperation did indeed become the ILO's main focus in the 1960s and turned into an operational field which clearly

surpassed all other practical activities of the ILO. While Maul expresses that the ILO is still based on a blend of the originating socialist and social liberal internationalisms, it would in that regard also be interesting to discuss further to what extent decolonization and the 'national liberations' (often also the glorification of the ideas of nation, state and people) have added further internationalisms (or anti-internationalisms). Pan-Americanism, for example, is taken up in the book as a competitor of the ILO (104f.).

The emergence and resurgence of nationalist movements in recent years – often also based on the experience of social inequality – is an impressive reminder that social justice is a core condition for the stability of democracies. Also, the ILO had to recognize in recent decades that the notion of *social progress* has undergone major changes. The focus is no longer only on a fair distribution of economic growth, but also on massive ecological challenges. Climate change and environmental destruction are accompanied by the digital revolution, increased global migration and a growing informal labor sector. All of these issues have massive effects on the world of work. Against this background, the future role of the ILO depends crucially on the space it can claim in this complicated discourse: On the one hand, globalization is predominantly understood as an inevitable path, while on the other hand the ILO itself is dependent on the willingness of states to counter or limit the threats of open market economies. Despite all this, Mauls rather positively formulated outlook on the future of the ILO may also be read as a call for even stronger and more flexible global engagement.

The current coronavirus pandemic may turn out to be an occasion to respond to this call in the form of a new consensus in the spirit of the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944 – this time within a globalized context that not only sheds light on existing inequalities but also creates new ones. The economic lockdowns imposed by the governments will put even greater pressure on the most vulnerable. After the Great Depression, with the *New Deal* (the ideas of which were encapsulated in the Philadelphia Declaration), the necessity was recognized to offer a comprehensive social contract. Such foresight is also necessary today, as the greatest social disruptions of this crisis are still to come. The ILO's potential to make a significant contribution to this debate becomes also evident in Maul's book. It shows that the ILO has been a global forum to address these issues for 100 years and illustrates the many ways in which the ILO helped to structure the debates and became practically active itself. The history of the ILO is neither linear in its direction nor should it be told as a simple success story. Rather, Maul takes the ILO especially serious in its struggle to mediate between different interests. Analyzing the ILO as a discursive forum, Maul thus also creates a panorama of competing concepts of order and governance, including their practical implementation attempts. The ILO is part of a broader international/internationalist environment that always remains related to the world of nation states. This concerns the specific founding background as well as the period of the *New Deal*, when the alternative of an active state was proclaimed together with the primacy of the political. The ILO is hereby part of the history of capitalism, or rather capitalisms insofar as Maul works out how the organization faced and reacted to the different historical and spatial forms of capitalism and the governing of (open) economies.

Daniel Maul's 100-year history of the ILO is a very meritorious contribution to the history of internationalism, social policy in a transnational and global dimension, and the history of decolonization, development policy and human rights. As the first comprehensive account of the organization, the book offers solid footing for many works to come.

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The way out of Basic Income's utopia trap. Making sense of the basic income debate

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The considerable public attention given internationally to the idea of a guaranteed basic income stands in stark contrast to the chances of its implementation. The main cause is that the discussion avoids problems that are difficult to solve and focuses instead on normative justifications for a basic income. How to get out of this 'utopia trap'? Making sense of the basic income debate requires combining analyses of the problems and perspectives of existing welfare states with a strategy of reform steps towards the implementation of basic income.

Keywords: Basic income, Experiments, Digitisation

1. Why is it important?

In the last two decades, the demand for a basic income has become a public issue almost worldwide. Nonetheless: The presence of the demand stands in stark contrast to the chances of its implementation. In view of the decades of broad discussion about a basic income and the many ways in which it can be connected, it is very surprising that the idea of a basic income is still far from being put into practice. What is the reason for this? My thesis is that the discussion is far too little concerned with strategic issues. This deficit has led the basic income idea into a utopia trap. For this reason, I do not want to enumerate the possible advantages and problems of a basic income here, but rather draw attention to some strategic deficits in the discussion and suggest ways of overcoming them. The discussion on a guaranteed basic income is important and instructive. There are two reasons for this, an atmospheric one for everyday politics and a socio-political one for fundamental principles.

The political-climatic reason: The political discussions, as far as they go beyond the politics of the day, have been going on for quite some time in rather narrow, pragmatic tracks. "Be realistic, demand the impossible" is completely out of fashion. As far as I can see, this is true in general, but it is particularly true of social policy. Not only is there no shortage of diagnoses of increasing inequality, disenfranchisement, social relegation and the fear of it. They are even peculiarly popular (Picketty, 2014). But debates on redistribution, social security and social policy have been conducted mainly defensively for decades. In view of this basic mood, the discussion of a basic income seems to have an element of a political culture of 'cheerful demand' against the dominant *Sachzwang-construction* of politics and economics. This is by no means about political folklore. The demand for a basic income stands against a basic political and cultural mood that has serious institutional consequences. The dominant economic mainstream sees social security as little more than a hindrance to the economy, at best a necessary evil. This manifests a loss of socio-political

expertise, which threatens to become irreversible through scientific policy decisions. The social science infrastructure for social policy research is being thinned out, the number of social policy chairs is being reduced, and research institutes are weakening their social policy profile. The result is that the topic of social policy is losing ground in academic and public debates. The pool of socio-political expertise that can be drawn on politically and administratively is shrinking (Kaufmann et al., 2016).
The fundamental socio-political reason: The basic income discussion is excellently suited for discussing fundamental socio-political problems (see Van Parijs, 1991; Blaschke, 2008). Questions of human dignity. According to which criteria does it determine itself? And who determines the criteria? Questions about the prerequisites and content of democracy, questions about conditions of social integration and recognition, questions about the meaning of work, questions about the legitimate domain of politics. I am by no means claiming that the introduction of a basic income would provide a convincing answer to all these questions. However, I believe that the demand for a basic income acts as a kind of socio-political litmus test. The reactions to the demand reveal positions on the fundamental issues mentioned. We learn a great deal about those in favour, but also about those critical or even denunciatory of the idea of a basic income.

2. "Unconditional"?

An unconditional basic income for all is hardly conceivable. I therefore consider the term "guaranteed basic income" (Opielka & Vobruba, 1986) to be more precise. In fact, the term 'unconditional' helps to ignore questions that are difficult to answer and disturb idyllic basic income ideas. But this aid is deceptive. Two limitations of 'unconditionality' are inevitable, they should be discussed socio-scientifically and politically offensively. 1) The circle of eligible persons is always spatially limited. The demand 'basic income for all' does not solve the problem, but conceals it. Formulating exclusions is unpleasant. This is precisely what is meant by disturbances of idyllic basic income ideas. 2) An age limit must be defined for the receipt of a basic income. To demand a basic income "for all" (Vanderborght & Van Parijs, 2005) is therefore delusory.
First limitation: The spatial limitation of the circle of entitled persons is generally taken into account, but not explicitly made and specified. An example: The (Mini-)party *Bündnis Grundeinkommen* ("alliance for a basic income" – my translation) in the Federal Republic of Germany defines the basic income in its programme (2016) as an individual legal entitlement "without means test and without coercion to work or other consideration" (my translation). It is a cash benefit which "a political community unconditionally grants to each of its members". Throughout the programme, there is no word on this limitation: who belongs to the "political community"? And above all: who does not belong to it? And what is to be understood by a "political community" at all? This is a lack of definition which becomes a strategic problem when it comes to the serious realisation of a basic income. The demand for a worldwide basic income is a logical but illusionary consequence of this.
Second limitation: At what age should one be entitled to receive the guaranteed basic income? This question is closely related to the question of the effects of a basic income on work motivation. Nobody can say with sufficient certainty what influence a basic income would have on the biographical work orientation in young people. After all, it would be conceivable that it would disturb the orientation towards education and work. And on top of that, this influence does not only arise at the time of payment, but already through the prospect of the basic income, i.e. much earlier. All the good arguments that people with a basic income would continue to work anyway draw their plausibility from an already completed work socialisation. "What would you do if you were to receive a thousand euros unconditionally every month?" Such questions, directed at middle-aged people, do not open up much, for all answers are from people who would be the first generation in a

'basic income era'. However, the decisive question for the young generation may not be: will there be enough people willing to take on unpleasant but unavoidable jobs? This problem can probably be solved with sufficiently high wages. The decisive open question is rather: How many will manage to find their way into a "vita active" at all (Arendt, 2002)? Well-meaning references to human innate creativity are not enough.

3. Effects on supply

This leads to the great uncertainty regarding the question of how a basic income would affect the supply of labour. This problem has long been the subject of intense debate. Hopeful expectations of unleashed creativity stand against gloomy forecasts of a general flight from work. The shrugging statement that there are different 'images of people' is unsatisfactory. It is largely undisputed in the discussion that, assuming a sufficient level, a basic income would have a modifying effect on the supply of labour. The thesis that a basic income would weaken (wage) work orientation and reduce the supply of labour on the labour market can be found in two variants. Reducing the supply of labour is seen as either unproblematic (A) or desirable (B). A. The reduction of the labour supply appears to be unproblematic against the background of the view that the socially relevant part of the work is carried out away from the labour market anyway. This argument was previously linked to very optimistic assessments of the potential of the alternative economy, later to the high estimation of voluntary work, housework and care work, etc. An empirical underpinning of this thesis is difficult. In fact, it turned out that the potentials of the alternative economy were far overestimated, especially in the early 1980s. Complementarities between paid and unpaid work must also be assumed rather than substitutability. B. Reducing the supply of labour appears desirable against the background of the conviction that demand for labour is declining anyway. This opens up the debate on basic incomes to questions about the long-term development of the labour market on two sides: the supply side and the demand side. Empirically sound answers to these questions are complicated. I will have to content myself here with approximations

4. Approximations

Any meaningful discussion of the quantitative effects of a basic income on labour supply should begin with an admission that little is known about the effects of a basic income on work orientation. An additional difficulty results from the interactions between labour market effects and the costs of a basic income, which from a dynamic point of view is difficult to control. Overall, there are only a few research results on these questions that directly target the relationship between basic income and the labour market. There are some model simulations and the results of several basic income experiments. Both are of limited informative value (I will come back to the problem of the experiments briefly). Nevertheless, empirical research results are available that can be used as approximations to answers to the question of the labour market effects of a basic income.

A basic income causes a slight decline in the supply of labour overall, and a somewhat stronger decline in the lower income bracket. Here, labour becomes more expensive because the basic income acts as a 'reservation wage' for some of the providers of labour. Together with the reduced supply in the lower income bracket, this leads to wage increases. However, some of this withdrawal effect will be reversed in the longer term because the demand for previously low-paid labour will decline, as sector-specific automation, the transfer of labour to customers, etc., will lead to savings of paid labour. However, experience with the introduction of a minimum wage in Germany suggests that these effects would probably not be very pronounced. Accordingly, warnings from economists against a basic income should be put into perspective. The fact that the negative effects on employment resulting from the minimum wage in Germany (introduced in 2015)

have largely failed to materialise (Bellmann et al., 2016) has not yet been analysed in social science as a collective misforecast of the economist profession. But it has also been overlooked so far that the introduction of the minimum wage can serve as a quasi experiment for some effects of a basic income in question.

For a considerable part of the labour force, non-monetary motives for their supply behaviour on the labour market obviously also have an effect. Empirical evidence of this can be gained from the empiricism of the 'top-ups' (*Aufstocker*). Topping up the low earned income means supplementing it by a social transfer up to the income level they would achieve if they only received the social transfer. Depending on the concrete design of the rules for crediting earned income to social transfers for non-employees who are able to work, such top-ups hardly have any material advantages from taking up paid work. Although limited by administrative controls of the employment offices/agencies, this group would have the alternative of living entirely on social transfers. Thus, top-ups take up work for their own sake, be it because an activity is regarded as particularly meaningful, be it so that "the ceiling does not fall on your head", be it to escape the "unemployment trap" (Gebauer et al., 2002; Gebauer & Vobruba, 2003). Otherwise, there would be fewer transitions between social assistance and the labour market (Leisering & Leibfried, 1999). That means: Taking up work despite a socio-political incentive structure, which makes it financially unattractive to take up low-paid work due to hight withdrawal rates of labour income on social transfers (Vobruba, 1986/2019, 349), therefore tempts one to remain in the social transfer system and thus deprive oneself of later opportunities for advancement and income (hence the unemployment trap). Two arguments can be developed regarding these results. First, they lead to the conclusion that the Hartz IV reform addressed a sham problem: The problem that the acceptance of dependent employment is prevented by socio-political false incentives did not exist, or not to the presumed extent. Transitions from social transfer to work take place much more frequently and for different reasons than economic common sense and prejudices against the unemployed assume. In other words, institutional incentives do not automatically translate into appropriate action (Vobruba, 2004). At the same time, the reform increased disenchantment with democracy, protest voting and polarisation tendencies in society (Butterwegge, 2015; Fervers, 2018). This results in an extremely unfavorable balance. The Hartz IV reform largely dealt with a pseudo problem, but it does cause high real political costs (Fehr & Vobruba, 2011). Secondly, such empirical results on supply behaviour cannot be converted into the labour market effects of a basic income. However, it is possible to gain insights into mechanisms that would work in the direction of more moderate labour market effects from the introduction of a basic income.

It is unlikely that a basic income will lead to additional labour supply, i.e. counteract the withdrawal effect of a basic income. Some fear that the supply of labour in the low-wage sector would increase as a result of a basic income, because employers and employees could agree on lower (hourly) wages through a basic income. However, this assumption is only plausible in the case of jobs that are primarily performed for their own sake and not for income reasons. As has already been said, this presupposes specific, intrinsic work motives. In such cases, a basic income does not act as a wage floor, but as a wage subsidy. This is possible when taking up work for non-monetary reasons. On the other hand, the concern that a basic income is a means of pressure to involuntarily take up low-paid work is incomprehensible – at least if one assumes a sufficient level of the basic income, which therefore acts in the sense of a 'reservation wage'. On the premise of a basic income, individually reduced working hours and constant or increased hourly wages are more likely.

5. Experiments

One can counter all this by saying that these are just approximations. That's true, but this argument doesn't work: I'm not here to collect arguments for or against a basic income. My intention is to point out open questions, to articulate doubts that are in the air anyway, to make them explicit and thus possible to clarify. This presupposes taking note of the state of research and using it, and subsequently asking further questions. Confessions are of no use.

Overall, little is known about the effects of a guaranteed basic income on the labour supply. Basic income experiments are currently in vogue (McFarland, 2017), but they are of limited help. Experiments are always designed for a definite period, and they always cover selected groups of the population only. This must be the case (otherwise they would not be experiments, but the introduction of a basic income), but their significance is considerably limited, particularly with regard to the supply of labour. First, reactions depend on whether one can expect a basic income for a fixed period of time (experiment) or forever (introduction). Who will seriously think about quitting a job when they know that the basic income will soon be gone? This could explain why basic income experiments tend to reduce labour supply less than expected (Burtless, 1988; Widerquist, 2005) and, above all, to undertake additional activities that can be seen as an investment for the time afterwards (further training; curing a protracted illness). Secondly, a basic income will have very different effects, depending on whether everyone in a (nationally constituted) society receives a basic income or only one test group. Under no circumstances can one tell from a test group whether a basic income triggers a fundamental cultural change. And the effects are most likely to be distorted once again, as the test persons compete with all the others on the labour market again after the end of the test phase. All in all: You can compare test groups equipped with different versions of a basic income with each other, but you cannot extrapolate from the test results to society. There is no way around it: If you want to know whether and how a basic income changes society, you have to introduce it. This is a difficult obstacle to overcome.

6. Digitisation

Digitisation brings with it the fear and hope of a sharp reduction in the demand for labour. Digitisation is relatively new, but the idea that society is losing its jobs as a result of technological progress, or that technology frees society from work, is an ancient one. The utopian novels of the 19th century are full of this hope. The idea of immense productivity advances also played a major role in the basic income discussion of the 1980s. The appearance of the first self-controlling engines were expected to lead to leaps in overall economic productivity and irreversible job losses. Nothing of the sort happened. Well, it could be that a qualitatively completely new technological push is actually taking place at the moment. But this would first have to be demonstrated. The fact that in the economically most advanced societies the increases in overall economic productivity decrease in the long term speaks against this. To the extent that the discussion about job losses due to digitisation is based on empirical data at all, one finds a characteristic pattern: the prospect of drastic losses is made plausible by “partial analysis”, i.e. usually on the basis of examples. Analyses, on the other hand, which set off the gains and losses of jobs through digitisation for the entire economy (here: the Federal Republic of Germany) against each other, arrive at very moderate results (Walwei, 2016; Eichhorst et al., 2016). This suggests two conclusions. First: Digitisation leads to job losses and to new jobs. It generates less productivity-related unemployment than problems of adaptation to new qualification requirements. Second: The discourse constellation today resembles the debate in the 1980s about productivity increases and technologically induced unemployment (Gorz, 1985; Kollektiv Charles Fourier, 1985). The then still relatively new experience of unemployment, which

hardly diminished in economic upswings, became the thesis of the work society, which extrapolates ‘the work runs out’, which developed considerable suggestive power. The fact that the forecasts made at the time were not accurate should motivate caution: All those who see immense economic productivity boosts as a result of digitisation should first show what exactly is fundamentally different about the situation today than it was at the time of the diagnosis of a technologically induced “end of work” (Dahrendorf, 1983; Rifkin, 1995).

Politically and strategically, this means that the scope for distribution is narrower, and the distribution conflicts that any strategy to enforce a basic income must reckon with will be much more intense than depicted in the hopeful digitisation scenario. The idea that digitisation provides both the problem (unemployment) and the means to solve it ("social wealth" used as a basic income for all) is deceptive. Accordingly, financing proposals aimed at taxing any features of machines are misleading. Taxes can only be levied on persons who earn income from the use of machines, not on machines themselves. All proposals on "machine taxes" are based on the confusion between the tax base and the taxpayer. This means, however, that one has to reckon with their distribution interests, alternative strategies and resistance. The discussion on basic incomes must therefore be underpinned by conflict theory, relate to positions of interest pro and contra, and shift its focus from normative arguments to questions of power and enforcement (Greven, 1986).

7. Ways out

The sudden demand for a guaranteed basic income has something very relieving about it. One moves in the ideal world of the normative: first a bad social actual condition is diagnosed, then a basic income is set against it as a target. A basic income is “objectively” necessary, one only has to seize the historical opportunity. There are many good reasons for a basic income, it is therefore a requirement of reason to introduce it. Accordingly some see it as “a black-red-green reform proposal”. Is it? Caution is advised when arguing in favour of a basic income without interest. This does not mean that intersections of common interests are excluded. But the concerns must be taken very seriously (Glotz, 1986; Butterwegge, 2014; Bothfeld, 2018) that a basic income will be used as a cover for the implementation of social policy reduction plans. It is therefore absolutely essential not to dismantle existing social policy in the first place and then envisage a basic income. This alone determines every conceivable introduction of a basic income as a conflict-laden, incremental strategy.

But how do you get from here to there politically? A brief thought might help. If a basic income can only be introduced with a big leap, then it cannot be introduced at all. That is the utopia trap. In order to avoid it, one has to consider the gradual realisation of the basic income. There are serveral important socio-political goals which can be achieved through a basic income, but not just through a basic income (Leibfried, 1986; Vobruba, 2019). This also means that these goals can be achieved not only through a basic income, but through a basic income among other instruments. Effective poverty reduction, for example, does not necessarily require a basic income, but a basic income can combat poverty. Reforms can therefore be seen as independent political projects, but they can also be seen as steps towards a guaranteed basic income. This resolves the confrontation between various proposals for a basic income and basic security and the demand for a basic income. So what is necessary?

1. What is needed are reform steps that bring immediate improvements and for which there are political allies beyond the basic income scene. 2. Under no circumstances should one run the risk of getting stuck in a situation where the steps towards introducing a basic income are worse than the current status quo. Every reform torso must therefore be acceptable. 3. This has the advantage that the reform steps towards a basic income already

show what they are ultimately intended to achieve. Thus the ideological and socio-political ambiguities of different proposals must be resolved by institutional design in practice - not only by confession with formula like 'emancipatory basic income'.
The question of gradual realisation has long been a secondary theme in the debate on a basic income (Opielka, 1986). I have the impression that all those who base their sceptical position essentially on the concern that, in the slipstream of the introduction of a basic income, the achievements of the welfare state would be recklessly relinquished, should deal with the many proposals for gradualist enforcement strategies. Conversely, advocates of such strategies should focus more on the actual development of social policy at national, European and global level; and above all on the fact that numerous recent social policy reforms in Europe tend to lead even further away from a basic income as a general orientation. A long time ago this was different and provided an opportunity to see a basic security logic slowly asserting itself in socio-political reforms. But at least since the late eighties there was a socio-political convergence trend in Europe towards a reduction in the level of social benefits while at the same time strengthening the focus on wage labour – i.e. in the opposite direction to a basic income (Fehmel, 2013; Vobruba, 1997). The trend towards privatisation and marketisation of social security also has an effect in the sense of a closer interdependence between earned income status and security benefits. It is therefore a matter of analysing the condition factors (power relations, institutional dynamics, etc.) of actual socio-political development and of analysing the tension between these tendencies and plans for a guaranteed basic income. Political action cannot replace analysis, but must build on it. In this way, strategies can be developed that lead the basic income out of the utopia trap.

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