European Self-portrait: Evidence from Citizens' Dialogues

By

Cristina Pricop

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Tamás Meszerics

Budapest, Hungary

2019

Abstract

The question that this paper endeavours to explore is how the EU communicates itself to its citizens. More precisely, it inquires into how the EU understands and enacts its democratic relationship with the European people, and how it portrays its identity and its values. It does so by reviewing official EC documents on communication policies, the manner in which Citizens' Dialogues have been recently organised and subsequently focusing on the Citizens' Dialogues held with one of the highest-ranking officials in the European Commission, First Vice-President (FVP) Frans Timmermans. The theoretical and methodological approaches that inform the analysis are discourse theory and discourse analysis respectively. The analysis uncovers the internal inconsistencies between discourse (as text and oral communication) and practice, but also within the EU narrative as embodied by FVP Timmermans. He strives to present one overarching coherent image of the EU and of Europeanness yet builds it on contradictory values. Finally, the Dialogues enlarge the sphere of participation and of the political, while reinforcing discourses of (internal and external) exclusion.

Table of Contents

List of abbreviations

Critical Discourse Analysis – CDA

Directorate-General for Communication – DG Comm

European Union – EU

European Commission – EC

European Public Sphere – EPS

First Vice-President of the European Commission - FVP

Member State – MS

Member of the European Parliament – MEP

State of the European Union – SOTEU

Introduction

The European project has always been struggling to communicate itself to European citizens and to engage with them. The European Union (EU) is a new political animal, with a complex, multi-layered institutional and bureaucratic architecture, hence it is a fruitful avenue of research for academics and desirable career path for many young professionals; but for many European citizens, the European project remains "another place, a different political level and an external locus of decision-making more than it is an internal one" (Schlesinger 2007, 416-7). Moreover, it has been noted that there is no European consensus on what Europe means; member states appear to have constructed various images of the EU and do not focus their internal debates on the same EU issues (Rowinski 2017). The European project takes on different forms for people espousing different ideologies as well. Forster (2002) observed that the EU was criticised both by the left and by the right because of its trade policies – for being a capitalist club, and, at the same time, for leaning too much towards protectionism.

This paper aims to place Citizens' Dialogues - public events permitting direct interaction between the general public and EU officials, in particular Commissioners, most often in the form of questions and answers sessions – in the context of general communication strategies devised by the European Commission (EC) and of the existing debates around the legitimacy of the EU. In the face of growing distrust in elites, Citizens' Dialogues are an interesting case study as they represent one of the few occasions where "the EU" goes to meet its citizens where they are and builds a forum where they can express themselves. The major advantage that the Dialogues thus

provide is the occasion to observe and analyse an unmediated interaction between citizens and representatives of the EU. They offer both the chance to note the messages that the European Commission or the European Commissioners want to convey and the reaction to questions and opinions expressed by citizens.

The question that this paper endeavours to explore is how the EU communicates itself to its citizens. More precisely, it inquires into how the EU understands and enacts its democratic relationship with the European people, and how it portrays its identity and its values. It does so by reviewing official EC documents on communication policies, the manner in which Citizens' Dialogues have been recently organised and subsequently focusing on the Citizens' Dialogues held with one of the highest-ranking officials in the European Commission, First Vice-President (FVP) Frans Timmermans. The theoretical and methodological approaches that inform the analysis are discourse theory and discourse analysis respectively. The analysis uncovers the internal inconsistencies between discourse (as text and oral communication) and practice, but also within the EU narrative as embodied by FVP Timmermans. He strives to present one overarching coherent image of the EU and of Europeanness yet builds it on contradictory values. Finally, the Dialogues enlarge the sphere of participation and of the political, while reinforcing discourses of (internal and external) exclusion.

The paper begins with theoretical and methodological considerations. The second section offers an overview of the existing literature and main EU documents detailing communication policies and strategies. The third section includes an overview of the purposes of and dynamics at play in Citizens' Dialogues. The fourth section details the case selection, while the fifth consists of their analysis, devided into further subsections. The last section concludes.

Chapter 1: Theoretical and methodological considerations

Before proceeding to an analysis of the selected Citizens Dialogues, I shall present the theoretical and methodological considerations that inform this paper.

The study of the EU can accommodate a number of research methods: there are researchers "who emphasise interest-based rationality and game-theoretic behaviour; institutional path-dependencies and historically-shaped patterns of development; social constructions of action, culture and identity; or, most recently, ideas and discourse" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 183). The present paper follows the last approach, based on discourse analysis and theory, which have, in recent years become part of the researchers' toolkit in understanding the European project (Crespy 2015).

Discourse analysis can be approached both as a theory and as a method. Discourse theory "investigates the way in which social practices articulate and contest the discourses that constitute social reality" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 3) – whereby social practices encompass a wide range of phenomena from the functioning of institutions, to social norms and routines to the articulation of our understanding of them through discourse. Discourse analysis as method refers to the research endeavor of "analyzing empirical raw material and information as discursive forms" including both linguistic and non-linguistic data (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 4). One of the main features that they however share is that they both ask different types of research questions and it focuses on the power struggles that lead to the drawing of political frontiers based on inclusion and exclusion (Torfing 2005). In terms of the importance assigned to discourse in empirical studies (of the EU) that use discourse theory as their theoretical foundation, the spectrum

ranges from considering discourse as simply one of the factors to be scrutinised, without granting it an a priori privileged explanatory power, to viewing discourse as the organising principle bringing it to the foreground against a background of other mediating factors such as economic or political conditions (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004).

In their overview of discourse theory, Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) emphasize the rejection of the conceptualization of interests and preferences as immutable and rationally utility-maximizing, which are rather seen as a result of social constructs, co-constitutive with identity. This explains why, while discourse theory is nowadays a well-established branch of political science overall, its value does not go uncontested as some researchers challenge its ability to provide new insights and are concerned about its impact on scientific knowledge production (Torfing 2005).

Torfing (2005) provides an overview of the evolution of discourse theory, starting from the first generation – which focuses on linguistic interpretations – to the second – focusing on power relations as revealed through discourse, which in turn however is seen only as a subset of the broader social practices – to the third generation. This paper subscribes to the last category, of post-structuralist thought, which builds on previous scholarship while broadening the meaning of discourse to encompass all social phenomena. Discourse is hence contingent on a specific historical and political context, while identities have no predetermined or self-determining essence The paper also draws on the second generation of discourse analysis, namely critical discourse analysis, in order to uncover exclusions and inclusions based on power dynamics..

Schmidt and Radaelli (2004, 184) define discourse "in terms of its content, as a set of policy ideas and values, and in terms of its usage, as a process of interaction focused on policy formulation and communication". Another definition is provided by Bialasiewicz et al. (2007, 406), who view discourse as "a specific series of representations and practices through which meanings are

produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made more or less possible". From a more critical perspective, Laclau and Mouffe (1985, 29) consider discourse as a "system for the formation of statements" which exerts a structuring impact on "what can be said and what not". This paper embraces the vision that discourse is "a larger constraining context that is imposed upon individuals, defines what is possible or not, and ultimately, determines power relations", which does not however preclude an appreciation for the possibility of contestation in interactive discourses and hence for change (Crespy 2015, 3). Discourse is dependent on that which can be meaningfully said, and on the logics that have been articulated before, while reproducing and modifying them with every new iteration (Wæver 2005).

The ontological and epistemological position that this paper takes is that objects exist as a reality external to thought and language but their meaning cannot be constituted "outside of language and our traditions of interpretation" (Campbell 1992, 6). These are inspired by Butler's theory, who argues that "[t]he act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene" (Butler 1988, 526). She simultaneously stresses the agency that one has in performing their role and the pre-existing structures that shape the realm of the acceptable, the possible and the imaginable. Participants in Citizens Dialogues mostly act within the confines of pre-existing scripts for European citizens; by performing this role they at the same time reinforce it. Reality – and in this case each Dialogue - is interpreted through their understanding of what it is to be a citizen or even to have a dialogue, what is the appropriate relation with institutional actors and the legitimacy that the EU has in their eyes. Similarly, the manner in which these events are organized and structured reflect the worldviews of the organizers in terms of the appropriate and desirable relationship between 'the elite' and 'the public'. Furthermore, the answers given by Commissioners, their reactions to and interpretations of

reactions and questions from the public reveal views on the EU: its identity and values, its role on the world stage, its proper internal functioning. While the present paper does not take discourse to be *the* locus of reality, and it concedes that sometimes discourse is used with the intention of obscuring reality behind smoke screens, that they may distort rather than reflect actions, the author nevertheless finds it equally relevant in those cases as they provide an insight into what a community deems as acceptable.

To reiterate, political discourse is, of course, strategical. The arguments that are chosen, the frames that are employed, are all meant to serve a message and a political aim, to legitimize political institutions and positions. Yet an analysis of frames and narratives allows an insight into their worldview, into what they perceive as instrumental, fundamental or natural and taken for granted (Polletta and Ho 2006). Frames are most clearly defined as "the manner in which a choice problem is presented", as "interpretive packages" combining a "diagnosis of the social condition in need of remedy, a prognosis for how to effect such a remedy, and a rationale for action, a "call to arms"" (Polletta and Ho 2006, 190).

A focus on discourse enables a discussion on themes such as "the role of ideas in constituting political action, the power of persuasion in political debate, the centrality of deliberation for democratic legitimation, the construction and reconstruction of political interests and values, and the dynamics of change in history and culture" (Schmidt 2008, 305). The importance of dialogue in order to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of the public has certainly been a key point for the EC when relaunching the Dialogues as "discourse serves to explain political events, to legitimate political actions, to develop political identities, to reshape and/or reinterpret political history and, all in all, to frame the national political discussion" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 202-3). In so doing, these discourses (re)shape who "we" (as Europe, as the EU and as citizens) are, which in

turn creates the boundaries of possible and acceptable future policies (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 203). For example, polity that defines itself as a fortress may be less welcoming to newcomers, whereas citizens who view themselves as active and engaged members of a community may be resistant to policies enacted without proper democratic debate. At the same time, people possess multiple and layered, sometimes hybrid identities and choose in any given moment which one they make relevant (Wodak 1999, 16–17). It is therefore significant which ones they choose to present during the Citizens' Dialogues. Moreover, the same can be observed about institutions and polities. The EC is at the same time a supranational, technocratic body and an institution that has been making efforts to communicate with – or at least to – the larger public. The EU presents itself as – among others – an economic union, a democratic polity, a normative power and a global actor. Which of these identities prevails during Dialogues - and at which points – has an impact on the courses of action that are perceived as appropriate or acceptable.

It is furthermore the aim of this essay to bring to light the fact that "identities are socially constructed as on-going processes: they are embedded in and interact with historically specific social contexts composed of intersubjective meaning systems (discourse), material conditions, social practices, and institutional structures" (Peterson 2000, 37). The literature finds that national identities are discursively constructed in a manner that ignores intra-national differences, while emphasizing national uniqueness (Wodak 1999, 3). The case of EU identity, to the extent that it can be compared to a national type of identity, is unique from this perspective, as it tries to embrace both unity and diversity, while it has yet to find an emotional grounding in people's imaginary. European identity has been defined as encompassing a number of cultures "unified by common goals and values, by a particular model of society, and by economic and legal agreements" (Wodak and Weiss 2005, 121). Interestingly, however, the literature also points to the existence of multiple

identities, these variations being discursively performed differently depending on the public, context, or topic (Wodak 1999, 4). Taking into account the idea that identities are context-dependent, and shaped in interactions, it would be relevant to observe whether there are noticeable changes in the discourse of Commissioners that can be associated with the different settings (countries) in which the Citizens' Dialogues take place.

If, as I have argued, identity is also performatively constituted (Campbell 1992, 8), contrary to assertions of permanent and stable identity, there is no essential core of Europeanness outside of that which is discursively narrated and performatively enacted. The performative aspect refers to the fact that it is through discourse (as language *and* practice) that the objects of discourse come into being. That is the reason why the study of identities, ideologies and the general structuring of society lends itself particularly well to discourse analysis (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000).

In terms of the level of analysis, Chakravarty (2012) asserts that there has been a general shift in political science recently away from grand theories and towards lower levels of abstraction, towards politics as experienced and enacted by ordinary people, towards micropolitics. The theoretical and normative reasons for this change include the effect of micropolitics on macro trends, as well as the instrumental role that studying micropolitics dynamics, relations or situations has for our understanding of the macropolitical mechanisms. Furthermore, scholars from other branches of political science, such as complexity theory, have made a convincing case for the two-way interaction between the local and the global: we may be tempted to asset the domination of the latter over the former, but there is strong evidence to support the argument that, in a complex system such as post-modern society, the local will also have a considerable impact on the global (Byrne 2003).

Of particular relevance for the present paper, this approach offers a richer understanding of concepts such as power and identity, as demonstrated by Solomon and Steele (2017). This allows those elements that are not captured by abstract models to become visible again and, perhaps most importantly, it allows for a study of politics in which people take center stage. As such, this does not amount to a rejection of grand theories but is rather complementary to it, building on it while engaging with those aspects of reality that it cannot engage with.

While Citizens' Dialogues remain extra-ordinary events and are not part of the routine practices of ordinary citizens, they have by now arguably become part of the routines of Commissioners and they are creating new life situations in which citizenship and identity are enacted and reveal the ways in which the (explicitly) political is experienced by 'ordinary' people. Relying on critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method of analysis allows for a comprehensive analysis of events that are to some extent intended to simulate everyday communication but, in reality, take place in contrived circumstances. This includes the moderated dialogue, but also the staging and the presence of cameras or mobile phones filming the dialogue – which are however oftentimes barely noticeable. These interactions are yet less scripted than most communications such as press conferences, more unpredictable than interviews, hence more authentic despite the fact that Commissioners' answers would still be shaped by the internal lines to take of the EC. In this sense, the present paper may fall short of the ideal of CDA to center "on authentic everyday communication", but it recognises and asserts the "dialectical relationship between particular discursive acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded" (Wodak 1999, 8).

Critical discourse analysis can play a role in uncovering how "[r]itualised diplomatic practices and discourses stabilise over time, creating an idea of the normal" and opens the possibility of probing

alternative paths, and "what if" questions" (Charrett 2019, 281). It aims "to unmask ideologically permeated and often obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as strategies of discriminatory inclusion and exclusion in language use" (Wodak 1999, 8). What is of particular interest for this analysis is the manner in which identities and legitimation practices are constructed in interactions between officials and the public.

The literature acknowledges (and sometimes praises, sometimes laments) that the world of critical discourse analysis can be rather eclectic as there is no clear and generally accepted definition of CDA – as a theory or as a method (Wodak and Weiss 2005). This both allows for flexibility for the researcher to choose the precise method that would best suit the research question at hand but also places on their shoulders the responsibility of describing it in detail and justifying the choices that were made. Particular attention therefore needs to be devoted to explaining the theoretical assumptions and conceptual tools as well. However, there are a few broad theoretical points to which most CDA researcher subscribe. Critical discourse analysis enriches political analysis by bringing in contributions from linguistics and sociology (Wodak and Weiss 2005). As such, it is a method that is highly sensitive and adaptable to the context in which it is used. The discourse analysis literature is often criticised for the lack of details regarding the empirical process and methods used, the interpretive dimension of this approach is by definition prominent (Crespy 2015). Taking this into account, the process of case selection is discussed below.

In terms of methodology, as Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) point out, discourse theory does not have an unproblematic relationship with the idea of objective reality, therefore generalisations and predictions in the form of testable empirical hypotheses are not the goals it aims for. Instead, its intention is to reveal and explain the logic of discourses and the socially constructed nature of identities. As Gibson and Brown (2009, 62) argue, while quantitative research places great

emphasis on the notion of 'validity' as "measuring what you claim to be measuring", quantitative research has a more challenging relation with this idea, as the notion of (objective) truth itself is oftentimes disputed or questioned as part of the theoretical framework underpinning the research. Instead of validity, for discourse theory, "the ultimate tribunal is the degree to which its accounts provide plausible and convincing explanations of carefully probelmatised phenomena for the community of social scientists" (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 7). Moreover, even if one were to take a more quantitative, positivist approach, such as content analysis, "the difficulty of isolating the independent force of ideas" (Polletta and Ho 2006, 203) is notorious in political science, therefore making it very difficult for the researcher to establish clear causal relations, should they decide to take on such a task.

Wodak and Weiss (2005) suggest three directions for future research in discursively analysing the EU: the historical perspective, the communication perspective, and the participation and representation perspectives. This paper aims to tackle the last two dimensions. I shall explore one of the communication spaces established by the EC – in the form of Citizens Dialogues – in order to unpack (re)productions of ideas of Europe/European identities.

Discourse matters "not only in terms of the quality of the deliberation, but also the quantity of participation" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004, 204) – it defines appropriate terms of engagement with the political process. This paper follows the tradition of looking at how different interconnect and how "individual argumentation patterns are reformulated and recontextualized in different contexts" (Wodak 1999, 3). These discourses of course do not exist in a vacuum, in an ahistorical moment, but are conditioned by other previous discourses that the Commission had accepted in the past (Schmidt 2008, 312). While being presented as a discussion on "the future of Europe", the Dialogues are, in practice, and equally importantly, an attempt to explain and justify past policies.

Previous actions constrain future ones, but only to some extent. Similarly to the manner in which narratives serve the individual as a process whereby "it is possible to arrange and interpret, to rearrange and reinterpret past events in one's own life" (Wodak 1999, 14), past events and policies in the history of the European project can be re-told, selected and reframed in ways that suit current political interests.

Chapter 2: European Union communications – literature and documents review

Discourse analysis is enriched by an understanding of the (institutional) context in which it takes place, of the expected actors and roles that they are assigned (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004), therefore the next section is devoted to a short overview of the development of EC communication policies and their reception in the literature.

The EU has been rather successful in creating narratives of success and legitimacy towards the outside. Despite criticism, the idea of normative Europe (Manners 2002) still persists, and the EU has arguably established itself as a legitimate actor towards its neighbours through the European Neighbourhood Policy, thus proving to be a "powerful narrative teller" (Schumacher 2015, 396). However, persistent internal contestation has been acknowledged in the literature as a "constraining dissensus" taking place since the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty, which marked the end of the "permissive consensus", a period when the European project was run by insulated elites with the tacit permission of a largely unaware public (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Recent challenges to the EU have been even more radical, as shown by the increased popularity of Euro-sceptic parties and the UK vote to leave the Union. Therefore, we may posit that the EU has been less adept at designing a discourse that would be convincing to its own citizens.

The EU has been criticized for its lack of legitimacy (the democratic deficit), which is seen as stemming from various institutional flaws (Smismans 2013; Newman 2005; Pollack 2005) but also from a lack of deliberation and transparency (Lindgren and Persson 2010; Majone 2010; Risse and Kleine 2007). This latter problem is explored by Schmidt (2008) who identifies two types of

political discourse: "coordinative" discourses, that take place in the policy sphere, among individuals with a certain degree of direct influence on policy choices (the elites), attempting to reach an agreement among themselves regarding "the creation, elaboration and justification of policy and programmatic ideas" (310), while "communicative" discourses belong to the public sphere, being a type of top-down communication and post hoc justification. The EU is presented as both lacking a clear connection between the two spheres and having the weakest communicative discourse – explained by Schmidt as due to the lack of an elected government – and the strongest coordinative discourse – seen as the result of its highly complex institutional mechanisms. In their ideal form, Citizens' Dialogues represent an attempt at bringing the – (self)selected – citizens into the policy sphere, the space of coordinative discourses. This is evident in the discursive desire expressed by the EC to "listen" to citizens on matters pertaining to the future of Europe, and in the documents summarizing the events, wishing to emphasize the results of the listening exercise.

Legitimacy itself, understood in a classical Weberian sense as a belief in the rightfulness of an actor's authority, has been further conceptualized in a number of ways, emphasizing the use of appropriate procedures to listen to citizens and their opinions (input), the use of appropriate decision-making processes (throughput), the instrumental value in results obtained (output), or the entitlement of institutions to make binding decisions for a group of citizens that constitutes itself as a demos (substantial) (Pansardi and Battegazzorre 2016). Meanwhile, legitimation is the process whereby such a belief is claimed of conferred and the EU is seen as often failing at offering public justifications for actions or decisions taken at the European level. The research undertaken by Pansardi and Battegazzorre (2016) using qualitative and quantitative content analysis offers an insight into the legitimacy frames and legitimation strategies used by Presidents Barroso and Juncker in State of the European Union (SOTEU) addresses. The authors' conception of

legitimation is based on the seminal work of Van Leeuwen (2007), and they group legitimacy into (a) values and goals based (with five, respectively six subcategories: economic, ethical, political, scientific and social values, and constitutive, political, economic, social, eidetic, and ethical goals) and (b) community-based legitimacy (symbols of popular sovereignty, of global designation, of the supranational community, of the treaties, of the common historical experience and memory). Pansardi and Battegazzorre (2016) found Barroso's speeches to be more focused on economic and output legitimacy, while noting an increased emphasis on democratic procedures and moral evaluations in Juncker's SOTEU. This paper also focuses in part on the discourse of European decision-makers, namely Commissioners, as it has been proven that political discourse alone can have a major impact on people's perceptions even when all other factors are controlled for (Schmidt 2008, 312). This means that attendance of such events can be significant, a fortiori since the Brussels discourse rarely reaches the wider public directly, being more often re-told, and re-framed by national media.

The EU has set high standards for itself, maintaining that, similarly to any democratic system of governance, it has to "to create the conditions for an active exercise of citizenship" (Caremier and Wyles 2002, 13). Yet the EU discourse has in practice been characterized by coordinative practices, in a multi-actor environment combining the national and transnational arenas, where the communicative practice is however mostly left to the national actors, in part due to factors such as a lack of a common European language or media (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004). This is one of the reasons why an initiative such as Citizens' Dialogues, aimed at reaching citizens directly and systematically, is noteworthy.

The choice to focus on the European Commission's communication efforts is motivated primarily by its supranational character: among the main EU institutions, it is the one that explicitly has as

its mission the promotion of the general interest of the EU (European Commission n.d.) rather than that of a member state or of a political group. Furthermore, as it is one of the main focal points for criticism related to the EU democratic deficit due to its unelected nature, the Commission has actively been trying to enhance its legitimacy and improve its communication strategies, as described below. Given that much of the anti-EU feelings are directed at the "unelected bureaucrats in Brussels", interactions with Commissioners are more likely to give rise to discourses about the nature of the EU and allow an insight into existing tensions – as opposed to discussions with members of the European Parliament (MEPs) which one could expect to have a more overtly and traditionally ideological focus or discussions with heads of state and government or ministers in the context of the European Council/the Council of the EU which would most probably have a more national focus.

In this context of contestations to its legitimacy, the Commission has been trying to be actively engaged in communicating the European project, and a sense of Europeanness, to its citizens. Bee (2008) identified the different strategies that the EC has used throughout time in order to reach the general public. The first identity building exercise was marked by an emphasis on symbols and symbolic actions: "European awards, sport competitions, the formation of a European orchestra, […] European-scale celebrations like 9 May as the Schuman Celebration, the implementation of actions aimed at defining Europe as a new cultural space such as the creation of the European City of Culture" (Bee 2008, 441). The 1990s brought about the first real information campaigns, while the turn of the century meant a shift towards a more value-based approach to citizenship, as the Commission understood the need to confer more substance to European identity. That is also the time when the now well known "bring Europe closer to its citizens" formula starts being used and

when the EC begins emphasising the need to develop a European public space and the need to involve the citizens more in the decision making-process.

Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate was launched in 2005, as a result of the official recognition by the EC that the democratic deficit existed – only to then start the ratification processes for the Lisbon Treaty with no genuine EU-wide debate (Ivic 2017). The goals of today's Dialogues may seem both ambitious and innovative, but in fact Plan D had a very similar aim: "Ultimately, this process should result in a concrete road map for the future of Europe" (European Commission 2005). Yet the Commission essentially placed the responsibility of the implementation of Plan D on member states, which, as anticipated before, did not have any incentives to actually work towards its realisation (Ivic 2017). This points not only to the anxiety of the EU after the failed Constitutional Treaty, but also to its half-hearted commitment to public communication, with a very timid implementation.

The declarative intentions have improved and become more inclusive and ambitious over the years, but possibly due to a fear of losing control over the direction of the European project in a large-scale debate with its citizens, the EC may end up failing to encourage – or, at worst, preventing – genuine European public engagement. In the case of the national debates on the Constitutional Treaty, for example, the EC aimed to provide information but to not be seen as actively advocating for it (Michailidou 2007, 152). It opted for the same strategy more than a decade later, during the debate in the UK on leaving the European Union. This may point to a self-image of a neutral arbiter, to an unwillingness to engage in debates and then take responsibility if they "fail", or to a concern to not in any way risk a damage to an already imperfect public image. Regardless of the reasons behind it, the EC has maintained this approach throughout the years, as Michailidou (2007, 124) notes that, for documents in the 2000 – 2006 period, the Commission

"appears reluctant to assume a leading, proactive role in communicating with the public, leaving this role to the member-states, despite their disappointing efforts in this area so far". Yet engagement initiatives continued to be designed and implemented. The 2013 European Year of Citizens brought about a number of Citizens' Dialogues, which however did not appear to lead to genuine deliberation, but to mere debates (Ivic 2017, 85). This is particularly disappointing as the literature has noted a shift in the rhetoric of the Commission itself, from an output-based claim to legitimacy to a focus on a more participatory type of democracy (Magnette 2003, 147). The 2001 White paper on European governance for example makes a case for "a less top-down approach" and a "more inclusive and accountable" policy-making process (Commission of the European Communities 2001, 4–8). Attempts made by the EC to communicate directly with EU citizens have thus been seen as serving the dual purpose of conveying messages about policies and about the polity – about the impartiality and transparency of the process (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004).

In 2003, Magnette argued that policies aimed at increasing participation will probably only target organised groups in the civil society, while the vast majority of citizens will be left out. He notes that these policies will be designed with active citizens and their groups in mind, rather than with the goal of enhancing "the *general level of civic consciousness and participation*" (148, emphasis in original). This probably holds true for Citizens' Dialogues as one would expect that most citizens who participate in such low-publicity events are already familiar with the EU. Magnette's observation that the Commission appears more interested in stakeholders and interested parties than in citizens and people is however to some extent challenged by today's reality. The EC has in more recent times launched, relaunched or strengthened a number of initiatives aimed at citizens, from public consultations, to citizens' initiatives, to questionnaires. Another problem that he

identifies and that remains valid over a decade later is the fact that this type of participation has never been linked in a legal or clear manner to the decision-making process.

Boucher (2009) notes that in its official policies and documents, the EC has been borrowing language from the deliberative democracy school of thought but has failed to clarify the role that such citizen deliberation would have in the policy-making process. The listening desideratum has been part of EC policy at least since Plan D (2005). However, these initiatives have always rested on an underlying assumption that the citizens not only need to be listened to, but they also need to be informed, taught, guided in their opinions of the EU. One of the central objectives of the Plan D was to "widen recognition for the added value that the EU provides" (Commission of the European Communities 2008, 24) which suggests a hope in the Commission that people's lack of appreciation for the EU is less due to a genuine disagreement with the European project, or the political and ideological direction in which it is going, and more to a lack of information. Boucher discusses the stated goals of a number of citizens' consultations born out of Plan D and concludes that they pull in different directions. These events were envisioned as being at once "citizen-oriented" (empowering the public) and "self-centered" (increasing turnout in EP elections, widening recognition for the benefits that the EU brings) – thus emphasizing the ambivalent stance the EC had on "listening" to citizens once again. They were also meant to be "action-oriented" - goal which was undermined by the lack of any clear guidelines for post-event actions. He furthermore questions their efficiency as "one wonders what can be inferred from the opinions of a small handful of largely self-selected citizens for the rest of Europe" (Boucher 2009, 8) – a criticism that could also be leveled against the current Citizens' Dialogues. However, this will hold true to some extent of any qualitative exploration into people's opinions. The most stringent problem then is the way these discussions can be portrayed as having offered legitimate solutions,

policy directions – whose legitimacy stems from the fact that they come from ordinary – or true – Europeans. However, there may still be some value in the process itself as far as it empowers the participating citizens, it shapes their perception of their role as active EU citizens engaged in deliberation processes. Yet Boucher also notes that there was almost no deliberation – for lack of time or for lack of a reasoned exchange of opinions. Therefore, to the extent that this type of events shape perceptions of democracy, they are potentially problematic; to the extent that they do not, they add to the capabilities-expectations gap. Citizens are told that they will be listened to but are presented with a reality where they are being lectured or they see no sign of the EU actually having listened, thus worsening their perception of the EU democratic deficit (Boucher 2009).

The 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan of Directorate-General for Communication (DG Comm) emphasises the need for the EC to speak with one voice, and to be both pro-active and reactive (European Commission 2016). The document mentions a few times that the communication strategy needs to focus on the 10 priorities set by the Commission. While having a focus, a direction and a message are probably generally desirable, it also suggests a lack of a willingness to adapt to citizens' priorities. Throughout the document, the emphasis in not on listening to citizens, or even on giving them a voice, a channel to communicate with the EU bottom-up, but rather on informing them about the 10 priorities. This includes the Citizens' Dialogues which "will focus on the political priorities" (European Commission 2016, 7), although they are one of the very few opportunities for EU officials to listen to the general public, and one of the relatively many opportunities for people to hear from decision-makers; believing that one can control the topics in a public debate open to everyone can also be read as a sign of wishful thinking and of a willingness to engage with the public – but only on the Commission's terms. The document identifies the "overarching objective shared across the whole "communication domain" of the

Commission [:] Citizens perceive that the EU is working to improve their lives and engage with the EU. They feel that their concerns are taken into account in European decision-making process and they know about their rights in the EU". These are all goals towards which the EU should strive, and which DG Comm should focus on. Yet the lack of any mention as to how the "concerns" of the EU citizens will be communicated to EU decision-makers is rather troubling. The bottom-up input appears to still mostly rely on media analyses, Representations, and Eurobarometers. The 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan does however signal a general desire to communicate not only to but also with the citizens. It mentions EC publications in local and easy to read language, and a focus on digital and social media, which are both approaches that should "bring Europe closer to its citizens". Indeed, the literature notes that, for example, the language used in the EUROPA.EU website has become relatively accessible (Michailidou 2006, 139). It is clear that the internet "has enabled the Commission to make the policy-making process more open to the public's feedback" (Michailidou 2006, 7), but less clear precisely how that feedback feeds into policy-making.

Experts and politicians however have questioned whether the EC is indeed the best suited institution to communicate with EU citizens in the first place. Jim Dougal, the Head of the EC Representation in the UK resigned in 2004 because he believed that "convincing people in the UK to tolerate, let alone love, Europe, in present circumstances is an impossible task" (Dougal 2003). He believed that it should not be the responsibility of the Commission to 'sell' the European project to the public, because its own bureaucratic and rules-bound nature makes it impossible that the institution could communicate effectively with the public. Dougal argued that it should be the task of national politicians to present the EU to their people, and that when Commissioners fail spectacularly and are perceived as outsiders when they try to talk to the British public. While these may be surprising arguments coming from an employee of the EC, they are worth considering

precisely because they come from an insider. The EC is indeed a huge bureaucratic machine, which has arguably proven incapable or unwilling to engage in fully open and persuasive two-way dialogue. At the same time however, one wonders whether national politicians would have any incentive to promote the EU to their citizens, rather than using it as a scapegoat – as they already do. Furthermore, assuming that they indeed engaged in an effort to communicate the EU to the national public, one sees the danger that this would forever impede the creation of truly European discussions and the citizens' perception of the EU would always be filtered through national lenses – even more so than it is the case today.

As we have seen, the EC itself has acknowledge the alienation of citizens from Brussels and the lack of European forums for debate. Despite many efforts, the Commission's direct communication with EU citizens is far from perfect. The European Commission has established a number of discussion spaces (forums, websites), and that can be beneficial to European identity/identification and to general participation, but it is still worth inquiring what type of identity is created, who uses them, who is included and who is excluded, particularly when the last category is obscured in public communications and thus is deprived of its own claim to democratic respect and equality. In the ensuing discussion, this essay also endeavors to maintain an awareness of the fact that EU studies often run the risk of including an unstated bias regarding the normative desirability of the European project and hence of depicting the Eurosceptic public in a negative light (Crespy 2015).

Chapter 3: Citizens' Dialogues – overview and relevance

Reality is constantly shaped and reshaped by everyday practices. Yet this exercise of "doing" Europe may be more important and more consequential than most practices of "doing" nation states as the latter is a concept we are all socialised into. Rarely do people contest the legitimacy of the nation state per se, although specific nation states with specific borders and policies may face a more difficult path to domestic and international recognition. The EU on the other hand is "under construction". So much so that it has been argued that "Europe […] is the process itself, not the goal, thus never reaching clear solutions, but going "from one complexity to another", always reforming the status quo" (Oberhuber 2005, 176). It is therefore essential to analyse those instances of "doing" Europe that involve European citizens. Following Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyżanowski (2009), this paper aims to discuss from a qualitative perspective "different discursive patterns of 'talking about Europe'" (2009, 4). However, while their studies analyse media content, the present one focuses on narratives produced by the public and their interaction with Commissioners.

The timing of the Citizens' Dialogues is also particularly conducive to analyse discourses about the EU as they coincide with – and are being organised in part due to – the UK vote to leave the Union and the refugee crisis. Conditions of uncertainty produce uncertainty over interests as well, thus opening up the possibility for change (Haas 1992). Such crises are hence moments that provide a window of opportunity for elites to engineer a change in ideas and discourses (Schmidt 2008, 320) and, more generally, they are moments when identities are being (re)negotiated

(Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyżanowski 2009, 4). The impact of these crises on the level and type of Euroscepticism of national political parties for example has been empirically researched by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2018).

This approach places the paper within the literature that considers it essential to analyse the practice of citizenship and "the dynamic relationship between the normative, social, institutional, and theoretical pre-constructions of citizenship, and what is communicatively achieved in participatory events" (Fairclough, Pardoe, and Szerszynski 2006, 119). In line with more general theoretical considerations of this essay, citizenship is not attributed a fixed meaning outside of interactions between institutions and citizens, but rather taken as constructed and performed in these dynamics. People are thus supposed to posses the agency necessary to transform the meaning and function of citizenship while enacting it (E. Isin 2017, 501). The communicative aspect of citizenship is considered as essential:

> "the type of citizenship we are interested in emerges when government and citizens come in direct contact […] In our understanding, citizenship is a communicative achievement […] Finally, we assume that the communicative achievement of citizenship can best be described in terms of social positioning between and among those participating in a concrete procedure, because communicatively achieved citizenship emerges as a relevant social position in the participatory discussion itself" (Heiko Hausendorf and Bora 2006, 86)

Citizens' Dialogues are presented as part of a larger communication effort undertaken by the EC in an effort "to hear all views and ideas, from right across Europe – from East to West and from North to South" (European Commission 2018, 11). The EU thus again claims ownership over the meaning of "Europe" and over the reality described by "Europe", which is of course not new

(Sassatelli 2002) but it is particularly glaring when certain types of places are excluded (rural areas in particular).

These events can also be read as an attempt to address the by now infamous European democratic deficit. As such, they are revealing of what the EC considers as a model for EU democracy. As mentioned above, EC documents emphasise the need for Commissioners "to listen", to learn from citizens. The practice of the dialogues however exposes a different worldview. The events are staged as questions and answers sessions, in which the Commissioners assume the role of conveyors of 'valuable' and 'valued' knowledge, whereas citizens who take more than the undefined allocated time in expressing their views are usually urged by the moderator to "please ask your question". Therefore, while the stated goal is to "engage with stakeholders" (European Commission n.d.), the manner in which the events are structured betray a rejection of the idea of "equality of intelligence" where no one intelligence is subordinated to another (Ranciére 1991) – principle which arguably is the necessary basis for any democratic debate. The EC furthermore takes on the role of "learned schoolmaster" when it divides its citizens into "those who know the vocabulary of Europe" and "the uninitiated" (European Commission 2018, 11): there is a code to understanding Europe (presumably including not only institutional mechanisms but also culture, values, identity/ies) that not all of its citizens understand, code to which the EC has privileged access and hence the authority to divide people according to their level of understanding.

Citizens Dialogues are indeed an expression of this perceived need to open direct communication channels with the European public. While they provide opportunities for direct encounters with "faceless bureaucrats", from a more pragmatic perspective, they also suffer from a lack of clear purpose. Nowhere is it clearly specified the manner in which any input from the citizens would be aggregated or used in policy-making. There are reports done by the EU, which focus on numbers

of people (potentially) reached, most debated topics, and feature quotes from participants, but they lack a practical, tangible output of these communication exercises. The reason why this is dangerous is this type of exercise, even when well-intended, can back-fire, lead to a general fatigue and frustrations among the populations who are heard but not listened to, hence sometimes no participation tools may be less destructive than poorly designed participation tools (Thomson 2012).

Similar criticism can be levelled at some more elite-focused attempts at defining the form of the European project. For example, the Convention on the Future of Europe (2001-2003), which bought together representatives of governments, of the EC, of the EP and of national parliaments, has also been described as unsatisfactory in terms of the quality of deliberation, as "arguments exchanged by two or more speakers only rarely took place"(Oberhuber 2005, 175), while the Presidium was the focal point of communications

What Oberhuber (2005) finds out in his analysis of the Convention is that a dominant, mainstream discourse arises as a result of discarding positions at the extreme sides of the spectrum, marginalising divergent issues and questions and ignoring or even ostracizing deviant stances. There are seven factors he hypothesises contribute to this dynamic. The first one is the selection process. While there was a formal procedure that the Convention followed, the Citizens' Dialogues are normally open to the general public (albeit sometimes with access restricted to people who have pre-registered, or take place in universities or NGO fairs thus having a high chance of only attracting a particular segment of the population). Yet the most important result of the selection procedure for the Convention is one that can reasonably be hypothesised as also being present in Citizens' Dialogues: only 'insiders' take part in such processes. The second factor refers to decision-making via consensus. Since there are no binding decisions to be made during the

Dialogues, one may presume that this has no bearing on these discussions. However, the EU officials are socialised into a culture of consensus decision-making, which may on the one hand limit their reactions (via general EC policies and lines to take) and on the other hand make them generally more prone to favour consensus building positions, to exclude dissonant views or to rephrase and reframe them in a more mainstream manner. In the most recent progress report on these events (European Commission 2018), the EC identifies a "[the] resounding message" from citizens, thus suggesting a homogeneity that the Commission can translate and articulate, relaying it back to the people. The optimistic assertion that "Europeans want to shape the future of their Union" obscures feelings of disempowerment expressed during Dialogues, and it obscures the opposite feeling expressed by (some) citizens by not taking part in the debate. It furthermore delegitimises the opinion of those who did not consider this to be a genuine form of debate undertaken by a legitimate institution. The same report emphasises "the need to join forces when communicating about the benefits that Europe brings to everyone" (8). This again suggests that citizens need to have the EU explained to them, rather than allowing them to create their own meaning, while brushing over complaints regarding its neoliberal logic, the "hollowing out of the welfare state" (Rhodes 1994) and unequivocally presenting the EU as a force for good.

Time pressure and workload are the third factor that Oberhuber notes. This is in a sense also applicable to the Citizens' Dialogues as, although they do not have a set agenda, the ultimate goal is no less than to design a vision for the future of Europe. Certain events have been more focused, as the organisers decided to guide the discussion towards more specific policy areas (e.g. the digital market, migration, the EU as a global actor) but the task itself remains daunting, especially when considering the very limited time (usually between one and two hours) that Commissioners usually have allocated for such events. The privileged position of the President(s) at the Convention is the

fourth relevant element, and it is mirrored by the indisputable and outmost centrality of the Commissioner(s) during the Dialogues. The fifth noteworthy aspect in Oberhuber's analysis is the incrementalism to which the Convention was fated as a result of its mandate. While the same cannot be said of the Citizens' Dialogues, it may still be the case that the propositions and ideas that the Commissioners acknowledge – or acknowledge as valid – as well as the policy proposals coming from their side follow the same incremental line. Finally, and crucially, the absence of genuine debate was a characteristic of the Convention, and the format of the Citizens' Dialogues do not go a long way in encouraging such deliberation either. Moreover, Oberhuber notes that the plenary sessions mostly served the role of allowing the Presidium to assess "[w]hich positions are supported by a broad majority, in which areas is it that vital interests are claimed, which opinions can be seen as minority positions and thus ignored" (180) – which one may hypothesis is also part of the goals of the Commission in organising these Dialogues.

3.1 Space

While the intersection between politics and performance theory is a territory whose potential has begun being uncovered, more attention has been devoted to observations of the space of political encounters, and the manner in which locations shape what can be said (Charrett 2019). The importance of staging is also being recognized: "[c]onstructed social positions appear in audible *and* visible forms" (Hausendorf and Bora 2006, 87, emphasis added). Discourse is thus being recognized as a complex social and political phenomenon, defined not merely by its text but also "to whom you say it, how, why, and where in the process of policy construction and political communication in the "public sphere"" (Schmidt 2008, 309). A broader understanding of discourse thus legitimizes an analysis of space as "one of the ways in which the body perceives power relations" (Kohn 2003, 5).

Commissioners are indeed often on a stage, often on a platform. This leaves no room to wonder who the focus of the event shall be. Smaller events, such as the one held with the participation of Commissioner Gabriel in Paris on 15 March 2018 (Commission européenne en France 2018b) allow for a different type of staging where the official, while still the focus of attention, in not placed in the centre of the room, nor higher up than the public. Furthermore, events where participants are not seated open up the possibility of mobility, of interacting with the Commissioner in a manner that seems more natural, as seen for example in Toulouse with Commissioner Moscovici on 21 February 2018 (Commission européenne en France 2018a) when participants were encouraged, when speaking, to move closer to the Commissioner.

It is thus noteworthy where the Dialogues take place. The Citizens' Dialogues have not repudiated the most traditional spaces of politics. They have taken place in city halls, in regional councils. Yet they have also been organized in universities, museums, theatres, (NGO) fairs, even outdoors. This is indeed an expansion of the spaces deemed for political conversations. The Dialogue organized during Europe Day in Paris on 12 May 2018 with Commissioner Moscovici (FRANCE 24 2018), provides an example of enlarging the realm of the political and a contestation of traditionally acceptable attitudes towards high-level political events: it takes place in a tent, and part of the public is sitting down on the ground. However, restrictions of access do apply sometimes: prior registration may be required, and a security control akin to the procedure in airports has been put in place for certain events (e.g. President Juncker's Dialogue in Bucharest).

Chapter 4: Case selection

As is characteristic of much qualitative research, the case studies have not been selected through random sampling. This paper employs purposive sampling, with the aim of selecting the cases that are – taken both together and separately – most relevant to the research. This is in line with the goal of present 'thick descriptions' and a contextualized, nuanced understanding of the social and political phenomena under consideration (Gibson and Brown 2009, 59).

The population of cases to be considered initially included all Citizen Dialogues organised since 2015 until the time of the analysis. Any events that had a similar format but were not specifically labelled as Citizens' Dialogue were excluded. For example, there was a meeting in 2018 between Commissioner Moscovici and the readers of SudOuest in France which took the form of a questions and answers session but lacked any reference to Citizens' Dialogues. There were other events that had to be excluded due to lack of publicly available recordings, such as the ones with First Vice-President FVP Timmermans in Paris on 13 May 2017, Commissioner Moscovici in Paris on 25 March 2017, or Commissioner Moedas in Strasbourg on 14 March 2017.

The substantive analysis will include Citizens' Dialogues with FVP Frans Timmermans, responsible for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The choice to focus on one Commissioner is due to a desire to be able to identify common frames used in discourse. FVP Timmermans' portfolio also makes it more likely that conversations will more directly tackle issues pertaining to the democratic character of the Union, to its values and identity. The selected dialogues aim to allow variation in geography and accession time, and to maintain a balance between capital cities and the province. This

consideration also explains the reason why President Juncker was not chosen for the analysis, as the Citizens' Dialogues in which he took part are have predominantly taken place in the West. Out of 12 events, only one took part in the East (in Romania), and only one in the South (in Portugal, not available online). Commissioner Avramopoulos, whose portfolio covers Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, topics which were likely to inspire passionate debates touching upon meanings of Europe, was also considered for the case selection but, at the time when the analysis was started, he had attended only 5 Citizens' Dialogues, one of which was not recorded. Another criterion that has been considered for selection was the number of views of each video. However, it quickly became apparent that comparisons could not be made, due to the videos having been published on different platforms that either have different algorithms in counting views or do not display the number of views.

In chronological order of their taking place, the Citizens' Dialogues analysed in this paper are:

1. A Citizens' Dialogue taking place in Riga, Latvia, on 8 January 2015. The main reason for its selection was the fact that it is the first such event in which FVP Timmermans took part. His stage partners were Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Crețu. The languages spoken were Latvian, English and Romanian. The Dialogue is available online in original on YouTube and on the EC website in original and translated into ten languages (simultaneous translation). The analysis is mostly based on the English translation, although the French, Italian and Romanian versions have also been consulted.
2. A Dialogue which took place in Rennes, France, on 7 November 2016. His stage partner is the French cartoonist Plantu. The original version, which informs this paper, is entirely in French and available on YouTube.

3. An event organised in Bucharest, Romania, on 20 April 2017. There are no stage partners, and the conversation takes place in Romanian and English. The analysis is based on the only version available online, the original version, published on the social media page of the EC Representation in Romania.
4. A Dialogue held in an international high school in Rotterdam, Netherlands, on 27 Jun 2017. The FVP is not sharing the stage with any other guests and the only language spoken is English. The original audio and video recording is available through the EC website.
5. A Dialogue organized outdoors in a piazza in Syracuse, Italy, that took place on 13 October 2017. The FVP did not have a stage partner. The original and the English translation are available though the EC website.
6. An event that took place in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on 29 June 2018. FVP Timmermans' stage partner was former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. The entire event was held in English and is available through the EC website.
7. The most recent event to be considered took place in Krakow, Poland, on 23 January 2019. The recording is available online on YouTube in the English translation – although the majority of the Dialogue takes place in English. The FVP shares the stage with the President of Tuscany, Enrico Rossi.

Due to the focus on communication efforts of the Commission, and because Commissioners have had very diverse stage partners (from Ministers to cartoonists), with diverse political affiliations and relations to the EU, the questions specifically addressed to and the answers given by a stage partner, should one exist, will not be taken into account in this analysis.

This paper maintains an awareness that the case under consideration is a best-case scenario in a sense. Citizens self-select into the process. The public attending such a Dialogue would have not only to have found out about an event that does not attract massive attention from the national media, but also be interested enough in the EU to be willing to spend their time at the CD. They are clearly not representative of the population – in terms of their preoccupation with the EU, and - one can presume - in terms of demographics. Furthermore, they are all city dwellers. We would therefore also expect to see more positive attitudes towards integration than the national average, as data from the Eurobarometer suggests – valid across time and across countries (Duchesne et al. 2010, 75). They are moreover primed to think about the EU. Therefore, these Citizens' Dialogues would provide us with one of the most optimistic scenarios for the existence or emergence of an EPS among EU citizens. However, as the large focus group study undertaken by Duchesne et al. (2010) shows, even prompting people to talk about the EU by giving them questions pertaining to the distribution of power in Europe or Turkey's potential for accession does not guarantee that their discussions will focus on Europe: "On the part of the French, […] they characteristically chose to discuss anything but the EU" (82). Moreover, while the purpose of the event is to discuss the future of Europe, the frames and narratives used to talk about the EU, its identity and legitimacy, are unpredictable.

Chapter 5: Analysis

The following section is dedicated to an analysis of the general structure of the seven chosen Citizens' Dialogues and the dynamic between FVP Timmermans and the citizens.

5.1. Structure

Some events are unstructured, such as the ones in Bucharest (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017) or the one in Amsterdam (European Commission 2015b), with only the questions of the participants determining the direction of the conversation, while others are divided into sub-sections dedicated to specific topics, pre-determined by the organisers (e.g. Rennes, Rotterdam). Taking the case of the Dialogue in Rennes, the event is divided in three parts, each of which begins with a question asked by a representative of civil society. This reflects the fact that the EC has considered (international)non-governmental groups as legitimate discussion partners – and has used consultations with them in order to increase its own legitimacy (Bouwen 2009, Lehmann 2009). These topics were discussed during three workshops, each of which identified one question. While we do not have much information on the deliberative process in these workshops, they do seem to introduce an element of deliberative democracy that could potentially be more meaningful.

The organisers of the event pre-selected challenges that the EU is facing: reception of refugees, reaction to the identitarian closure (nationalist politics), the fight against terrorism. Whether people in the room perceived these situations as problems could not have been determined a priori; yet the manner in which the Dialogue is conducted means that they will have been primed to think of them in such terms. Moreover, the moderators differ in their assumptions about citizens' interests and the extent to which they voice these assumptions, hence priming the audience to think along certain lines. In the opening remarks, sometimes the message from the moderator is strictly related

to the functioning of the EU, sometimes the moderator includes a mention of the host country and yet at other times they focus in particular on it, such as in the Dialogue in Riga: "all of us are mainly interested to priorities related to Latvia" (European Commission 2015a).

In terms of how the relationship with the audience is viewed, there are general efforts to create a sense of equality among participants: they are usually asked to only introduce themselves with their names, "there is no need to put yourselves a title" (European Commission 2017b). Yet at other times (even during the same event) there are people who are recognised by the moderator in terms of their title and are given a special position during the dialogue either as a special and pre-determined interlocutor to the Commissioner (e.g. an imam in Syracuse) or even as someone to address the 'audience' (e.g. a Member of the European Parliament in Rennes). In Riga, despite the Dialogue being attended by "500 citizens from all parts of Latvia as well as from Estonia and Lithuania" (European Commission 2015a) – according to the official EC summary of the event – all participants who asked questions were people the moderator knew by full name and who held various positions in institutions such as the Latvian National Defence Academy or the Ministry of Defence.

The moderators often emphasise the idea that this event is a "real dialogue" and mention that all subjects can be discussed, hence it is the public who control the agenda, that they are free to ask questions, offer criticism or present opinions, while the Commissioner is there to listen. In Bucharest (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017), the moderator's introductory remarks include the statement that "[i]t is a privilege to be able to learn…from highest level official and you, the audience". The special status of the Commissioner in the Dialogue is recognised, yet the value of his knowledge is not overtly privileged. By contrast, in Rotterdam (European Commission 2017a), the moderator explicitly asserts that the role of the audience is to ask

questions that will be answered by FVP Timmermans. Surprisingly then, the event in Rotterdam is the only one among those included in this analysis where the moderator asks (two) specific participants their opinion on the topics they had asked the Commissioner about. These however remain isolated events and the conversation does not continue.

While people in the audience are interrupted while talking if their interventions last for "too long", the moderators also remind FVP Timmermans that shorter answers are desirable. Therefore, it is less the authority of the Commissioner that appears to prevail, and rather that of a format imposed through the moderator. However, what the format reveals is that it is the citizens who are meant to listen, as their remarks are, without exception, shorter than those of the Commissioner.

The contradiction between the stated goals of this communication exercise and the social practice that results are not apparent only in terms of power dynamics as seen through structuring the Dialogue or through the usage of space, but also at the level of textual discourse. In Rennes, citizens are invited to participate in an "active manner", "but not too much either because we have to listen to what is happening at the centre of the debate"(Commission européenne en France 2016): it is therefore clear that there is a centre, in the person of the VP, and that there is a hierarchy. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, during the Bucharest dialogue, one of the participant's microphone is cut off as she was speaking for 'too long' yet we can hear her in the background saying "well, it is not democratic what is happening, alright? This is not democratic" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017). Timmermans does not engage with her any further and does not address the underlying objection regarding the manner in which the Dialogue is organised.

At a declarative level, the Commissioner is prepared to accept alternative views and to be challenged: "I am not saying you need to follow me; I'm giving an example, take it or leave it; if

you have a better idea, good for you. […] The EU is not a goal in itself, it's a tool – if in the future you find a better one, kudos, I will support it". However, he quickly follows with "but for now it [the EU] is still the best show in town" (European Commission 2019). Therefore, the need to support the EU stems less from its intrinsic value, and more from a lack of alternative.

In terms of interaction with the public, the FVP often takes for granted the views of European citizens at large and as such fails to engage with his direct interlocutors. When people try to challenge the control/management frame regarding migration in Rennes, either by pointing to economic repercussions or to the humanitarian aspect, the FVP reverts to his frame in his reaction. When a participant asks whether some actions undertaken by the EU challenge the Geneva convention, Timmermans asserts that "the people" want to see that "we" are capable of managing this issue (Commission européenne en France 2016). The people are a uniform mass, abstract. The Commission's actions are legitimised – in this context – because they comply with the majority will. Furthermore, the people's preferences are taken as fixed ("if we don't do it [migration management and control], we will not have the support of the people"). The debate is hence in fact over, the EC has knowledge of what the people think, and they have a mandate.

Timmermans often does not appear to be willing to accept the possibility of a real conflict between his values and those of the public or even of the people in broader terms. Even people who support nationalist parties are presumed to mostly not genuinely hold nationalistic views: "National extremists are attacking our values. But people see something else, they're attacking the establishment, people in power" (European Commission 2017b). There is a conflict between the nationalistic and European values, but this mostly exists as expressed by politicians, while people are in fact dissatisfied with the establishment rather than with the values it embodies. Furthermore, citizens who support their country leaving the EU are written out of existence: "I don't see any

support in any member state for leaving the European Union today [..] we need to give the EU citizens more credit, they are more level-headed, more focused on their own long-term interests than some politicians believe" (European Commission 2017a). Should there be any European citizen holding such views, there are therefore automatically denied the above-mentioned qualities.

5.2. The European Union on the world stage

Having taken a general overview of the dynamics at play during the seven Citizens' Dialogues, I now move to a discussion of the main topics and narratives identified during these events. Firstly, I consider aspects related to the role of the EU on the world stage, on issues such as migration and its relations with other international actors, with a particular focus on Russia and Africa.

5.2.1. Migration

Migration is a topic that appears under some form or another in all the Dialogues under discussion. FVP Timmermans uses a control frame in regard to migration – migration is defined primarily as a phenomenon that needs to be managed. He maintains this frame, even when citizens attempt to shift it – be it to more economic or market-based frames, to integration frames, or to normative or values frames. What "the people" want appears to have been already established prior to these Dialogues – and it is controlled migration. People's preferences are taken as fixed and as the basis for EC's actions, but there is no a clear willingness to engage with the public in the room on their terms. When a participant challenges the phrase "true refugees" used by the Commissioner, the FVP appeals to the Westphalian system for justification as this is the 'natural' hence the unquestionable mode of organisation of human society: "we make this distinction everywhere in

the world" (Commission européenne en France 2016). However, that which included in his statement is that there also exist "non-true refugees". While the intention may be to emphasise the fact that these are people entitled to and in need of international protection, the result is rather the opposite, as it adds a new degree of separation between (unqualified, indeterminate) refugees and the public. The extent to which this narrative has been adopted as a result of the success of extreme-right or populist parties is a matter for further investigation, but what this analysis reveals is the creation of a new category to be added to the list of migrants, illegal migrants, economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Overall, when participants try to question the hospitality of Europeans, to suggest that not enough has been done for the refugees and asylum seekers, the Commissioner avoids genuinely engaging with this criticism by switching away from a values-based frame, instead adopting a more pragmatic outlook and pointing to the ('reasonable') unwillingness of Europeans to accept uncontrolled migration or flows of refugees. Furthermore, Timmermans argues that the influx of people in 2015 and 2016 "is creating huge political problems in every single member state" (European Commission 2015b). The framing of the situation does not thus emphasise the reaction of the authorities or of Europeans, the focus is rather on the people who arrived.

In the literature, Miskimmon (2018) analyses the ways in which the EU has employed strategic narratives in order to gain support for further integration. While the initial message was that of a "grand strategic vision of the people of Europe" working together in order to maintain peace on the continent, in recent times this has shifted towards a "narrative of strategic calculation" where the EU becomes a "force for good" on the global stage (p. 85). Miskimmon also engages with the difficulties the EU is facing in constructing a coherent narrative, both due to its complexity and to the multitude of actors involved in communicating EU messages, as well as the attempts at

selectively narrating Europe's past and its present. We find evidence of both strategic calculations, value-based identity and selective narration in Timmermans' answers in regards to migration.

Once granted the right to stay, voluntary integration of the newly arrived is presented as the desideratum and a sign of an open society by Timmermans. Critical studies however point to the fact that once one adopts such an approach, violent exclusion is the only other alternative that is offered to those who refuse integration (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007, 420). Furthermore, while the label used by the Commissioner is that of integration, the description matches better the idea of assimilation: we must "explain what our values are, the role of the woman in our society", we must "give them the means to function in our society" (Commission européenne en France 2016). There is no suggestion of mutual learning, and migrants are unquestionably the ones who need to learn from "us". In creating a hierarchy between separate identities, the dominating identity group can either grow to encompass (parts of) the 'other' group, or it must clash with them. This is noticeable in Rotterdam, where Timmermans argues that "we have our own brand of Islam in Europe"(European Commission 2017a), which is the one European citizens should accept and be tolerant towards – therefore subordinating Islamic values to European ones. Moreover, Timmermans accepts a frame that links together terrorism, radicalism and Islam. He is most concerned with the negative influence of the internet, but he talks about the danger posed by "Imam Google" (Commission européenne en France 2016) – thus also extending the label of "dangerous" to Imams in general. Furthermore, he mentions the need for Muslim communities to take responsibility as well in Rennes, but he rejects the idea in Rotterdam (European Commission 2017a).

5.2.2. The EU and other international actors

We have seen how migration is portrayed as at best a challenge and at worst a threat to the EU. We shall now explore the narrative around world stage dynamics and the role of the EU at a global level. It is however important to note at this point that, as Campbell argues in his book on American foreign policy, risk and danger are not objective truths or situations that merely exist in the world independently of those who perceive them: "Nothing is a risk in itself […] anything *can* be a risk" (Campbell 1992, 1, emphasis in the original). In proceeding with this analysis, I strive to maintain an awareness of the constructed nature of risks – as well as identities and preferences.

Whereas the EU is a place where one can strive for compromise and mutual growth, the world stage is either a place where the EU needs to take responsibility – for Africa – or a zero-sum game scenario, where, if we are not united, "we will be the object of a game of the others: Chinese, Russians, Americans, etcetera, etcetera" (Commission européenne en France 2016). A similar fear of the Chinese shaping the world if 'we' don't stay united is expressed in Syracuse. In all Dialogues, other 'big' world players are portrayed as a threat, as potentially exercising undue influence on the future of Europe. European values on the other hand are universalised since it is maintained that embracing them would lead to a "united world". During the event where Timmermans shares the stage with former US State Secretary Madeleine Albright however, this list is unsurprisingly altered as to emphasise the common values and interests of Europeans and Americans. While European values are depicted as being potentially willingly embraced by states outside the EU, China is seen as having "the power to dictate these [their] values to the rest of the world – if the rest of the world remains divided" (European Commission 2015b). The rest of the world is suggested to be the US and the EU, while the antagonism towards the other actors involves a "chain of equivalence, which emphasize the 'sameness' of the excluded elements" (Torfing 2005,

15) in terms of their values and interests. Nonetheless, these challenges from external actors are never fully specified, and therefore remain threatening in a vague manner. The policy and political choices enacted by these states are not seen as strategic choices made by particular administrations, regimes or actors but rather as an enduring divide, signalling fundamentally different or even opposing worldviews. Timmermans therefore argues that, starting from a taken-for-granted balance of powers logic, solidarity is the only means for Europeans to have more power and more agency on the international stage (European Commission 2019).

Although a truly European foreign policy is still in the making, the worldview put forward by Timmermans is that characteristic of a statesman. In creating a world of danger outside the EU, he is legitimizing the existence of the latter through the same mechanisms that ensure the perpetuation of states: "The constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to a state's identity or existence; it is its condition of possibility" (Campbell 1992, 12). The lack of an immutable core leads to a constant process of reproduction of identity, in which the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are continuously negotiated.

5.2.3 Views on Russia

Russia is the most often mentioned "other" of Europe. The present situation is normally portrayed as a zero-sum game: Putin wants a weaker Europe (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017) and his opposition to the third energy package is read as a sign of the value of this legislative proposal in strengthening the EU (European Commission 2015a). At the same time however, the Commissioner also admits to the possibility of this dynamic changing over time and to the fact that the EU would also have to act differently in order to enable this development to take place: "we should create conditions where president Putin can come back to a more positive course" (European Commission 2015a). In Bucharest, in mentioning *"the* challenge provided by

Russia"(Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017, emphasis added), Timmermans is firstly reducing the relationship(s) between Russia and the EU to one of enmity, thus obscuring any cooperation between Russia and the EU or its member states, and secondly, he creates a picture of common perception of the challenge posed by Russia across the EU.

Particularly surprising is Timmermans' remark that Moscow is afraid of "blue flags with yellow stars on Red Square" (European Commission 2015a). He does not fully clarify this image, does not explain whether it would include Russian people aspiring to EU membership but at the very least he means Russian people wishing to have the European lifestyle and hence embracing European values. This statement on its own is not more controversial than its inverse, that the EU would fear Russian flags in Place Luxembourg in Brussels. Yet what it expresses in fact is a belief in the universal nature of European values. They originate in and are particular to Europe but have the potential of being translated to other geographical spaces.

5.2.4. Views on Africa

Continuing the well-established narrative of Europe as a civilizing force, Timmermans argues that the EU needs to take responsibility for Africa's development (European Commission 2017a; Commission européenne en France 2016; European Commission 2017b), while Africa remains a unitary entity, endowed with very little agency. If anything, it is taken for granted that 'the African people' will want and accept European aid. However, the main reason why the potentially "2.5 billion people in Africa living in poverty" (European Commission 2015b) becomes relevant is that Africa is "not that far away from Europe". This self-interested logic of helping African people and refugees reappears in a number of events – in Rennes, in Syracuse. Europe also has a similar role to play for its Eastern neighbours – for similarly self-interested reasons: "if a European nation [Ukraine] says we want to be part of this form of Europe […] if that is the society that you want,

we will help you get there. Because that creates more stability for us" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017).

5.3. The nature of the European Union

The next section is dedicated to uncovering the discourse of FVP Timmermans regarding the nature of the EU. It includes an analysis of the narratives around the functioning of the EU, the role that the EC plays within it, the democratic legitimacy of the EU, the depoliticization of EU policies and a discussion on the European public sphere.

5.3.1. The EU: evolution and functioning

Whereas Europe before the European Coal and Steal Community is mostly presented as EU's other (with certain exceptions such as Ancient Greek democracy and the Enlightenment period from with a lineage is traced to the present day), the relationship to the very beginnings of the European project are slightly more complicated. The project is legitimized in terms of its goal (i.e. peace) but the means through which it has been brought into existence are not seen in an unquestionably positive light – not involving 'the people' "too much" is something that decision-makers "got away with" at the time (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017). This was possible at that point because people lived in a different type of society, but not now in the post-paternalistic world. This type of relationship to the (past) establishment is similar to what Diani (1996) categorizes as a realignment master frame. His paper focuses on challenger social and political movements, but he is specifically looking at what kinds of frames can be most successful in creating mobilizing messages. The realignment frame attempts to restructure the system on the basis of a different

collective identity but does not seek to delegitimize the established procedures of the polity. This also displays the flexibility of discourse, its ability to incorporate a range of different events into their symbolic system (Torfing 2005). The contemporary EU is characterized by the FVP as a society that is more demanding in terms of participation, transparency and accountability, but the existing procedures, established in a different type of society, can accommodate these requirements.

Timmermans talks about the EU as being not merely an economic but a political project, and a "community of values" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017; European Commission 2017b) but the most eloquent description – hints of which also exist in other Dialogues – is the one in Riga: "this most historic of projects, the best peace project this continent has ever known" (European Commission 2015a). He goes on to argue that, because of its goals, the project "deserves our investment, deserves sacrifice because it is not only goods, you need to sacrifice, you need to invest, you need to compromise, you need to accept that you don't always get what you want from your member state, but you do it for the greater good". While self-interest is not dismissed, it is incorporated into a greater common good which embodies moral values worth sacrifices.

Criticism of the EU is accepted but incorporated into the larger narrative on the legitimation of EC actions as the being the only viable options: "once again, if you don't have alternatives, you can criticize but give me at least an alternative" (Commission européenne en France 2016). The lack of alternatives is invoked as a reason for a number of EU policies (for the EU project itself even), including the agreements with Turkey and Libya regarding migrants and asylum seekers (Commission européenne en France 2016; European Commission 2017b). Part of what renders this almost deterministic view possible is the attempt by the Commission to depoliticize its

decisions: “If, however, the Commission acknowledged that different policies were possible, on different ideological assumptions, it could […] encourage both the EP and the Council to spend more time on public deliberation.” (Magnette 2003, 157). Abandoning this narrative could therefore both open up new possibilities and create more public engagement, but Timmermans often seems convinced that “there are no other options” (Commission européenne en France 2016). Other times, dissatisfaction is even interpreted as a “driving force for positive change in Europe” (European Commission 2017a), creating the impression that dissent will necessarily take the form of a desire for “more Europe”.

However, this perceived lack of alternatives also leads Timmermans to acknowledge at times that he does not have all the answers and to remind people that he is there to listen to their ideas (European Commission 2019; Commission européenne en France 2016). While the latter idea is critically investigated throughout this paper, the former may be equally relevant for the direction the EU and politics take. Charett argues that making it possible in politics not to know would be a radical change, one that would create the opportunity for a different kind of politics (Charrett 2019), and Timmermans appears at times willing to open such a window of opportunity. As such, Europe is not limited to a geographic space, or a limited set of policy option, but rather it is a mission. Europe at its best is “an open idea, symbol or potentiality, rather than as a unified and closed project” (E. F. Isin and Saward 2013, 5).

In terms of standards to which the EU should be held, Timmermans creates a parallel with Member States, in saying that people feel equally not heard by the EU as by their own governments. While he acknowledges it as a problem that needs remedy, this comparison accomplishes two goals: it both positions the EU on par with the nation state – and by extension it offers it the same claim to

legitimacy – and it suggests that the EU should not be held to higher standards that the MS, a plea which is reminiscent of Moravcsick's intergovernmentalist argument (Moravcsik 2002).

5.3.2. European Commission agency

The EC does not take center stage during the Dialogues, and "we" can normally be presumed to mean "the European Union". Moreover, the Commission is usually presented as having limited agency. Timmermans often points out – sometimes as a reaction to mentions of the democratic deficit – to the fact that the Commission has the right to initiative, but the negotiations and the final approval take place in the Council and the EP. At other times, the agency of the EU or of the EC is downplayed. Despite popular discontent and a feeling among the Greek people of not being able to decide their own fate but rather being it directed by external forces (Evans-Pritchard 2014), the FVP insists that fiscal and economic reforms are "up to the Greeks themselves" and quotes the then Italian prime minister who had declared that "these reforms were not done because of the EU but because Greece needed them" (European Commission 2015a). However, when discussing the Junker plan (European Commission's Investment Plan for Europe), the FVP argues that "we will have to break with a logic that has been applied in the EU for decades. […] If member states don't accept that logic, the plan will not work. But if they do accept the logic the plan can work brilliantly". Therefore, it is the MS that need to adapt to the logic of the Commission.

Another area where the EC – and the EU as a whole – appears to lack agency and power relation with market forces. Although in Riga Timmermans maintains that the economy is "an instrument for […] political reasons"(European Commission 2015a), his more often repeated narrative is that "the economy is changing" (European Commission 2019, 2017a; Commission européenne en France 2016). It is presented as a natural force, the EU can react to it, by, for example, having educational systems that better match the needs of the market, but the EU cannot really shape it,

the market has its own trajectory. If the market is an immutable force, then other values will have to adapt to it, rather than vice-versa. Multiculturalism for example is subordinated to economic success: "the most successful economies will be the more creative economies. Creativity is at its best when different cultures clash and meet and exchange" (European Commission 2015b).

5.3.3. A result-oriented view of democracy

Timmermans oftentimes invokes the results that certain policies will yield as a means to argue for their legitimacy: "I'm sure the European public will support this [reducing bureaucracy] as soon as they see that this leads to more jobs and more growth" (European Commission 2015a), "it is through actual results that we will convince Europeans that the EU is not that ugly" (Commission européenne en France 2016). The need for support on the part of the population before a policy is adopted or even during the initial implementation stages is therefore downplayed. While the former example is part of Timmermans' first Dialogue, when he had not yet mentioned his conviction that we are today in a post-paternalistic society, the logic of adopting a policy and only expecting support for it from the population after it yields its results is in line with paternalistic thinking. Furthermore, after having found out that most people in the room were sceptical about the Juncker plan (on which they had the opportunity to vote during the event), he did not ask for further discussion on the matter, for possible reasons for people's position, did not even attempt to persuade the of the contrary. Instead, he said: "I like people to be sceptical because then they are not disappointed". The message that comes across is that people disliking a policy is not reason enough to rethink it, which may make practical sense, in that EU policies take a long time to agree on and start implementing policies but an institutional design that makes it nearly impossible for the EU to be immediately responsive to its citizens may also affect the mindset of its officials. Furthermore, this is in opposition to legitimization strategies employed in other contexts, when it

was precisely the will of the people, above all pragmatic or moral considerations, that was presented as informing the actions of the Commission.

5.3.4. A propensity for depoliticization

Timmermans claimed a number of times that the new generation is no longer ideological (European Commission 2017a) and welcomed this change: "the new generation, which is no longer ideological, which doesn't think in terms of left and right" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017). While it may be true that party identification has been in decline, this statement raises two issues. Firstly, it appears to depoliticise European politics. Authors have long claimed that one of the main reasons for low engagement of the public at the EU level is the lack of true political debate, the fact that the European Parliament does not function as a traditional parliament with an opposition – problem which is only marginally addressed by the Spitzenkandidaten process, whereby EU political groups appoint lead candidates for the EC Presidency ahead of the EP elections. Timmermans himself is a member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats and while he has stayed away from topics that would be overtly linked to the left-right divide during the Dialogues, his emphasis on social cohesion, on the lack of a societal fabric ("le tissu social"), on the need to regulate provider on the internet, these are all ideological in a traditional sense. He even expressly says "If you ask me how we can start fixing things, it's about reducing inequalities" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017) – which places him firmly in the socialist camp. Secondly, it paints a picture of a unified European youth, one that "thinks in terms of looking for solutions for societal problems, sharing a common vision, wanting to do something for your neighbour" (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017). Even if one were to accept that the younger generation is more interested in solving societal problems than its older counterparts (an assumption that the FVP does not support

with any evidence or logical argument), assuming that they would share a common vision on the solutions is not only unrealistic but also highly problematic. It delegitimises dissenting voices and obscures what is arguably the most relevant political division in Europe at the moment, the GAL/TAN divide (tradition/authority/national versus green/alternative/libertarian) (Hooghe and Marks 2018). If ideology can be obscured precisely it is precisely because it constructs a reality that "denies the contingent, precarious, and paradoxical character of social identity" (Torfing 2005, 15).

Yet this is an opposition that Timmermans himself reinforces at times, albeit in a slightly modified version, as an opposition between proponents of open or closed society. This is most clearly articulated in Syracuse, where people are either afraid, afraid of others and only thinking about protecting themselves or they "really believe that the founding values of the European community […] are values that are worth being safeguarded" (European Commission 2017b). Being afraid (of others) is thus not only against the European project, but also un-European.

5.3.5. A common European public sphere

In the context of this communication deficit and of the democratic deficit criticism, the development of a truly European public sphere (EPS) has been regarded by many as an essential part of the solution. There is however no consensus on what the European public sphere is (Splichal 2006, 695) and hence any conclusion as to whether and the extent to which it exists will depend on the definition employed. However, there is evidence that Timmermans considers those who are present at the Dialogues to be to some degree aware of political developments in the EU and in Europe.

One strand of research (Koopmans and Erbe 2004) argues that one can identify the emergence of an EPS when EU affairs or affairs of another member states feature relatively prominently in

national debates. Timmermans himself notes the Europeanisation of national public spheres through the media coverage of events happening in other MS (e.g. the protests in Romania, elections in various countries) but also mentions situations in other member states without assuming the need to provide many descriptive details. For example, in Amsterdam, the FVP maintains that "now what we see in Hungary and Poland is [that] they instrumentalise democracy against the rule of law and human rights" (European Commission 2015b), and he makes similar comments in Bucharest (Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România 2017).

A second, more demanding conceptualisation of the public sphere is provided by Risse (2003, 1), who argues that the European public sphere can be said to have emerged:

> "1. if and when the same (European) themes are discussed at the same time at similar levels of attention across national public spheres and media;
>
> 2. if and when similar frames of reference, meaning structures, and patterns of interpretation are used across national public spheres and media;
>
> 3. if and when a transnational community of communication emerges in which speakers and listeners recognize each other as legitimate participants in a common discourse."

While the third criterion cannot be assessed during nationally-based events, we note some evidence for the first two points. When Timmermans references "little Alain on the shore" or "the events in Cologne [Germany]" when talking in Rennes, he expects the audience to be familiar with these events. He does not explain what happened, he uses these as symbols, assuming that they are part of the European dialogue. The FVP also mentions "mothers in Brussels' Molenbeek" does so in a manner which not only supposes that the public will know – or infer – Molenbeek to be a neighbourhood in Brussels, but that they would be at least vaguely familiar with its importance or its issues.

Another characteristic of the public sphere regards the prominence of different types of actors in political discourse (Walter 2017). It is therefore notable that the three types of actors that are most

often mentioned are EU institutions (mostly the EC and the EP), states (which are usually seen as one unitary actor) and 'the people' or 'the citizens'. National political parties or European political groups are rarely referenced, while civil society receives positive recognition for its efforts but rarely outside of cases where someone in the audience identifies themselves as working for a non-governmental organisation. This observation is relevant for its role in revealing the actors that the FVP deems to be most relevant politically.

5.4. Europeanness: European values and European citizens

The final part of the analysis centers on FVP Timmermans' understanding of Europeanness. It considers European values, the temporal othering aspect of European identity and concludes with a discussion on those European who are not included in the Citizens' Dialogues – in the audience and in the discourse.

5.4.1 European values

The image that Timmermans appears to have of European citizens is that of people who both hold a humanitarian values and have a pragmatic approach to international relations. Therefore, in order to be successful, a European identity would have to integrate these two points of identification into an overarching relatively coherent identity and discourse (Torfing 2005). This leads to a constant tension between "normative Europe" and "a Europe that delivers".

There are several appeals to values, in particular solidarity vis-à-vis other MS Even in this situation, however, self-interest plays a significant role and is viewed as legitimate: "self-interest is always the hard core of solidarity" (Commission européenne en France 2016). This is a slight

departure from the official line of the EC. The Cohesion Fund for example "aims to reduce economic and social disparities and to promote sustainable development" (European Commission n.d.) and was established "for the purpose of strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union in the interests of promoting sustainable development" (Official Journal of the European Union 2013). There is no mention of equivalent gains in richer and poorer MS.

In Timmermans' speeches, it is a given that 'we' have a common future as Europeans. He allows for variation in different Member States' self-interests but argues that European peoples should still show solidarity towards each other because this will benefit everyone. "What Polish and Italian citizens want – they might be different" (European Commission 2019): national interests are not superseded but merely brought together. Moreover, the FVP is actively embracing national pride, and national attributes: the Italians are "warm-hearted", the Latvians are "results-oriented", while the Romanians can be proud of their fight against corruption and the French of the global reach of their values. There is no contradiction between national and European identity since people are believed to have multiple, multi-layered identity: European, national, regional, local (European Commission 2017a). It is however not clear the extent to which these interact and affect each other. Moreover, if one does not accept his premise, if the destinies of European states are not inextricably intertwined, then we may be relinquished from the responsibility of solidarity, arguably hollowing out normative Europe. The consequences of this type of solidarity are described by the Commissioner himself, yet he does not seem troubled by them. In Syracuse, he describes a situation where the other member states fail to acknowledge Italy's problems and to provide help, thereby leading Italy to respond in kind (European Commission 2017b).

Timmermans attempts to combine cognitive and normative ideas, a reflection of "principled pragmatism" – a difficult balancing act between universal (liberal) values and interest-driven

action. Cognitive ideas are those ideas that justify policies and actions by reference to their "interest-based logic and necessity", while normative ideas seek to do so by appealing to ideals and values (Schmidt 2008, 306–7). He follows the same logic in arguing that it is in Europe's self-interest to help refugees, and to design a legal migration system – "apart from moral considerations" (European Commission 2017a).

In Riga, Timmermans recalls Ukrainians in Maidan Square carrying EU flags and argues that "[t]hose flags don't stand for institutions, they stand for values" (European Commission 2015a). It is indeed rather rarely that people carry flags in order to signal support for a specific political institution. But institutions are the reflection of values. Timmermans is almost disentangling the two, obscuring their interplay. Indeed, Timmermans acknowledges a number of times that it is not because of the existence of EU institutions that people are European (Commission européenne en France 2016; European Commission 2017a). Yet people's support of European values is seen as translating in support for the European project, embodied by EU institutions, thus making possible the argument that a radical critique of the EU institutions is equivalent to rejecting European values.

The European values appear immutable and immune to external influence. Europeanness does not change depending on people's actions or ideals, rather it is something they can achieve: "I believe in you, I believe in your ability to be true Europeans"(European Commission 2017a). Timmermans mentions both a changing world and a desire for "our values to persist"(European Commission 2015b). The fourth industrial revolution is a challenge we should resist. He believes that part of the reason for the increased popularity of populist movements resides in their ability to exploit "this feeling that we are not in charge of our destiny" (European Commission 2015b). Yet the ability of the alone state to provide security and prosperity to its citizens has been questioned since

the end of the Second World War and has arguably been one of the reasons for European integration from the very beginning (Milward, Brennan, and Romero 2000).

5.4.2. Temporal othering

Some political scientists have argued that Europe has overcome a type of exclusionary identity, because the opposition it centred its identity around was its own past (Wæver 1998). The idea behind the European project was that Europe was not going to be what Europe had been. This argument offered hope that, if identity needs another to exist, by placing the other in the past, one can avoid excluding and attempting to subordinate other present cultures. Time thus provided us with an opportunity that space could not offer. This paper maintains that the EU identity still features important exclusionary elements. Yet, from a different perspective, Prozorov (2011) argues convincingly that temporal othering inevitably leads to spatial othering. In a conception of time as progress, the spatial other is seen as comparable to the Past Self. Once the Past Self has been transcended, the need to have an Other re-emerges. This success however has the additional effect of validating the othering of those who are perceived as being at a lesser "stage" of development, in virtue of having constructed one's identity around the rejection of the Past Self (Prozorov 2011). This argument thus also problematizes the temporal logic of progress.

While this practice has mostly, and most significantly, impacted colonial spaces, the use of a temporal narrative to justify othering and create hierarchies has been present inside Europe as well. Agnew (1996) argues that space and time intersect in past European narratives about Italy, while the same logic holds true for the presentation of Eastern Europe as being in need of "catching up" with Western Europe. Temporal othering therefore has the double effect of creating hierarchies and as such justifying forms of domination and of imposing one unifying temporal matrix on the entire world. In the context of Citizens' Dialogues, it is Romania that is presented as having caught

up with “Europe” after the fall of the Iron Curtain, which also reveals the duality of Europeanness as inherent in all current EU member states and as a status that one has to earn. In Krakow, Timmermans presents the EU as a project born “on the ashes of the concentration camps”(European Commission 2019), therefore providing support for the idea that Europe’s other is its own past self. Europe is different because it has managed to overcome its bloody past and internal divisions through an integration process underlay by common values (Miskimmon 2018). The same logic is suggested in a story he shares in Rennes, the story of someone who is the first in his family in four generations not to have fought against a neighbouring country (Commission européenne en France 2016). Yet several young people in the Dialogues have questioned the relevance of the past for their support of the EU in its current form. Moreover, the extent to which Europeans have transcended and are now separated from their past is called into question by the Commissioner himself: “What defines us Europeans is that for centuries, every 30 years we would go to war with each other” (Rotterdam).

5.4.3. The missing Europeans

Citizens’ Dialogues often obscure people who are missing from these events. These are the people whom Edkins (2013) calls the “doubly missing”, the people whose absence is “so fundamental that we don’t even realise they are missing from our parochial picture of the world”. They become forgotten again when the Commission refers to conclusions it has drawn, based on Citizens’ Dialogues, regarding what European citizens want, not mentioning those who were not included in the conversation from the beginning. But citizens themselves can sometimes bring to light and challenge this absence: “Here we are all students or upper class, all white. How are you…how are you going to address the excluded populations, how do you wish that those people who are excluded and that cannot find a meaning in politics in general to adhere to a European project that

seems to them completely outside of their reality?" (Rennes). However, the opposite can also happen. An Italian participant taking part in the Krakow Dialogue, organized at the local university, says looking at the audience: "This Europe, we are Europe". The effect is thus reinforced. Europeans look, act and think as the people in the room. Those who do not are the doubly missing.

Another form of exclusion is language. Timmermans argues that we have found a common language to communicate, the bad English. While it is certainly true that the EU strives to make all official information available in all EU languages and that Citizens Dialogues always provide simultaneous translation into the local language, this points to the Commissioner's worldview and to a reality that most EU-related dialogue takes place in English. Taking an example, of the top four EU-focused publications most read by "EU influencers" (ComRes 2017), namely POLITICO, EURACTIV, EUobserver and New Europe, only EURACTIV offers coverage on multiple languages – specifically 14 out of the 24 official EU languages. This is not to put an unreasonable linguistic burden on EU officials; rather to point not only to the well-known and much debated hegemony of English in EU affairs but also to the effect this situation has on the non-English speakers. Not only are they excluded from the conversation, at times their absence is not even recognized. Even the moderators, who are locals, sometimes speak in English (e.g. in Bucharest) which may make the Dialogue more accommodating for the Commissioner than for the audience.

The European youth is portrayed as being able to move around in the European space feeling at ease, as if Europe is their "natural habitat" (Commission européenne en France 2016). This assertion comes only minutes after having acknowledged that the Erasmus+ programme in its current form has some undesirable undertones. Being a true young European thus appears to be reserved for those who can afford and want to travel and feel comfortable doing so. In Krakow,

Timmermans argues that, "[i]f you have the capacity, and all of you here have the capacity, it is almost a duty to spend time as a student in a different country […] to begin to understand what it means to be European"(European Commission 2019). One is not therefore merely European, one becomes European – via means that are not accessible to the entire European population.

Conclusion

This analysis has employed discourse theory and analysis in order to analyze the manner in which the EU presents itself to its citizens. It has explored policy documents in order to understand the relationship the EU deems appropriate to have with European citizens and has noted a contradiction between the stated goals. Yet a progression over time towards more public participation can be noted and Citizens Dialogues, as an expression of this development, offer a rare occasion to directly observe the interaction between EU officials and European citizens. The manner in which these events are organized is reflective of the same logic as the policy documents, where a dialogue with the public is desired, but the intelligence and knowledge of citizens is overall subordinated to that of the officials. Focusing on events organized with FVP Timmermans, the analysis of his discourse has attempted to uncover his perception of the EU as a global actor, of the nature and functioning of the EU and of Europeanness. In this process, it has become apparent that Europe's others are not only other international powers or its own past self, but also part of its citizens who fail to embody the appropriate Europeanness.

One of the limitations of this paper is a challenge that any researcher interested in quantitative analyses of EU affairs will probably face: linguistic diversity. For certain Citizens' Dialogues, the only publicly available recordings were in the original, local language. Therefore, most events organized in the Netherlands were excluded from the beginning from the list of possible cases for further examination. Furthermore, for the Dialogue taking place in Italy, the analysis makes use mostly of the English simultaneous translation. While the translation was available during the

event as well, and was potentially made use of by some participants, it nonetheless offers indirect access to the Commissioner's discourse, challenge that was to some extent mitigated by a limited engagement with the original version as well. In Riga, FVP Timmermans always expresses himself in English, but the moderator and the participants mostly use Latvian, therefore some constrains exist in that case as well. Secondly, a significant number of recordings are not available online, thus making the case selection process more challenging. Thirdly, part of the analysis centers on the First Vice-President, therefore it may be the case that his discourse is not representative for the discourse of other Commissioners and that of the EC in general. Crucially however, discourse analysis and theory are not interested in generalizations per se. The contribution that this paper and the literature to which it belongs strive to make cannot bring generalizations and parsimony. Rather, the contribution may reside in "providing a more complex and frenzied representation of politics" (Solomon and Steele 2017, 280), in revealing inconsistencies at times, confirming the persistence of certain discourses and exploring their meaning and implications. Broader and logical conclusions can still be drawn: to the extent that some narratives reoccur in a number of Dialogues, one may expect them to be repeated in other events as well; to the extent that institutional socialization has an effect, some of the same narratives may appear in Dialogues with other Commissioners as well – but that is a matter for empirical investigation. In the narrowest interpretation, the present research explores the discourses that a few thousand European citizens have been exposed to and have contributed to.

It would rather obviously useful to be able to observe the participants' assessments of the events, as well as how it impacted them. Yet another question worth asking is how participation in such events changes the perception of democratic practice of the Commissioners and their teams who were involved in organizing the Citizens' Dialogues. If one were interested in measuring impact

on policy, one could look at references to these Citizens Dialogues by Commissioners, but also by national and European politicians and officials. It may still be the case that while these events have had a debatable impact on specific pieces of EU legislation, they have produced a shift in the officials' mindset. It is also a matter of empirical investigation whether such an impact would be one of increased levels of elitism and frustration with "the people" or whether officials would now see a greater importance for the active participation of citizens. Furthermore, while the Commission has a history of striving for consensus, it would be interesting for researchers to investigate the extent to which (and the conditions under which) contentious discourses contribute to the legitimation or the delegitimization of the European project – a question which has so far been barely explored (Crespy 2015). Finally, there is a dimension of the Citizens' Dialogues that this analysis has mostly bracketed, namely the online conversations taking place during and after the events. This could constitute an avenue of future research, particularly since participants are encouraged to engage online, to send the questions (and suggestions) they have not had a chance to ask the Commissioners and given the increasing number of transnational online Citizens' Dialogues**.**

References

Agnew, John. 1996. “Time Into Space: The Myth of ‘backward’ Italy, in Modern Europe.” *Time & Society* 5 (1): 27–45.

Bialasiewicz, Luiza, David Campbell, Stuart Elden, Stephen Graham, Alex Jeffrey, and Alison J. Williams. 2007. “Performing Security: The Imaginative Geographies of Current US Strategy.” *Political Geography* 26 (4): 405–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.12.002.

Boucher, Stephen. 2009. “If Citizens Have a Voice, Who’s Listening? Lessons from Recent Citizen Consultation Experiments for the European Union. CEPS EPIN Working Paper No. 24, 12 June 2009.” http://it.ceu.hu/vpn.

Butler, Judith. 1988. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal* 40 (4): 519. https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

Byrne, David. 2003. “Complexity Theory and Planning Theory: A Necessary Encounter.” *Planning Theory* 2 (3): 171–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/147309520323002.

Campbell, David. 1992. *Writing Security : United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.

Caremier, Benedicte, and John Wyles. 2002. “Broadening and Enriching the Public Debate on European Matters.” In *European Governance: Preparatory Work for the White Paper*, edited by European Commission. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Chakravarty, Anuradha. 2012. “Political Science and the ‘Micro-Politics’ Research Agenda.” *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs* 01 (01). https://doi.org/10.4172/2332-0761.1000e103.

Charrett, Catherine. 2019. “Diplomacy in Drag and Queer IR Art: Reflections on the Performance, ‘Sipping Toffee with Hamas in Brussels.’” *Review of International Studies* 45 (2): 280–99. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210518000451.

Commission européenne en France. 2016. *Europe: des valeurs communes dans un monde incertain ? Parlons-en ! FR*. Rennes, France. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4rma4QRyqM.

———. 2018a. *Europe-Occitanie : un avenir commun ? - Dialogue Citoyen*. Toulouse, France. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k378p8VJ6m4&list=PL8pz8KXDGEn7lBQMlziVU1C8OFf6ZTQ_F&index=11.

———. 2018b. *“L’Europe, le web ... et nous?”* - *Dialogue citoyen*. Paris, France. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5FJtdjXQl4.

Commission of the European Communities. 2001. “European Governance - A White Paper.” Brussels.

———. 2008. “Debate Europe — Building on the Experience of Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.” Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/dorie/fileDownload.do;jsessionid=xh8KNzbZWdKNPe9Y5IJOuQYSu%20CtWIZXrytbUD2yo-7LREdYe14qC!-898031139?docId=155076&cardId=155076.

ComRes. 2017. “ComRes/Burson-Marsteller 2017 EU Media Survey.” London. https://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Burston-Marsteller-EU-media-Poll_June-2017.pdf.

Crespy, Amandine. 2015. “Analysing European Discourses.” In *Research Methods in European Union Studies*, edited by Kennet Lynggaard, Ian Manners, and Karl Löfgren, 102–20. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137316967_7.
Diani, Mario. 1996. “Linking Mobilization Frames and Political Opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy.” *American Sociological Review* 61 (6): 1053. https://doi.org/10.2307/2096308.
Dougal, Jim. 2003. “Living with Press Eurotrash.” *British Journalism Review* 14 (2): 29–34.
Duchesne, Sophie, Florence Haegel, Elizabeth Frazer, Virginie Van Ingelgom, Guillaume Garcia, and André-Paul Frognier. 2010. “Europe between Integration and Globalisation Social Differences and National Frames in the Analysis of Focus Groups Conducted in France, Francophone Belgium and the United Kingdom.” *Politique Européenne* 30 (1): 67. https://doi.org/10.3917/poeu.030.0067.
Edkins, Jenny. 2013. “Novel Writing in International Relations: Openings for a Creative Practice.” *Security Dialogue* 44 (4): 281–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613491304.
European Commission. 2005. “European Commission Launches PLAN D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate.” Brussels. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-05-1272_en.htm.
———. 2015a. “Citizens’ Dialogue in Riga with First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis and Commissioner Corina Creţu.” Text. Европейска Комисия - European Commission. 2015. https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues/citizens-dialogue-riga-jobs-growth-and-investment-2015-jan-08_en.
———. 2015b. *Citizens’ Dialogue in Amsterdam with First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Former U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright*. Amsterdam, Netherlands. https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues/citizens-dialogue-amsterdam-first-vice-president-frans-timmermans-and-former-us-secretary-state-madeleine-albright-2018-jun-29_en.
———. 2016. “Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020 - DG Communication.” Brussels. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/strategic-plan-2016-2020-dg-comm_april2016_en.pdf.
———. 2017a. *Participation of Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President, in a Citizens’ Dialogue, in Rotterdam*. Rotterdam, Netherlands. https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-140951.
———. 2017b. *Citizens’ Dialogue in Syracuse with First Vice-President Frans Timmermans*. Syracuse, Italy. https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues/citizens-dialogue-syracuse-first-vice-president-frans-timmermans-2017-oct-13_en.
———. 2018. “Citizens’ Dialogues and Citizens’ Consultations - Progress Report.” Brussels. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/eu-progress-report-consultations-111218_en.pdf.
———. 2019. *#EUdialogues in Krakow with Frans Timmermans - YouTube*. Krakow, Poland. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63xt56DJegA&t=5553s.
———. n.d. “Citizens’ Dialogues.” Text. European Commission - European Commission. Accessed May 29, 2019a. https://ec.europa.eu/info/events/citizens-dialogues_en.
———. n.d. “European Commission - Commission and Its Priorities.” Text. European Commission - European Commission. Accessed May 29, 2019b. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en.
———. n.d. “European Structural and Investment Funds.” Text. European Commission - European Commission. Accessed May 29, 2019c. https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-

tenders/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes/overview-funding-programmes/european-structural-and-investment-funds_en.
Evans-Pritchard, Ambrose. 2014. “Greece Comes Back to Haunt Eurozone as Anti-Troika Rebels Scent Power - Telegraph.” *The Telegraph*, December 29, 2014. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11316726/Greece-comes-back-to-haunt-eurozone-as-anti-Troika-rebels-scent-power.html.
Fairclough, Norman, Simon Pardoe, and Bronislaw Szerszynski. 2006. “Critical Discourse Analysis and Citizenship.” In *Analysing Citizenship Talk : Social Positioning in Political and Legal Decision-Making Processes.*, edited by H. Hausendorf and Alfons Bora. Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture: V. 19. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
FRANCE 24. 2018. *Fête de l’Europe : le débat citoyen à un an des élections européennes !* Paris, France. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buA9Qf5tcmI&t=196s.
Gibson, William, and Andrew Brown. 2009. “Research Design.” In *Working with Qualitative Data*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857029041.
Haas, Peter M. 1992. “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination.” *International Organization* 46 (1): 1–35.
Hausendorf, Heiko, and Alfons Bora. 2006. “Reconstructing Social Positioning in Discourse: Methodological Basicsand Their Implementation from a Conversation Analysis Perspective.” In *Analysing Citizenship Talk : Social Positioning in Political and Legal Decision-Making Processes.*, edited by Heiko Hausendorf and Alfons Bora. Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture: V. 19. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2009. “A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus.” *British Journal of Political Science* 39 (1): 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000409.
———. 2018. “Cleavage Theory Meets Europe’s Crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the Transnational Cleavage.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (1): 109–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279.
Howarth, David R., and Yannis Stavrakakis. 2000. “Introducing Disourse Theory and Political Analysis.” In *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis : Identities, Hegemonies, and Social Change.*, edited by David R. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis. New York: Manchester University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Isin, Engin. 2017. *Performative Citizenship*. Edited by Ayelet Shachar, Rainer Bauböck, Irene Bloemraad, and Maarten Vink. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198805854.013.22.
Isin, Engin F., and Michael Saward. 2013. “Questions of European Citizenship.” In *Enacting European Citizenship*, edited by Engin F. Isin and Michael Saward, 1–18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524025.002.
Ivic, Sanja. 2017. “The Concept of European Public Sphere within the European Public Discourse.” *Etikk i Praksis - Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics* 11 (2): 79. https://doi.org/10.5324/eip.v11i2.1959.
Kohn, Margaret. 2003. *Radical Space : Building the House of the People.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.

Koopmans, Ruud, and Jessica Erbe. 2004. “Towards a European Public Sphere?” *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Sciences* 17 (2): 97–118. https://doi.org/10.1080/1351161042000238643.
Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy : Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Lindgren, Karl-Oskar, and Thomas Persson. 2010. “Input and Output Legitimacy: Synergy or Trade-off? Empirical Evidence from an EU Survey.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 17 (4): 449–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501761003673591.
Magnette, Paul. 2003. “European Governance and Civic Participation: Beyond Elitist Citizenship?” *Political Studies* 51 (1): 144–60. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00417.
Majone, Giandomenico. 2010. “Transaction-Cost Efficiency and the Democratic Deficit.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 17 (2): 150–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501760903561799.
Manners, Ian. 2002. “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (2): 235–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353.
Michailidou, Asimina. 2007. “The Role of the Internet in the European Union’s Public Communication Strategy and the Emerging European Public Sphere.” Loughborough University. OAIster. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Milward, Alan S., George Brennan, and Federico Romero. 2000. *The European Rescue of the Nation State*. Second edition. London: Routledge. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Miskimmon, Alister. 2018. “Finding a Unified Voice? The European Union Thorugh a Strategic Narraitve Lens.” In *Forging the World : Strategic Narratives and International Relations.*, edited by Alister Miskimmon, Ben O’Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Moravcsik, Andrew. 2002. “In Defence of the ‘Democratic Deficit’: Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union.” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, no. 4: 603.
Newman, Michael. 2005. “After the ‘Permissive Consensus’: Still Searching for Power.” In *European Union : Power and Policy-Making.*, edited by J. J. Richardson. London: Routledge. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Oberhuber, Florian. 2005. “Deliberation or ‘Mainstreaming’? Empirically Researching the European Convention.” In *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis: Theory, Methodology, and Interdisciplinary*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Paul A. Chilton. Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture 13. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
Official Journal of the European Union. 2013. *Regulation (EU) No 1300/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the Cohesion Fund and Repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006*. *OJ L*. Vol. 347. http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2013/1300/oj/eng.
Pansardi, Pamela, and Francesco Battegazzorre. 2016. “Which Legitimacy for the European Union? An Analysis of the President of the Commission’s State of the Union Addresses (SOTEU).” Reconciling Economic and Social Europe. Brussels: European Research Council. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309133944_Which_legitimacy_for_the_Europe

an_Union_An_analysis_of_the_President_of_the_Commission's_State_of_the_Union_Addresses_SOTEU.
Peterson, V Spike. 2000. “Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism.” In *Women, States, and Nationalism*, edited by Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, 54–80. Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203361122_chapter_4.
Pollack, Mark A. 2005. “THEORIZING THE EUROPEAN UNION: International Organization, Domestic Polity, or Experiment in New Governance?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (1): 357–98. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.082103.104858.
Polletta, Francesca, and M. Kai Ho. 2006. *Frames and Their Consequences*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.003.0010.
Prozorov, Sergei. 2011. “The Other as Past and Present: Beyond the Logic of ‘Temporal Othering’ in IR Theory.” *Review of International Studies* 37 (3): 1273–93. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000586.
Ranciére, Jacques. 1991. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster : Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Reprezentanța Comisiei Europene în România. 2017. *Prim-Vicepreşedintele Comisiei Europene În Dialog Cu Cetăţenii*. Bucharest, Romania. https://www.facebook.com/reprezentanta.comisiei.europene.in.romania/videos/10154405699537031/.
Rhodes, Rod. 1994. “The Hollowing out of the State: The Changing Nature of the Public Service in Britain.” *Political Quarterly* 65 (2): 138. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1994.tb00441.x.
Risse, Thomas. 2003. “An Emerging European Public Sphere? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators.” In , 11. Nashville.
Risse, Thomas, and Mareike Kleine. 2007. “Assessing the Legitimacy of the EU’s Treaty Revision Methods*.” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 45 (1): 69–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2007.00703.x.
Sassatelli, Monica. 2002. “Imagined Europe: The Shaping of a European Cultural Identity Through EU Cultural Policy.” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (4): 435–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/136843102760513848.
Schmidt, Vivien A. 2008. “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (1): 303.
Schmidt, Vivien A, and Claudio M Radaelli. 2004. “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues.” *West European Politics* 27 (2): 183–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/0140238042000214874.
Schumacher, Tobias. 2015. “Uncertainty at the EU’s Borders: Narratives of EU External Relations in the Revised European Neighbourhood Policy towards the Southern Borderlands.” *European Security* 24 (3): 381–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2015.1028186.
Smismans, Stijn. 2013. “Democracy and Legitimacy in the EU.” In *European Union Politics*, edited by Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán. New York: Oxford University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.
Solomon, Ty, and Brent J. Steele. 2017. “Micro-Moves in International Relations Theory.” *European Journal of International Relations* 23 (2): 267–91. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116634442.

Splichal, Slavko. 2006. “In Search of a Strong European Public Sphere: Some Critical Observations on Conceptualizations of Publicness and the (European) Public Sphere.” *Media, Culture & Society* 28 (5): 695–714.

Taggart, Paul, and Aleks Szczerbiak. 2018. “Putting Brexit into Perspective: The Effect of the Eurozone and Migration Crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European States.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 25 (8): 1194–1214. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1467955.

Torfing, Jacob. 2005. “Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments and Challenges.” In *Discourse Theory in European Politics : Identity, Policy and Governance.*, edited by David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.

Triandafyllidou, Anna, Ruth Wodak, and Michał Krzyżanowski. 2009. *The European Public Sphere and the Media : Europe in Crisis.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. http://it.ceu.hu/vpn.

Van Leeuwen, Theo. 2007. “Legitimation in Discourse and Communication.” *Discourse & Communication* 1 (1): 91–112. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307071986.

Wæver, Ole. 1998. “Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European Non-War Community.” In *Security Communities*, edited by Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2005. “European Integration and Security: Analysing French and German Discourses on State, Nation, and Europe.” In *Discourse Theory in European Politics : Identity, Policy and Governance.*, edited by David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.

Walter, Stefanie. 2017. *EU Citizens in the European Public Sphere*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-14486-9.

Wodak, Ruth. 1999. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity.* Critical Discourse Analysis. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. https://ceuedu.sharepoint.com/sites/itservices/SitePages/vpn.aspx.

Wodak, Ruth, and Gilbert Weiss. 2005. “Analyzing European Union Discourses: Theories and Applications.” In *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton, 13:121–35. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.13.10wod.