

How do we speak of the EU?

Narratives in newspaper coverage of the EU



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Abstract

This project examined how the European Union (EU) is portrayed in newspaper media in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland between 2014 and 2018. It did so by asking which narratives were constructed about the EU, how these narratives evolved over time in different member states and how these narratives were related. Using an interpretivist stance, this project builds on a theory that sees the media as playing a large role in the public perception. Using a simple definition of narrative structure based on actors and events combined with a temporal aspect, the project identifies narratives about the EU in the two largest newspapers in the UK and Ireland: *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent* respectively. Using qualitative content analysis, a method of classifying data into analytical categories, twenty-one core-narratives have been found to exist in the newspaper coverage. The project identifies seven major core-narratives, six medium core-narratives, and eight minor core-narratives. These core-narratives are found ranging from issues such as, migration as seen in the core-narratives *Migration issues are solved by the EU*, Brexit as seen in *The UK will benefit from Brexit*, to issues of EU rules and regulations as seen in *The EU acts as a standard setter*, and development in member states as seen in *We benefit from EU funded development*. The project finds that the frequency of these narratives has changed over time, with some being present throughout the entire time frame, and some only appearing in parts of it. The project also found how some narratives are more present in one or the other country. It found six completely unique narratives, three in either state. Additionally, it showed that there were more total narratives found in the *Irish Independent*, but the narratives found in *The Sun* occurred more frequently. It has also found differences in how the EU is portrayed in the different member states, concluding that coverage of the EU is generally more positive in Ireland than in the UK. This was shown to be closely related to how the EU was constituted and characterised as an actor. Further, by looking at the relationships between narratives, it has been found that some narratives exist in binary relationships where they influence each other. Overall, the project concludes with the finding of a narrative landscape that in many ways continuously evolves, while anchored around key subjects, which are continuously replicated.

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1.0 Introduction

The European Union (EU) is, to many people, an abstract entity which they will only encounter in very specific instances of their lives. However, the impact upon the lives of these people by the EU should not be underestimated. Today, the EU is a crucial part of the internal workings of Europe, governing, advising, and judicating on a wide variety of European issues, in fields as diverse as agriculture, migration, and foreign policy.

When Europeans do engage with the EU it is often through the media. We hear about the newest measures from Brussels through our national medias whether this be fines to big companies, or the extension of sanctions on Russian individuals. The established media channels thereby become the relay station between the citizens and the EU.

In this relay function, the presentation of the EU in the national media becomes quite important. The media could be argued to be crucial to the way in which citizens live the experience of the EU that is to say, the way in which the citizens perceive the actions of a, to them, abstract entity far away from their homes.

Whether we subscribe to the theory that the news media sets the agenda of public opinion, as suggested by Statham (2010, p. 126), or the theory that the media is influenced by the public to whom it is beholden, as suggested by Glynn, Herbst, Lindeman, O'Keefe and Shapiro (2018, p. 333-334), there is no doubt that the concepts of public opinion and news media are closely linked.

In the words of Glynn et al., citing Walter Lipmann 1922 book *Public Opinion*,

people rely on indirect representations of their environments: instead of the 'world outside,' we react to 'the pictures in our heads.' Media sources prodigiously supply those pictures, providing images and stories about events, issues, personalities, social situations, and other things that we will likely never encounter 'live' on our own (p. 334).

At the same time, Glynn et al. also argue that,

Media outlets are competing for an audience; their decisions about what to cover are shaped by their perceptions of what people will read or watch and what the audience will think of it (p. 335).

Therefore, it would be only natural that the way in which events, institutions, and people are portrayed in the media will impact the way in which these are seen by the public and vice versa.

Given the wide variety of countries, people and customs making up the EU, it cannot surprise us that there are differences in how the EU is seen. The EU itself conducts biannual surveys of the European populace, asking a large assortment of questions on several issues. One of the recurring questions is whether the participants are optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the EU (European Commission, 2018, p. 31). The 2018 report showed that in the fall of 2009, 66 percent of respondents were optimistic about the future of the EU, while 27 percent were not. These numbers had drastically changed by the spring of 2013, where only 49 percent of respondents were optimistic, and 46 percent pessimistic about the future of the EU. Since then, optimism has returned, and the latest survey showed 61 percent optimistic, 34 pessimistic respondents (p. 30). Further, the report also showed that there are huge regional differences. Using the same question as before, but this time accounting for the individual member states, Irish respondents were the most optimistic about the future of the EU, with 88 percent. The UK was at the pessimistic end of the scale, with only 51 percent of respondents being optimistic about the future, while 45 percent were pessimistic (p. 31). Taking this into consideration, Ireland and the UK provide an excellent pair of subjects for our project. They share a common language and a common border, both have a similar length of attachment to the EU, and they have traits of a shared common cultural heritage.

Considering the above, the differences and similarities in the perception of the EU's future, coupled with the realisation that there seems to be an intricate link between the role and reporting of the mass media and public opinion, leads us to the question of **how the European Union is portrayed in different types of news media in the UK and Ireland? Specifically, which narratives are constructed about the EU, and how have these narratives evolved over time and in different member states? Additionally, how are these narratives related?**

2.0 Research Design

To lay the theoretical foundations for the research, our theory section will explain the core concepts of the media's role and understanding public opinion. To understand the relationship between these entities, the section on narrative structure explores and conceptualises narrative structure in mass media to provide an understanding of different stories and strands within newspaper articles and stories. By using a concept of narrative structure, it is possible to analyse how newspapers cover the EU. Having established the conceptual foundations of narrative structure, this allows us to outline the methodological bearing of the research paper. These rely on the framework of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), a method championed by Philipp Mayring (2001) and Graham Gibbs (2007), amongst others. QCA is essentially a collection of techniques for the systematic analysis of texts, which enables us as researchers to deconstruct news media stories in a structured manner, to identify and analyse narratives based on the narrative structures. Based on QCA methodology, the analysis will be undertaken, with the help of the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVivo. The subject of analysis will be a wide range of newspaper articles from two EU member states, the UK and Ireland, throughout a period of five years. From 2014, a year before the European Migrant crisis and two years before the Brexit-referendum, to, and including, 2018 (we use the years of 2014-2016-2018 to create our analysis). Within this time span, two weeks in May have been selected in order to create a concentrated window allowing for the observation of narratives. We chose the two first weeks of May every year (1.-14.) because these weeks were leading up to the EU election of 2014. This was done because it increased the probability to encounter EU specific narratives in newspaper coverage. The material is sourced using the most popular newspaper and cross-media platform in each country (*The Sun* in the UK and the *Irish Independent* in Ireland), creating a data-archive from which to work. Our coding regime, developed using QCA methodology and structured around the conceptualisation of narrative structure, helps break down these source materials into strands of narratives, or stories, which in turn will then be used for the comparison and discussion of

different narratives across states and time whilst also allowing us to explore the actors understanding of the EU. Finally, the findings will recapture the core-narratives and their development, contributing to the identification of consistent narratives about the EU in news media coverage.

3.0 Theoretical Considerations

Our theoretical considerations are divided into two levels; a level of core assumptions that create the foundation of the research, as well as a level of operational theory, the narrative structure. The operational theory will be used as the basis for carrying out the research itself. In a way, the core assumptions constitute the toolbox itself, whilst the operational theory is the tool that is used in the research.

3.1 Core Assumptions

The epistemological stance of interpretivism places great importance on the understanding of the subjective nature of human behaviour (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, pp. 24-25; Lamont, 2015, pp. 18-20). We believe that to be able to understand the norms of narratives in the media, as well as the culture surrounding the relationship between the media and the public, we need to accept that these are subjective and created in the interactions between humans. As Lamont suggests *interpretivist research agendas seek to understand identities, ideas, norms, and culture* (2015, p. 19). Ontologically, the research is placed squarely within the constructionist paradigm (Bryman, 2016, p. 29). Constructionism views the structure of social actors and institutions as constructed through interaction, meaning that these do not exist as separate, external constructs, but rather as an outcome of social interaction (p. 29-30). The research concerns itself with the portrayal of the EU in the media, specifically which and how narratives about the EU are created, reinforced, and evolve in the media.

The *Media* is an ambiguous concept today. Traditionally, the media is meant to be understood as the printed media, such as the news media. However, changes in the media landscape, such as the emergence of social media and the general shift

towards online media, has fundamentally changed the overall composition and action of media providers.

At the very core, media is communication. The Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication (Chandler & Munday, 2011) defines *mass media* as *the various technological means of producing and disseminating messages and cultural forms (notably news, information, entertainment, and advertising)*. This media has a function, defined by Chandler and Munday (2011) as (1) *The key roles that the mass media, a particular medium of communication, or specific kinds of media content are seen as playing from the perspective of society*, and (2) *The basic human needs which the mass media, a single medium, a media genre, or specific media content, serve for individuals*. Essentially, the media plays a role in society, both on a large scale as well as on a smaller individual scale. As Walter Lipmann pointed out in his *Public Opinion* (as cited in Glynn et al., 2018, p. 334), the media provides pictures and stories of realities that we are never likely to experience on our own, thereby influencing how we perceive these events. Thereby, the role of the media as a provider of information, as well as an analyst of information provided becomes clear. Given these considerations, we define the medias function as being a) *informative*, providing information and analysis for the reader, and b) *conductive/reflective*, being a reflective conduit for the readers opinions.

In the role of analyst, the media acts as a filter for how events, institutions, actors, etc. are represented and perceived. The EU is a prime example of an institution that is primarily experienced by the public through media exposure. Previously, we spoke of the EU as an ‘abstract entity’, one with which most people have no personal experience. This view is reinforced by a journalist interviewed by Paul Statham (2010, p. 132) who states *[European politics is] too complex to become popular. It is a complex process of institutionalisation that escapes most people’s understanding*. This statement also points towards a fundamental issue in media communication, the question of supply and demand. Media providers are enterprises that rely on the consumption of their product by the public. Statham states *Journalists writing for national and regional audiences felt that their readerships lag behind in their understanding of the importance of European politics. For them, **readerships’ demand produces few incentives for covering Europe*** (2010, p. 132, our emphasis). Interestingly, looking at Danish coverage of the EU versus the national

political scene, there are 160 journalists covering the Danish parliament (Søgaard, 2018) whilst there are 14 correspondents covering EU politics (Udenrigsministeriet, n.d.).

This leads us to conclude that whilst the media certainly plays a role in the shaping of public perception surrounding certain issues, by being the provider of information on these issues, it is also to a certain degree dependent on a public that continues to 'buy' the information. A circular motion could therefore be envisaged, where public opinion is informed by the media's coverage, and this coverage in turn is shaped by public opinion.

3.2 Structures of Narratives

Narratives are a way people make sense of the world around them (Gibbs G. , 2011, p. 56). Joy L. Hart describes narratives thus, *we make sense of our lives by weaving stories, making discrete experiences into functioning wholes. That is, knowledge is narratively configured—we interpret our experiences and describe them to others through stories* (2013, p. 591). Thus, narratives become the way to understand and explain, not only our perception of the world around us, but also how we perceive ourselves as individuals. Hart explains *individuals come to understand and describe themselves to others through stories* (2013, p. 591). Walther R. Fisher (as cited in Hart, 2013, p. 591) argues that we *experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends*.

Establishing the importance of narratives as a fundamental tool for perception of our reality does, however, not explain what a narrative is, nor how we can identify these narratives. Most of the time people do it without thinking about it, we implicitly understand the stories that we are being told. However, the analysis of narratives requires a definition of the criteria involved in the creation of narratives. This task is complicated by the plethora of definitions and classifications of what constitutes a narrative and how it can be analysed. One of the schools of thought within narrative analysis is the school of structuralists, encompassing many different styles and approaches that all share one basic premise: structure (Freed-Thall, 2018, p. 61). This concept of structure relates to the belief by structuralists that narratives can be analysed by finding the underlying structure and the elements of which the narrative is composed.

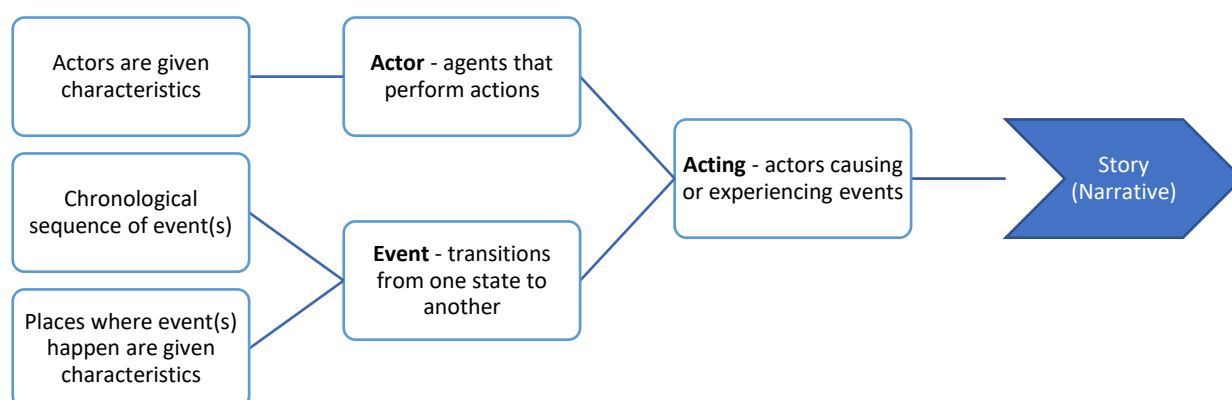
Christian Metz argues that narratives are defined by having a beginning and an ending as well as a temporal aspect, which is to say that narratives have already happened (this temporal aspect will be discussed in relation to policy narratives later) (Metz, 2000, pp. 86-87). Due to the closed, temporal sequence of narratives, all narratives are discourse; they are created by someone and not naturally occurring (p. 88). Metz' definition of a narrative can be illustrated like this,

Figure 1 - Metz' Narrative Definition



Just like a sentence, a narrative has a beginning and an end. However, having a beginning and an end does not explain what the sentence says, neither does it, in the case of the narrative, explain what it is about. Opening up Metz' *temporal aspect* is therefore a vital step in the understanding of a narrative. Mieke Bal (2000) posits that a story is defined by the actors involved and the event experienced or caused (p. 82-83). For Bal, *actors* are *agents that perform actions* (p. 83), *events* are transitions *from one state to another state* (p. 83) and acting is defined by actors causing or experiencing *events*. In Bal's narrative definition, actors are given characteristics making them distinct, the places where events happen are given characteristics making them distinct, and events are arranged in a chronological sequence that does not need to correspond to reality (p. 84). Bal, along the same line as Fisher, argues *that with which the narrative text is concerned, the 'contents', is a series of connected events cause or experienced by actors* (2000, p. 85). Bal's concepts are illustrated below,

Figure 2 - Bal's Story Construction (Temporal Aspect)



An example of this story construction could be *The German chancellor visited Paris yesterday, after repeated invitations*, here an actor is very clearly the *chancellor*, who is given the characteristic of being *German*. There is evidence of another *implicit* actor; the one that has issued repeated invitations. The place of the event is characterised as *Paris* and the event is *visiting* (experienced by the German chancellor). The chronological sequencing of the event does not correspond to 'reality', as it describes the event before describing the reason for it. This shows the ability of narratives to change the chronological sequencing while still making sense. At its very core, Bal's concept of a story can be reduced to actor(s) and event(s). For instance, *someone did (something)*, here the actor and action are reduced to the minimum necessary for a story. Whether explicit or not, acting necessitates someone acting and someone being acted upon. This automatically creates a minimum of two actors (implicitly or explicitly). The characteristics are not necessary, and the place of the event is implied in the story. The chronological order is still there. These are the elements that constitute a 'bare-bone' story. The logical conclusion of this is that our narratives will have a least two actors, either explicit or implicit.

Another dimension in this regard is the question of agency. Agency (Horowitz, 2014) is defined here as the will and ability to act. As defined above, we have a minimum of two actors, one of which is the agent. The agent is the initiator of the acting, whereas the other actor is the recipient of the action.

Turning back to the question of Metz' *temporal aspect*, we posit that by expanding this aspect, through operationalisation by Bal's story construction, it is possible to create a narrative model that can identify and describe narratives within our field of research. This combined narrative model is illustrated below,

Figure 3 - Combined Narrative Model



In Metz' model, the temporal aspect is defined through the narration of events post-factum. However, there are types of narratives, such as policy narratives, where the outcome of the policy in question takes place in the future (Gad, 2010, pp. 70-71). If the objective of the narrative analysis therefore was to analyse the *policy narrative*, where the outcome of the policy is uncertain, this would necessitate an opening of the temporal aspect to allow such ongoing narratives. We are interested in the way in which the EU is portrayed in narratives, as such we are interested in how the EU is spoken about in relation with policy changes, not in the policy change itself. Even though the outcome of the policy has yet to become known, the portrayal of the proposed policy changes has taken place, having ended with the publication of the newspaper. Metz' requirement of post-factuality is therefore fulfilled.

This holds true for Bal's story construction too; the chronological order places a story in the temporal dimension. Thus, the continuity of Metz' models is kept whilst incorporating the detailed story aspect of Bal.

The combined model serves to facilitate the exploration of narratives in our research. Through use of this model we can identify and describe narratives in newspaper coverage of the EU. By keeping the model relatively simple, we enable ourselves to identify narratives, even if these narratives only consist of few elements. However, the very basic requirements of this structure also include narratives that are not relevant to our research.

A necessary step, to focus on narratives pertaining to our research question, is the establishment of a framework for the identification of said narratives. Here, we return to delve into the concept of actors. An actor, as previously defined, is an agent

that is capable of action. For the purpose of examining narratives in relation to the EU, agents therefore have to be able to interact with the EU in some way. This means that an actor can either be the EU or someone that interacts with the EU, such as a nation state, organisation, or person. To understand how other actors interact with the EU, it is necessary to identify the relationship between these actors and the EU. This relationship depends on how actors constitute other actors around them. By identifying the relationship between the actors, we can better understand the context of the identified narratives.

The relationship between actors, as posited above, is dependent on how actors perceive each other. In other words, how they identify the other actor(s). Identity is *a social construction that emerges through social interaction and that only exists in relationship to binaries* (Tindall, 2013). This binary relationship is also alluded to by Wæver (2000) in his examination of French and German discourses related to Europe. This binary relationship manifests itself in the idea of *self/other*. If someone (be it a state, a group, or a single person) cannot be identified to be equal to *us* it must be *them*. Each of us creates our self through self-identification with numerous groups that are constantly reaffirmed by collective recreation (Wæver, 2000, p. 290). Translating this into the project, actors can relate to each other by either identifying another actor as part of *us/self* or as part of *them/other*.

$$\begin{aligned} actor^x &\equiv actor^y \rightarrow us \\ actor^x &\neq actor^y \rightarrow them \end{aligned}$$

This comparison can be continued until no more new actors are present. For our identification of actor relationship one of the following equations must be true,

$$\begin{aligned} actor^x &\equiv actor^{EU} \rightarrow us \\ actor^x &\neq actor^{EU} \rightarrow them \end{aligned}$$

Thereby, the EU is either a part of the self or a part of the other. Again, this process can be repeated in relation to other actors as well, provided that the relationship to the EU is established first. This examination of inter-actor relationships makes it possible to construct a context for the narrative.

Essentially, you either identify with someone or against someone, in our case that someone is the EU. Therefore, we can expect actors to either identify with the EU or against the EU.

Of the found narratives, we choose the narratives that in some shape or form engage with the EU, either as an actor or non-actor, and disregard the narratives which do not. Essentially, we use narratives where the EU fulfils one or more of the elements (actor, event, characteristic). Additionally, as we are interested in the EU as a political entity, we only engage with narratives that display a political dimension.

The following method section expounds the methodical considerations underpinning the research. It attempts to operationalise the theoretical concepts discussed in this section.

4.0 Methods

The aim of method is the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts that frame the research. In our case, this meant finding a way to analyse data in such a way that it allowed us to answer our initial research questions.

Below we introduce the overall method of content analysis and why this is a viable approach in the research. Then, we introduce Qualitative Content Analysis as an aspect of content analysis that allows us to engage with our sources and find narratives, their patterns and how they change. To this end, we also introduce the use of computer assisted tools (CAQDAS), specifically NVivo, and explain how this tool eases the indexation of sources and data collection. Finally, we explain our choice of data, why we chose newspapers, what those newspapers allow us to find out, and how we collected the data.

4.1 Content Analysis

Generally speaking, Content analysis is best defined *as an activity in which researchers examine artefacts of social communication* (Lamont, 2015, p. 89).

Content analysis originated as a *technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication* (Berelson as

cited in Bryman, 2016, p. 284). The beginnings are to be found in the first half of the twentieth century concurrent with the rise of a broader media landscape and an interest to understand this newly developing mass media (Schreier, 2014, p. 171). The aim, to systematically and quantitatively describe mass communication firmly placed content analysis in the toolbox of quantitative method. The systematic breakdown of media communication into analytical categories allowed researchers to find themes and recurrences in these communications. However, some critics argued that meaning was often *complex, holistic, context dependent* (p. 171) and not apparent from the quantitative approach. As an alternative to the quantitative approach to content analysis Siegfried Kracauer, in 1952 (as cited in Schreier, 2014, p. 171), proposed a type of content analysis that did not limit itself only to the apparent content. Thus, he became the first advocate for what came to be known as qualitative content analysis.

Early content analysts developed a method to break down mass media into numerical categories alone. This had the obvious benefit of making vast amounts of qualitative data accessible in a relatively easy manner. The researcher could then extrapolate from that data and identify trends and tendencies. What the researcher could not do through this method was identifying the content of these trends. Essentially, the researcher could say how many boxes there were but not really whether the cat was in the box or not.

Looking at narratives it is easy to see that in order to say anything about narratives, we need the context. Therefore, the solution is to analyse texts and data with a focus on the qualitative content.

The choice of content analysis as the best analytical tool regarding this project rests on two assumptions. One, by breaking down our research into smaller compartments of content categories we will be able to see and develop thematic links, trends, and tendencies. Two, the categorisation process makes it possible to reduce complex qualitative data into numerical data. These two points are intricately linked, it could be argued that the development of tendencies and themes rests on the numerical data, or vice versa, the numerical data is only usable in conjunction with qualitative thematic categories.

Essentially, by using qualitative material and analysing it in a semi-quantitative way, we can get the best of both worlds.

4.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) is described as a method for the systematic description of meaning of qualitative data (Mayring, Kombination und Integration qualitativer und quantitativer Analyse, 2000; Schreier, 2014). According to Mayring QCA revolves around four key aspects: (1) the fitting of material into a model of communication, (2) the step by step analysis of the material following a set of rules, (3) the categories at the centre of the analysis, and (4) the generalisation opportunities created through triangulation with other studies. These are by and large supported by Schreier's (2014) characteristics of QCA (p. 170). Schreier argues that the amount of data can be reduced through the application of QCA, due to the thematic and overarching categorisation the method facilitates. Where Mayring speaks of fitting material into a model of communication, Schreier argues for thematic categorisation, however, both of these arguments revolve around the same idea of applying a set of rules to the data, a set of rules that allows the breakdown of the data into analytical categories. This also ties in with the systematic argument, as the analytical categories provide the researcher with a structured system of analysis. Crucially, a logical, transparent and structured approach to the content analysis allows for the replication of the research. Schreier also identifies the 'flexibility' of QCA as a core concept. By flexibility she means the advantage that the qualitative content analysis has over its quantitative counterpart through the use of data-driven categories. In short, she argues that the iterative nature of QCA allows a lot of flexibility in the categorisation of data, as the *coding frame should always be matched to the data* (Schreier, 2014, p. 171). This data-driven, or iterative approach, is also something championed by both Mayring (2000), as well as Bryman (2016), as a way of developing categories and codes. The main concept of the iterative approach is the *weaving, back and forth between data and theory* (Bryman, 2016, p. 23). The iterative approach thereby combines the two common approaches to the handling of data within QCA: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach (illustrated in Figure 4), as the name suggests, deduces analytical categories and codes from theoretical considerations, essentially starting the analysis with a set of codes already deduced at the outset. On the other hand, the inductive approach (see Figure 5) can

be summarised in the mantra of 'letting the data speak for itself'. Here, the researcher does not pre-ordain analytical categories and codes, but rather creates these throughout the analysis, organically, based on the source content (Mayring, *Kombination und Integration qualitativer und quantitativer Analyse*, 2000).

Figure 4 - Deductive category application
(Mayring, 2000)

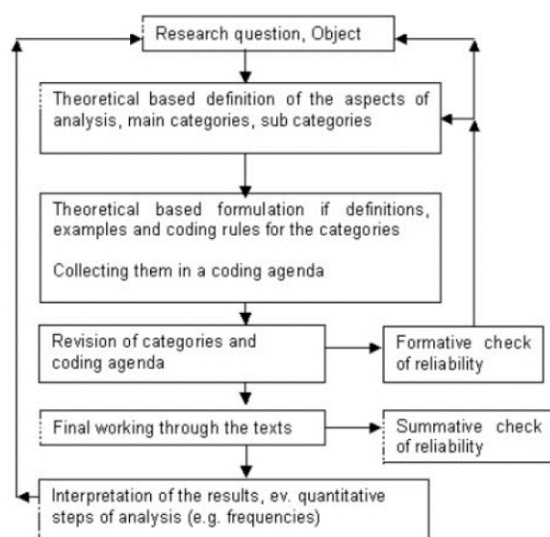
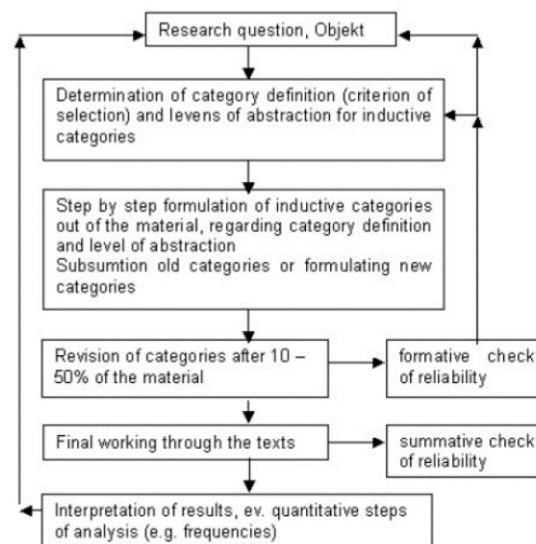


Figure 5 - Inductive category application



Often, researchers find themselves using a mix of both approaches, as Schreier suggests (2014, p. 171). This provides the abovementioned flexibility that QCA is capable of.

This research takes advantage of this approach, creating categories both based on theoretical concepts, but also organically developing categories on the basis of the data, reviewing and revising these categories throughout the analytical process.

To understand why and how these different categories are created we return briefly to the theoretical concept of the narrative. To identify narratives, we have defined a set of rules, these being:

- 1) The narrative has a beginning and an end
- 2) In between, there is a story
- 3) This story consists of actors and actions

Using these rules, we can identify narratives in our source material. This is essentially the starting point of the analysis. We have created one large category with

all our found narratives. To see trends and tendencies one large category is not necessarily well suited. So, we create categories of like-minded narratives. Because we do not know exactly how our narratives look before the beginning of our analysis, we cannot create these thematic categories deductively, they must be created inductively.

Through this process, we have produced two different levels of categories; deductive and inductive categories. Our analytical structure can be portrayed as the following,

Level 1 – Deductive (Theoretical) categories: large category for all found narratives

Level 2 – Inductive (Organic) categories: thematic categories

Applying QCA as a methodology requires a certain procedure (Schreier, 2014, pp. 174-180), roughly outlined as follows:

1. **Deciding on a research question.** The question of how the European Union is portrayed in the mass media in different member states and, specifically, which narratives are constructed about the EU and how these narratives have evolved over time and in the UK and Ireland, is the guiding question in this research project. Really, these are two separate, but connected questions. Firstly, a question of how the media portrays the EU. Secondly, a question on the evolution and occurrence of these portrayals across different member states. Both questions are interpretive questions. These questions are concerned with the explanation of the social meaning behind actions, e.g. “what is the meaning of a kiss?” or “how is the sudden appearance of a prince received in the kingdom?” (p. 40). We are looking to understand the social meaning of the portrayal of the EU, as well as the how this meaning changes throughout time and geography.
2. **Selecting material.** The material selection will be explained in depth further on, suffice to say that the sort of data used also sets the possible parameters of analysis. Schreier (2014, p. 174) argues that because QCA is concerned with the description of *meaning in context* transcripts and sources should be complete and unredacted.

3. **Building a coding frame.** The coding frame is the structure around which the analysis itself is built. It is composed of a main category and subsequent sub-categories. The main category is defined by the aspects the researchers wish to know more about (Schreier, 2014, p. 174), in our case that would be how the EU is portrayed in the media. Our coding frame follows the analytical levels discussed above. By creating a coding frame that is very broad and flexible in its initial phase, we allow ourselves the opportunity to shape the coding frame organically throughout the research. At the outset we knew that we would have two levels, but not exactly how the second level was to be divided, what themes might be observable.
4. **Segmentation, or creating codes.** Schreier (2014) identifies this as a separate step within the process of QCA, although in reality, this is closely linked to the building of a coding frame. Segmentation is the process of creating *codes* that can be used to break down the data into analytical components (p. 175). *Codes* are labels applied to different passages or words in a text, in order to sum up and categorise the content of that specific passage or section in the data. Gibbs (2007, p. 38) explains it thusly, *Coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about. It involves identifying and recording one or more passages of text or other data items [...] that, in some senses, exemplify the same theoretical or descriptive idea [...] they are then linked with a name for that idea – the code* (p. 38). Taking this back to the idea of segmentation, as proposed by Schreier (2014), the codes are the segmenting devices, enabling the division of data into analytical segments, or categories. Our segmentation is a two-step process, firstly identifying all the relevant narratives (that is to say, all the narratives that include the EU) and secondly, the coding into thematic categories. Another aim of segmentation is a consistent division of the source material. This means not only picking out the most “useful” narratives, but consistently applying the coding frame and rules to the text. Thereby, a uniform and consistent coding can be guaranteed.
5. **Main analysis.** Having now created our coding frame, based on our research question and the source material, it is time to engage with the main analysis. Here, the actual analytical work is done.

Our analysis has the following steps:

- a) Identifying narratives within the newspaper sources.
- b) Extracting the narratives that use the EU, either as an actor, or as a non-actor.
- c) Thematically coding the narratives into themes with similar narratives.
- d) Examining and analysing the themes to determine the relationship between the narratives in these themes.
- e) Looking for trends and tendencies in the themes and across the themes, thereby creating the possibility of comparing and contrasting different narratives and themes.

6. **Presenting and interpreting the findings.** The last step is the presentation of findings. This marks the overall conclusion of the analysis.

4.3 CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software)

Today, researchers have access to a wide array of software tools for their research. One of the many categories of tools is CAQDAS. There are different ways of using this type of software, Gibbs (2014, p. 277) argues that one of the issues with such software arises from the problem of distinguishing between CAQDAS as an analytical tool and as an analytical method. Gibbs postulates that presenting CAQDAS as an analytical method suggests that the analysis is done by the software, however he argues that *the software no more 'does' the analysis than the word processor I am using now writes this chapter for me* (p. 278). Therefore, using CAQDAS as a purely analytical tool, allows the researcher to keep track of the analysis, but does not imply that the software *does* the analysis. That work still squarely rests with the researcher. Acknowledging this, we use CAQDAS, more specifically NVivo 12 Pro, to help us structure our analysis and organise our findings. Software usage *supports the storing and manipulation of texts or documents and they support the creation and manipulation of codes* (Gibbs G. R., *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, 2007, p. 114). It allows us to implement complex coding frames with relative ease and resource efficiency. This is especially true because of the amount of data of the research.

Because of the copious amounts of data, it would become almost unmanageable to keep track of the data and analysis.

The main benefits of CAQDAS for this project is the ordering element. By using NVivo, we can dispense with printing out our newspaper articles, putting them in unruly piles marked with a plethora of different coloured markers to see the different codes and themes. All this can be accomplished through the tools that NVivo offers. It is essentially a shortcut to easier data storage. Arguably, this tool is less important if you were to analyse a smaller amount of data, say ten or fifteen articles. However, we are analysing a dataset of hundreds of newspaper articles, making NVivo a very handy tool indeed.

4.4 Why Newspapers?

As with many aspects of our daily life, news and entertainment media have been profoundly affected and influenced by the rise of digitisation. Today, the traditional news media must contend with social media such as Twitter and Facebook for the attention of the consumer. This has led to a rise in online and cross-media news platforms, such as the American sites BuzzFeed and VICE, as well as innumerable news blogs such as fivethirtyeight.com. This has forced the traditional news media to adapt, establishing online presences, often vastly more successful than their print counterparts. Through the establishment of these cross-media platforms, the newspapers have managed to create new ways of reaching consumers, no longer solely relying on their paper editions to further their influence (Strategic Direction, 2016, pp. 7-8). In many ways the traditional media, whilst being challenged, has remained a large influence on the way the public perceives the world around them (Glynn, Herbst, Lindeman, O'Keefe, & Shapiro, 2018, p. 330).

Considering the above, the question presents itself; how do you engage with media representations today? The answer for this project is comprised of two different considerations. The overall aim has been to create a data archive containing relevant material to enable our analysis. This poses two challenges; which media company to choose, and how to engage with them on equal terms.

Our solution to the first question has been to look at the comparative sizes of the cross-platform media companies. To do this, we had to find a neutral way of comparing the companies across borders. This was achieved through the use of an

online analytics company. The market analytics firm Similarweb.com gathers data on website traffic. Through their comparison tool we found the largest online media platforms in both the UK and Ireland:

Table 1 - Overview of Cross Platform Media Companies

Country	Platform	Monthly Visitors	Date
United Kingdom	The Sun	86,800,000	Jan-19
Ireland	Irish Independent	20,300,000	Jan-19

(Similarweb.com, n.d.; Similarweb.com, n.d.)

These findings were then cross checked with the distribution of newspapers in the two countries (News Brands Ireland, n.d.; Statista, 2018). The conclusion: the biggest cross platform media company in the UK was *The Sun*. In Ireland it was the *Irish Independent*.

The Sun is the most widely distributed daily news media in the UK. First published in 1964, it has become the largest newspaper in the UK, with a circulation of about 1,5 million copies daily (Statista, 2018). The Sun is considered a tabloid¹ newspaper, defined by the *tabloid narrative [eschewing] the ‘inverted pyramid’ format, preferring a ‘teasing’ introduction, followed by the complete tale, laid out concisely* (Bird, 2009).

The **Irish Independent** is the most widely distributed daily news media in Ireland. Founded in 1905, it has a daily circulation of 83,900 copies (News Brands Ireland, n.d.). The *Irish Independent* is not considered a tabloid newspaper.

Both news media get most of their views from internet views. Both news medias are also rated as centre-right/right leaning according to websites such as www.mediabiasfactcheck.com. Both newspapers have traditionally supported conservative policy stances in their editorials.

The question of engaging with these media companies on equal ground still presented some challenges. The aim was to find a medium that could be argued to be representative of the media company, whilst being easily accessible and not subject to change. A natural conclusion of this was to use newspapers. Using newspapers

¹ Tabloid is commonly used to describe a particular kind of formulaic, colourful narrative, coupled with dramatic visuals, and usually perceived as distinct from standard, ‘objective’ styles of journalism (Bird, 2009)

allows us to engage with products of these media companies after publication. Further, it seems logical that newspaper companies will only print articles that reflect the editorial opinion of the papers.

4.5 Data Archive

To collect a suitable data archive², we used the electronic journalistic document database LexisNexis. This is a database distributed by the company LexisNexis, indexing all published materials from a very wide variety of newspapers. Here, we could access the publications of both newspapers and use matching search criteria to achieve a similar set of data.

Aiming at collection a suitable data set, we devised the following criteria for our data search.

- 1) The keyword was limited to “EU”. This ensured the possibly broadest intercept of material, whilst still being as relevant as possible.
- 2) The date range for collection was decided to be two weeks of May in 2014, 2016, and 2018. This was chosen for two considerations. Firstly, an election for the European Parliament was taking place in May 2014, making it an excellent point of departure since it could be assumed that narratives including the EU would at least be present. Secondly, because we wish to see the evolution of narratives, we believed it necessary to start prior to two important events that have shaped the last few years of Europe; the migration crisis of 2015 and Brexit. These two choices made May 2014 a good point of departure

Using these criteria, we collected 666 newspaper articles. These 666 articles constitute the data archive on which this research is based. A complete overview over our data archive is to be found in Appendix A.

We then chose to not include either letters from readers or the sports section of the newspapers. This was done to cut down on the number of sources on one hand, and on the other to focus on the essential and relevant material. For the same reasons we

² A data archive is the entire collected data used in the research (Rapley, 2007, pp. 10-11).

chose not to engage with the entertainment section either. This left us with 389 sources from our initial 666 to which to base our analysis on.

Due to the difference of newspaper type, one being a tabloid whereas the other is not, we might expect a difference in narrative structure. As Bird (2009) mentions, tabloid narratives tend to be more concise. At the same time, the choice of a limited time frame might also skew the results. By choosing only a few weeks out of every year, we gain an advantage in terms of total material size. However, we also run the risk of missing narratives that do not occur in that very limited time frame. We also realise that any project involving qualitative analysis will have some subjective bias if it relies on researchers to interpret the results. We have tried to limit this bias by being as transparent as possible and reflective about our process throughout the project.

In the Analysis Process section, the engagement with this data archive is explained in depth.

5.0 Quantitative Characteristics

The analysis section consists of three different parts. First, the Analysis Process section explains the process of analysis, how the data was used and analysed and what quantitative tendencies can be seen in the data. Then, our thematic analysis gives an in-depth look at the core narratives of our analysis. Finally, we introduce a comparative section where the tendencies of the narratives are compared across time intervals and between the UK and Ireland.

5.1 Analysis Process

Two different types of categorisation, *categorising EU as an actor* (see section 5.2) and *categorising the narratives* (see section 5.3) were applied to the data set. The following section sets out how we executed our analysis, which steps were taken and why. Further it gives a breakdown of our analytical categories and suggests tendencies that can be seen in the research.

Initially, we set out to find all the narratives in which the EU was involved, within our source material. We found 440 narratives including the EU across our 389 sources. These 440 narratives were then further divided to create a more accessible data set;

Table 2 - Number of sources

Number of Sources	The Sun (222)			Irish Independent (167)			Total (389)
	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018	
	22	124	76	39	61	67	

5.2 Categorising EU as actor

First, we divided the narratives into two categories; ones where the EU was either the actor or the recipient of action, and ones where the EU was constituted as a third party or not directly involved in the event itself. The first category was defined on the back of the story construction within our narrative structure (see section 2.2). Here, the EU was either the actor who performed the action, or the direct recipient of performed action. The other category was therefore comprised of narratives in which the EU was a third-party actor.

We divided the narratives into these two categories for two reasons. Firstly, it gave us an angle of approach to our large data set; we knew we could find actors in the narratives, so by using them we could get a first inkling as to how the narratives are structured. Secondly, the identification of the EU as either a direct or non-direct actor was presumed to be indicative of the constitution of the narratives that were found; i.e. if the EU was seen as a direct actor, we could presume our formula

$$\begin{aligned} actor^x &\equiv actor^{EU} \rightarrow us \\ actor^x &\neq actor^{EU} \rightarrow them \end{aligned}$$

was enough to establish relationship. On the other hand, if the EU was seen as a non-direct actor, we presumed that there would have to be further testing of the relationship between the direct actors and the relationship between the direct actors and the EU. Essentially, the relationship between the direct actors is either $actor^x \equiv actor^y = us$ or $actor^x \neq actor^y = them$. This establishes the relationship between the direct actors, where $actor^x$ is taken to be the primary actor.

Having established the relationship between the direct actors, the relationship with the EU as a third actor can be either:

1. if $(actor^x \equiv actor^y) \neq EU = EU$ as *them*, here the direct actors are equal, thus being *us*, whereas the EU is not equal to *us*, therefore the EU is *them*.
2. if $actor^x \neq actor^y$ and $EU \equiv actor^x = EU$ as *us*, here the direct actors are divided into *us* and *them*, with the EU being equal to $actor^x$ therefore being part of *us*.
3. if $actor^x \neq actor^y$ and $EU \neq actor^x = EU$ as *them*, conversely, if the EU is not equal to $actor^x$ the EU is *them*.

This shows that the binary dichotomy of relationships still is the defining aspect in the relationship between the EU and the direct actors, it just means that a more complex analytical procedure is necessary to establish this relationship.

As an example, imagine the situation where the EU is perceived to act detrimental to a member state. This member state's point of view could be expected to be different than the EU, resulting in the EU being constituted as something else, as *them*.

However, we could also imagine an example where the EU's actions enhance the member states, where the wishes and priorities align. Here, the EU would, most likely, be constituted as having the same positions as the member state, thus being a part of *us*. Here, it should be pointed out that not all narratives conform to this easily digestible binary dichotomy. When appropriate, this is pointed out.

So, returning to the question of the EU as a direct or non-direct actor, the resulting spread of narratives was as follows:

Table 3 - Overview of EU as actor categorisation

Newspaper Article	The Sun	Irish Independent	Total
EU as Actor	39	67	106
EU as non-direct actor	215	119	334
Total	254	186	440

As we can see from the division, there was a big imbalance in the distribution of narratives between the "EU as direct actor" and "EU as non-direct Actor". Two observations became very clear. Firstly, only about a quarter of the overall narratives constructed the EU as a direct Actor. Secondly, the distribution was vastly more

skewed in *The Sun* than in the *Irish Independent*, with a ratio of 5 to 1 in *The Sun* and almost 2 to 1 in *Irish Independent*.

When we looked at the distribution of these narratives along the time units, we saw the following:

Table 4 - Distribution of EU as actor categorisation over time

Newspaper Article	The Sun			Irish Independent			Total
	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018	
EU as Actor	3	18	18	13	21	33	106
EU as non-direct actor	20	126	69	28	42	49	334
Total	23	144	87	41	63	82	440

The ratio in *The Sun* remained much higher across the time, with 7 to 1 in 2014, whereas the *Irish Independent* remained closer to the overall 2 to 1 ratio albeit with a slight outlier in 2018.

The overall distribution in time also shows that during 2016 the EU was a much bigger subject of *The Sun* than in 2014. The UK's EU-referendum in June 2016 was found to be the most prevalent subject during this time, which points towards the extraordinary importance of this referendum for the public. At the same time, the difference in the amount of narratives with the EU as its subject in the *Irish Independent* also increased between 2014 and 2016. The main cause of the heightened discourse on the EU was seen to be Brexit as well, with much of the focus on the Irish-UK border.

Delving into the coverage of *The Sun* 2014, the main subject of this coverage was the immigration to the UK through the EU. The limited amount of coverage of the EU in general also suggest that there, prior to 2016, was limited interest in the subject from *The Sun*.

5.3 Categorising narratives

The second type of categorisation was to go back to the 440 found narratives and develop thematic categories based on the content of the narratives. In total, we found that the narratives conformed to six different thematic categories, with an additional category for the nonconforming narratives - the "Others".

These thematic categories all have distinct properties setting them apart from each other. These properties and the distribution of associated narratives can be seen below,

Table 5 - Overview of thematic categories and narrative structure in themes

Theme	Properties	Narrative structure	Associated Narratives
EU as an international player	EU in international situations	<i>actor^{EU} acts on actor^x in international context</i> The EU acts upon actor in an international context	24
EU governance	internal workings of EU rules and regulations decisions taken regarding the governing of the EU as a bloc	<i>actor^{EU} regulates on actor^{internal} in policy area^x</i> EU regulates policy area affecting either member or organisation	96
Criticism of EU policy	criticism of EU policies general criticism of actions criticism of outcomes	<i>actor^{internal} criticises actor^{EU} for policy^{EU}</i> Member state or organisation criticises EU because of policy	87

Political alienation	sources claim lack of credibility politicians institutions	<i>actor^x claim lack of credibility of actor^{politician} because event^{EU}</i> Actor claims a lack of credibility in politician because of EU/in relation to EU	35
Outcomes of Brexit	consequences of Brexit negative impact positive impact	<i>actor^x claims outcome^x because of actor^{EU}</i> Actor claims outcome of Brexit due to actions of EU	125
State of Brexit negotiations	negotiations between EU and UK for Brexit different actors	<i>actor^{x or EU} claims state of negotiation^x because of actor^{x or EU}</i> Actor (x) or actor EU claim state of negotiation is x because of the other	54
Others	Non-conforming narratives	N/A	19
Total			440

These themes are comprised of narratives that are deemed to have the same, or very similar, topics. That is to say, these narratives deal with the EU in an international context or the potential outcomes of Brexit, etc. Within these themes, we identify some *core-narratives*, which are different and distinct narrative structures capturing the different aspects of the theme.

A consequence of this focus is that some themes might have similar looking narratives, while the core-narrative is still different. For instance, a migration narrative can be seen to occur in several different themes. It could therefore be argued that migration itself should constitute a theme. However, we see the underlying core-narrative as more important and the migration related narratives use migration as a tool to tell an underlying narrative that does not necessarily

revolve around the theme of migration. The same could be said about the EU as a standard setter, where we see narratives occur across different themes.

Based on the numbers in the table above, it is very clear that some of these thematic categories occur more than others. For instance, we can see that Brexit plays an extraordinarily big role in the coverage. Particularly, considering that Brexit became a tangible idea during 2015-2016. It is also evident that narratives regarding the governance of the EU and its policies are big fields of interest in the coverage of the EU. Interestingly, it does not seem as if the relationship of the EU with external third parties (i.e. as an international actor) is given equal importance. This suggests that a large focus is on intra-EU events.

Looking at the narratives distributed between *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent* the allocation was the following:

Table 6 - Distribution of themes across newspapers

	The Sun	Irish Independent	Total
EU as an international player	2	22	24
EU governance	16	80	96
Criticism of EU policy	62	25	87
Political alienation	34	1	35
Outcomes of Brexit	95	30	125
State of Brexit negotiations	35	19	54
Others	10	9	19
Total	254	186	440

Evidently, the narrative emphasis is very different in the two newspapers. As we might expect, *The Sun* is much more occupied with post-Brexit questions, as well as the state of the negotiations surrounding Brexit. On the other hand, the *Irish Independent* focuses much more on the EU in an international context, EU governance, as well as Ireland's place within the EU.

Further subdivision, by time intervals, showed the following:

Table 7 - Distribution of themes across newspapers and time

	The Sun			Irish Independent			Total
	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018	
EU as an international player	0	1	1	3	7	12	24
EU governance	4	9	3	26	28	26	96
Criticism of EU policy	9	49	4	11	8	6	87

Political alienation	1	21	12	0	1	0	35
Outcomes of Brexit	7	56	32	0	14	16	125
State of Brexit negotiations	1	1	33	0	0	19	54
Others	1	7	2	1	5	3	19
Total	23	144	87	41	63	82	440

A quick glance shows the evolution of narratives across different time units, as well as the formation of new narratives. Logically, the state of Brexit negotiations was never present before the 2016 referendum, but the development of political alienation seems to follow the pattern of blooming during the run-up to the referendum and remaining fairly strong in 2018 as well. The narratives surrounding the implication of EU governance, particularly pronounced in the *Irish Independent*, evolves over time staying consistent across the time frame. In *The Sun*, the same narrative seems to be much more in focus in 2016 than in 2018, most likely due to the extra scrutiny the policies of the EU faced in the UK at that time.

As we mentioned previously, one of the strengths of QCA is the quantitative aspect of the analysis. The quantitative data suggests narrative tendencies that will be expounded in the following sections, where we substantiate our analysis through an in-depth look at our themes and the narratives allocated within each theme.

6.0 Thematic Analysis

In the previous section we presented the initial narrative tendencies expressed as quantitative tables. Here, we present our thematic analysis, our core narratives, and examine how these are created, relate to each other and how they change over time.

An overview of the sources, including their date of publication can be found in Appendix A. In the following sections, citations such as II-2018-08 refer to Appendix A. This citation should be read as Irish Independent (II), publication year (2018), number of source (08). For *The Sun*, it would be (TS). In the appendix, the order is such that the sources are arranged by year and by newspaper, alphabetically. Additionally, when there are similar occurrences of narratives in other sources it has been marked in the footnotes.

As mentioned previously, we found six themes that the core-narratives revolve around³. These themes are arranged as following in this analysis,

1. EU as an international player
2. EU governance
3. Criticism of EU policy
4. Political alienation
5. Outcomes of Brexit
6. State of Brexit negotiations

The examination of these themes is followed by a comparative section showing the relationship between different core-narrative strands and themes.

6.1 Theme: The EU as an international player

The theme regarding the EU as an international actor focuses on core-narratives portraying the EU in international situations. We see both the values that the EU projects beyond its own borders and how the EU is seen in relation to other actors, such as the US.

6.1.1 The EU uses its values to stabilise international politics

This core-narrative revolves around the portrayal of the EU as a stabilising force in international politics. One example of this construction can be found in narratives about the EU in dealing with president Trump's withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPA). Such can be seen here;

The EU wants to prevent more instability in the Middle East, not least because of the risk of increased migration flows as refugees flee conflict and the potential higher threat of terror attacks. But Mr Trump's announcement has destabilised EU policy on trade and energy as well. Brussels prides itself on its trade deals. Thanks to EU membership, the bloc argues, it is easier to sell Greek feta cheese, German cars, and French wine around the world (II-2018-08)⁴.

The EU is portrayed as attempting to prevent instability using the great power of the EU, the Common Market. Trade is seen to be the EU's main power and the way in which it promotes stability in international contexts.

³ The *Others* category will not be analysed as it consists of non-conforming narratives.

⁴ See also: II-2018-18

Attempts by the EU to stabilise other international situations can also be seen in the condemnation of anti-Semitic remarks of Palestinian leaders by the EU;

The EEAS, the EU's foreign service, also condemned the remarks as 'unacceptable' and said 'such rhetoric will only play into the hands of those who do not want a two-state solution, which President Abbas has repeatedly advocated'. With anti-Semitism growing in several corners of Europe in tandem with the rise of far-right movements, the EEAS described it as a threat not only for Jews 'but a fundamental menace to our open and liberal societies' and said it was committed to any attempt 'to condone, justify or grossly trivialise the Holocaust' (II-2018-50).

Here, the values of the EU as an open and liberal society, embodied within the framework of the EU, is presented to be both the tool used to stabilise, as well as the values being destabilised. Interestingly, this also suggests that the actions of the EU are seen as somewhat self-serving, since by condemning anti-Semitism abroad, it also condemns anti-Semitism at home.

The narrative also encompasses the EU reacting to situations in neighbourhood regions, particularly seen in regards to the rescuing of refugees in the Mediterranean, exemplified here;

it's highly instructive that one of the most recent EU puffs for Operation Sophia puts the rescue of human life first on its list of mission objectives - which is where it should be - and only then waffles on about smugglers [...] The purpose of the whole EU project, we are told, is to 'tackle the root causes' of the refugee tragedy (II-2016-03).

Again, the values of Human Rights are presented to be core values to the EU, which are used as an argument for the rescuing of migrants in the Mediterranean, thus bringing stability to the region. This covers the eastern borders with Ukraine too;

the European Union said it would not recognise the result of a referendum on self-rule held by pro-Moscow rebels in east Ukraine yesterday, calling it illegal (II-2014-34).

Here, the values of democracy and free elections are presented to be the major driving force. It could be argued that the EU does not directly contribute to stability

by not recognising a ‘*democratic*’ vote. However, by not recognising illegal referenda, the EU seems to be defending its core values of liberty and democracy.

This narrative appears primarily in the *Irish Independent*, where it is covered from 2014 till 2018. It suggests an Irish interest in the EU’s external policies, particularly regarding the values of the EU being projected and defended abroad, as well as being used in a stabilising role by the EU.

6.1.2 Migration issues are solved by the EU

A core-narrative regarding migration also occurs in this theme. The focus lies mostly on the external relations of the EU when it comes to actions solving the migration crisis. Illustrated here;

The European Union also sees Turkey as a crucial partner in stemming the flow of refugees who use the country as a transit point to get to Europe. Davutoglu was Ankara's negotiator in the controversial recent migrant deal between Turkey and the EU (II-2016-45)⁵.

It is presented here as if the EU will struggle to solve the migration crisis without Turkey’s help. However, it also presents the agreement that would potentially let the EU solve the crisis, as controversial.

The narrative also focuses on the potential of Turkish citizen gaining access to the EU through visa-waiver programmes;

Top European Union and German officials made clear yesterday that Turkey must back off from its refusal to change its anti-terror laws if it hopes to secure visa-free travel to Europe for Turkish citizens (II-2016-20).

As well as;

Turkey is on course to be handed visa-free travel to the European Union for its 75 million citizens, despite not meeting a series of key targets. Tomorrow, the European Commission is expected to recommend a radical loosening of travel conditions for the country (II-2016-58).

⁵ See also: II-2016-03

In both these instances, the EU is portrayed as using its values, here embodied by the “anti-terror law” or “key targets”, as a measurement to regulate the flow of migration as well as the relationship between the EU and Turkey.

This narrative occurs only in the Irish Independent, exclusively in 2016. This is shortly after the European migration crisis of 2015 whilst the EU is still struggling to allocate refugees, which could explain the heightened focus on migration and migrants.

6.1.3 *The EU stands up for itself*

Another core-narrative within this theme is a narrative focusing on the EU’s refusal to cooperate with Trump and “standing up for itself”. This focuses primarily on the JCPA, as illustrated in the following;

*The European Union can showcase its mettle, stand up to American hegemony and show her the way forward by taking other domestic, historical, social, religious and cultural contexts into consideration (II-2018-25)*⁶.

Here, the EU is portrayed in opposition to the US, essentially being tasked with standing up to US foreign policy and defend other cultural and historical contexts. This seems to be in line with the values that the EU is presented to embody, particularly its liberal values. The same can also be seen here;

*The latest ravings of the American president on the Iran nuclear agreement - mercifully, at last, firmly opposed by the EU - obscure the lands of mass graves and tunnels in which the Muslim Middle East now exists (II-2018-07)*⁷.

Here, the EU is portrayed as ‘finally’ standing up for itself and standing up to the US. This suggests a view where the EU has lacked the courage and willingness to defend the JCPA, as well as suggesting that this lack of courage has had dire consequences for the population of the Middle East.

The narrative also portrays president Trumps foreign policy in direct conflict with EU goals, which can be seen here;

European businesses have made investments which are now at risk from Mr Trump's threat of sanctions on countries 'helping' Iran [...] Iran was also an

⁶ See also: TS-2018-03,

⁷ See also: II-2018-63

important part of the EU's strategy to wean itself off Russian gas, which was brutally exposed by the Ukraine crisis. Russian President Vladimir Putin had cut off gas supplies to the EU, the majority of which pass through Ukraine, to heap pressure on Kiev and Brussels (II-2018-08).

This echoes the previously discussed sentiment of the EU being portrayed in opposition to the US, more specifically president Trump's foreign policy. It also seems to suggest that the EU has been in a state of weakness, due to reliance on Russian energy, and by standing by Iran it combats this weakness, essentially standing up for itself.

This narrative is also primarily found in Irish coverage and shows a clear focus on the EU's actions during 2018. The narrative suggests that the EU is slow to react to US foreign policy, but also that when it reacts there seems to be more than one purpose, e.g. the values of the EU as well as energy security playing a role.

6.1.4 Thematic tendencies

A very clear thread throughout this theme is the exclusivity with which these narratives occur only in the *Irish Independent*. They do, tentatively occur throughout the entire timeframe, however much more concentrated in 2018. This suggests both a general interest in the EU's role and actions on an international level and that this interest has grown over time. Another tendency is one of portraying EU foreign policy in opposition to president Trump's US foreign policy. We can see, several instances, where the US is portrayed as acting to the detriment of the EU and its interests. The EU is found to be portrayed as a defender of rights and is essentially portrayed as a part of the *self*, whereas the US, specifically president Trump, is portrayed as the *other*.

6.2 Theme: EU governance

The theme of EU governance is comprised of narratives that focus on the internal workings of the EU. This relates to the decision-making processes of the institutions, such as the European Commission, but also to the outcomes and consequences of decisions made. For instance, consumer protection would be considered an outcome of European Commission governance. Essentially, the theme encompasses narratives of rules and regulations, or decisions taken regarding the governing of the EU as a bloc.

6.2.1 The EU institutions govern in their own rights

A core-narrative to be found within this theme relates to governance by the institutions. This narrative focuses on the governance of EU institutions governing within their jurisdictions, such as the European Commission (EC), the European Court of Justice (ECJ), and others.

Examples of this narrative can be seen here;

The Commission ruled in favour of the four Dublin local authorities who have invested in the incinerator in a move that edges the project closer to completion. 'The European Commission has found that a series of measures by the Dublin local authorities to participate in the Waste-to-Energy project in Poolbeg, Dublin, are in line with the EU state aid rules,' it said (II-2014-09).

Here, we see the EC being portrayed as the final decision maker in regard to state-aid rules. This falls squarely within the purview of the EC, and this narrative distinctly views the EU rules as unquestionable.

The governance of the EC can also be seen here;

The EU Commission has ruled out taking 'unilateral action' to prevent dairy farmers across Europe facing a massive super levy fine next year (II-2014-11)⁸.

Again, we can see that the EC is portrayed as a legitimate actor, acting within the bounds of its purview.

The ECJ can be seen to be indicated here;

The European Union's highest court has also upheld a tough EU law that will standardise cigarette packs, ban menthol flavouring and restrict e-cigarette advertising, paving the way for its adoption this month and dealing a blow to Big Tobacco (II-2016-12)⁹.

The ECJ is portrayed as a rule setter, governing through the law. In both these instances, the governance of EU institutions impact organisations and businesses. However, another side of these narratives focus on how governance by EU institutions impacts national governments. This can for example be seen here;

⁸ See also: II-2016-51, II-2016-48, TS-2018-39, II-2018-35

⁹ See also: II-2016-19

The EU bathing water directive forced the Government to make beaches fit for swimming and stop untreated sewage flowing into the sea. This helped develop a seaside economy worth an estimated £3.5billion a year (TS-2016-06).

It is clear that the EC is portrayed as positive force obliging the UK to comply with a directive that benefitted the UK in the long run. However, the actions of the EC restricted the governance choices of the national government. This can also be seen here;

The European Commission has warned Health Minister Simon Harris that curbs on alcohol advertising appear to break EU laws (II-2018-05)¹⁰.

Again, the EC governance is portrayed as restricting national governments, this time to the (perceived) detriment of public health in Ireland.

As can be seen from the above, these narratives stretch across both the UK and Ireland, as well as being present across the entire time frame, suggesting a consistent interest in the theme of EU governance. However, it seems that while Irish coverage exhibits both aspects of the narrative, *The Sun's* coverage is mainly focused on the portrayal of EU governance as a limiting factor regarding the nation state.

6.2.2 Consumers are protected by the EU

In the theme of EU governance, a core-narrative concerning the EU's attempts to protect consumers within the Union can be found. This narrative focuses on how EU institutions use their powers to protect the citizens of the EU.

An example could be the introduction of the GDPR, as presented here;

The arrival of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on May 25 is being billed as a prized initiative in helping to protect consumers, particularly after the Facebook data scandal. GDPR's set of laws aims to prevent websites from capturing and storing user data (II-208-21).

The aim is clearly presented to be to protect consumers from having their data abused. This sets the scene for the EC protecting consumers through the powers of legislation.

¹⁰ See also: II-2014-03, TS-2014-01, II-2016-27, TS-2018-57, II-2014-37

Another example of the EC attempting to protect consumers is the prohibition of a UK phone merger, on the grounds of anti-competitive rules;

A £10.3 billion mobile phone merger between O2 and THREE was blocked yesterday over fears it would push up prices. The European Commission said there was a danger the tie-up would weaken competition [...] EU antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager said yesterday: 'Allowing Hutchison to take over O2 at the terms they proposed would have been bad for UK consumers and bad for the UK mobile sector' (TS-2016-02)¹¹.

Here, the commissioner (Margrethe Vestager) is directly quoted as using consumer protection as a justification to limit business interests. It shows a clear representation of the EC as being on the side of consumers, defending them from price gouging.

A different view on consumer protection by the EU is presented in relation to the negotiations of the TTIP free trade agreement. Here, the EU is represented as wanting to lower consumer protection standards. This can be seen here;

TTIP The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) discussions between the EU and US to hammer out a trade agreement have proved controversial across Europe. It has been claimed leaked documents from Greenpeace show TTIP could lower standards in the EU by pressuring it to accept looser regulations on GM foods or harmful pesticides. However, this has been disputed by the EU Commission, which says it will not lower the level of protection for consumers or the environment (II-2016-47)¹².

The narrative presents a suggestion that the EU might be lowering the food and safety standards to gain good leverage on the proposed trade deal. However, whereas the previous case for the EC to step in and protect consumers was not challenged, these allegations by Greenpeace do not go unchallenged. This seems to suggest that the EC is viewed positively and that challenges to this positive view are received somewhat critically.

This consumer protection narrative occurs both in the UK and Irish newspaper coverage, with the majority of occurrences in Ireland. In the *Irish Independent* it

¹¹ See also: TS-2016-48, II-2014-07, II-2014-17, II-2014-38, II-2016-18, II-2018-55

¹² See also: II-2014-21, II-2018-30

occurs throughout the entire time frame, suggesting that the narrative consistently plays a role in the Irish media. The narrative presents most of the coverage portraying the EU as a champion of consumer protection, and even when there are instances where the opposite is alleged, these allegations are received critically. Overall, the EU, and its institutions, are seen to be portrayed favourably towards consumers.

6.2.3 The EU acts as a standard setter

A different core-narrative within the theme concentrates on EU rules and regulations as a golden standard that other legislation needs to adhere to.

This can be seen in the following examples;

Shadow Environment Secretary Kerry McCarthy said: 'Rather than taking action to clean up these beaches so they meet basic EU standards, ministers are washing their hands of the problem' (TS-2016-06).

Here, UK ministers are accused of not living up to the standards set by EU legislation. The EU standards are portrayed as something very positive. This can also be seen portrayed in the following;

Vacuum cleaners have got better since their power consumption was slashed by EU law two years ago. Many feared the energy restrictions would lead to a drop in cleaning standards, but Which? has found the opposite (TS-2016-49)¹³.

Although it seems some had feared a worsening of standards due to regulations, it is said that the EU standard is actually seen as something positive.

The narrative can also be observed in the following;

As much as €7bn is needed to bring it in line with EU requirements, and that's before new plants to serve our growing population are delivered (II-2014-14)¹⁴.

The emphasis here is not necessarily portrayed as being on whether the EU regulations are positive or not, but rather that it is necessary for businesses and governments alike to adhere to these standards and allocate resources accordingly.

¹³ See also: II-2014-02, II-2014-08, II-2018-49

¹⁴ See also: II-2016-16, II-2014-20, II-2018-46

The standard setting narrative is present both in the UK and Ireland. The *Irish Independent* coverage shows that the narrative appears across the entire time frame, while *The Sun* coverage is limited to 2016. Common to these narratives is the invocation of EU standards as something to aspire to, something positive. This suggests that the EU is seen as a positive presence in terms of regulating these aspects. This can be seen both in *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent*.

6.2.4 *We are part of the EU*

This core-narrative portrays member states, in this case Ireland, as doing well in relation to other EU members, comparing Ireland to standards and indices across the EU. It suggests that Ireland is solidly part of the EU. This is exemplified;

Ireland is the fastest growing European market for digital ad spend, new industry figures show. According to IAB Europe's AdEx Benchmark, Ireland saw a 29-pct. rise in digital ad spend in 2015, far outstripping any European rivals (II-2016-29).

Here, we can see how Ireland is compared to other EU members regarding growth in certain industries. Interestingly, there is talk here of EU rivals, which seems to suggest competition with other members of the EU. The same can be found to be portrayed in the following;

The last time the unemployment rate was around the current level was in November 2008, when it stood at 8.1 pc, just two months after the country officially sank into recession. It is also below the eurozone unemployment rate of more than 10pc. Ireland was the first country in the eurozone to slip into recession, but is now its fastest-growing economy (II-2016-32)¹⁵.

In both these instances, the portrayal of Ireland as a part of the EU seems clear. There is no portrayal of the EU as an *other*, rather focusing on different member states. This can also be seen in the following example;

The European Union opened doors and minds for Ireland. We took our place among the nations of the world. We travelled. We found new markets and sought to make life simpler for citizens and business. We embraced the positive international identity of Irishness. These changes have had a deep impact on

¹⁵ See also: II-2014-12, II-2014-25, II-2014-29, II-2016-40, II-2016-49, II-2018-47

our higher education system and continue to do so. Our relationship with our nearest neighbour is now very different to almost half a century ago. We are on a more equal footing and, crucially, there is relative peace on these islands” (II-2018-67).

Quite clearly, the EU is portrayed as something positive and important to Ireland and to Irish success.

The narrative is exclusively found in the *Irish Independent*. Equally present in 2014, 2016, and 2018, the occurrence might point towards a relatively stable narrative.

6.2.5 *We benefit from EU funded development*

Another core-narrative found within this theme of EU governance is one of development funded by the EU. In this narrative, the EU is portrayed as a benevolent entity. This development refers to EU funded programs, particularly related to programmes such as the Common Agriculture and Fishery policy of the EU (CAP).

Emphasis on the CAP can be seen here;

A set of nine objectives under the new CAP, including climate-related targets, will have to be met to receive direct payments under a Commission proposal due around June 1. Under the new CAP, the EU will monitor climate compliance via mandatory nutrient management plans and will roll out compulsory farm advisory services to encourage precision and digital agriculture (II-2018-17)¹⁶.

We see that the EU is portrayed as an ambitious legislator, tying payment to ambitious climate goals. At the same time, the emphasis on the ‘mandatory’ and ‘compulsory’ parts of the programme suggest that the EU is willing to enforce its policies. The stick and carrot approach is solidified by the idea of encouraging farmers towards digital agriculture, something seen as the future of farming.

Other occurrences of this narrative focus on other EU development programmes, for instance here,

¹⁶ See also: II-2016-14, II-2018-43

Rural areas will get €250m of EU funding up to the end of the decade. The funding is for economic development, job creation, rural tourism, improving broadband and community job projects (II-2014-01)¹⁷.

The benevolence of the EU is clearly portrayed here. It seems that the aims of this program are good for the local community as a whole.

This community approach can also be seen here;

Speaking at the launch of Erasmus Plus, European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly said the programme could 'play a huge role' in the fight against unemployment and poor living standards across Europe (II-2014-32).

The Erasmus program is credited with helping fight unemployment and inequality, in line with the values of the EU. This portrays the EU in a very positive light.

This development narrative concerning EU funding is found exclusively in Irish coverage, and while it is to be found across the entire time frame, it is mostly concentrated on 2014. This suggests a heightened focus on the issue in that particular time frame. The focus is also primarily on rural development, whether this is by independent development schemes, as seen in II-2014-01, or later the CAP as seen in II-2018-17. At the same time, the coverage shows that these development schemes are portrayed very positively, suggesting that the EU is seen as a positive influence in this regard.

6.2.6 *The EU acts in bad faith because of migration*

A core-narrative focusing on the governance of migration can also be found portrayed in this theme. This can be seen here;

Brussels was blasted yesterday for trying to "blackmail" countries into accepting migrants. The European Commission threatened to fine EU member states £200,000 for each refugee they decline to house under a new quota scheme. Within hours, leaders across eastern Europe had condemned the move (TS-2016-36).

Here, the EU is accused of 'blackmailing' member states to accept refugees. This portrayal of the EU suggests it is failing to address the migration crisis, resorting to

¹⁷ See also: II-2014-30, II-2016-13

questionable tactics. It portrays the EC as a bad faith actor, very clearly labelled as an *other*.

Whilst this narrative does not appear very often in this theme, it is nonetheless interesting that when it does appear it is only in UK coverage, in the time period of 2016. Potentially, this could be seen in relation to the European migration crisis of 2015, as well as a general heightened scrutiny of the EU leading up to the Brexit-referendum in June 2016.

6.2.7 Thematic tendencies

The theme is very versatile, incorporating many different narratives in it. Taking all the core-narratives together, one of the very visible tendencies is the primary occurrence of these narratives in the *Irish Independent*. Most of these narratives create a very positive picture of the EU. This can be seen in the consumer protection narrative, or the standard setting narrative. It is quite clear that the EU is more often than not seen as a protector of citizens, constituted as a part of the *self*, even over national governments (see TS-2016-06). The overall positive picture of the EU and its institutions presented in the Irish coverage seems to contrast to some extent with some of the coverage in the UK, such as the ‘blackmailing’ member states (see TS-2016-36). This suggests an overall more negative portrayal of the EU institutions in *The Sun*’s coverage.

The governance narratives are present across the entire time frame, with the UK appearances coinciding mostly with the run-up to the Brexit-referendum. The coverage in Ireland seem particularly focused on the development aspects in 2018, the time where new CAP rules were being negotiated and decided.

6.3 **Theme: Criticism of EU policy**

The theme, Criticism of EU policy, encompasses various core-narratives with the common denominator of being critical towards actions or outcomes of EU policy. This theme is closely related to the theme of EU governance, as it to a large degree deals with the same subject matter: EU policy.

6.3.1 The EU is the cause of migration problems

As we know, the migration crisis of 2015 was one of the central events during that year and has remained a very large influence on the political landscape ever since.

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the most consistent and largest narratives within this theme concerns migration and the EU's policies towards migration.

However, the migration narratives do not only focus on external migration, internal EU migration is also the subject of several narratives.

On the one hand, there is the criticism of the principle of free movement, exemplified by the quotes,

More than 80 EU nationals are being arrested in London each day as Britain's open borders change the face of Britain. The Met held more than 30,000 in the capital in each of the past three years (TS-2016-09).

This criticism of the free movement principle is a direct criticism of the EU, as the free movement of people is one of the core tenements of the EU today. There is also a portrayal of change as something negative where the *face of Britain* is concerned. Whether this is due to a concern for job security, local culture and customs, or a third thing we cannot say. However, we see this concern of other groups reflected in a lot of populist rhetoric around the EU. This is also portrayed in the following quote,

Ministers fear EU immigrants now outnumber arrivals from the rest of the world [...] largely from debt-hit south and eastern European states, the number of continental newcomers could even top 250,000 for the first time ever (TS-2014-02).

Again, fear of outside influence can be clearly seen portrayed here. Interestingly, the immigration from the EU is contrasted with immigration from the rest of the world. This idea can also be seen here,

EU migrants now make up more than one in 20 of the UK population, a report revealed yesterday. The number has soared from 0.9million in 1995 to 3.3million last year. But a separate report could today reveal 1.3million more EU migrants are here than stats suggest (TS-2016-04).

The make-up of the UK is portrayed as being challenged by EU immigrants. The increased arrivals of EU immigrants are portrayed as a negative prospect for the UK. Particularly, the last part also can be seen to portray politicians as not truthful about the effects of migration. This can also be seen portrayed by Boris Johnson, the

former foreign minister of the UK, being cited as having said *EU policies had driven ministers to 'terrible dishonesty' on immigration* (TS-2016-04)¹⁸.

On the other hand, there is a portrayed criticism of the migration policies regarding external migration, such as migrants and refugees coming into the EU during the migrant crisis. This is seen here,

Almost 12,000 unaccompanied kids aged 13 or under flooded into the EU to claim asylum last year, shock figures have revealed. The spiralling number of children and teenagers under 18 on the move without their parents is up fourfold from 2014 (TS-2016-05).

We see outrage towards the migration of unaccompanied children into the EU portrayed. This portrays the EU as allowing a situation that is *spiralling*, i.e. getting out of hand. The same sentiment can also be seen here,

The number of children and teenagers under 18 on the move without their parents rose fourfold. Tory rebels said Britain must "do its bit" and accept more (TS-2016-15)¹⁹.

Although, the above reflects the outrage over this trend, it also brands politicians suggesting helping the problem by taking in these children as '*rebels*'. The narrative also depicts the consequences for the UK, for instance in the statement,

'The biggest problem people will face in the next ten years is illegal immigration.' Mr Brown said it put pressure on schools and hospitals in some areas. But he added: *'The answer is not to leave the EU but help communities run decent social services* (TS-2016-64)²⁰.

Here, we see a former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, argue that the biggest problem for Britain will be related to immigration. This problem is related to illegal immigration, which seems to suggest a failure to restrict or control immigration. It also highlights how migration will affect the UK, with more pressure on local services as a result. Interestingly, Mr. Brown does not suggest that this is not the fault of the EU, neither suggesting it is.

¹⁸ See also: TS-2014-05, TS-2014-14, TS-2014-16, TS-2016-66, TS-2016-31, TS-2016-95, TS-2016-99, TS-2016-100, TS-2016-111, TS-2016-112

¹⁹ See also: TS-2016-23, TS-2016-98

²⁰ See also: TS-2016-95, TS-2016-115

The migration narrative is almost exclusively present in *The Sun*, suggesting a high focus in the UK on this topic. This migration narrative differs from other migration narratives because it seems to conflate internal and external migration in a way, problematising both. Other narratives focusing on migration tend to focus on problematic aspects of external migration. The narrative is primarily present in the coverage from 2016, although the aspect of inter-EU migration also appears in coverage from 2014. One of the probable causes for the heavy increase in coverage between 2014 and 2016 is the occurrence of the 2015 European migration crisis. However, the occurrence of the narrative previous to 2016 suggests that there was some awareness regarding EU migration before 2015.

6.3.2 *The EU intrudes on national policy*

A different core-narrative in the theme centres on criticism of the EU intruding on national policies in member states. This narrative has different aspects to it, whereas one centres on criticisms of EU rules and how these restrict the national governments, the other centres on how the EU uses its power to influence local and national sentiments.

The aspect of it is the criticism of EU rules and regulations, as exemplified by this statement,

A crackdown on our cuppa tea and toast are under attack by EU officials who want to ban high powered kettles and toasters. Tough curbs on household items will be unveiled in autumn. Britain, which accounts for a third of all EU kettle sales, will be hardest hit. It comes as food and drink recalls soared 60 per cent due to 'heavy handed' EU label rules (TS-2016-11).

Evidently, the EU is here depicted as a controlling entity, restricting national governments. Here, it is presented as a direct attack on, arguably, one of the most iconic British cultural traits, tea drinking. Describing EU regulations as *heavy handed* is a very clear criticism of the EU, essentially arguing that this EU policy is overly forceful or clumsy. Some of the same sentiments can be seen echoed in following,

The project was forced on the landowner by EU laws Britain has had to adopt. Estate manager Andrew Blenkiron said: 'We just wanted to dig a hole in the ground but ended up with a phenomenal rigmarole.' The EU added the newts to

its protected species list in 1992. Anyone ignoring rules protecting them faces a fine of £5,000 for each lost newt (TS-2014-19)²¹.

Again, the portrayal of resentment towards EU rules due to a restriction of producers and consumers is evident. This is also further enforced by arguing that the EU has *forced* member states to adopt this legislation, portraying the EU as oppressive in this regard. It is also clearly seen that the above-mentioned sentiment of heavy handedness is again on display.

The other aspect of this core-narrative, criticising the EU for trying to bias the public debate particularly related to the Brexit-referendum, can be seen here;

Brexit-backing MPs have written to the European Commission warning it not to target British homes with pro-EU leaflets ahead of the referendum. It accuses Brussels of interfering in previous referendums in EU states and adds: 'Any intervention is likely to be controversial' (TS-2016-87).

Warning the EC not to *interfere* in the Brexit-referendum is a clear indication of criticism levelled against the EU. The portrayal seems to be that the EU is abusing its position and power to *controversially* influence the public sentiment in member states in favour of the EU. Here, we see how the EU is depicted as an actor with subversive interests, as an *other*. This accusation of abuse of power to influence opinions is also levelled at national governments working in the EU's interests. This can be seen in the following,

Motorists who renew their car tax online are being bombarded with pro-EU propaganda. Thousands more who visit Government websites about tax, benefits, passports or education are also being diverted to a site telling them the referendum will be on June 23 (TS-2016-46).

Here, the national government is depicted as abusing its position to further the EU's agenda. In the run up to the Brexit-referendum, which is referred to here, it is suggested that influencing voters via governmental institutions is wrong.

This criticism is also portrayed in relation to other international institutions, i.e. *the IMF was blasted yesterday for 'interfering in democracy' with an apocalyptic Brexit warning (TS-2016-71).*

²¹ See also: II-2014-15, II-2016-57, TS-2014-17, TS-2016-54

Interestingly, there seems to be a conflation of EU politicians and national politicians (particularly leaders) of other member states. This phenomenon can be observed here,

German Chancellor Angela Merkel secretly controlled David Cameron's EU renegotiation - sabotaging his emergency brake on migrants, it's claimed. Brexit-backing former Cabinet minister Iain Duncan Smith said she forced the PM to axe the key demand less than 24 hours before he was due to unveil it (TS-2016-44)²².

At the same time, we see accusations of pro-EU bias of national medias depicted, particularly in the UK;

Boris Johnson is silenced - as a row raged over the TV Brexit debate. Vote Leave accused ITV of pro-EU bias after the channel said David Cameron will face Nigel Farage, left, on June 7 instead of Michael Gove (TS-2016-22)²³.

This portrays the EU and national medias as the same *other* based on their perceived bias.

The narrative is very prominent in coverage by *The Sun*. The aspect regarding EU bias is present only in the 2016 coverage, coinciding with the run-up to the Brexit-referendum in the UK. Although the narrative is tentatively present in 2014, it is very clear that the focus on these issues has increased vastly by 2016. Coverage in Ireland in relation to the problems of EU regulations are also found, albeit much less than in the UK.

6.3.3 *The EU prioritises wrongly*

A different narrative, focusing on the perceived wrongful prioritisation of EU policies can also be identified within this theme. This narrative focuses primarily on how the prioritisation of EU funds can impact member states. The narrative is less focused on portraying direct criticism of EU institutions, seemingly more concerned with potential improvements through changed prioritisation.

²² See also: TS-2016-45, TS-2016-78

²³ See also: TS-2016-85

One aspect of this narrative is concerned with how the EU prioritises its budget post-2020 (after Brexit). Here, the focus is portrayed particularly as being on the how this budget will impact Irish farmers,

He said a reduction in the CAP budget post-2020 would be a big blow for Irish farmers. 'It is clear that the commission has moved to fill the Brexit gap, but they have prioritised other areas at the expense of the CAP, which is another setback for Irish farmers on foot of the UK decision to leave,' Mr Healy said" (II-2018-09).

As well as here,

Farmers' income was a key issue on the election trail with Mr Healy warning that politicians need to "get serious and recognise there is a real income crisis on Irish farms' (II-2016-25)²⁴.

In both statements above, we see a concern that wrongful prioritisation on the EU's part has a direct effect on Irish farmers, portrayed. However, as opposed to the previous narrative, we do not see the portrayal of the EU as an oppressive force. The focus seems more to lie on how the impact on farmers should be a concern for local and national politicians as well.

Another aspect of this narrative argues that the EU is focusing on the wrong approach towards its policies. This is illustrated here,

Faced with these problems, Europe's leaders tend to think of their own national electorates, rather than of the eurozone as a whole. This is because they are each elected by national electorates, rather than by Europe. Political incentives and economic responsibilities are not aligned in Europe. That needs to change if a sufficiently robust structure is to be built to protect the eurozone against the next global crisis (II-2016-52)²⁵.

Here, the criticism is depicted as being directed at national politicians within the EU who think more about their own interests than collective EU interests. There is a lack of criticism towards the EU itself, rather focusing on the lack of political alignment within the Union.

²⁴ See also: II-2018-33, II-2018-51, II-2018-54, TS-2016-08, TS-2016-24

²⁵ See also: II-2014-31

The narrative is quite prominent in Ireland. The aspect of budget prioritisation seems to be a large concern considering Brexit. However, the income concern exists in 2016 as well, tentatively suggesting that this is a longer issue than purely Brexit speculation.

6.3.4 *The EU is taking autonomy away from members*

A core-narrative concerned with the loss of autonomy is also present in the theme. This narrative is based around the belief that the EU is taking away autonomy from the nation state.

The concern regarding this perceived loss of autonomy is illustrated here,

The EU wants to create a Hitler-style superstate, Boris Johnson claims. He says Brussels uses 'different methods' but shares the same aim to unite the continent under one authority. Boris said: 'Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried this out, and it ends tragically. What is lacking is there is no underlying loyalty to the idea of Europe' (TS-2016-53).

The portrayal of the EU as a fascist entity with megalomania is a very indicative of how the EU is constituted as an actor in this statement. Clearly, the EU is portrayed as an *other*. The portrayal of autonomy is quite clear here: the EU wants to take over all the autonomy from the national governments, which would lead to disaster. The fear of the EU having sinister goals, albeit with less overt fascism, can also be seen in the following,

Voters have seen their democratic power eroded by the ever-expanding European superstate. Some feel under siege from mass migration via the EU's open borders. Some have seen their economies wrecked by the Euro catastrophe (TS-2016-118)²⁶.

The portrayal here implicates the EU taking sovereignty from member states and encroaching on national jurisdiction. At the same time, the EU is heavily criticised for its *open borders* policies, as well as the handling of the financial crisis.

²⁶ See also: TS-2016-84, TS-2016-69

Interestingly, this narrative only exists in UK coverage, exclusively in 2016. Therefore, it seems to suggest a clear correlation between the Brexit campaign and the question of EU and national sovereignty.

A different angle of this narrative, which centres on the problems Ireland faced due to EU regulations regarding bank payments, can also be seen. This narrative is demonstrated here,

*But because Ireland is now part of the Single European Payments Area (SEPA), and there were no interbank transactions in most EU countries yesterday, banks here were unable to process wage payments or pay direct debits (II-2014-10)*²⁷.

As well as here,

The mess meant some people had to wait until the close of business yesterday before they had funds, leaving them facing into the bank holiday weekend scrambling to buy groceries and other essentials (II-2014-16).

This aspect is present in Ireland in 2014. It occurs after Ireland had to comply with ECB rules due to financial issues, leading to a large restructuring of the banking sector in Ireland (O'Carroll, 2010). Clearly, we see the loss of autonomy of the Irish banking system having negative consequences for Irish consumers and Ireland portrayed here.

6.3.5 Thematic tendencies

Overall within this theme, the EU is portrayed overwhelmingly negative. This can be seen in the way in which the core-narrative on migration depicts other EU nationals as a burden being foisted upon the UK by bad EU rules. Additionally, the image of migrants “flooding” Europe suggests an EU that is unable, or unwilling, to control its external borders. The EU is also portrayed as a meddling entity, overreaching both in terms of sovereignty, as seen in the narrative on loss of autonomy, and in terms of intrusion into the political spheres of member states, as portrayed in the corresponding narrative. This depiction of the EU as very negative is certainly mostly pronounced in *The Sun*. Whilst the depiction of the EU as a negative persists in Irish coverage as well, it is not nearly as pronounced. Here, the narrative on wrong

²⁷ See also: II-2014-06, II-2014-13, II-2018-48

prioritisation focuses more on lamenting the issues faced by the European Commission in the face of budget cuts, or the lack of agreement on how to move forward. This overall theme spans all time frames, both in UK as well as Irish coverage. There is a clear trend in UK coverage of pronounced coverage in 2016, which given the referendum in 2016 is not surprising. The same can be said of the negative portrayal of the EU, which is *worst* in 2016 as seen in TS-2016-53.

6.4 Theme: Political alienation

The theme of political alienation encompasses core-narratives focusing on the lack of credibility of national politicians, as well as political alienation. The narrative takes two shapes, one is focused more on national politicians and their lack of credibility, with the EU playing less of a direct role. The other is aimed more at the EU, and the lack of political credibility of EU politicians.

6.4.1 Our national politicians lack credibility

Here, the focus lies on national politicians having a lack of political credibility, as well as a general criticism of the entire political system or the establishment on a national level.

Within the core-narrative different politicians are criticised, however one of the most heavily criticised is former prime minister David Cameron. Examples could be;

David Cameron is really scraping the barrel by saying Britain's exit from the EU could pave the way for World War Three. What next - a plague of frogs, followed by boils and locusts? The EU did not stop Tony Blair sending our young men to fight in the Middle East with poor equipment and it did not stop David Cameron trying to get his own war in Syria. The only threat to this country is from weak politicians (TS-2016-123).

Here, we see how David Cameron's credibility is heavily questioned. He is portrayed as a doomsayer, underscored by the allusion to the biblical plagues. He is also described as weak and, by extension, a *threat* to the UK. The same lack of credibility can also be seen here,

David Cameron has enthusiastically championed Turkey joining the European Union. Turkey - an increasingly authoritarian nation of 75 million Muslims that shares its sieve-like border with Syria, Iraq and Iran. Hey, what's not to

like? But the Prime Minister can't have it both ways. He can't be a fawning cheerleader for Turkish membership of the EU when it suits him - for example, when he is making a speech in Ankara - and then tell us that Turkey will not join the EU 'for decades' and so it is not relevant to the referendum of June 23 (TS-2016-41)²⁸.

Not only is his credibility questioned, he is also portrayed as unreliable, or naïve, in relation to the question of Turkey's ascension to the EU.

However, it is not only David Cameron who is seen as lacking credibility. Former Labour prime minister Tony Blair is also mentioned in one of the previous quotes. Another quote also shows that Theresa May, the current prime minister, is missing the same credibility;

Grassroots Tories have told the PM the party will not be trusted for a generation if she 'fudges' Brexit. In an open letter to Theresa May, they say compromise will frustrate the will of the people (TS-2018-23).

We see that she is essentially depicted as someone that cannot be trusted, if she does not 'deliver' on Brexit.

Other prominent politicians, on the Remain side, are also portrayed with the same lack of credibility during the Brexit referendum, which can be seen here;

The arrogance of David Miliband and his diehard Remainer chums is repugnant. The banana-waving bighead, famous only for bottling one leadership challenge before losing to his little brother and stomping off to New York, now demands we heed his every utterance on Brexit. And his considered view, alongside Nick Clegg and Tory Nicky Morgan, is we shouldn't do it. Sure, we can pretend to leave - but stay in both the customs union and single market, surrendering control of immigration. They call this tired old argument 'Soft Brexit'. Leaving any part of the EU is 'Hard Brexit' now. It is laughable. Who do they imagine would tell 17.4 million people their votes were to be ignored? Not Miliband, hiding in Manhattan. These Remain ultras are blind to the obvious: that the story has moved on (TS-2018-61).

²⁸ See also: TS-2016-34, TS-2016-39, TS-2016-43, TS-2016-92, TS-2016-97, TS-2016-106, TS-2016-110, TS-2016-115, TS-2016-118, TS-2016-124

Here, David Miliband, a prominent former Labour politician, is essentially ridiculed and described as a child, *stomping*. Further, Miliband's point of view is described as *laughable* and he, together with other Remainers, as out of touch with voters and the public.

Another example of political alienation in a narrative could be the following;

Whitehall Brexit adviser Olly Robbins has been accused of holding back key evidence proving technology can be used to solve the Irish border issue (TS-2018-41)²⁹.

Here, a government aide, and by extension the government, is accused of holding back critical information. This depicts low credibility in the entire political system, which is also to be found in this;

The House of Lords believes we peasants do not understand what is best for us. But unlike people in the past, we live in a democracy and have voted for a future outside the EU (TS-2018-30).

The House of Lords is here described as out of touch and undemocratic, standing in the way of 'the people' and their will.

This narrative is only to be found in the UK in 2016 and 2018. This suggest, that the media coverage in the UK is more concerned with a lack of credibility with the national politicians. The politicians that are described as lacking credibility are being portrayed very negatively, almost amounting to character assassination. This seems to clearly indicate that the politicians in question are certainly not a part of *us* but most definitely an *other*. Interestingly, this narrative is primarily present during 2016, coinciding with the Brexit-referendum. This points towards Brexit, and by extension the EU, playing a large role in the perception of politicians and their credibility.

6.4.2 *The European politicians lack credibility*

On the other side of this theme this core-narrative revolves around political alienation with a focus on politicians and institutions within the European system.

²⁹ See also: TS-2018-49, TS-2018-53

These can be both Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as well as the EU as an entity.

The largest aspect within this narrative is concerned with a lack of credibility within the EU system. This critical portrayal of the EU can be seen here;

Why does the Remain lobby batter voters with some new apocalypse every day? If the positive case for staying in the EU is solid, why not make it without the infantile scares? One answer is that Remain are spooked. Voters just don't believe them - and the polls are still deadlocked. Millions of sensible, moderate people are considering Brexit. Remain should treat them as adults, maybe even conceding a few upsides to going it alone (TS-2016-59).

Although it is couched towards the Remain party within the UK, the inherent criticism of the EU system is obvious. The EU is portrayed as lacking the qualities and the credibility to convince voters that it is worth staying in the Union. Some of the same sentiment can be found here;

The EU was supposed to be about free trade,' says Blake. 'But what did we get - a bunch of idiots in Brussels' (II-2016-09)³⁰.

The EU is depicted as not having lived up to its promises, therefore losing the credibility necessary. Incompetence is implied as well, with 'idiots in Brussels'.

Another aspect of the narrative about a lack of credibility is concerned with a lack of credibility with the MEPs. This can be seen here;

In the meantime, MEPs will continue to rake in more than £200,000 per year, on average, in salaries, expenses and pensions before UK membership of the EU ceases. I bet the legal procedures will be dragged out as long as possible as the gravy train slowly comes to a stop (TS-2016-119).

Essentially, EU politicians are depicted as greedy and only interested in the money. This shows political alienation quite clearly. It is further implied that these politicians only attempt to stop Brexit due to self-interest.

The same can be seen here;

³⁰ See also: TS-2016-74, TS-2016-86

Two Euro MPs have milked the taxpayer for more than £1million each, The Sun can reveal (TS-2016-81).

Here too, greed is portrayed as being a driving force for these politicians.

This narrative is mainly anchored within the newspaper coverage in the UK. Furthermore, it is only found in 2016 leading up to the Brexit referendum. This suggests that political alienation and the lack of political credibility played a role in the run up to the referendum.

6.4.3 Thematic tendencies

Overall, the core-narratives within this theme are only to be found in UK coverage, particularly in the time frame of 2016. This seems to indicate both a heightened scrutiny of politicians and their motivations at that time, but also an overall weariness of the political class. Interestingly, we see the politicians being portrayed very negatively, with personal attacks being the norm in this narrative. Further, we can also see that the national politicians are singled out, and particularly David Cameron is clearly constituted as an *other*, lacking huge amounts of credibility.

6.5 Outcomes of Brexit

The theme *Outcomes of Brexit* includes core-narratives concerned with the consequences of the Brexit referendum in June 2016. These narratives support one of two binary core-narratives, either *Brexit has a positive impact on the UK* or *Brexit has a negative impact on the UK*. These two core-narratives have several aspects to them.

6.5.1 The UK will not benefit from Brexit

One aspect of this core-narrative is concerned with the economic dimension. The economic dimension consists of three concerns. One, a concern about free trade, which sees Brexit as something that could lead to problems for UK development and growth, as seen here;

Britain must stay in the EU for greater access to high-growth Commonwealth countries, warns a business leader. CBI boss Carolyn Fairbairn said a Brexit would mean going 'back to the drawing board' on deals (TS-2016-47).

The CBI (a business organisation within the UK) is portrayed as warning that a renegotiation of all trade deals and access to other countries, even Commonwealth countries, which are historically close to the UK, will impact the economy.

The same concerns are depicted here;

The UK economy could face a £250bn (€316bn) hit in lost trade if the country votes to leave the EU, Remain campaigners have claimed. The 'Britain Stronger in Europe' analysis suggests that trade to the EU would be £224bn (€283bn) lower if there was no deal in place after a Brexit. There would also be a £9bn (€11bn) fall in trade with the wider European Economic Area and £14bn (€17.5bn) in lost trade with countries which have deals with the EU (II-2016-23)³¹

Again, trade is portrayed to be heavily impacted if the UK does not remain in the EU. Interestingly, this statement is from Irish coverage, which suggests that trade concerns of Brexit also go beyond the UK itself.

The second economic dimension is somewhat more specific than the first. This aspect is concerned with the negative consequences for specific British industries as evident here;

Leaving the EU poses a 'huge risk' to the Scotch whisky industry, the UK Environment Secretary claimed yesterday. Liz Truss said Scotland's largest exporter would face soaring costs and red tape in the event of a Brexit next month (TS-2016-29).

This has some relationship to the first dimension, seeing as the consequences are portrayed to be linked to trade. However, here we see the depiction of a very specific industry: the Scottish whisky industry.

However, it is not only the whisky industry that would be impacted by Brexit, the same thing can be seen in the car industry;

Economist Howard Archer said uncertainties over the UK economic outlook and concerns about the EU referendum could be a 'potential speed bump' for the UK car industry (TS-2016-63).³²

³¹ See also: II-2016-06, II-2016-31, II-2018-42, II-2016-60, TS-2016-94, TS-2018-13, TS-2018-33,

³² See also: II-2016-05, TS-2016-117, TS-2016-120, TS-2018-07, TS-2018-40, TS-2018-74

Again, a major industry for the UK is depicted as potentially being at risk in a Brexit situation.

The third economic aspect is regarding rising housing prices and unemployment, which can be seen here;

Leaving the EU would push down house prices and raise mortgage costs, George Osborne has controversially warned (TS-2016-69).

As well as here;

House prices have also started to cool - dropping to an average of 0.5 per cent in England and Wales in March - and it appears that overseas investors have been staying away from UK commercial investments ahead of the EU referendum (TS-2016-72)³³.

In both of the above examples, Brexit is portrayed as having a negative impact on general living standards in the UK. This is also mirrored in the concern of rising unemployment, as portrayed here;

Bank of England boss Mark Carney yesterday issued the grimmest warning yet about a Brexit, saying it could trigger a recession. Inflation and unemployment are likely to rise if we opt out, he said. And the Pound could fall 'perhaps sharply', pushing up prices and hitting growth (TS-2016-27).

We see a prominent economist warn about some very core aspects of the economic system. It shows that Brexit is depicted as having an adverse impact on the lives of everyday citizens in the UK.

These three dimensions are part of this overall economic aspect in which the central theme is that the British economy and UK citizens will be worse off outside the EU.

A different aspect of the core-narrative, namely that the UK will not benefit from Brexit, is concerned with intelligence security, as well as a general concern for the security of the British population, which can be seen in the following;

Thirteen former US defence chiefs and five ex-NATO bosses last night warned a Brexit would help the UK's enemies. Quitting the EU would harm Britain's standing and leave us 'dangerously weakened', the retired White House chiefs -

³³ See also: TS-2016-33, II-2016-24

including former CIA boss George Schultz - said in a letter to The Times (TS-2016-32).

Interestingly, we see US defence chiefs and NATO officials used as key witnesses. Essentially, the argument is portrayed as being that the UK will be weaker outside the EU in terms of security, not only because of capabilities, but also because of harm to Britain's 'standing'.

The same sentiment can be seen in this;

First Richard Dearlove, former head of MI6, said Brexit wouldn't damage UK security and we'd be safer if we regained control of our borders. Then yesterday Sir John Sawers, another ex-MI6 head, warned that leaving the EU could undermine 'our ability to protect ourselves' from terrorists (TS-2016-103)³⁴.

Here, the emphasis is not on the standing, but rather on the actual defence against terrorism. Both examples however, portray the UK weakened in terms of security outside the EU.

A different aspect to the core-narrative is concerned with the EU's role as a standard setter and how the UK needs the EU to fulfil this role. This can be seen here;

Harriet Harman has sparked a backlash by saying Brexiteers think a woman's place is in the home. The Labour MP said the EU helped secure reforms including equal pay and maternity rights. She claimed there was a 'match' between people who want out and 'want women back in the home' (TS-2016-73).

Essentially, fear of a roll back of standards as fundamental as women's rights is used to argue against a Brexit, because it is depicted as damaging to these fundamental rights.

However, it is not only in terms of equal rights that there is a need for the EU as a standard setter;

All of the approved chemicals used in European agriculture have limitations as to usage. Restrictions These include individual crop permissions/restrictions,

³⁴ See also: II-2016-10, TS-2016-102, TS-2016-113

maximum rates, periods of permitted usage, conditions under which application is permitted, buffer zones in which application is permitted, condition of application equipment and usage restricted to persons who have undertaken a training course in pesticide application. The same level of controls are not in place for imported products. How much product are we importing in foodstuffs that does not meet our standards? Within Europe we have a very comprehensive residue testing in food products combined with records keeping by farmers of all products used and traceability of both animals and crops. Controls are rigidly enforced on farm. Can the same be said for imported product? If Britain exits the EU will we have different environmental standards for crops produced in the Northern Ireland? The issue of immediate concern is that the food we import in Europe should meet the same standards as Europe demands of it's farmers (II-2016-39).

Here, we see that the EU is instrumentalised as important regarding agricultural regulations. This seems to suggest a fear that the UK outside of the EU would not be able, or willing, to live up to the same high standards. Further, this statement also touches on the EU's large power as a trade bloc. We can see that there is a concern of the UK importing/exporting lower quality goods because it does not have the same power as the EU in terms of setting standards for import/export.

A good summary of the risks to the UK, by leaving the EU can be seen in the following;

Vote Leave will tell you EU red tape is strangling our hardworking firms. They're living in cloud cuckoo land. A vote to leave would be a triple tragedy - more rules, more forms and more delays when selling to the EU. Right now we can sell to 500million people in the blink of an eye. Now look at Norway, which isn't in the EU. Its firms must fill out a form with 50 boxes. Then they need tedious custom checks, which could be a death sentence for our fresh fruit. Over 100,000 of our businesses sell to the EU. Add together all this wasted time and money and you'll see why leaving is a hassle they could do without (TS-2016-122).³⁵

³⁵ See also: TS-2016-37

This statement depicts the same concerns seen in the other examples; the UK would be far harder pressed to trade with the EU if it were to be outside the Union.

A different aspect of the core-narrative is not concerned with the negative impact on the UK in even of Brexit, but rather makes the case that other EU members will benefit from the UK's exit. The argument consists of two things the first one being that Brexit will result in better opportunities for member states which can be seen here;

He will tell a conference in London today that Britain's planned departure from the EU must be seen as a 'catalyst rather than a catastrophe' for Irish higher education and research. Mr FitzGerald, who has been knighted in the UK, says Ireland must prepare to take advantage of being 'the centre of English-speaking higher education and research in the EU' (II-2018-14).

As well as,

Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML) has named key staff who will move to Dublin ahead of Brexit, to join the bank's new European global banking and markets operations. Last week, the Irish Independent reported that the global bank is to relocate 125 jobs to Dublin as it overhauls its banking business in the UK and Europe in preparation for the UK exit from the EU. (II-2018-10)³⁶.

What can be seen portrayed in these two examples are the benefits that can be gained by Ireland in case of a Brexit, e.g. getting more jobs to the country. Since companies suddenly can no longer rely on an office in the UK to be within the EU and might need access to the single market, Ireland can and will benefit from that. We see this in effect already, looking at the example of BAML, where Brexit and the uncertainty about what is going to happen and how an agreement between the EU and UK is going to be structured, has led to the company moving employees to Ireland. At the same time there is also an opportunity for Ireland to become the best place to go for *English-speaking higher education [...] in the EU* which is portrayed as being a huge gain for Ireland and Irish economy.

³⁶ See also: II-2018-02, II-2018-34, II-2018-41, II-2018-60

The other side of this aspect is that the EU will struggle after a Brexit, which is why the UK should stay. This is exemplified in the potential downsizing of the EU budget;

Brussels unveiled plans to hike foreign aid spending by a quarter yesterday - as a huge row broke out between member states over plugging the EU's post-Brexit black hole. Eurocrats want to splurge £108billion on overseas development as part of its seven-year budget. Remaining member states would see contributions to the overall EU budget rocket. But Dutch PM Mark Rutte said: 'A smaller EU as a result of Brexit should also mean a smaller budget' (TS-2018-16).

We see a clear concern for the future of the EU without the UK depicted. By arguing that the EU essentially needs the UK to keep economically in shape, the importance of the UK is highlighted.

This is also reflected in the following example, which pertains specifically to the Irish economy;

The potential impact of Brexit on the Irish economy, particularly on the Irish agri-food sector, has been discussed and debated the length and breadth of the country for the last year and a half and it will continue up to and beyond March 29 next, when the UK leaves the European Union. For Irish farmers, one of the key concerns relates to the impact that Brexit might have on the EU budget and, especially, on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) budget post-2020 (II-2018-52)³⁷.

There is a concern for how Brexit would affect Irish farmers and a concern for how the EU would be financed after Brexit. Interestingly, these budgetary concerns appear both in Irish and UK coverage.

The last aspect of the core-narrative warns about general problems with a Brexit, such as expat rights or the quality of life for Britons;

A report by his committee also warns the rights of ex-pats to live in Europe or get free healthcare would be thrown into chaos (TS-2016-10).

³⁷ See also: II-2018-68

Or here, a variety of issues;

The Labour leader urged the 9.3million who supported Labour at the last General Election to vote to stay in Europe. He said: 'I believe we have to vote to remain to defend investment, to defend jobs, to defend the environment and to defend workers' rights' (TS-2016-13).

A Brexit is portrayed as also negatively affecting the overseas territories of the UK, which can be seen here;

The Falklands would face a 'catastrophic' risk if Britain pulls out of the EU, the islands' leader has warned. Gavin Short fears the move would encourage Argentina to be much more aggressive in its sovereignty claims. And he said it could also lose up to £120million worth of fish, meat and farm trade with Europe (TS-2016-58)³⁸.

As we can see depicted here, the threat to the Falkland Islands is deemed not only economical, but also territorial. This touches upon both the previously mentioned concerns for how trade would suffer, but also how overall security for UK citizens would suffer.

In summary, this core-narrative, about the UK not benefitting from Brexit, is comprised of several trends. First and foremost, the economic implications for the UK are a very large focus, where particularly trade with the EU is seen as vital to the UK economic health. Then, there is a concern for the security of the UK. Both in terms of security against terrorism, but also, as seen in TS-2016-58, a concern for the territorial integrity of the UK. Thirdly, there is a trend towards portraying the EU as a much-needed standard setter in terms of both fundamental rights and agricultural and trading standards. Another argument for why the UK would be worse off is essentially made by arguing that other members, particularly Ireland, would benefit from the problems that would arise for companies if the UK was not in the EU.

Perhaps this core-narrative is best described in the following statement,

The European partnership has helped turn enemies into friends and made us all better off (TS-2016-52).

³⁸ See also: TS-2016-21, TS-2016-62, TS-2016-70, TS-2016-77, TS-2016-107, II-2016-05, II-2016-21

These overall trends and tendencies can be found in both the British and Irish news media coverage in the years 2016 and 2018. A large reason for this is very likely the imminent Brexit-referendum and the heightened focus on the pros and cons to EU membership at that time. The EU is consistently portrayed positively in this core-narrative, being a beneficial influence on the UK's economy and security. At the same time, we can clearly see that the phenomenon of Brexit, and by extension its proponents, are characterised as unreliable and risky.

6.5.2 *The UK will benefit from Brexit*

As opposed to the previous core-narrative, there is also the core-narrative that the UK will benefit from Brexit. This narrative consists of several aspects, one of the arguments posits that the EU is holding the UK back from achieving its full potential. Essentially, this means that if the UK leaves the EU, the UK will be able to live up to its potential and gain much from the Brexit. These gains could, for instance, be in terms of economic potential, as can be seen in these two examples;

Theresa May must summon every ounce of courage today and make the right choice for Britain. More than a year ago she set out her admirable vision for Brexit. We would retake control of immigration, our laws and our money. And, crucially, we would be completely free to trade independently beyond the EU's borders. She called that 'the great prize for this country - to build a truly Global Britain, a great trading nation' (TS-2018-62).

Free trade outside the EU is here seen to be portrayed as the ultimate liberation of UK potential. The argument is depicted as being: without the constraints of the EU, the UK would be able to, once again, become a world leading trading power in its own right. The statement above also refers to an aspect of autonomy, which if 'taken back' by the UK would lead to both better UK laws and economic upturns, a sentiment echoed in the following;

Boris Johnson said yesterday a Brexit would create almost 300,000 jobs because Britain could forge its own trade deals with countries outside the EU (TS-2016-07).³⁹

³⁹ See also: TS-2018-66

The economy aspect is seen depicted here in terms of trade agreements, more beneficial and easier to make with the UK being out of the EU. Therefore, the EU holds the UK back since the UK is not allowed to make independent trade agreements with anyone whilst being a member of the Union, which does not allow the full potential of the British economy unfold.

Another economic benefit to Brexit is argued to be a lowering in prices of food and goods in general, which can be seen here;

EU tariffs also make food more expensive. Grocery bills could fall by up to 20 per cent once we leave the customs union, according to the Policy Exchange think-tank. It is scandalous that four fifths of the tariffs on non-EU goods bought by UK shoppers go directly to Brussels (TS-2018-72).

The argument is portrayed thusly: EU rules and regulations make food more expensive. Outside the EU, this would not happen, thereby lowering food prices. We can also see the EU being portrayed as greedy, expressed in the idea that the majority of tariffs on UK food ‘scandalously’ go to the EU. Similar ideas are expressed in the following statement;

UKIP leader Nigel Farage is planning to hijack Labour's cost-of-living campaign. He will unveil its latest election posters directly linking EU membership to the price of grub and fuel. UKIP will claim food bills would be £400 cheaper if we ditched Brussels, while power bills would be £112 less. (TS-2014-06)⁴⁰

Again, the view expressed is quite clearly that by exiting the EU, the UK will be better off. Here, it seems to suggest that consumers can even save the, substantial, sum of over £500.

Both of the above examples suggest that a UK outside the EU would be beneficial to ordinary consumers, essentially putting more money in their pockets.

A different aspect of this core-narrative argues that the UK would benefit from being freed from EU bureaucracy. This is exemplified here;

⁴⁰ See also: TS-2018-34

Mrs May was lobbying for a customs partnership solution where the UK collects duty on behalf of the EU. Mr Javid said the plan would hinder Brexit Britain trading around the world - to the delight of Brexiteers. (TS-2018-48)

We see EU bureaucratic rules, such as a customs partnership, where the UK would collect EU duties on behalf of the Union, presented as a hindrance to international trade. This is also echoed in the following statement;

The new power to trade globally, beyond the EU and unhindered by it, must be a red line. It is the future ... a Brexit Leavers can live with (TS-2018-63) ⁴¹

Simply put, the freedom to trade, without EU interference, is paramount to UK success. Both of these statements see EU red-tape as a hindrance to UK trading, and therefore as a hindrance to a powerful UK.

Another aspect of the core-narrative is the argument that the EU needs the UK to succeed, and therefore the UK has substantial leverage to gain the best possible terms for Brexit. This argument can be seen expressed here;

We are warned an Out vote on June 23 will bring the roof down on the entire European Union and imperil civilised Western society as we know it. The fragile euro will implode, plunging the world into another catastrophic financial crash. Extremists will rise to power across the Continent, wrecking the Grand Project and putting 70 years of peace at risk. Conflict will break out among squabbling member states, stoked by malevolent Russian tyrant Vladimir Putin (TS-2016-105).

We see both security and economic consequences for the EU mentioned in this statement. Essentially, even though the tone is somewhat exaggerated, it depicts areas where the UK provides necessary stability to the EU, without which it would sharply decline. Another example of the EU needing the UK to succeed can be seen here;

A vote for Brexit could 'pull Europe apart' and risk the security of the entire continent, a former MI6 chief has warned. Sir John Sawers said Europeans

⁴¹ See also: TS-2016-65, TS-2018-06, TS-2018-38, TS-2018-56, TS-2018-72, II-2018-61

could drift to the 'extreme left' and 'extreme right'. He added: 'We need to make sure the centre is solid' (TS-2016-55)⁴².

This example seems to portray similar consequences of a Brexit. Were the UK to leave the EU, it would lead to EU member states drifting apart to a point where extreme political left and right wings would emerge in the EU, destabilising the Union.

The last aspect of this core narrative is concerned with the implications of migration if the UK does not leave the EU. Here the focus is seen to be on the need of the UK to leave the EU to gain control of its own borders;

MPs campaigning for Britain to leave the EU stressed the situation will get worse as other countries, including Turkey, wait to join the EU (TS-2016-99).

As we have seen previously in other themes, the fear that Turkey joins the EU and that this would lead to a mass migration movement within the EU is portrayed here as well. Therefore, the UK must leave the EU according to the argument. These migration concerns are also mirrored here;

More than 1.5 million EU nationals now working in Britain would not be allowed to do so if the UK votes for Brexit, a report claims. Seventy-five per cent of the 2.2 million EU citizens earning a living here fail to meet visa requirements set for those from other parts of the world, a Migration Observatory study found (TS-2016-03)⁴³.

Here, we see the argument that millions of EU citizens that are in the UK because of EU rules, would not even qualify for visas if they were not EU citizens. This is a clear rejection of one of the core tenements of the EU project, the free movement of people. Therefore, it also seems clear that the suggestion here is that the UK will be much better off in control of its own border, where only immigrants fulfilling visa requirements would be allowed through immigration. It portrays the EU as an irresponsible entity, as well as EU citizens as a burden upon UK society.

Overall, this core-narrative is in many ways the polar opposite of the previous core narrative. Essentially, the base argument is that the UK will benefit tremendously

⁴² See also: TS-2016-30, TS-2016-38, TS-2016-76, TS-2016-91, II-2016-37

⁴³ See also: TS-2016-35, TS-2016-80, TS-2016-101

from a Brexit. This is clearly shown in the economic argument, which sees the UK both gain large trading benefits, as well as generally better terms for the average consumers outside the EU, essentially the UK is held back by the EU in these areas. Another argument seems to be concerned with the bureaucratic constraints of the EU system and how this restrains the potential of the UK. This constraint is then argued to be an excellent reason why the UK should leave the EU. There is also a portrayal of the UK as a necessity to the EU, which is used to argue that the UK could therefore get very favourable relations with the EU when it leaves the Union. One of the often-repeated arguments regarding a benefit to Brexit is border control. Here, it is made clear that only outside the EU can the UK really control immigration and that the EU has only placed burdens on UK society in that regard. This is seen to be argued by pointing out that most of the current EU residents in the UK would not be granted visas, if they were not EU citizens. This core-narrative about the UK benefitting from Brexit is almost exclusively mentioned in the British news media coverage in the years 2016 and 2018. Like the previous core-narrative, the narrative here should be seen in relation to the Brexit-referendum in 2016, and the run up to that, where most of the coverage is located. However, even after Brexit became a reality, we see proponents arguing for the reason why Brexit is the best route. This seems to suggest the ambiguous status Brexit has in the UK, even today.

6.5.3 *Thematic tendencies*

What is immediately obvious within this theme is the binary relationship between the two core-narratives. On one side, the core-narrative “The UK will not benefit from Brexit” is clearly very concerned about the consequences for the UK if it leaves the EU. On the other side, the core-narrative “The UK will benefit from Brexit” is obviously concerned with the consequences if the UK does not leave the EU. However, the second narrative has a mixed focus, both on the potential of the UK when it leaves the EU, but also a concern of the consequences of the EU’s influence on the UK, particularly in regard to migration policy. Many of the worries and concerns seemingly regarding the same issues in both narratives, with the notable exception of security and migration concerns, which only appear in the anti-Brexit and pro-Brexit narrative, respectively.

It is interesting, that the narrative which sees Brexit as a bad thing for the UK is portrayed both in Irish and British news media coverage, whereas the narrative

about the UK benefitting from Brexit is solely portrayed in British news media coverage. The EU is portrayed almost completely opposite in each core-narrative. In the narrative with the UK will not benefit from Brexit the EU is being portrayed as a helper and a positive influence, whereas EU is portrayed as a bad influence and detrimental to the UK in the pro-Brexit narrative. This seems to exemplify the idea of constituting *us*, the UK, as a part of the EU or seeing *us*, the UK, in opposition versus *them*, the EU.

6.6 The state of Brexit negotiations

The theme “The state of Brexit negotiations” includes core-narratives where the state of the negotiations between the UK and the EU are essential to the story. These core-narratives focus on the entire process of the Brexit negotiations and appear from the perspective of different actors such as the UK wanting to leave the EU and the EU having responsibilities towards its member states.

6.6.1 Betraying Brexit

This core-narrative focuses on how the British Prime Minister, in this case Theresa May, has an obligation to the people in the UK of ‘delivering’ on Brexit, in accordance to the referendum results in 2016. The expectations towards the PM and her negotiations of Brexit are clearly seen here;

Theresa May says today she is ‘absolutely determined’ to leave the EU customs union and the single market. It's good to hear you say it Prime Minister. We intend to keep you to your word. The evidence at the moment is that she is trying to force through a fudge on the customs union which would make the notion of taking back control meaningless (TS-2018-60).

The delivery of a ‘good’ Brexit, i.e. one that is not ‘fudged’, is here presented as something very important. The statement seeks to persuade the reader that Theresa May, up until that point, has not done a good job of Brexit, essentially not delivering what was promised of the referendum. This feeling of not living up to a, arguably vague, promise is also reflected here,

Brexiters hailed Boris Johnson as they told Theresa May to dump her customs plan with the EU. They lauded the Foreign Secretary for ripping into the PM's

preferred approach of a post-Brexit customs partnership. Mr Johnson said it was 'crazy', 'totally untried' and would betray the Brexit vote (TS-2018-59)⁴⁴.

We see the idea of *betraying* Brexit is closely linked to the idea that anything short of leaving the EU completely seems to go against the spirit of the Brexit-referendum.

We also see a prominent proponent of Brexit, Boris Johnson, state this perceived obligation to not make a custom partnership with the EU since that would be a betrayal of the Brexit referendum.

This core-narrative occurs specifically in UK coverage, only in 2018. The potential non-delivery of Brexit is presented as concerning for the UK.

The next core-narrative is taking the opposite point of view where the focus is on how Theresa May is delivering on Brexit.

6.6.2 Delivering on Brexit

This core-narrative revolves around the argument that Prime Minister Theresa May is trying to deliver, or getting, the best possible deal for the British whilst honouring the outcome of the referendum. This can be seen here;

The prime minister agreed a fall-back Irish Border deal with the EU last December, hailed as 'bullet-proof' and 'cast-iron' by Taoiseach [Irish prime-minister] Leo Varadkar and Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney (II-2018-31).

And,

Theresa May last night moved to unite her Cabinet behind her Brexit plan and told the wider public: 'Trust me to deliver.' The PM said it was her 'mission' to take back control of laws, money and borders (TS-2018-36)⁴⁵.

It is here seen how Theresa May is presented to be concerned with the issues of taking back control with the borders, laws and money. This should be seen in the context of trying to deliver on the spirit of the referendum. We see these same issues throughout Brexit coverage, and therefore, it must be assumed that this is Theresa May's idea of what is possible and best. The customs partnership should be seen as

⁴⁴ See also: TS-2018-04, TS-2018-05, TS-2018-09, TS-2018-10, TS-2018-31, TS-2018-35, TS-2018-64, TS-2018-68, TS-2018-75

⁴⁵ See also: TS-2018-02, TS-2018-12, TS-2018-26, TS-2018-46, TS-2018-55, TS-2018-63II-2018-18

the best outcome thinkable from May's point of view, where she also seems to have the backing of Irish politicians. This is particularly important since the issue of the Irish border has wide historical implications for the UK. The Northern Ireland - Ireland conflict was only solved due to the open border between Ireland and the UK. Having this openness threatened is potentially the biggest issue in the Brexit debate (Chatzky, 2019).

Comparing these two core-narratives, there seems to be a disconnect between how *The Sun* presents its perception of this customs partnership and what Theresa May thinks of it. The difference in opinion on the customs partnership could be argued to be one of split loyalties for the PM. On one hand, she wishes to honour the will of the people (i.e. Brexit), but on the other she has an obligation as the PM to make the best possible deal for the country, even if that means compromising on some of the terms. Interestingly, there seems to be a difference in tone from the PM, depending on whether she speaks of Brexit in general, where the motto of *taking back control* is invoked,

In an apparent bid to placate hard-line Brexiteers, she also said she would deliver on taking back control of the UK's borders, money and laws (II-2018-19)⁴⁶.

or whether she speaks of her Brexit-deal, in which case her tone seems more conciliatory towards the EU,

She was lobbying for a customs partnership⁴⁷ where the UK collects duty on behalf of the EU (TS-2018-26)

The next core-narrative does not take the point of view of the UK, like these two core-narratives have. Instead it portrays UK as being unreasonable in its negotiations with the EU.

6.6.3 *The UK is being unreasonable*

This core-narrative is concerned with how the UK believes it can cherry-pick parts of the EU cooperation they want to be a part of and leave out the things that the country

⁴⁶ See also: TS-2018-36, TS-2018-46

⁴⁷ The customs partnership is seen as a 'softer' Brexit, favoured by the EU.

does not want to be a part of. This is portrayed as unreasonable by EU officials, and some member states, which can be seen here;

So, just to make this clear, one year and 43 weeks after the Brexit vote, your UK government still can't decide between two alternative plans - BOTH of which have already been rejected by the EU. Just to make this even clearer, whichever plan they decide on, we already know that the man from Brussels says 'No' (TS-2018-25).

In this quote it can be seen how the UK is being unrealistic, due to trying to pass an agreement in the UK parliament that lawmakers already know has been rejected by the EU. At the same time, we see puzzlement related to the inability by the British Parliament to agree on any deal whatsoever. The same puzzlement, or consternation, can be seen in the following;

The Tánaiste [Irish deputy prime-minister] pointed to the impossible scenario where the UK believes it can stay outside the customs union and single market and expect the EU and Ireland to evade long-established rules of the single market - most of which Britain was instrumental in creating - in order to satisfy misguided Brexiteers' fantasies. 'The British government has red lines all over the place and expects the EU to accommodate them. We have red lines, so does the EU, but nobody seems to focus on that,' Mr Coveney said (II-2018-11)⁴⁸.

This quote focusses on the same aspects of the UK wanting to be a part of some areas of the EU cooperation and leave out others. This is something that cannot be tolerated by the Ireland, or the EU, which is responsible for all its member states interests. We also see that the Irish deputy prime minister characterises Brexit proponents as *misguided*, at the same time pointing to the *red lines* of the UK's PM as part of the problem.

This core-narrative expresses a concern for the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which can be seen in this quote;

Tánaiste Simon Coveney has warned the divided British government that Ireland won't be flexible on the outcome of the post-Brexit Irish Border, saying

⁴⁸ See also: II-2018-12, II-2018-22, II-2018-32

there is no technical solution to avoid a hard Border. Mr Coveney was speaking as the British cabinet remained split on how to avoid a hard Border in Ireland. One senior minister, Environment Secretary Michael Gove, cast fresh doubt on the viability of Prime Minister Theresa May's proposed post-Brexit customs partnership with the EU, saying it had 'flaws'. He said there were 'significant question marks' about whether the model was deliverable (II-2018-19).

Here, we again see this fear of what will happen to the British-Irish border in case of a Brexit. During the negotiations, different scenarios have all revolved around this question. Northern Ireland, as a part of the UK, is leaving the EU which leads to a need for a border, invalidating the core values of the EU project, as well as the agreement between Ireland and the UK (Campbell, 2019).

It is exemplified in statements such as;

As the lead negotiator for the EU 27, Mr Barnier has - and continues to have - almost complete support from every Irish stakeholder in Brexit, including crossparty recognition, as well as from business and civil liberties groups. Their presence reflected this (II -2018-11) ⁴⁹.

Reflecting complete confidence of Ireland in the EU-negotiator. This suggests that the EU and Ireland are aligned, whereas the UK is indirectly presented as outside this alignment.

The last core-narrative in this theme is concerned with how the EU is perceived to treat the UK poorly in the process of these negotiations.

6.6.4 The EU treats the UK poorly

This core-narrative, about the EU treating the UK poorly, revolves around how the EU no longer cooperates with the UK, in relation to the Brexit negotiations. This lack of cooperation here, where the EU, and Ireland, are accused of wanting a hard border on the Irish-UK border;

In a report published this week, Trimble went on to accuse Michel Barnier, the EU's lead negotiator in the Brexit talks, of 'reckless intransigence'. The former

⁴⁹ See also: II-2018-22

leader of the Ulster Unionist Party claimed that it was Ireland and the EU, not the UK, which would cause a hard Border on this island (II-2018-64)⁵⁰.

Here, we see how the blame is placed on the EU and Ireland rather than the UK when it comes to the agreement to prevent a border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. Essentially, the UK accuses the EU of explicitly wanting a hard border, rather than it being a natural effect of not being inside the EU anymore. The EU, and Ireland, are portrayed as provocateurs willing to orchestrate confrontation with the UK to promote their own goals. Clearly, we see both the EU and Ireland constituted as something opposite the UK. This supports the idea, here shown through the quote of a former Northern Irish politician, of the EU not acting in good faith and treating the UK poorly. Another instance of a lack willingness to cooperate on the side of the EU is shown in the following example, where the focus is on EU policy;

The PM will today launch Britain's own space programme after Eurocrats secretly tried to ground the country after Brexit. Theresa May is tasking aerospace experts to work on a satellite-operated navigation system. Brussels negotiators are refusing to allow the UK to participate fully in the EU's Galileo satellite programme, which has a key military role. Some member states want a deal with Britain because it is a major defence ally. But The Sun can reveal EU officials are withholding a negotiating document which could lead to a compromise. No10 insists a UK system would cost little more than the contributions to Galileo (TS-2018-58).

Very clearly, it is presented here as if the EU is acting against the UK, by withholding important documents, keeping it out of an EU satellite program based on the UK's wish to leave the EU. Here, it is presented as if the EU secretly tries to prevent the joining of the UK, which due to the *key military role* might have security implications for the UK. This seems to suggest not only that the EU treats the UK poorly, but even that the EU acts with the intent of keeping the UK on the outside.

Interestingly, this core-narrative appears both in Ireland and the UK. However, whereas the UK coverage seems to take the side of the UK, Irish coverage seems to use UK politicians to present this argument, rather than taking a stance of its own.

⁵⁰ See also: II-2018-29

The narrative only appears in 2018, presumably due to the more concrete concerns and issues that appeared during that part of the negotiations.

6.6.5 Thematic tendencies

In this theme, we see two sets of binary core-narratives. On one hand, we see the portrayal of the British PM not delivering the Brexit she has promised, on the other we see a narrative that purports her delivering the best Brexit she can. We also see a portrayal of the UK as being a hindrance to the progression of negotiations, as well as seeing the opposite view, where the EU and Ireland are accused of slowing down the negotiations. Interestingly, the first two core-narratives seem less concerned with the relationship between the EU and the UK, rather focussing on the internal machination of UK politics. Having said that, we see that the EU is often used as an indirect actor, portrayed as obstinate and hindering. This portrayal is also seen in the core-narrative *The EU treats the UK poorly*, where we see the EU portrayed as a bad faith actor. On the other side, there is a similar portrayal in the core-narrative *The UK is being unreasonable*, expect with reversed roles. It is worth noting that the portrayal of the UK being unreasonable relies heavily on the inability of British Parliament to agree on a unified policy, rather than suggesting the UK is a malicious actor.

7.0 Narrative comparison

The following section explores the relationship between the twenty-one core-narratives found in the previous thematic analysis. Here, we present the analytical findings and show the relationship between our core-narratives and their presence in the UK and Ireland, as well as the constitution of *us* vs. *them* and how the EU is portrayed, respectively. Following this, we examine the core-narratives occurrence in the time frame⁵¹.

In the first table, the division of the different narratives across *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent* can be seen. We decided to split the narratives into three groups,

⁵¹ All the raw tables can be found in Appendix B

depending on their frequency of occurrence. This was primarily done to provide an overview of the narrative's relative frequency to each other. Through this, we are able to compare the narratives whilst being aware of the limitations due to the difference in size. Our sizes were defined as such;

- Major core-narratives consist of 16+ codes
- Medium core-narratives consist of 10-15 codes
- Minor core-narratives consist of 0-9 codes

This gave us the following spread; **7** major narratives, **6** medium narratives, **8** minor narratives.

Table 8 - Narrative size and presence

Core-narrative	Major	Medium	Minor	Presence in <i>The Sun</i>	Presence in <i>Irish Independent</i>
<i>The EU uses its values to stabilise international politics</i>			X	14.29%	85.71%
<i>Migration issues are solved by the EU</i>			X	0%	100%
<i>The EU stands up for itself</i>			X	20%	80%
<i>The EU institutions govern in their own rights</i>		X		7.69%	92.31%
<i>Consumers are protected by the EU</i>		X		27.27%	72.73%
<i>The EU acts as a standard setter</i>	X			30.77%	69.23%
<i>We are part of the EU</i>		X		0%	100%
<i>We benefit from EU funded development</i>			X	0%	100%
<i>The EU acts in bad faith because of migration</i>			X	100%	0%
<i>The EU is the cause of migration problems</i>	X			94.12%	5.88%
<i>The EU intrudes on national policy</i>	X			86.36%	13.64%
<i>The EU prioritises wrongly</i>		X		35.71%	64.29%
<i>The EU is taking autonomy away from members</i>		X		41.67%	58.33%

<i>Our national politicians lack credibility</i>	X			100%	0%
<i>The European politicians lack credibility</i>			X	83.33%	16.67%
<i>The UK will not benefit from Brexit</i>	X			61.67%	38.33%
<i>The UK will benefit from Brexit</i>	X			93.88%	6.12%
<i>Betraying Brexit</i>	X			100%	0%
<i>Delivering on Brexit</i>		X		81.82%	18.18%
<i>The UK is being unreasonable</i>			X	12.5%	87.5%
<i>The EU treats the UK poorly</i>			X	50%	50%

At a glance, it is quite evident that some narratives were much more heavily present in one coverage over another. There were 6 completely unique narratives, only appearing in either *The Sun* or the *Irish Independent*. There were 11 narratives found more frequently in the *Irish Independent*, whereas 9 are found more frequently in *The Sun*. One narrative can be found exactly 50/50 in both newspapers.

Of the major narratives, 6 out of 7 of these were more heavily present in *The Sun*. The other narrative, *The EU acts as a standard setter*, was also almost 40 percent present in the UK, whilst being 60 percent present in Ireland. Interestingly, most of the major narratives portray the EU negatively. Additionally, at least half of these narratives also relate to Brexit in some shape or form.

Of the six medium narratives, 4 out of 6 were more heavily present in Irish coverage, *The EU is taking autonomy away from members* was split almost evenly and *Delivering on Brexit* was almost exclusively to be found in the UK. As opposed to the major narratives, there does not seem to be either a UK or Irish bias.

Looking at the eight minor narratives, 5 out of 8 were heavily or exclusively found in Ireland. *The EU treats the UK poorly* is present in both countries, albeit with seemingly different presentations (see section 6.6.4). *The European politicians lack credibility* was only to be found in *The Sun*, whereas *Our national politicians lack credibility* also could be found, to a smaller extent, in the *Irish Independent*. As we have previously seen, these two narratives are very similar in their composition.

Overall, if we compare these numbers with the original number of narratives found in either newspaper (see section 5.2), we can see that even though there is a higher frequency of narratives found in *The Sun*, there are less, but more major, core-narratives to be found in the newspaper. This paints a picture of more frequent major core-narratives in *The Sun* but more diverse core-narratives in the *Irish Independent*.

In the following table, the characterisation of the EU in the different narratives can be seen. Additionally, the table also provides an overview of how the relationship between the EU and the other actors in each narrative is.

Table 9 - Constitutionalising and characterising of EU

Core-narrative	Us	Them	How is EU characterised?
Theme - The EU as an international player			
<i>The EU uses its values to stabilise international politics</i>	73.33%	26.67%	Stabilising presence, defender of values
<i>Migration issues are solved by the EU</i>	100%	0%	Using values to regulate flow of migration
<i>The EU stands up for itself</i>	66.67%	33.33%	Finally standing up for core values, direct opposition to U.S.
Theme - EU governance			
<i>The EU institutions govern in their own rights</i>	100%	0%	Legitimate actor, institutions seen as just and legitimate also when prompting national governments to respond
<i>Consumers are protected by the EU</i>	100%	0%	EC is strong protector of consumers
<i>The EU acts as a standard setter</i>	76.27%	23.73%	Positive presence on regulation, seen as force of good influence, some scepticism
<i>We are part of the EU</i>	100%	0%	Inclusive club, positive
<i>We benefit from EU funded development</i>	100%	0%	Provides positive growth opportunities
<i>The EU acts in bad faith because of migration</i>	0%	100%	Lying, failing, bad faith actor
Theme - Criticism of EU policy			

<i>The EU is the cause of migration problems</i>	8.41%	91.59%	Not able to regulate EU-migration, failing member states, weak on external border control
<i>The EU intrudes on national policy</i>	8.57%	91.43%	Restricting national governments, meddling in internal affairs, 'heavy-handed', abusing position to bias citizens
<i>The EU prioritises wrongly</i>	80.33%	19.67%	Members do not think of EU wide interests
<i>The EU is taking autonomy away from members</i>	0%	100%	Power hungry, eroding national sovereignty
Theme - Political alienation			
<i>Our national politicians lack credibility</i>	7.64%	92.36%	Seen as puppet-master, national politicians seen as not credible if on the side of the EU
<i>The European politicians lack credibility</i>	0%	100%	Lacking credibility to convince voters, does not live up to promises, EU politicians seen as greedy
Theme - Outcomes of Brexit			
<i>The UK will not benefit from Brexit</i>	80.97%	19.03%	Provides safe growth, seen as stable, important for security, very important for trade
<i>The UK will benefit from Brexit</i>	9.73%	90.27%	Holding back the UK, bad for business, greedy, overgrown bureaucracy
Theme - The state of Brexit negotiations			
<i>Betraying Brexit</i>	0%	100%	Seen as other, only working in self-interest
<i>Delivering on Brexit</i>	0%	100%	EU does not allow UK to exercise sovereignty
<i>The UK is being unreasonable</i>	9.12%	90.88%	Reasonable, protecting Ireland and other members
<i>The EU treats the UK poorly</i>	0%	100%	Unreasonable, disrespectful towards UK, bad faith acting

In the table above, the narratives are arranged according to their themes. This provides an easier overview, as well as allowing us to compare the different narratives across themes more easily.

Looking at the theme *The EU as an international player*, we can see the three core-narratives decisively constituting the EU as *us*. This is particularly obvious in *Migration issues are solved by the EU*. This minor narrative (see previous table), is present explicitly in Ireland. Coupled with the characterisation of the EU as a positive value-based actor, we see a beginning correlation between constituting the EU as *us* and positive characterisation of the EU as an actor. This correlation is also found in *The EU uses its values to stabilise international politics*, where three-quarters of the characterisation of the EU fall within the *us* category.

In the theme *EU governance*, there is a clear tendency for the narratives to portray the EU as *us*. This is most clearly seen in the narratives *The EU institutions govern in their own rights*, *Consumers are protected by the EU*, and *We benefit from EU funded development*. Common for all of these is also their positive characterisation of the EU. Additionally, these narratives all are either predominantly or exclusively present in Irish coverage. The major narrative of *The EU acts as a standard setter* is present both in *Irish Independent* and *The Sun*. In this narrative we can see a differentiated portrayal of the EU, where three-quarter of the coverage portrays the EU as *us*. Here too, we can see a correlation between positive characterisation and the constitution of EU as *us*. The one narrative, *The EU acts in bad faith because of migration*, which characterises the EU as a negative actor and a part of them, is present only in *The Sun*.

The theme *Criticism of EU policy*, we see a clear trend of portraying the EU negatively. In three out of four narratives, *The EU is the cause of migration problems*, *The EU intrudes on national policy*, *The EU is taking autonomy away from members*, the portrayal of the EU is almost exclusively as an *other/them*. The first two narratives mentioned here are both major narratives, occurring almost solely in *The Sun* coverage. Here, the EU is characterised as a weak and failing entity, holding back members with heavy-handed regulations. In this theme, we see evidence of a correlation between characteristics and portrayal in narratives primarily occurring in the UK. Throughout it can be observed how the EU is primarily constituted as a *them* and characterised negatively in *The Sun* coverage. In the narrative *The EU is taking autonomy away from members*, we can see an exclusive portrayal of the EU as *them*. Interestingly, this narrative occurs more in Ireland (58.33%) than in the UK (41.67%).

Political alienation is a theme where the portrayal of the EU is almost exclusively as *them*. As seen in the table above, the EU is characterised in both narratives, *Our national politicians lack credibility* and *The European politicians lack credibility*, as a negative influence and conducive to greedy behaviour. These two narratives are dominated by personal attacks on politicians and their credibility, calling politicians arrogant and out of touch, as well as attacking the House of Lords as undemocratic. All in all, these narratives show some of the most forceful language in the entire data set.

The theme *Outcomes of Brexit* has two opposing narratives. On one hand, *The UK will not benefit from Brexit* primarily portrays the EU as *us*, characterising it as a provider of stability, safety and growth. On the other hand, *The UK will benefit from Brexit* overwhelmingly portrays the EU as *them*, characterising it as greedy, overgrown bureaucracy holding back the UK. Although both of these major narratives are primarily present in the UK, we can see that *The UK will not benefit from Brexit* also occurs quite a lot in Ireland (38.33%). Interestingly, if we look at *The UK will benefit from Brexit*, we can see 6.12% of occurrences in Ireland. Here, it is important to point out, as we discussed in the thematic analysis, the Irish coverage essentially uses UK politicians to showcase this narrative, without endorsing it themselves.

The state of Brexit negotiations portrays the EU almost completely as *them*. Both the narratives of *Betraying Brexit*, *Delivering on Brexit*, and *The EU treats the UK poorly* exclusively portray the EU as *them*. Here, the characterisation of the EU is as a negative, disrespectful actors that works only in self-interest. These narratives occur primarily in the UK.

Generally, we see a correlation between the constitution of the EU as either *us* or *them* and the coverage in either the *Irish Independent* or *The Sun*. In the *Irish Independent*, a majority of narratives constitute the EU as *us*, whereas the opposite is true for *The Sun*. Here, the majority of narratives constitute the EU as *them*. There also seems to be a correlation between *us* and *them* and whether the EU is considered a positive or a negative actor. In most narratives where the EU is constituted as *us*, it is characterised positively, whereas most narratives constituting the EU as *them* characterise the EU as a negative actor.

In the following table, we examine the occurrence of narratives across the different time. To this end, the break-down of narratives across the time frames is shown below:

Table 10 - Spread of narratives over time

Core-narrative	The Sun			Irish Independent			Total
	2014	2016	2018	2014	2016	2018	
<i>The EU uses its values to stabilise international politics</i>	-	1	-	1	1	4	7
<i>Migration issues are solved by the EU</i>	-	-	-	-	5	-	5
<i>The EU stands up for itself</i>	-	-	1	-	-	4	5
<i>The EU institutions govern in their own rights</i>	-	-	1	2	8	2	13
<i>Consumers are protected by the EU</i>	1	2	-	3	2	3	11
<i>The EU acts as a standard setter</i>	1	6	1	10	3	5	26
<i>We are part of the EU</i>	-	-	-	6	4	5	15
<i>We benefit from EU funded development</i>	-	-	-	3	2	2	7
<i>The EU acts in bad faith because of migration</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
<i>The EU is the cause of migration problems</i>	6	26	-	-	2	-	34
<i>The EU intrudes on national policy</i>	2	15	2	1	2	-	22
<i>The EU prioritises wrongly</i>	-	4	1	3	2	4	14
<i>The EU is taking autonomy away from members</i>	-	4	1	5	1	1	12
<i>Our national politicians lack credibility</i>	1	16	12	-	-	-	29
<i>The European politicians lack credibility</i>	-	5	-	-	1	-	6
<i>The UK will not benefit from Brexit</i>	-	29	8	-	10	13	60
<i>The UK will benefit from Brexit</i>	3	24	19	-	2	1	49
<i>Betraying Brexit</i>	-	-	17	-	-	-	17
<i>Delivering on Brexit</i>	1	-	8	-	-	2	11
<i>The UK is being unreasonable</i>	-	-	1	-	-	7	8
<i>The EU treats the UK poorly</i>	-	-	4	-	-	4	8
Total	15	133	76	34	45	57	360⁵²

At a glance, it is evident that some narratives are much more heavily represented at certain times than others. This is particularly obvious when looking at narratives

⁵² This number is comprised of narrative codes within our core-narratives, the difference between total coded narratives (440) and total codes within the core-narratives (360) is due to a high number of non-conforming narratives that do not create coherent core-narratives. These non-conforming narratives nonetheless fall within our thematic categories.

surrounding Brexit. If we are to look at the total numbers, we see roughly a nine-fold multiplication of mentions of the EU in the UK between 2014 and 2016. We see some of this interest abate between 2016 and 2018, although it remains significantly higher than in 2014.

In the Irish coverage other trends can be seen. One of those trends is the relative continuance of EU narratives such as *Consumers are protected by the EU* and *We are part of the EU*. We also see that the narrative *The UK will not benefit from Brexit* is the largest of the Brexit related narratives to occur in Ireland. Interestingly, we also see the emergence of Brexit negotiation related narratives in 2018.

There are a number of narratives that stay almost exactly the same throughout the entire time frame. Of these, most are to be found in Irish coverage where narratives such as *Consumers are protected by the EU* and *We are part of the EU*. An interesting observation relates to coverage of the EU in *The Sun*, here we see that a number of these narratives do not stretch across the entire time frame, appearing and disappearing throughout the period. Thus, we see the enormous amount of Brexit coverage in 2016, which is somewhat smaller in 2018, as well as the disappearance of migration as a large-scale issue between 2016 and 2018.

Overall, a very fluid landscape of narratives across the time frame emerges. Whilst some narratives can be found across the time frame with similar frequency, most are only to be found either in some parts of the time frame, or with very differing frequency.

8.0 Discussion

In this discussion, we re-examine some of the most important findings and how they relate to each other. In a sense, it is a continuation of our analysis, where we explore the trends of the core-narratives and see how they relate to each other across time and state boundaries.

Overall, there are a surprising number of narratives that are uniquely present in either the UK or Ireland, at the same time, only very few narratives are evenly

present (see section 7, Table 8). This suggests a very differentiated narrative landscape, where the unique narratives are so specifically linked to their respective nation that there is no cross-pollination of narratives. At the same time, there are a few narratives that do appear (almost) evenly across both newspaper coverages. This seems to suggest that these narratives have a common theme that resonates across both member states. Interestingly, these common narratives can be quite different. For instance, *The EU is taking autonomy away from members* occurs in both newspapers, suggesting that this is an issue recognised in both countries. It also shows that the EU is portrayed negatively when perceived to shift sovereignty from member states to itself, regardless of the members states' relationship with the EU. There are also narratives such as *The UK will not benefit from Brexit*, which point towards a shared concern for the future of the UK, albeit because of different interests. The occurrence of this narrative in 2018 in both newspapers seems to suggest a concern on both sides of the border about the future of the relationship between Northern Ireland (UK) and Ireland.

A further point of note is the occurrence of most major narratives primarily in *The Sun*. 6 out of 7 major narratives are more frequently found in *The Sun*, whereas most of the minor narratives, 5 out of 8, are found more frequently in the *Irish Independent*. Essentially, there are more frequent major core-narratives in *The Sun* but more total core-narratives in the *Irish Independent*. This suggest a more nuanced engagement with the EU in the *Irish Independent*, whereas *The Sun* engages more with certain core issues. This could be either due to a more differentiated view of the EU in Ireland, or conversely a narrower view of the EU in the UK. However, it could also be due to the types of newspapers we compare in this project. As we established in section 4.4, tabloid newspapers are traditionally more concise in their coverage, possibly leading to less nuanced coverage of a topic such as the EU. This also might mean that *The Sun* focuses on fewer narratives that garner more interest from the public. Hereby, these few narratives become more influential in their portrayal of the EU.

If we look at tables 8 and 9 combined, we see a strong correlation between those narratives that are uniquely present in Ireland, and positive portrayals of the EU. This is evident in narratives such as, *Migration issues are solved by the EU* or *We benefit from EU funded development*. Conversely, *The Sun* coverage portrays the EU

quite negatively in its unique narratives, such as *Our national politicians lack credibility* and *The EU acts in bad faith because of migration*. It seems very clear that there is a difference of how the EU is portrayed in *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent*. As we have seen, the characterisation of the EU in UK coverage often focuses on the EU as a negative entity, a *them*. Conversely, the Irish coverage is often seen to focus on the EU as a positive force, an *us*.

However, there are also outliers that do not support this correlation. In the analysis, we saw that Irish coverage of the narrative, *EU prioritises wrongly*, we see a different portrayal and characterisation of the EU. Here, the EU is portrayed primarily as *us*, even though the overall characterisation of the EU is negative. Although, this characterisation was more focused on national politicians in member states rather than the EU. The essential focus seems to be on the lack of EU wide aspirations of the member states' political leaders, suggesting that the EU itself is not necessarily at fault. It could be argued that this correlation between portrayal and characteristic suggest a feeling of being part of the solution on the part of the *Irish Independent*, i.e. taking part in changing the priorities of the EU from inside the 'club'. This is also true the other way around. The narrative of *The UK is unreasonable* portrays the EU as *them*, whilst having a positive characterisation of the EU. The Irish coverage suggests that even though the EU is constituted as a *them*, i.e. not identical to Ireland, it protects Irish interests as a member of the Union.

If we are to look at the total frequency of narratives spread across the time frame, we see roughly a nine-fold multiplication of mentions of the EU in *The Sun* from 2014 to 2016. This is quite interesting in relation to our initial ideas about the coverage of 2014. Here, we presumed that in a year, and month, with EU elections, we would find a large proportion of narratives about the EU. It has become clear that the question of Brexit has meant extraordinary growth in EU coverage. This is most likely due to the continuance of the issues surrounding Brexit in the overall political landscape of the UK.

The occurrence of the narratives about political alienation, primarily in *The Sun* in 2016 and onwards, point towards a larger awareness of potential issues of credibility with politicians coinciding with the Brexit-referendum. The composition of this narrative, with both personal criticism of politicians, such as David Cameron, and

criticism of democratic institutions, such as The House of Lords, point towards an underlying unhappiness with several aspects of the political system.

Additionally, we also see how the narratives about migration (*Migration issues are solved by the EU*, *The EU is the cause of migration problems*, and *The EU acts in bad faith because of migration*) disappear in both *The Sun* and the *Irish Independent* between 2016 and 2018. This is quite interesting, as it suggests that either the concerns and issues of migration have disappeared, or other narratives have become more dominant in the discourse. At the same time, we see that the Brexit narratives have become much more prominent in 2016 and 2018, which seems to reflect the political realities in the UK, where Brexit continues to dominate the public debate. We can see that the Brexit narratives swallow a lot of the themes of the other narratives between 2016 and 2018. By this, we refer to appearance of migration related discourse in Brexit narratives, such as Theresa May's promise to *take back control of laws, money and borders* (TS-2018-36).

What has also become apparent is the binary structure of some core-narratives. For instance, we can see this in theme of *Outcomes of Brexit*. Here, we essentially have two core-narratives that are diametrical opposites. These opposites draw on the same facts to predict different outcomes, i.e. the fact that trading relationships will have to be renegotiated is in *The UK will not benefit from Brexit* portrayed as a disaster, while the core-narrative *The UK will benefit from Brexit* sees this as an opportunity to negotiate improved trade deals. This is also observable in the theme *The state of Brexit negotiation*. There, we have two sets of binary narratives. The narratives *The UK is being unreasonable*, and *The EU treats the UK poorly* also draw on some of the same events, reaching diametrically opposed conclusions.

Betraying Brexit and *Delivering on Brexit* show an interesting interaction of two core-narratives. We see that Theresa May respond to criticism, criticism that can also be seen in *Betraying Brexit*. An example of this is the statement,

Theresa May says today she is 'absolutely determined' to leave the EU customs union [...] at the moment [...] she is trying to force through a fudge on the customs union [making] the notion of taking back control meaningless (TS-2018-60)

This shows the criticism levelled at Theresa May, and her response to it, which can also be seen in *she also said she would deliver on taking back control of the UK's borders, money and laws* (II-2018-19). This suggests that binary core-narratives can interact and influence each other. Here, it seems that one part of a core-narrative can react and change in relation to the contents of a different core-narrative. We can also see that some issues can be instrumentalised to tell different stories. Issues surrounding migration are to be found both in the themes of *EU governance*, *Criticism of EU policy*, and *EU as an international player*. In these cases, even though the content of the narrative is migration, this is used to construct very different narratives with different characterisations of the EU.

Generally, we have seen a tendency of narratives along the lines of the EU as a negative actor and the EU as a positive actor where the thematical focal point is the same. Essentially, we can see this divide in our themes, e.g. *EU governance* and *Criticism of EU policy*, with both of these themes having a focal point of EU policies. This distinction between positive and negative can be seen to be very closely connected to the constitution of the EU as either *us* or *them*.

We expected that choosing 2014 as a point of departure, right before the European elections, there would be more intense coverage of the EU and its institutions. Interestingly, there were no mentions in either newspaper about the ongoing election process at that time.

9.0 Conclusion

Through the analysis of newspaper articles from The Sun (UK) and the Irish Independent (Ireland), as representation of EU member states, we have been able to identify twenty-one core narratives used by these media companies when portraying the EU. As previously mentioned, different types of news media might yield different narrative structures. Therefore, we acknowledge that the comparison of The Sun and the Irish Independent does not represent an exhaustive comparison of the entire media landscape of these two countries.

We saw that different narratives were constructed around diverse themes in both member states. Some of these narratives were found to be in both the UK and Ireland, such as *The EU is taking autonomy away from members* and *The EU acts as a standard setter*, whilst other narratives were unique to either member, such as *Our national politicians lack credibility* in the UK and *We benefit from EU funded development* in Ireland. We also saw that the characterisation of the EU varied between these different narratives. We found that UK coverage often focused on the EU as a negative entity, while Irish coverage often focused on the EU as a positive entity.

The distribution of narratives changed over time, with several issues that rose to prominence and others that disappeared completely. This was exemplified in regard to Brexit. Narratives about Brexit rose from non-existence in 2014, to extreme prominence in both 2016 and 2018. Brexit was the main issue with which the EU was engaged in UK coverage in 2016 and 2018. In Ireland, we saw fewer fluctuations in narratives over time. At the same time, we saw a more diverse number of narratives represented in the *Irish Independent*. However, while *The Sun* depicted fewer narratives, these narratives appeared more frequently.

Within these narratives, we identified and examined the relationship between different narrative actors, specifically, how these actors constituted the EU and themselves. Here, we found large differences in how the EU is portrayed in the *Irish Independent* versus *The Sun*. We found that coverage in *The Sun* was often critical of the EU, constituting the EU as an *other*. In the *Irish Independent*, we saw that coverage tended to portray the EU more favourably, often constituting the EU as an *us*.

We also saw that some narratives had close relationships. Some had binary structure where diametrically opposed narratives drew on the same facts to reach conclusions, particularly seen in narratives about Brexit. We also observed narratives interacting, with one narrative reacting to the development of the other. Further, we also saw that even narratives might disappear, such as the migration narratives, the issues could later be found in other narratives, such as ones regarding Brexit negotiations and outcomes. We also saw that some issues, such as migration, could be instrumentalised in different narratives to tell different stories.

Our findings suggest a narrative landscape that in many ways is continuously evolving, nonetheless anchored in some parts around key subjects, which are replicated repeatedly. It is a landscape divided by diverging portrayals of the EU, utilising diverse issues to tell different stories about the EU. By identifying these narratives and characterising them, we have attempted to contribute towards an overall better point of departure when identifying narratives about the EU in news media.

10.0 Perspectives

Looking back at the project and its findings, several questions for further research can be raised. Based on the findings and given the limitations, it would be quite interesting to map the entire media landscape in Ireland and the UK. This way, it would be possible, with more certainty, to see exactly which narratives and their portrayal of the EU across a broad spectrum of media. At the same time, it would be interesting to see the development over time going back further, given that both countries have a similar history with the EU. This might help us understand why the relationship between member states and the EU can develop so differently, even though they share so many similarities. The extension of the time frame might also have highlighted more recent changes in narratives, based on changing political realities, such as Theresa May's Brexit deal.

Mapping the media landscape in all the EU members, or a larger part of them, would also open new avenues of understanding the portrayal of the EU through narratives. This would highlight regional differences and similarities in a way that has not been possible using Ireland and the UK.

In a similar vein, we saw that Brexit became a large focus in our narratives. Therefore, examining member states media with Brexit as the focal point would provide an opportunity to see how, or if, narratives regarding the EU have evolved in different member states following what is, arguably, one of the largest challenges the European Union has had to face.

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