Debating the European Union transnationally – Wikipedians' construction of the EU on a Wikipedia talk page (2001-2015)
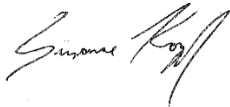
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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the construction of the European Union (EU) as negotiated among contributors to the English Wikipedia between 2001 and 2015. It focuses on the Talk Page (TP) which accompanies the Wikipedia article on the EU and provides a space for Wikipedia contributors to discuss controversial issues regarding the article.

The EU has received considerable attention in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), addressing e.g. questions regarding language policy and discourses surrounding topics connected to the EU (e.g. Muntigl, Weiss, & Wodak, 2000; Unger, Krzyżanowski, & Wodak, 2014; Wodak, 2007a). However, private individuals' attempts to make sense of the EU when facing the task of defining it have hardly been touched upon. In this context, Wikipedia constitutes an ideal repository of data as it has recorded debates on the institution since 2001. Taking a corpus-assisted approach (cf. Baker, 2006), I examine how contributors from various backgrounds have grappled with their understanding of the EU.

Additionally, this study explores aspects of Wikipedia since this collaboratively created encyclopaedia has received little research attention. Taking the EU on Wikipedia as a starting point, this thesis presents a foray into how Wikipedia can be approached from a CDS perspective. That is, on the one hand, it identifies central aspects of this website's structure and addresses policies that guide Wikipedia operations and thus shape Wikipedia data. On the other hand, it examines the site's societal impact/relevance and evaluates to what extent it can function as a transnational public sphere.

Findings suggest that a substantial part of discussions amongst Wikipedians addresses the classification of the EU along the continuum between confederation and unified country, depending on different views concerning member states' sovereignty. Wikipedia's policies and the nature of the debates further suggest that the TP can, to some extent, serve as a transnational public sphere.

Table of Contents

Figures

Tables

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To me, working towards a PhD feels like something between a Marathon and a trip to unknown lands. For both undertakings it's great to have someone by your side – a coach who knows when to challenge you, when to pull and when to push, when to provide a protein bar or a drink of water and when to just support you and cheer you on; an experienced travelling companion who leaps down the rabbit hole with you, who patiently waits as you wide-eyedly explore your new surroundings all the while making sure you don't veer too far off safe paths, who is counsellor and mentor, sounding board and sparring partner as you excitedly work through what you found. I got so lucky – I found this coach and companion in my supervisor Veronika Koller. Words are frustratingly inadequate to express how thankful I am for everything that you've done for me, extending far beyond helping me grow intellectually.

> Let us remember that Europe is a civilization, that is at one and the same time a territory, a shared history, a unified economy, a human society and a variety of cultures which together form one culture.
> – Lionel Jospin

1   Introduction

Before detailing the research objectives and the rationale underpinning this study, I would like to give some insight into my stance and personal motivation for studying how private individuals make sense of the European Union (EU). In the spirit of a key tenet of Critical Discourse Studies – self-reflexivity – it is important to make explicit that I support European integration. This support is motivated by the conviction that we need spaces and platforms that allow us to interact on a transnational plane, especially in a world that is intricately and inextricably interlinked on all levels, be it in the form of our financial and real economy or in the form of facing environmental and social problems that affect us globally.

The EU is such a space that facilitates transnational communication and cooperation. The institution might be flawed – it might seem remote and intransparent for ordinary citizens, it might not be entirely democratic and it might serve the interest of an already powerful elite. However, it still fulfils one crucial function: it allows or even forces the most powerful and/or representatives of smaller units (e.g. nation states) to talk to one another before taking other, possibly military, action. I would argue that that alone already justifies the EU's existence although improvement is of course desired.

One element that requires improvement is the institution's ability to listen to what its citizens and other private individuals affected by the EU's existence think of the EU, what they find difficult to grasp, what they consider problematic and what they oppose. Wikipedia allows me to metaphorically listen to conversations about the EU and how people from various backgrounds grapple with the institution. The insights from this study can then be used to redress misconceptions about the EU and thus help to have a more effective dialogue about the actual issues private individuals struggle with.

As indicated above, I consider spaces that enable interaction and peaceful debate key for continued stability and progress. Hence, I am also interested whether and, if yes, how Wikipedia, as a globally accessible website that allows people to debate various issues, functions as such a space.

Having clarified my personal stance and agenda, the following sections detail my research objectives and elaborate on the rationale underlying this thesis.

1.1   Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is twofold. In the main, it addresses how the EU is constructed amongst contributors on the English version of the collaboratively created encyclopaedia Wikipedia (Wikipedia:About, Wikipedia, 2016). Here, the focus is on the Wikipedia community's debates about the EU between 2001 and 2015 on the Wikipedia *Talk Page* (TP) – a page that accompanies the encyclopaedic entry (or 'article') on the European Union and that provides space for contributors to discuss controversial issues pertaining to the Wikipedia article (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016). The second aim of this thesis arises from my decision to focus on Wikipedia data. As a unique, relatively young and – in discourse studies – under-researched repository of textual data, Wikipedia deserves particular attention. Thus, this thesis also aims to explore central aspects of this encyclopaedia by answering a set of research questions geared towards investigating Wikipedia's structure, policies and societal relevance.

In order to account for the two-pronged research agenda of this thesis, there are two sets of research questions. One set of questions, predominantly addressed in chapter 3, aims at exploring various elements of Wikipedia. This set of questions is motivated by a central CDS tenet, which states that language material should not be examined divorced from context. Thus, answering these questions is, on the one hand, crucial in order to make sense of the data examined in this thesis and to understand Wikipedia's and Wikipedia data's potential societal impact and ramifications. On the other hand, addressing this set of questions geared at exploring Wikipedia also aims to pave the way for future linguistic research, especially in the field of CDS.

- A. What are notable aspects of Wikipedia that deserve particular attention in the context of a critical discourse approach to Wikipedia data? That is,
    1. what characteristics specific to Wikipedia shape and constrain contributors' text production, what are core rules and policies that guide Wikipedia operations and thus affect Wikipedia data?
    2. what is the societal impact and relevance of Wikipedia? To what extent can the platform, in particular Wikipedia talk pages, potentially function as a transnational public sphere?

To address these questions, I outline Wikipedia's overall structure and zero in on central policies that guide user behaviour and shape Wikipedia data. Moreover, I explore the societal relevance of Wikipedia, giving an overview of impact in terms of readership figures and also discussing contributor demographics. Additionally and particularly worth noting in light of ongoing discussions about the EU's lack of a transnational public sphere, I discuss the site's potential to function as such. In order to do so, I draw on Habermas' conception of *Öffentlichkeit* (public sphere) (1990) complemented with Fraser's modifications thereof (1995) and then discuss Wikipedia TPs with respect to these understandings of public sphere(s).

Another set of research questions addresses the Wikipedia community's treatment of the EU:

B. How is the European Union discursively represented and constructed[1] on Wikipedia? Specifically,

1. which aspects of the European Union have been discussed on the Talk Page (TP) accompanying the Wikipedia article on the European Union, that is, which topics connected to the EU have been considered controversial enough to have yielded TP activity?

2. within selected topics, how did Wikipedians discursively construct the EU on the TP between 2001 and 2015?

3. how are the controversial aspects, identified from the TP examination, resolved on the article page?

While research question B1 focuses on topic identification, which is enabled by a combination of Wikipedia policy and Wikipedians enforcing this policy (see section 3.2.1.2), research question B2 homes in on how the Wikipedia community constructs and negotiates the EU in debates about these controversial topics. This question requires an approach that is equipped to deal with a large body of data since I examine approximately 15 years of debates, which amounts to 611,431 tokens. A qualitatively-oriented corpus-assisted approach as described in section 4.3 allows me to take the large amount of data into account and still glean an in-depth understanding of the data. Research question B3 is addressed only briefly and superficially. It merely aims to show what the TP discussions of controversial aspects culminate in on the Wikipedia article page.

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[1] Using language, we *represent* aspects of the world, while at the same time, *constructing* these elements of the world. Thus it is worth noting that every representation is also a construction.

1.2   Background, Existing Research on the EU and Rationale for this Study

The European Union is an entity unlike any other; a sui generis that has defied conclusive definition for the past thirty years (see e.g. Glencross, 2009, pp. 9–10; Phelan, 2012, p. 367; Risse-Kappen, 1996, p. 56). Indeed, Phelan finds that while the institution has been repeatedly described as "'unique', 'new', 'exceptional', 'hybrid', and differing from […] both federal states and international organizations" (Phelan, 2012, p. 367), scholars in the fields of political science and international relations have not managed to satisfactorily capture the nature of the EU in definitive terms (Phelan, 2012, pp. 370–371).

The EU is a distinct body incomparable to federal countries (e.g. the US) or international organisations (e.g. the UN or the WTO) not least because of the unique relationship between the EU and its constituents (Phelan, 2012, p. 381). To name but three notable elements of this relationship, first, while the EU, understood as result of its constituents' choices and actions, could be defined as a confederation that could become a federation like the US (Mann, 2009, p. 321), Nicolaïdis and Howese argue that, in contrast to the US, the EU "will always be composed of distinctive peoples and constitutional democracies" (Nicolaïdis & Howse, 2001, p. 12). They add that the citizens of the US share a "common sense of single nationhood, while the [EU] is based on the idea that separate countries have many elements in common" (Nicolaïdis & Howse, 2001, p. 39). Second, in contrast to traditional international organisations, the EU lacks inter-state reciprocity and countermeasures. That is, EU members do not have the authority to enforce compliance when a member fails to meet requirements agreed upon at the EU level (Phelan, 2012, pp. 369–370). Consequently, the nature of the EU cannot be adequately captured by describing it as an international organisation comparable to e.g. the WTO (Phelan, 2012, p. 369, pp. 369–370). Third, the union's combination of supranational and intergovernmental elements makes the EU one of its kind (Goebel, 2013, p. 82). In fact, the question of who has sovereignty and final decision-making power – the EU as a legal entity or the member states – is, in many cases, one of interpretation and cannot be determined irrefutably even by political science scholars (Mann, 2009, p. 321).

In addition to this brief discussion of why the EU is such a distinct entity, the following paragraphs present an overview of key events in the development of the EU. This is indispensable to be able to make sense of the Wikipedians' references to various world events, the EU and its treaties in the given data set. However, in terms of what and to which degree contextual information is provided, this study only presents the most

rudimentary information on the EU's evolution. This is due to the fact that this project does not inquire systematically about the relation between world events and data.

1952 – Treaty of Paris: European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

'The Six', that is, Belgium, (West) Germany, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy form the ECSC, a supranational institution geared towards economic cooperation with respect to steel and coal (Dedman, 2009, p. 7; Phinnemore, 2013, p. 14). The EU itself, in presenting its historical narrative, cites the ECSC as the first step towards European integration (European Union, 2017). It is also worth noting that the attempt to create military cooperation in the form of the European Defence Community fails in 1954 (Phinnemore, 2013, p. 13).

1958 – Treaty of Rome: European Economic Community (EEC) (and Euratom)

The Treaty of Rome, effective in 1958, sets up the EEC, a Common Agricultural Policy and a common market in manufactured goods. Rather than general European integration or even the federation of European nation states, the EEC's goal was short and medium-term economic gain (Dedman, 2009, p. 83). Both Dedman and Phinnemore describe the EEC as supranational organisation already (Dedman, 2009, p. 7; Phinnemore, 2013, p. 12).

Additionally, Euratom, a common market for nuclear energy, is established (Dedman, 2009, pp. 82–83).

ECSC, EEC and Euratom together constitute the 'European Communities' (EC)

The 1960s – European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

The loose, intergovernmental EFTA complements economic cooperation in Europe as it streamlines cooperation among the 'inner six' with the 'outer seven' countries: Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK (Phinnemore, 2013, p. 15).

Even though then French president Charles de Gaulle is wary of advanced supranational cooperation and sees this as a threat to French sovereignty, a first proposal concerning European political cooperation is considered (Phinnemore, 2013, p. 17).

The 1970s – United Kingdom (UK), Denmark and Ireland join

After joining, the UK renegotiates its membership and, in 1975, holds a referendum on whether to remain part of the EC (Phinnemore, 2013, pp. 17–18). This is notable since the UK's joining had been a struggle – on the one hand, the UK had been reluctant to join and allegedly only decided to do so as its economy had suffered from the continuous exclusion from the common market and, on the other hand, France had actually rejected Britain's application for membership (Dedman, 2009, pp. 99–101).

Apart from welcoming three members, additional free trade agreements with the EFTA states are signed in the 1970s. In due course, the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund are established. 1975 sees the publication of a report on the 'European Union', the development of a monetary union and a common foreign policy (Phinnemore, 2013, pp. 17–18).

The 1980s – further expansion, cultural policy and Single European Act

Greece, Portugal and Spain join; the Cultural Capital scheme commences, i.e. each year a cultural capital is named to arouse international public interest in local developments and events (Moussis, 2011a). 1987 also sees the creation of the Erasmus scheme, which encourages EU citizens to "mov[e] physically to a country other than the country of residence, in order to undertake study, training or non-formal or informal learning" (Moussis, 2011b).

The Single European Act amends the Treaty of Rome and cements the members' commitment to creating a single market. It aims to harmonise legislation in areas such as research and development, economic, social, and environmental policy (Phinnemore, 2013, p. 19)

The 1990s – the Maastricht Treaty and the Schengen Area

The Maastricht Treaty, later called the Treaty on the European Union, adds political components to European integration and paves the way for the European Monetary Union (Europa.eu, 2016b; Phinnemore, 2013, pp. 20–21). With the establishment of the 'three pillars', the EU combines *intergovernmental* and *supranational* aspects: pillar II and III are intergovernmental, pillar I is supranational and incorporates the European Communities: EEC, ECSC and Euratom (Phinnemore, 2013, pp. 20–21):
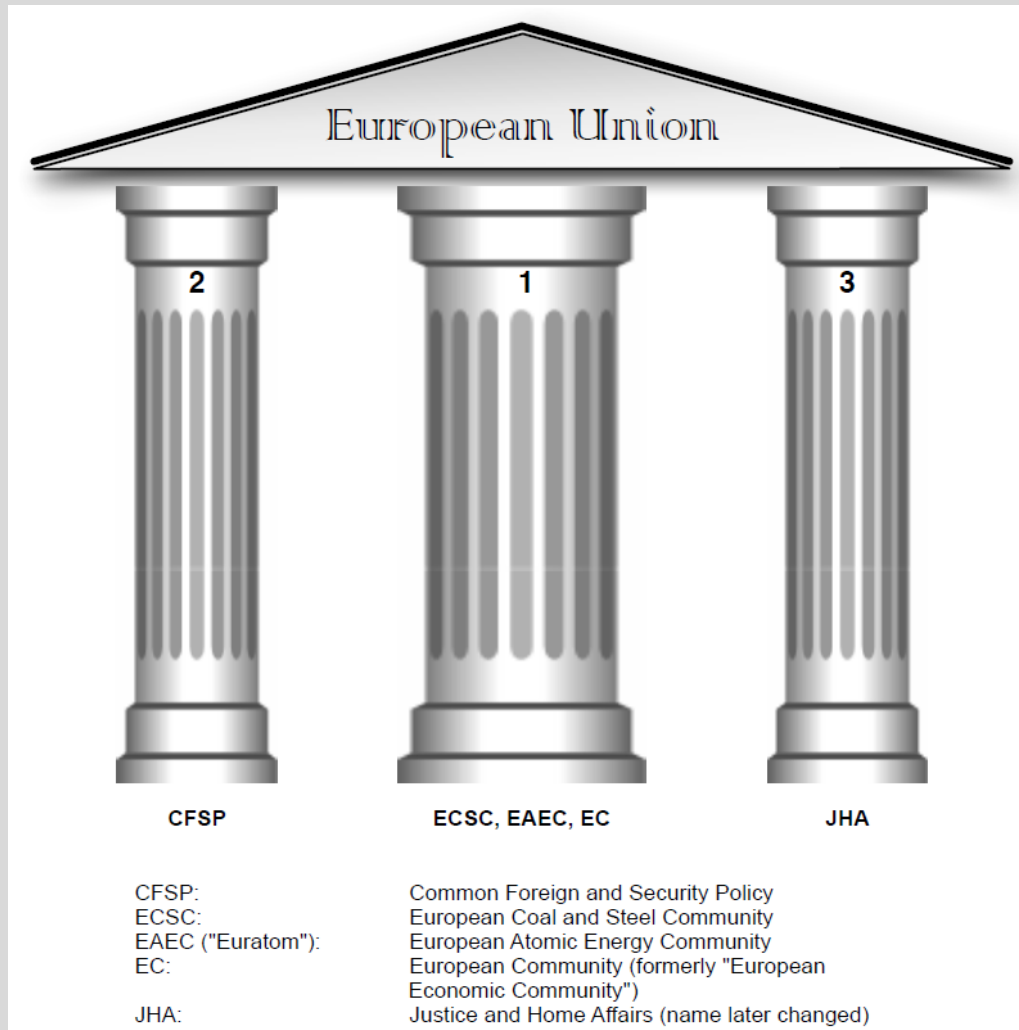
Figure 1 The three pillars of the EU (Tobler & Beglinger, 2013, pp. 18–19)

The Maastricht Treaty also contains cultural policies not aimed at "any harmonisation of the cultural identities of the Member States, but, on the contrary, at the conservation of their diversity. Article 3 of the Treaty on the European Union declares, in fact, that the Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity" (Moussis, 2011a).

The Schengen Agreement enabling freedom of movement between (some) EU members (and others) is first implemented, over the subsequent decade various countries join and implement the agreement (European Commission, 2017b).

Austria, Finland and Sweden join the EU (Europa.eu, 2016a)

2000 – The Treaty of Amsterdam prepares for further enlargement, the tasks of pillar III are integrated into pillar I, i.e. there is a move towards more supranationalism (European Parliament, 2017, p. 2).

Moreover, the euro is introduced in ten member countries; over the next few years the number of members introducing the euro increases gradually (European Commission, 2017a).

2003 – The Treaty of Nice aims to ensure the EU's functioning after growing to 25 members.

2004 – In a major enlargement, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta, Latvia, Hungary, Poland join the EU (Europa.eu, 2016a).

2005 – France and the Netherlands reject the Constitution of the EU (Nugent, 2010, p. 74).

2007 – Bulgaria and Romania join (Europa.eu, 2016a).

2009 – The Lisbon Treaty enters into force

Generally, most of the Treaty's content overlaps with the failed Constitution (Nugent, 2010, p. 78). It strengthens the European Parliament and introduces the new positon of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs. In its article 50, it also stipulates how members can withdraw from the union (Europa.eu, 2016b). The EU acquires the status of a legal personality and the three pillar structure is abolished since the EU is not an umbrella organisation for these anymore (General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, 2009).

Moreover, the treaty – for the first time – clarifies the union's powers and distinguishes between "exclusive competence, where the Union alone can legislate, and Member States only implement; shared competence, where the Member States can legislate and adopt legally binding measures if the Union has not done so; and supporting competence, where the EU adopts measures to support or complement Member States' policies" (European Parliament, 2018). Still, it is worth noting that there is continuous debate and a lack of consensus regarding whether the member states are sovereign, whether the EU has acquired or is in the process of acquiring sovereignty or even whether the concept of sovereignty is a useful concept to apply to the EU and its members (Richardson, 2015; Richardson & Mazey, 2015; Schout & Wolff, 2012; e.g. Shore, 2006; Wallace & Wallace, 1996; Weiler, 2002).

2012 – A report on the EU languages and EU multilingualism finds that German is the most widely spoken first language. This is followed by an equal number of Italian and English as L1 speakers, followed by French (European Commission, 2012, p. 10). In addition, the most widely spoken foreign language is English, followed by French and finally, German (European Commission, 2012, p. 19).

2013 – Croatia joins the EU (Europa.eu, 2016a)

2014 – Scottish Referendum: Scotland remains part of the UK

2016 – Brexit referendum: the UK decides to leave the EU

2017 – The UK triggers article 50 of Lisbon Treaty

Moving on from this overview of the unique nature of the European Union and its evolution, a brief review of past scholarly work on the EU shows that there is gap in research that this project redresses. Generally, the EU has received considerable research attention from scholars of various fields ranging from the humanities to the social sciences. Recent work on the institution ranges from, for example, philosophical essays on the EU (e.g. Habermas, 2008, 2011) to broad, sociological examinations of EU governance and the integration of civil society into decision-making processes (e.g. Kutay, 2014). Due to the breadth of existing research on the EU, this brief review of existing work is limited to studies predominantly produced within the linguistic field of discourse studies and is further limited to more recent research, i.e. research published after 2000. Moreover, the aim here is to present an overview of which areas and issues connected to the EU past research has addressed, rather than an in-depth review and evaluation of past projects and findings.

First, a sizable body of research in applied linguistics has focused on specific *EU policies* or particular *aspects of the EU*; how these are addressed on the level of the EU but also on the level of EU member states. Wodak and Fairclough (2010), for example, focus on higher education in an EU context, examining policy documents and then exploring how these are recontextualised in various EU member nations. Another topic Wodak explores with Muntigl and Weiss is un/employment in the EU with a focus on policy creation processes and on a broad macro-level examination of the EU labour market (Muntigl et al., 2000). Amongst the projects on aspects of the EU, one EU policy and real-life practice is especially notable because it has been the focus of research attention in discourse studies repeatedly – EU multilingualism. Already in 2003, Tosi presented an overview reaching from how the EU's policy of multilingualism is put into practice on a daily basis to issues connected to translating legal texts into the different EU languages (Tosi, 2003). Additionally, the DYLAN project (Language Dynamics and Management of Diversity) undertook a comprehensive examination of multilingualism in Europe and various aspects of EU language policy (Dylan, 2006). Thus, it inspired numerous publications, that, amongst other issues, address how EU institutions deal with

multilingualism but also how multilingualism is conceptualised in various contexts (Berthoud, Grin, & Lüdi, 2013; Gazzola, 2016; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011; e.g. Unger et al., 2014).

Additionally, further research on the EU has focused on *decision-makers*, i.e. politicians' treatment of the EU and issues connected to the EU, e.g. Krzyżanowski and Oberhuber (2007), who explore data from delegates of the Convention on the Future of Europe. Drawing on data from the European Parliament, Fløttum's edited volume (2013) addresses how politicians negotiate the EU's role in relation to particular issues, for example, Ly (2013) examines EU politicians' framing of the EU with regard to climate change. Comparably, other contributions to Fløttum's volume focus on how politicians satisfy the twofold demands made on them, that is, how they address a wider European audience while, at the same time, pandering to the expectations of their national electorates (e.g. Kjeldsen, 2013). This ties into research on politicians' discourses on the EU on a national level, which shows that discursive choices concerning the EU strongly depend on the speakers' national agenda(s) (Kosic & Triandafyllidou, 2004; Wodak, 2015, 2016).

Moreover, scholars have also explored national *news media*'s discourse(s) on the EU. Musolff, for instance, traces the development and use of the metaphor 'heart of Europe' in the British media (Musolff, 2013). In this context it is worth noting that Musolff (2004) also presented a broader comparative study of German and British metaphor usage in regards to the EU. Additionally, Liebert (2007) and contributors to her edited volume focus on national media: these researchers home in on the EU constitution and examine several member states' media treatment of it to understand why the 2007 Constitution failed ratification. Koopmans and Statham's edited volume (2010) also focuses on traditional news media but already enters into an exploration of the internet as complementing traditional news media. Still, this discussion is limited to one chapter devoted to a discussion of internet search engines and hyperlinks in the context of issues connected to the EU (Koopmans & Zimmermann, 2010).

Apart from this, the role and evolution of *EU citizens and citizenship* has elicited a sizable body of research reaching from studies on EU identity amongst groups of citizens (e.g. Galasińska & Galasiński, 2007; Toolan, 2007) to studies of general self-conceptions of EU citizens in relation to the EU (Barnhurst, 2007). However, the most noteworthy subset of citizenship research in the context of this thesis relates to citizen *participation in public debate* and, possibly, even in decision making processes. While the EU as an institution acknowledges the importance of platforms that facilitate such public

engagement and concludes that "democracy depends on people being able to take part in public debate" (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 11), even EU-internal research finds that stakeholder communication within the EU is problematic especially with regard to regular citizens (e.g. Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Later EU-external research confirms the continued existence of such a problematic communicative deficit within the EU and the democratic deficit linked to it (Eriksen & Fossum, 2003; e.g. Gerhards, 2002; Millar & Wilson, 2007; Spanier, 2010).

This problematic aspect of the EU has inspired research into the potential emergence of a European public sphere that facilitates interaction amongst citizens, between citizens and decision makers and possibly even aids in citizens' active participation in decision-making processes (e.g. Eriksen, Joerges, & Rödl, 2006; Thiel, 2008). Research on the (lack of a) European public sphere was also carried out as part of the EU-funded project EMEDIATE, which involved numerous researchers from various European Universities (European University Institute, 2011). The project identified an issue that might impede on the development of a European public sphere, namely that media still predominantly operate on national levels and are biased towards national interests (Triandafyllidou, Wodak, & Krzyżanowski, 2009). In this context, Preston's discussion of the emergence of a post-national 'European' journalism is worth mentioning – he concludes that there is virtually no cohesive journalistic pan-EU culture (2009, pp. 159–161).

Moving on from the sobering conclusions concerning traditional news media's potential to function as true European public sphere, the *internet* has received research attention as an alternative venue of interaction that is not limited by state borders and might thus provide a space for a viable transnational public sphere. Amongst researchers who address this issue individually (Bohman, 2004; Dahlgren, 2005; Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010), the EMEDIATE project also dealt with this question. Overall, the researchers involved conclude that, on the one hand, participation in a potential online European public sphere is still unequal due to inequality of access to the internet across the EU. On the other hand, they also find that, while the internet is used "as a tool for connecting people beyond borders" and has "mobilised political communication in Europe and about European politics" (Priority 7 Citizens and Governance, 2007, p. 30), there is a lack of non-EU-sponsored websites aimed at a transnational European audience. Moreover, they find that the sites that do exist still do not go beyond explicating EU policy to the layperson (Stråth, Schultz-Forberg, & Kaye, 2008, pp. 28–29). Particularly noteworthy in connection with

this thesis is the exploration of the EU-run 'Futurum' an online forum where EU representatives invite EU citizens to post questions and comments (Wodak & Wright, 2006). Evaluating its potential to function as a European public sphere, Wright concludes that it cannot constitute a European public sphere not least due to the fact that it is run by the EU, i.e. it is not an independent platform (Wright, 2007). Although seemingly comparable to Wikipedia talk pages since also an asynchronous threaded discussion forum (Wright, 2007, p. 1170), Futurum differs from Wikipedia in this regard. Thus, evaluating Wikipedia in the sense of whether it can function as a transnational, if not European, public sphere might lead to noteworthy and possibly different conclusions.

The previous point already leads to how existing research on the EU motivates this study – on the whole, my project redresses a gap in research on the European Union with respect to four major aspects. First, my review of existing literature shows that, so far, a sizable part of research on the EU has focused on specific aspects of the EU such as multilingualism (e.g. Berthoud et al., 2013). By comparison, this thesis sheds light on the construction of the *EU as a whole* and, in particular, homes in on what about the institution is controversial or at least elicits debate in the Wikipedia community. Second, research on discourse(s) on aspects of the EU or even on the EU in general is limited in the sense of, for example, focusing on politicians' discursive choices (e.g. in Fløttum, 2013) or, when private individuals are taken into account, research focuses on individuals from specific member states and backgrounds (e.g. in Millar & Wilson, 2007). In contrast, my project investigates how a group of private citizens from potentially all over the world makes sense of the EU. Third, a substantial part of existing research has focused on traditional top-down mass media treatment of the EU (e.g. in Liebert, 2007). Hence, this project also redresses this lack of explorations concerning platforms other than traditional top-down news media. Fourth and connected to this, researchers have explored the issue, and emphasised the importance, of a European public sphere and have indeed begun to take into account the internet as potentially giving rise to a European public sphere (e.g. Bärenreuter, Brüll, Mokre, & Wahl-Jorgendsen, 2009). However, so far, various new media platforms' potential to function as such has not been addressed in depth or, in the case of Wright, such exploration is limited to an EU-run site (e.g. Wright, 2007). This thesis redresses this lack of consideration at least with regard to one new media platform – Wikipedia.

In addition to a lack of research that this study seeks to redress, Wikipedia, in particular, is an interesting repository of data for a study of private individuals' attempts to arrive at a shared conception of the EU as a whole. Indeed, the rationale behind exploring

Wikipedia data and aspects of Wikipedia in general is threefold. First, Wikipedia articles, which are informed by and hinge on talk page discussions and consensus, are widely read. That is, Wikipedians' decisions and opinions reach a sizeable audience and the website has been found to inspire considerable faith in its reliability, which equips the site with notable influence on its large readership. Thus, Wikipedia has reasonable societal reach and impact (see section 3.3.1 for more on this).

Second, despite the website's obvious significance, my review of research on Wikipedia (see 3.1) illustrates that, so far, the site has hardly received any research attention in linguistics. Thus, exploring key policies and technological affordances provides a first step to understanding the factors that shape Wikipedia data and, therefore, future linguist research on Wikipedia data can build on this exploration. Connected to this, this thesis constitutes a first foray into how Wikipedia can be approached from a critical discourse analytical perspective in that it also evaluates and theorises Wikipedia's potential role in society beyond its functioning as a mere online encyclopaedia.

Third, my review of existing literature on the EU ought to be mentioned in connection with some of the most extraordinary features of Wikipedia. As noted above, a substantial body of research on the EU has focused on and lamented the lack of a European public sphere and has already begun to address the internet as a potential venue for the development of such public sphere. However, Wikipedia has not yet been discussed and evaluated as, if not a European, then at least a transnational, public sphere. This oversight ought to be redressed especially in light of two factors. First, the website provides a platform for private individuals from potentially all over the world to engage in debate. Second and in contrast to the 'Futurum' site, Wikipedia exists entirely separate from the EU, i.e. is not subject to control by this institution.

Concerning the structure of this thesis, chapter 2 presents the theoretical background from which this project is approached. It defines relevant terminology but also addresses how this project orients towards different subfields of Discourse Studies, i.e. Herring's Computer-Mediated Discourse Studies (CMDA) and the younger field Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS). Based on this theoretical background, chapter 3 explores Wikipedia, including the policies and structures that shape Wikipedia data, and the platform's societal role. The latter point consists of an overview of facts and figures concerning Wikipedia's reach and impact and an evaluation of Wikipedia's potential to function as a transnational public sphere. Chapter 4 introduces the data set used for this study, details data selection and treatment processes and discusses the methods of

data analysis drawn upon. Chapter 5 to 7 present discussions of my data analyses and chapter 8 concludes this thesis. It maps how the issues identified from data analyses are dealt with on the Wikipedia article page, presents concluding remarks with regard to the research questions addressed in this project and indicates areas of further research.

2   Theoretical Background: Critical Discourse Studies (CDS)

To give a brief overview of the field's history, a meeting among linguists in Amsterdam in 1991 is often cited as the watershed moment of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or, as it has also been referred to in recent years, CDS (Critical Discourse Studies) (Wodak, 2007b, p. 4). However, even before then, numerous linguists had worked in accordance with related principles that constitute the pillars of CDA/CDS. Indeed, the 1970s already brought about a form of text analysis that noted the significance of language in regards to constructing, maintaining or subverting power relations between members/groups of society(ies) (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011, p. 357; Wodak, 2001b, p. 5). Back then, it was a novel approach in linguistics to ask questions about processes of production and reception, the broader societal backdrop of the data and to examine language material on a supra-sentential level since, even in areas of linguistics that took the connection between language and context into account, the focus had still been on the sentence level or on even smaller meaningful units of language. This new, more holistic approach became known as Critical Linguistics (CL) (Wodak, 2001b, p. 5). Only later, was the name Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) coined and the terms CDA, CDS and CL have since come to be used interchangeably (Wodak, 2001b, p. 1). Koller, among others, argues that the word 'analysis' in CD<u>A</u> is easily misunderstood as referring to a specific method of analysis. By comparison, the term 'studies' provides a broader, more general common ground from which researchers can then depart choosing their research objective and adequate methods to achieve their research goal (2014, p. 151). Thus, the term CDS is used here (see also Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Nowadays, CDS is a well-established field of research. However, the fact that this discipline is so well-established with dedicated journals, a fashionable three-letter acronym and even entries in mainstream media (such as Wikipedia) might elicit the wrong impression that CDS is a unified discipline, when, indeed, there is no *one* way of carrying out research in order to produce a work of CDS (van Dijk, 2008, p. 87). Rather, van Dijk, already in 1993, claimed that CDS is "at most a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis" and each study within the area of CDS might examine fundamentally different data using an essentially different methodology drawing on various theories while *still* be considered a work of CDS (1993, p. 131). In light of this diversity of research objects and objectives, scholars working in the field are urged to take a problem-oriented approach and select their data and methods accordingly. Critical

discourse researchers ought to take a "multi-disciplinary and multi-methodical" approach – they are encouraged to draw on various theories and methodologies that support them in the exploration of any issue under investigation (Wodak, 2002, p. 7, 2009, p. 2). Generally then there is no one way of doing CDS. Instead, CDS is better understood as a framework within which a study can be located; a mindset with which a project is approached.

What, though, is the common defining feature of this framework? One unifying aspect is Critical Linguists' view of language as carrying out ideological work. Language use is understood as a means of giving expression to and representing, but also as a tool to construct or contest power relations and, more generally, as a form of social practice. That is, at the core of CDS lies the view that language plays a vital role in the construction, reflection, maintenance but also subversion of the societal status quo and its power structures (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 357; Wodak, 2001b, p. 5). Even though definitions of 'discourse' vary to some degree even within the field of CDS, this understanding of what language is and can do is a fundamental prerequisite for scholars to identify as critical discourse researchers (Mautner, 2016, p. 17).

2.1 Discourse

As mentioned above, definitions of discourse are wide and varied within and outside CDS. Mautner goes so far as to discuss 'discourse' as a cluster concept, that is, a term with numerous definitions that might even be seen as contradictory (2016, p. 17). Still, Wodak and Fairclough present a comprehensive definition of 'discourse' that succinctly summarises several aspects:

> CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of 'social practice'. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by the situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them. (1997, p. 258)

In this definition, the initial mention of 'discourse' is in reference to "language use in speech and writing". However, Fairclough and Wodak then proceed beyond this basic understanding of the term. They establish 'discourse' as a form of social practice and as constitutive of social conditions and structures. Moreover though, discourse and non-linguistic social practices and structures are set in a dialectical relationship. That is, apart from discourse shaping (social) reality and practices, discourse, in turn, is shaped and influenced by the given social practices and the societal status quo. On the whole then,

discourse is understood as creating, corroborating or contesting (social) reality *and vice versa* (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 63–64). This view of discourse inevitably leads to the conclusion that a close examination of discourse allows an insight into the social reality produced by and producing discourse.

By comparison, the count noun 'discourse' refers to a "way of signifying experience from a particular perspective" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 95), e.g. a conservative discourse on equal marriage versus a progressive discourse on the topic. Thus, a particular discourse on a matter gives expression to and reinforces the ideological orientations (see definition below) that are specific to the individual(s) producing this particular discourse. It also becomes clear that contesting discourses on one and the same issue can exist simultaneously with some discourses possibly taking a more dominant position in society than others.

Not least due to the complex nature and manifold meanings of the term discourse (Mautner, 2016, p. 17), a distinction from the term 'text' is indispensable. In this matter, Krzyżanowski and Wodak draw on Lemke's differentiation between the terms (2007, p. 9). Lemke maintains that discourse is a form of social action *which produces texts*. He states that "[w]hen we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text" in contrast to "when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships that embrace different texts and occasions, we can speak of discourses" (Lemke, 1995, p. 6). Thus, 'text' is the discourse sample – it is the concrete realisation of discourse (uncountable) and, potentially, of a particular discourse (countable). In the course of this thesis, it is language material – data taken from Wikipedia talk pages (TP) – that constitutes the primary textual material drawn upon. Material in other modes, although possibly semiotically relevant, e.g. pictures, will not receive in-depth analytic attention in the TP analysis.

To sum up, the term 'discourse' is understood as linguistic social practice that shapes, but is also shaped by other, non-linguistic social practices. It is a means of acting on and representing[23] the world, while, at the same time, individuals'/groups' experience of the world affects the way they then represent and act upon the world. Additionally, as a count noun, 'discourse' is understood as the linguistic manifestation of a certain ideological stance. By comparison, 'text' is the concrete realisation of discourse/a specific discourse.

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[2] i.e. the depiction of events, situations, involved actors, etc. (Hart, 2014, p. 19)
[3] and constructing, since creating a representation in discourse is also a process of construction

Having discussed 'discourse' and described CDS' core view of language use as carrying out ideological work, it is now important to clarify how, in this project, the term and concept of 'ideology' ties in with the presented understanding of discourse and discourses.

2.2 Discourse and Ideology

As stated above, language use is understood as performing ideological work. Although an in-depth discussion of the term ideology is not the focus of this project, the concept requires a brief explanation. The term has been discussed and (re-)defined numerous times (cf. Hart, 2014; Koller; van Dijk, 1998; Ventola & Solin, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). This study adopts van Dijk's understanding of ideology as "clusters of beliefs" (1998, p. 26) that are *"shared by members of a group.* This means that ideologies allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, *for them*, and to act accordingly [italics in the original]" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 8). Thus, ideology is understood as a socio-cultural as well as cognitive concept (Verschueren, 2012, p. 7). While the cognitive aspect does not lend itself to empirical study per se, it might be possible and fruitful to investigate manifestations of ideology (Verschueren, 2012, pp. 17–18).

Verschueren discusses where and how ideology is reified and thereby also succinctly summarises the relationship between discourse and ideology: "(One of) the most visible manifestation(s) of ideology is LANGUAGE USE or DISCOURSE [original emphasis], which may reflect, construct, and/or maintain ideological patterns" (Verschueren, 2012, p. 17). This means that all of us are exposed to discourse or even numerous discourses motivated by and charged with particular ideological leanings or "clusters of beliefs" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 26). As individuals in social context(s), we process this/these discourse(s) and develop a set of beliefs, norms and values. In turn, we give voice to these by drawing on the discourse corresponding to our opinions. By doing so, we perpetuate and reinforce or, possibly, challenge and contest the discourse(s) we have been exposed to and, thereby, the particular ideological stances manifest in particular discourses (Koller, 2012, p. 22). Thus there is a dialectical relationship between ideology and discourse(s).

In connection with this it is important to point out that ideology can never simply be read off of discourse samples because there is no one identifiable form-function relationship of how ideology manifests in discourse. That is, there is not one particular grammatical form or lexical expression that can only be interpreted as referring to one

specific definable ideology. Still, analysing discourse samples in a systematic manner and, in particular, drawing on a considerable volume of data to examine the discursive representation and construction of the EU allows a glimpse of the ideological leanings of the involved Wikipedia community (cf. Baker et al., 2008, p. 277, 297; Partington, 2010, pp. 88–89). To account for the lack of definitive form-function relationship of how ideology is expressed linguistically, this thesis only focuses on retracing the discursive treatment of the EU on Wikipedia *without* speculating about the concrete ideological background of involved Wikipedians.

Apart from clarifying this thesis' view of the relationship between discourse and ideology, it is important to expand briefly on the *socio-cultural* aspect of ideology. Verschueren's discussion of ideology – as well as van Dijk's definition above – conceives of ideology as shared among group members but Verschueren also concedes that ideologies' "relevance, while going beyond the individual does not extend beyond a given society or community" (2012, p. 11). In the context of this study, this means that each Wikipedian might belong to different groups with which they share ideological leanings concerning the EU. When they enter into talk page discussions they introduce these different backgrounds into the debates with the goal of reaching consensus and, possibly, with the agenda of having their understanding of the EU represented in the Wikipedia article. Thus tracing the different aspects of the EU's discursive treatment on the TP might allow a glimpse of existing ideological leanings concerning the EU, although, as already mentioned, this project does not enter into speculative discussion of potential ideological backgrounds of particular Wikipedians.

Compared to the talk page, which hosts constant negotiation concerning aspects of the EU, the *article* page gives the overarching discursive representation of the EU that is presently shared or at least accepted by the majority of the contributing Wikipedians. This means that the article presents the version of the EU that the Wikipedia community has managed to agree on for the time being. Yet, it cannot be emphasised enough that even this apparently static shared representation of the EU is continuously subject to negotiation and adaptation. Thus, one version of a Wikipedia *article* on the EU is merely a snapshot of a constantly evolving discursive representation/construction.

Apart from the view that language use – discourse – carries out ideological work and that ideology is manifest in discourse(s), 'critique' constitutes another central aspect of CDS as a research paradigm.

2.3   Critique

Wodak suggests that the notion of 'critique' is a further unifying characteristic of CDS despite the field's multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach (Wodak, 2001b, p. 2). To be 'critical' in the sense of CDS refers to several aspects.

First, it relates to researchers' perspective on what linguistic analysis can/should achieve (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 4–5). As mentioned above, at the heart of CDS lies the view of language use as ideological. Starting from this perspective, critical discourse researchers go beyond exploring language use. Rather, they see linguistic analysis as a means of exposing "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 2001b, p. 2). Machin and Mayr discuss CDS in terms of a more general objective than merely focusing on oppression and dominance. According to them, CDS aims to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions manifest in discourse and denaturalising the seemingly 'natural' status quo given in discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 5). Generally then, CDS "is not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena" and critical discourse analysts share the view that investigating language use can provide an insight into the workings, the structure and order of societies (Wodak, 2009, p. 2).

However, this form of 'explanatory critique', i.e. exposing the (societal) status quo and attempting to shed light on why social reality is as it is (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 79), does not suffice. Instead, 'critical' also refers to determining what the social optimum is and aiming to effect social change to achieve this ideal – Fairclough and Fairclough's 'normative critique' aims to evaluate and strive for what is actually 'good' and 'desirable' in terms of social evolution (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 79). This explicit agenda of effecting societal change has been met with scepticism in that researchers' political motivations might supersede robust analysis and researchers merely find in the data what they set out to find to support their political agenda (Stubbs, 1997, p. 102). This study resolves this dilemma by virtue of its research goals: this project aims to find out about the discursive treatment of the EU on Wikipedia and to understand if the EU, and if yes, which aspects of the EU inspire controversy. While I clearly support the continued existence of the EU (see section 1), I do not enter into data examination with the goal of promoting a particular ideological strand or with particular expectations of what to find in the data. Instead, my political agenda factors in only after data examination is concluded – my findings ought to be used to aid the continued existence of the EU, e.g. in

improving the institution's communication strategy and focus attention on the issues private citizens grapple with. Additionally, this project ought to draw attention to the fact that language use is never free from ideology, even though the declared aim is the representation of 'objective' reality and, as Wikipedia claims, a Neutral Point of View (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, 2015). Thus, this study also aims to alert Wikipedia users, or more ambitiously, policy makers in education, to the fact that even Wikipedia as a self-identified encyclopaedia does not constitute an ideology-free zone of the internet and critical media awareness ought to extend beyond the realm of traditional news media such as newspapers and television.

In his discussion of the basics of CDS, Fairclough acknowledges that, by carrying out their analysis, critical discourse researchers of course also participate in discourse production and, thereby, the construction of certain versions of events. However, he also maintains that CDS is based on investigation and analysis, which equips it with considerable "explanatory power", that is, well-founded and justifiable reasons and explanations for social phenomena (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 8–9). In this context, Wodak stresses the importance of researchers' self-reflexivity and awareness of their own role as scholars in their work (Wodak, 2009, p. 7). This self-reflective element might serve to increase the reliability of their investigation, which leads to justifiable and valid results in terms of what discourses are dominant and what inequalities exist, how they are present in society and in a last step, possibly, how more 'desirable', e.g. more equal, structures could be created. Concerning this point, this thesis contains an introduction that explicitly addresses the personal motivations underlying this project. Apart from this, chapter 4 incorporates detailed sections on data selection, treatment and methods of analysis in order to ensure maximum transparency. Finally, the conclusion in chapter 8 explicitly acknowledges some limitations of this study.

One more aspect of 'critical' is the importance of contextualizing language material in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the issue under investigation as Wodak (Wodak, 2001b, p. 9), as well as Candlin (Fairclough, 2010, p. ix) point out. The following sections address potentially problematic aspects of incorporating context and detail the systematic way in which this study contextualises the data.

2.4 Context

'Context' in this study principally refers to embedding the linguistic material in layers of background information based on the view that discourse production is always context-

dependent and thus, discourse material should never be examined in isolation (Meyer, 2001, p. 15). Reisigl and Wodak see contextualisation as a central part of the triangulatory approach propagated in CDS – they argue that contextualisation mitigates researcher bias and is, therefore, indispensable in order to arrive at reliable conclusions that hold true beyond subjective interpretation (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, pp. 33–40).

Still, Wodak concedes that the form and extent to which contextualisation is provided remains one of the challenges of CDS (Wodak, 2002, p. 24, 2007b, p. 6). In this context, Hart and Cap suggest a case-by-case approach and argue that a researcher's "analytical emphasis" determines the focus on some point along the continuum between macro- and micro-level of investigation (Hart & Cap, 2014, p. 1). This focus of course then affects which contextual information researchers provide and how they relate this information to the aspect they focus on. Thus, 2.4.1 outlines the types of contexts addressed and to which extent contextualisation is part of this project.

2.4.1 Four Levels of Context

The manner in which context is provided in this thesis follows Wodak's understanding of layers of context. In explaining the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDS, Wodak discusses a four-level model of context: first, "the immediate, language or text internal co-text"; second, "the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses"; third, "the extralinguistic social/sociological variables and institutional frames of a specific 'context of situation'" and fourth, "the broader socio-political and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to" (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67). To clarify briefly, here the term 'co-text' is used to refer to the text-internal environment surrounding an item, a sentence or a meaningful unit that is focused on in the course of the analysis. In contrast, the term 'context' is defined as comprising the other layers mentioned above. It is also worth noting that, in contrast to Wodak, Fairclough lists *three* layers of analysis that, to some degree, correspond with Wodak's levels of context: the textual level, discursive practice and social practice. However, in Fairclough's model, Wodak's third level (interdiscursivity/intertextuality) is subsumed in the second layer (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73). I, in accordance with Wodak, view interdiscursivity and intertextuality as separate from questions regarding the institutional context and therefore adhere to Wodak's framework.

Wodak's first level of context addresses the text under investigation. Indeed, Wodak's first proposed level of analysis is central to this study since its analytical emphasis

is on the micro-level of analysis. Thus, linguistic analysis that takes into account the entire data set constitutes the quintessential source informing and answering the research questions about the EU.

Wodak's second level of context deals with intertextuality and interdiscursivity. This level is highly noteworthy since Wikipedia draws on numerous outside sources to support its claims (Wikipedia:Verifiability, Wikipedia, 2015) and uses hyperlinks to create connections to other sites within and outside Wikipedia. Hence, exploring intertextual relationships in particular, i.e. exploring how texts relate to one another and other forms of semiosis (cf. Orr, 2010), would be a fascinating research project. However, this thesis is subject to certain spatial restrictions and therefore only certain aspects of intertextuality are explored here: This thesis takes into account how Wikipedia editors react and respond to each other in the TP conversations and also explores the way in which the TP relates to the Wikipedia article. However, other elements of intertextuality beyond this level, such as Wikipedia's hyperlink system or incorporation of sources,[4] are not examined.

Wodak's third layer refers to questions of situatedness. It enquires about the "formality of situation, the place, the time, the occasion of the communicative event, the group(s) of recipients, the interactive/political roles of the participants" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 41). This level of investigation can be seen as corresponding to a degree with Fairclough's second context-layer which he calls "Discursive Practice" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73) and which involves "processes of text production, distribution, and consumption" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 78). This thesis examines this level of context in some depth for three reasons: first, all data examined in this study are taken from Wikipedia, which makes this context immediately and irrevocably relevant for the study. Second and in line with some CDS researchers' focus on online contexts (see 2.5.2), such online platforms, particularly one that have received as little research attention as Wikipedia, require particular caution and careful exploration in order to not miss how the data are affected by, e.g. the site's regulations and technological structures. Third, a set of research questions explicitly addresses Wikipedia as a source of data in a CDS context and enquires about Wikipedia's role in society.

The fourth and broadest level of context is concerned with the "sociopolitical and historical context" the data are embedded in (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 41). In this study,

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[4] Elements of interdiscursivity are not explored as part of this thesis either, e.g. this thesis does not address how – when recontextualising source material for Wikipedia articles – the discourse(s) given the source might affect the article.

the choice of what to include in this widest level of context is data-driven/data-dependent. That is, background information on the EU is only provided to the extent that this background is referred to in the data set and therefore indispensable to making sense of the data.

After these considerations concerning which and to which extent contextual information is included in this thesis, 2.4.2 gives an overview of how this project views the relationship between the wider context in which the data are embedded and the narrowest level, namely the language material subject to analyses.

2.4.2   The Explanatory Power and Limitations of Contextualisation

There are multiple interpretations and explanations of the connection between the micro-level of linguistic expression and the macro-level of social background, depending on which school of CDS a researcher subscribes to (Hart & Cap, 2014, p. 1). Consequently, it is important to briefly consider how context and the concrete data set – the language material under investigation – relate to one another.

Van Dijk, in discussing the role of cognition in discourse production and consumption, acknowledges the difficulty of relating context to language material not least due to the fact that we cannot observe what happens in participants' minds, how individuals make sense of the world, how they integrate context and language practice. (van Dijk, 2006, pp. 161–164). It is, as such, not possible to *precisely* understand how the wider societal context impacts linguistic practice or how human cognition mediates wider societal contexts and linguistic practices (van Dijk, 1995, pp. 137–138). Moreover, considering van Dijk's context model, context itself is not an absolute concept in the sense that individual communication participants (here: numerous Wikipedians) might have varying perceptions of what constitutes the relevant context of a situation. Consequently, a researcher's understanding of it is just one possible view of what context matters, and how it relates to and impacts the concrete data set (van Dijk, 2006, pp. 163–164).

As a result of the lack of proof of how precisely linguistic practice is shaped by (non-linguistic) social practice, this study is limited to focussing on, on the one hand, the discursive treatment of the EU in Wikipedia data and, on the other hand, Wikipedia as a young and undertheorised and -researched repository of data. The wider societal and historical context – and contextual information about Wikipedia – is drawn upon to explain references in the data, e.g. references to particular world events that have shaped the EU. However, despite the fact that such world events are referenced in this thesis, this study

does not speculate on how these might have impacted linguistic practice or attempt post-hoc interpretations of the data with a view to the available contextual information.

It also becomes clear that the reverse – making predictions how Wikipedians' *linguistic* practice might affect future non-linguistic *social* practice – is even less feasible and would be highly speculative. Thus, this study refrains from attempting to make claims in that regard. Still, an unwillingness to speculate does not mean that this study rejects the premise that linguistic practice does affect social practice and that human cognition plays a vital role with respect to both, even though the precise manner in which it does cannot be determined here.

The following section examines briefly whether CDS and Herring's Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) can be combined without paradigmatic conflicts. It then discusses the young field of Social-Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), which can be understood as a subfield of both CMDA and CDS (see 2.5.1 and Figure 2).

2.5   Computer-Mediated Communication in the Age of Web 2.0

The term Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) has been widely used to refer to the interdisciplinary field that deals with various aspects of computer-assisted/mediated forms of communication (Androutsopoulos, 2008; Herring, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2015; Mroczek & Thurlow, 2011). Ean presents a relatively concise definition of CMC as

> a form of human communication using computer and Internet network[s] […] this Internet-based communication takes place on a global collection of networks […]. It is a type of communication which allows people to combine numerous media in a single message when conversing. CMC is an interactive channel which allows users to be active and engage in two-way communication. (Ean, 2011, p. 3)

Ean touches upon the increasingly multimodal means of making and conveying meaning (Herring, 2013, p. 4) and CMC's interactive elements (cf. KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 210). The latter point has figured prominently in Herring's 2001 definitions of computer-mediated discourse as "communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers" (Herring, 2001, p. 612). Comparing Herring's explanation of computer-mediated discourse and Ean's description of CMC shows that they can be used interchangeably. Both definitions focus on the channel of communication, i.e. on communication/discourse production and reception via networked computers. This emphasis on the channel of communication does not conflict with CDS' basic understanding of discourse as language use as social practice

but merely homes in on the (metaphorical) spaces from which CMC studies take the data they examine. This is supported by Herring's liberal definition of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) as, broadly speaking, "any analysis of online behaviour that is grounded in empirical, textual observations" (Herring, 2004, p. 339).

Another point that deserves to be mentioned is the fact that nowadays people use smart phones, tablets and other devices instead of merely traditional computers. Therefore, *Digitally* Mediated Discourse Analysis could possibly understood as a more apt descriptor for this subfield of discourse studies. However, seeing as 2.5.1 focuses on Herring's work in the field, her original terminology is retained.

The following section addresses how CDS and Herring's CMDA can be combined in more detail. Then, 2.5.2 presents a brief discussion of how recent developments in the critical study of digitally mediated communication and social media in particular lead to a more concrete understanding of what aspects to include in a discussion of Wodak's third context level (see 2.4.1).

2.5.1 Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Studies

In detailing the aims of CMDA, Herring explains that the particular methods of data collection, treatment and data analysis may vary in accordance with the research objective. Herring emphasises that CMDA is an *approach* without a single theory or method. Not dissimilar to CDS, the researcher is encouraged to select those theories and methods best suited to their data and research objective in order to gain new insights (Herring, 2004, p. 341). This liberal and permissive delineation of CMDA also extends to CMDA's focus on linguistic matters or broader, more general issues – Herring acknowledges that CMDA permits insights into micro-level phenomena as well as into macro-level issues, that is, CMDA also allows researchers to address "questions of broad social and psychological significance" (Herring, 2004, p. 339).

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that the preceding paragraph reads almost like an introduction to Critical Discourse Studies. Indeed, there is no paradigmatic conflict between CMDA and CDS. CDS as well as CMDA cover the macro-to-micro spectrum, albeit, arguably, with a slightly different understanding concerning the micro-level: when discussing micro-level phenomena, Herring refers to questions of, e.g. online word formation processes (Herring, 2004, p. 339). While a research project located in the field of CDS might also deal with this micro-phenomenon, its examination is a means to an end in CDS, since CDS has the explicit agenda of examining how language is used to

(re-)produce or challenge social structures and practices (see 2.1 to 2.3). As a consequence, the phenomenon might be examined in order to gain an insight into ideologies underlying the representation and construction of an issue but never for its own sake alone. Generally, micro-level works in CMDA could be limited to examining aspects of language/language use for its own sake whereas micro-level works in CDS cannot be limited in this matter without forsaking the critical impetus. Still, the fact remains that Herring does not reject CMDA's potential to incorporate a wider perspective in terms of context and to possibly address social issues (Herring, 2004, p. 339), a point that KhosraviNik later also acknowledges (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 4).

Additionally, Herring provides further, relatively loose premises that constitute the core of her approach to CMDA. Again, these in no way conflict with CDS. First is the assumption that patterns are recurrent in discourse, that is, language users draw on certain ways of expressing and making meaning (Herring, 2004, p. 341). Discourse analysis then aims to "identify patterns in discourse that are demonstrably present, but that may not be immediately obvious to the casual observer or to the discourse participants themselves" (Herring, 2004, p. 341). Second and connected to this, Herring argues that "discourse involves speaker choices" and that these choices do not hinge solely on linguistic considerations. Rather, Herring claims that these choices reflect social and cognitive factors and conditions (Herring, 2004, p. 341) – CDS shares in this perspective as especially 2.2 illustrates. Overall, with regard to these two points CDS and CMDA do not clash or contradict one another.

Third, computer- and – more broadly – digitally mediated discourse is always shaped to a degree by the "technological features of computer-mediated communication systems" (Herring, 2004, p. 341) and Herring highlights that, apart from situational factors such as participant characteristics (2007), technological affordances and their influence on the data deserve particular attention and ought to be examined on a case-by-case basis (Herring, 2004, p. 341, 2007). This last point is one of the most important aspects Herring's CMDA adds to CDS – as she emphasises that technological affordances and limitations require careful investigation, the researcher adds a layer of investigation to Wodak's third level of context (see 2.4.1). Thus, my examination of this contextual layer will touch on Wikipedia's technological features and restrictions (see 2.5.2).

All in all, CDS and Herring's CMDA are combinable because the truly novel addition that Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis affords to CDS is that, on the one hand, the data are mediated via networked computers and, on the other hand, that the

characteristics of these networks from which data are taken are to be deliberated on a case-by-case basis. However, as already indicated above, the term 'computer' is slightly misleading as nowadays people use various devices apart from traditional computers. What is more, the focus on online discourse as separate from offline discourse implied by traditional computer-mediated discourse studies (e.g. Herring, 2001) is problematic from a CDS perspective in particular as it implies an independence of online and offline data (Jurgenson, 2012; cf. Unger, Wodak, & KhosraviNik, 2016, pp. 280–281). To account for this, this thesis uses the broader term 'digital' and in Figure 2, the phrase 'Digital Critical Discourse Studies' (Digital CDS) reflects the integration of CDS and CMDA.

Figure 2 serves to illustrate how different fields are connected and overlap in terms of the data they draw on and whether they take a critical approach. At the intersection of CDS and Herring's CMDA, we find works taking a critical approach to digital discourse – Digital CDS. Within this field we can further introduce a sub-field – Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS), which focuses on the critical analysis of social media data (see 2.5.2). Thus, Digital CDS provides the backdrop for SM-CDS since numerous instances and forms of digitally mediated communication do not satisfy KhosraviNik's social media criteria (see 2.5.2) but can still be subject to critical study (e.g. the study of Whatsapp messaging).
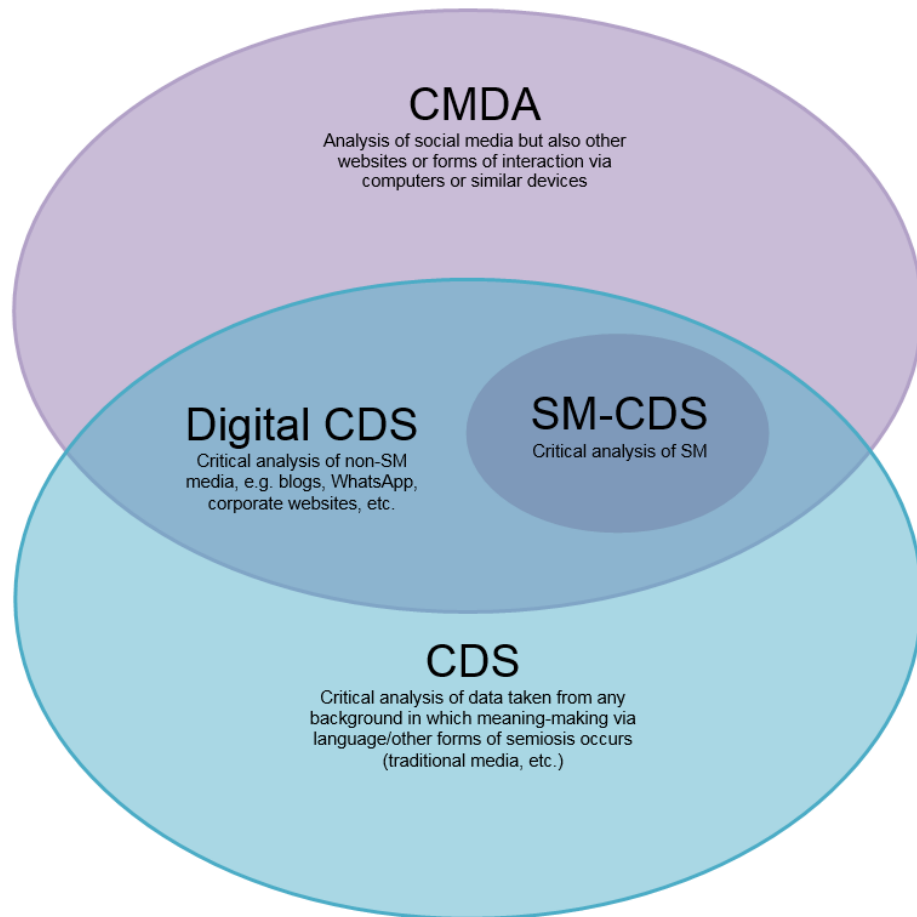
Figure 2 Overlapping and integrated analytical approaches

The following section details how Wikipedia can be categorised as a social media platform. It addresses how this study can thus be more narrowly defined as located within KhosraviNik's SM-CDS, which can in turn be viewed as located within the field Digital CDS as Figure 2 illustrates. Additionally, section 2.5.2 discusses aspects of Wodak's third context level that require particular attention in the context of SM-CDS and, specifically, this study.

2.5.2 Web 2.0 and Social Media – Extending Wodak's Third Level of Context

The term Web 2.0 refers to the changes in how internet content is produced and describes the shift from top-down communication to the "participatory internet" (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 207), that is, it emphasises the increased user participation in creating content. Apart from this, Web 2.0 also refers to the rise of applications that support the convergence of different modes of communication (Herring, 2013, pp. 2–4). This study focuses on Wikipedia data, that is, data from an internet site that has been understood as a typical Web 2.0 site (Herring, 2013, p. 5).

This rise of the Web 2.0 and its participatory content production processes was a prerequisite for the development of social media, which can be defined by three core tenets. Users have to

> (a.) work together in producing and compiling content; (b.) perform interpersonal communication and mass communication simultaneously or separately – sometimes mass performance of interpersonal communication and; (c.) have access to see and respond to institutionally (e.g. newspaper articles) or user-generated content/texts. (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 582)

Hence, beyond a Web 2.0 site, Wikipedia fulfils all the criteria of a social media platform (KhosraviNik, 2017, p. 1): first, Wikipedians collaborate to create content. Second, they converse on the TP and, at the same time, communicate information to readers of the encyclopaedia via the article pages. Finally, they also have access to external source material (such as newspapers) as well as user-created content. Thus, my study of Wikipedia data falls within KhosraviNik's Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS).

Like Jones before him (2008, pp. 429–431), KhosraviNik emphasises the importance of acknowledging the difference between social media, where private individuals can draw on various modes to engage in interpersonal and mass communication, and 'traditional' top-down media (e.g. broadcast media). In light of this difference, he emphasises the role of contextualisation when approaching social media from a critical perspective (KhosraviNik, 2017, pp. 4–5). However, again, the question arises which aspects of contextualisation require particular attention.

Indeed, my review of Herring's work already points to the importance of discussing especially the technological affordances offered by the site from which data are taken. By comparison, KhosraviNik underpins the importance of exploring the societal role and significance of the social media site under investigation. Building on both Herring and KhosraviNik, I arrive at three facets that deserve particular attention concerning the third layer of contextualisation: first, the social media site's embeddedness in *society* (KhosraviNik, 2017, pp. 4–5), second, the social media site's *technological* affordances (Herring, 2004, p. 341) and third, the social media platform and its *policies*.

Concerning the first aspect, KhosraviNik emphasises that SM-CDS requires a "contextualisation level which embeds both the text and the medium" (2017, p. 4) in the wider social context, that is, works in SM-CDS must not neglect to examine how the social media platform from which discourse material was taken for analysis relates to society (KhosraviNik, 2017, pp. 4–5; also see KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 214). Thus, on the

whole it is important to address questions that could be considered traditional aspects of Wodak's third level, e.g. questions of reach and readership of the platform (see 3.3.1).

Moreover, KhosraviNik's emphasis on exploring the relationship between society and social media platforms also motivates the exploration of additional elements – one such element being the shift in power to create and disseminate information and 'knowledge' throughout society. In traditional mass media, an elite group directs a flow of information at the non-elite, i.e. society at large. As Unger and KhosraviNik note, social media have changed this in that non-elite individuals can now participate in the creation of mass media content (2016, p. 210). Before celebrating the apparent democratisation of media and 'knowledge' creation however, it is important to explore different forms of potential gatekeeping and communicative power inequalities when examining social media data (e.g. see 3.2).

Another point relating to social media and society that deserves attention is the fact that, like most digitally mediated communication, social media are usually not limited nationally. Potentially, users from all over the world could interact and produce content that is then available globally. Consequently, scholars dealing with social media data within a CDS framework must sufficiently address this shift in reach and the implications it might have, especially in the context of topics that exceed national relevance, such as the EU (see 3.3.2).

Second, and as Herring's approach already implies, *technological* affordances and restrictions of the social medium under investigation ought to be addressed, not least because – as indicated above – participatory content creation might be limited via technological restrictions. KhosraviNik touches upon this but focuses mainly on technological affordances concerning multimodality (2017, p. 6). While I agree that the level of textual analysis ought to take multimodality into consideration, I take Herring's more general point and argue that it is essential to address general technological restrictions and possibilities that affect the data under investigation (Herring, 2004, p. 341). This goes beyond an examination of how multimodal signifiers can technically be included, but also relates to issues such as what format textual interaction takes, whether post-hoc manipulation of contributions is possible, if data are recorded and can be mined after production (Herring, 2007).

Lastly, and in addition to a) societal relevance and b) technological possibilities, I argue that Social Media Critical Discourse Studies must not neglect a final aspect of consideration regarding Wodak's third layer – the investigated platform's rules and

policies. As Herring notes, such institutions frequently have sets of organisational norms (2007), i.e. a set of policies that organise user behaviour. Since Wikipedia has a particularly extensive body of policies and these policies affect and shape the data set (Wikipedia:Policies and guidelines, Wikipedia, 2017), a detailed examination of these rules is crucial.

Summing up, Wodak's third level of context features three focal points with respect to my data set. First, questions of societal impact and reach need to be addressed, which is done in this study by discussing Wikipedia's impact over the past few years and its potential to function as a transnational public sphere (see 3.3). Second, technological affordances and limitations need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, here, e.g. Wikipedia's wiki structure deserves some attention. Last, policies and rules that guide Wikipedia operations ought to receive sufficient attention as well (see 3.2 for more details on the latter two aspects).

The following chapter examines Wodak's third level of contextualisation and thereby addresses this study's research questions geared towards exploring Wikipedia.

3 The Third Context Level – Wikipedia, the Free Online Encyclopaedia

This chapter first presents past research on Wikipedia. It then deals with the three aspects of Wodak's third context level that have been established as central – Wikipedia's technological affordances, policies/guidelines and Wikipedia's role in society.

3.1 Research on Wikipedia

The following brief literature review does not aim to go into depth or to critically evaluate existing research. Rather, the objective is to demonstrate the gap in linguistic research on Wikipedia in general and in the context of CDS in particular.

A considerable body of work on Wikipedia focuses on theorising and conceptualising the website rather than examining Wikipedia data. For example, research has addressed Wikipedia's policy creation process and, connected to this, attempted to define the site's form of governance – from Konieczny's 'adhocracy', a term inspired by the Wikipedia community's tendency to create policies ad-hoc as part of its work on articles (2010), to van Dijck's 'democratic bureaucracy' based on the fact that Wikipedia has a considerable and ever-growing body of policies, voting procedures and even an arbitration committees when conflicts cannot be resolved among Wikipedians (2013). Apart from this, various research has theoretically explored Wikipedia contributors as individuals without expert status, queried the motivations behind Wikipedians' voluntary work and investigated the societal implications of such willingness to put in substantial but free labour (Bruns, 2008; Lund, 2017; Messner & DiStaso, 2013; Sundin, 2011).

Moving on from these theoretical considerations, numerous researchers have addressed the implications of collaborative content creation using Wikipedia data, including how contributors establish authority, negotiate which content to include or exclude from Wikipedia articles and how collective memory is built on the website (e.g. Ferron & Massa, 2011; e.g. Oxley, Morgan, Zachry, & Hutchinson, 2010). In the context of peer collaboration, Schneider et al.'s project (2012) is particularly notable since it highlights the importance of discussing Wikipedia's policies and guidelines: these researchers use content analysis to evaluate Wikipedia discussions with a focus on determining the most important factors in Wikipedians' decision-making processes with regard to, for instance, what to include and exclude in a particular Wikipedia article. They find that novice contributors are disadvantaged due to their lack of knowledge of Wikipedia policy. Schneider et al. (2012) conclude that new contributors sometimes do not

understand their interlocutors' pragmatic intentions, e.g. they might not view the mention of 'notability' as particularly problematic when, in fact, this is a reference to a central Wikipedia policy.

Other non-linguistic research in this context has focused on automated mapping of controversies and processes of consensus-building on Wikipedia, for instance, Borra et al.'s (2015) 'Contropedia', a tool that is still in development and aims to allow the visualisation of edits to articles to identify controversial aspects in existing Wikipedia articles. Another aspect of Wikipedia's content creation process that has received research attention focuses on the inclusiveness of the website's peer collaboration. For example, Kittur et al. and Wilson examine whether Wikipedia can harness the 'wisdom of the crowd' and conclude that it is an elite user group that builds the majority of content (Kittur, Chi, Pendleton, Suh, & Mytkowicz, 2007; Kittur & Kraut, 2008; Wilson, 2014).

By comparison, in linguistics, researchers have started to engage with Wikipedia and Wikipedia data to describe its *genres and styles*. Myers, among a more general discussion of blogs and wikis, briefly discusses Wikipedia, how articles evolve and what shape talk page discussions take; however, while his discussion gives an overview of how Wikipedia functions, Myers work mostly aims to provide an overview and introduction to the topic (2010, pp. 129–159). Comparably, Schmied (2012) in his discussion of various new media, also touches on Wikipedia as a source of data for linguistic inquiry and addresses the site's central features briefly. In contrast to this, Mederake (2016) presents an in-depth examination of the features of Wikipedia, but focuses on its German incarnation. Drawing on Wikipedia data, Emigh and Herring take a corpus-based approach to provide a more in-depth examination of formality and informality in Wikipedia. Comparing Wikipedia with traditional encyclopaedias they conclude – similar to Elia (2006) – that Wikipedia articles are as formal in style as traditional encyclopaedias but that TPs are markedly less so (Emigh & Herring, 2005).

Furthermore, numerous studies have focused on Wikipedia content, in particular, on the presence and detection of *bias* and *point-of-view* (POV) in Wikipedia. Some projects quantify Wikipedia data to devise automated methods of bias detection (Al Khatib, Schütze, & Kantner, 2012; Recasens, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, & Jurafsky, 2013). Alternatively, several studies take a qualitatively oriented approach to Wikipedia data. For instance, Swarts (2009) addresses how collaborative authoring leads to the construction of fact, how contributors create alliances, push certain aspects of a topic and hide controversial aspects to arrive at a stable article version irrespective of whether this is then

factual. Additionally, Callahan and Herring's (2011) project focusing on cultural bias across different language Wikipedias suggests there is a systemic cultural bias. Page (2014) also examines different language Wikipedias – she takes a diachronic view on one article in the English and the Italian Wikipedia to trace the creation of counter narratives, i.e. narratives that present alternatives to the dominant version of certain events. By comparison, Gredel takes into account both talk pages and article pages of different language Wikipedias when discussing the site's treatment of the annexation of the Crimea to Russia (2017). While the latter examples already present first steps towards addressing Wikipedia and Wikipedia data in linguistics and discourse studies, these studies still do not take into account both Wikipedia's body of policies and the wider societal context and relevance of Wikipedia. In this context, Lih's (2004) work is noteworthy since he does discuss Wikipedia's wiki technology and policies to evaluate the site as an opportunity for participatory journalism. However, in contrast to the cited linguistic studies and in contrast to this study, he does not engage with Wikipedia data.

Altogether, this very brief review of the existing literature confirms that my project fills several research gaps. First, there is, generally, a distinct lack of linguistic research on Wikipedia. Second, what little linguistic research has been done does not take into account both quantitative and qualitative approaches to Wikipedia data, nor does it address the social relevance of Wikipedia or consider its unique structure as well as examine Wikipedia data. By comparison, this study is the first comprehensive examination of Wikipedia to take into account both Wikipedia talk page data and the corresponding article, that is, both 'WikiSpeak' (language material surrounding articles, here, a Wikipedia talk page) and 'WikiLanguage' (Wikipedia articles) (Elia, 2006). What is more, this study embeds analysis of Wikipedia data in a discussion of Wikipedia's characteristics and also explores the site's potential societal impact.

3.2   Wikipedia – an Encyclopaedia by Virtue of Policies and Technological Affordances

Wikipedia was developed by Larry Sanger and Jimmy Wales in 2001 and is now operated by the Wikimedia Foundation, a non-profit organisation "dedicated to encouraging the growth, development and distribution of free, multilingual, educational content" (Wikimedia Foundation, 2017b). Wikipedia's original purpose was to feed into the online expert-written encyclopaedia Nupedia (Pscheida, 2014, p. 349). Still, already in 2001 the site's goal was to "to create a free encyclopedia--indeed, the largest encyclopedia in

history, both in terms of breadth and in terms of depth" (Sanger, 2001). Since its inception, the website's objective and purpose has not changed – Wikipedia is still "intended to be the largest, most comprehensive, and most widely-available encyclopedia ever written" (Wikipedia:Purpose, Wikipedia, 2016). This is also reflected in the site's self-definition as "web-based, free-content encyclopedia" and the claim that "[a]nyone with Internet access can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles, except in limited cases where editing is restricted to prevent disruption or vandalism" (Wikipedia:About, Wikipedia, 2016).

The question that arises is what actually constitutes an encyclopaedia. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes an encyclopaedia as a "reference work that contains information on all branches of knowledge or that treats a particular branch of knowledge in a comprehensive manner". It further states that this reference work contains "alphabetically arranged contents" that "will have been edited by a highly skilled and scholarly staff" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016). The Britannica also claims that an encyclopaedia's goal is to be "truthful and to present a balanced picture of civilization" (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016).

Wikipedia ensures that its goal – being an encyclopaedia – is met through a body of policies as well as through its technological structure. Because Wikipedia policies are continuously added to, the focus here is on the most basic cornerstones that have structured Wikipedia's operations since the beginning. These central policies are condensed into the so-called "five pillars" (Wikipedia:Policies and guidelines, Wikipedia, 2017):

1, Wikipedia is an encyclopedia.
2, Wikipedia is written from a neutral point of view.
3, Wikipedia is free content that anyone can use, edit, and distribute.
4, Editors should treat each other with respect and civility.
5, Wikipedia has no firm rules.
(Wikipedia:List of policies and guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016)

Pillar one states the site's purpose and pillar number four sketches how Wikipedia contributors (also called Wikipedians, editors and contributors in this thesis) ought to behave toward one another. Pillar five seemingly negates pillars one through four and all other Wikipedia policies since it suggests that there are no rules or, at least, no *firm* rules that restrict the wiki creation process. In fact though, pillar five merely encodes "wiki culture", namely that there should be some freedom and flexibility concerning rules in order to boost creativity and encourage bold action that drives progress (Sanger, 2005). A caveat here is that, while ignoring rules might be theoretically possible, doing so can in fact lead to undesirable reactions by fellow editors, e.g. editors can be deemed disruptive

and be blocked. In the most severe instances, the site can draw on technological means to silence editors or use the threat of such repercussions to enforce compliance – certain Wikipedians are equipped with the power to block individual contributors from editing Wikipedia or block certain articles from editing activity (see below). Generally, pillar two and three are the most complex of the five and deserve more detailed discussion.

Pillar two touches upon a central aspect of encyclopaedias mentioned last in the definition of the term above – the idea that balanced representations of issues and the absence of bias are key in encyclopaedias. Wikipedia calls this the Neutral Point of View (NPOV), i.e. Wikipedia aims to represent "fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without bias, all of the significant views that have been published by reliable sources on a topic" (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, 2015). It further mandates that the information provided ought to be verifiable, i.e. "people using the encyclopedia can check that the information comes from a reliable source" (Wikipedia:Verifiability, Wikipedia, 2015). In turn, the expression 'reliable source' is defined as excluding original research and using the "best and most reputable authoritative sources available" (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, 2015). Still, even a Wikipedia policy site, whose purpose is to help editors identify what a reliable source is, only gives vague guidance, such as using published sources and avoiding "publications expressing views that are widely acknowledged as extremist" (Wikipedia:Identifying reliable sources, Wikipedia, 2016).

Additionally, Wikipedia articles have aimed for an "impartial tone" and "balance" since its inception (Sanger, 2001, 2005). The former phrase relates to the language used in Wikipedia articles – "[n]eutral articles are written with a tone that provides an unbiased, accurate, and proportionate representation of all positions included in the article" (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, 2015), but the question of how this 'tone' can be realised linguistically is not addressed. The latter, 'balance', is described as key to Wikipedia's NPOV since "[n]eutrality assigns weight to viewpoints in proportion to their prominence" (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, 2015) but, again, Wikipedia does not address how to precisely implement this policy.

This leaves pillar three, which claims that "anyone" can edit, use and distribute Wikipedia content (Wikipedia:List of policies and guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016). Usage and distribution are not too problematic – if one is literate, has internet access and their country of residence permits access to the website, one can use and redistribute Wikipedia content. In contrast, 'editing content' is more complex. One aspect that distinguishes Wikipedia from classic encyclopaedias such as the Britannica is that contributors do not

have to be 'experts' with respect to the field that they wish to contribute to, i.e. they do not have to supply proof of their expert status concerning a field (see Bruns, 2008 for a more detailed discussion of the term expert). Another aspect that distinguishes Wikipedia contributors from traditional encyclopaedic writers is the necessity for some digital literacy in the sense of being able to handle a minimum of technological challenge – adding to Wikipedia does not require programming skills but the idiosyncratic visual representation of content while adding to the encyclopaedia could confuse inexperienced editors. Inexperienced editors might also suffer some confusion when faced with the community's use of abbreviations and acronyms, such as the abovementioned NPOV. Nevertheless, these issues are not insurmountable, i.e. Wikipedia's editing gatekeeping is minimal in this regard.

Still, while Wikipedia policy emphasises community consensus as "the primary way decisions are made on Wikipedia, and it is accepted as the best method to achieve our [Wikipedia's] goals, i.e. to achieve our five pillars" (Wikipedia:Consensus, Wikipedia, 2016), there are instances where some types of Wikipedia editors have more or less power to impact the decisions made and generally, editing Wikipedia content is not possible for 'anyone' at all times. In fact, there are several kinds of Wikipedia contributors with different rights and levels of access. As Wikipedia explains, the user access level determines a "contributor's ability to perform certain actions in Wikipedia" (Wikipedia:User access levels, Wikipedia, 2016), that is, the website only allows particular users to make certain modifications. In turn, the user access level "is determined by whether the editor is logged into an account, whether the account has a sufficient age and number of edits, and what additional rights […] have been assigned manually to the account" (Wikipedia:User access levels, Wikipedia, 2016). All in all, in this case, policies and technological affordances work hand in hand to create a hierarchical structure amongst Wikipedia contributors.

The following table gives an overview of the rights particular groups of contributors have with respect to editing Wikipedia content. It also gives an insight into how certain contributor status is achieved, i.e. what the promotion process is (refer to George, 2007; Kostakis, 2010 for more information on this):

Table 1 Editor categories and privileges (Wikipedia:Requests for adminship, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:Rollback, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:User access levels, Wikipedia, 2016)

Editor category	Promotion process	Editing privileges
unregistered user/IP address	-	- modify pages that are not protected - create pages in some parts of the wiki - cannot upload images/files
new user	create free Wikipedia account	- create pages (with minor restrictions) - email other users
auto-/confirmed users	(automatically) awarded to members who have been Wikipedians for a certain number of days and have made a certain number of edits (mostly: at least ten edits in the first four days of membership)	- all of the above - move pages - edit semi-protected pages
extended confirmed users	automatically awarded after at least 500 edits in 30 days tenure	- all of the above - edit 'extended confirmed protected' articles
administrators/sysops	granted by Wikipedia community through (self-)nomination, discussion and majority vote (75 per cent); status change implemented by bureaucrat	- carry out page deletion - add page protection - block other users - edit fully protected pages - award or remove certain rights and status from lower-ranking editor categories - by convention: judge outcome of discussions that require particular technical control (e.g. page deletion) - review other editors' changes to articles under 'pending changes protection' - undo revisions
bureaucrats	similar procedure as sysop process but clearer consensus necessary (85 per cent agreement)	- particular powers with respect to awarding/removing privileges to other and their own editor group(s)

In order to ensure that only desired editor behaviour leaves traces in the encyclopaedia, the website has several technological means of preventing editing activity on Wikipedia pages. With respect to this study, I focus on 'protection' and 'semi-protection' since these are particularly relevant in the sense that the Wikipedia article on the EU has been subject to these forms of protections (European Union:Protection log, Wikipedia, 2017). Both of these types of protection can be set to indefinite or set to expire at a certain point in time (Wikipedia:Protection policy, Wikipedia, 2016) – the Wikipedia article on the EU has been

subject both to protections set to automatically expire as well as to protections that had to be manually removed between 2001 and 2015 (European Union:Protection log, Wikipedia, 2017).

Altogether, the EU article was semi-protected against editing activity twelve times between 2001 and 2015. 'Semi-protected' refers to the lowest level of editing restriction on a Wikipedia page – it means that the editor wishing to modify the page has to be logged on and (auto)-confirmed. This form of protection impacts a TP inasmuch as unregistered Wikipedia users are unable to make changes. This can lead to – as can be seen in my data – requests for changes to the article motivated by the fact that the posters – being unregistered users – are unable to make any changes themselves, e.g. the thread "Semi-protected edit request on 25 June 2014" (Talk:European Union/Archive 28, Wikipedia, 2015). Generally, semi-protection is implemented in instances when there is significant "disruption or vandalism from new or unregistered users, or to prevent sock puppets of blocked or banned users from editing" (Wikipedia:Protection policy, Wikipedia, 2016). To briefly clarify, the term 'sock puppets' refers to additional accounts Wikipedians might use to fake additional support for/opposition to a proposed edit, e.g. to cast extra votes in Wikipedia decision-making elections.

In addition to these semi-protections, the article 'European Union' was fully protected twice (European Union:Protection log, Wikipedia, 2017) and both of these full protections occurred in 2007 when most of the editing activity took place (see Figure 11 for details). 'Full protection' means that only an administrator can edit a page. If a modification is to be made to the protected page it has to first be proposed on the article's TP. Only then can a sysop make the proposed edit or, potentially, undo the protection. Decisions on (un)protecting an article are made based on Wikipedians' consensus, typically reached through discussion on the TP (Wikipedia:Protection policy, Wikipedia, 2016). The TP under investigation contains such discussions, such as in the thread "Protection of the article" (Talk:European Union/Archive 24, Wikipedia, 2009).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Wikipedia's types of protections are usually *not* applied to TPs: "[t]alk pages are not usually protected, and are only semi-protected for a limited duration in the most severe cases of vandalism" (Wikipedia:Protection policy, Wikipedia, 2016). Indeed, the TP examined in this study has not been subject to any protection (All public logs - European Union Talk Page, Wikipedia, 2016). However, as mentioned above, the corresponding article has, which is why there are TP threads that make reference to article protection.

Generally, Wikipedia's protection policy constitutes a caveat to the site's pillar three (i.e. everybody can edit and use Wikipedia content). This restriction to the third pillar has existed since the inception of Wikipedia, for instance, the 2001 policy site 'Wikipedia:Administrators' already stated that administrators "can do some extra-powerful stuff", i.e. carry out the actions detailed in Table 1 (Wikipedia:Administrators, Wikipedia, 2001). Hence, Wikipedia's structure is not and has never been as egalitarian as pillar three implies.

Altogether, this discussion of integral Wikipedia policy shows how Wikipedia is set up in order to meet the definition of an encyclopaedia mentioned at the beginning of this section. Indeed, the website meets the traditional conception of encyclopaedias in the sense of aiming to present comprehensive information and emphasising the importance of balance and reliability. However, the website differs from traditional encyclopaedias as defined above in two points: first and as mentioned above, contributors are not necessarily experts in the field since level of access is not tied to expertise. Rather, status is determined by activity level, tenure and – for sysops and bureaucrats – nominations and elections amongst Wikipedians. Secondly, an aspect that has not been discussed yet is that Wikipedia is not sorted alphabetically but allows users to enter a search term on the platform itself or on a separate search engine. Additionally, users can click on hyperlinks in Wikipedia articles and thereby navigate to another topic.

Further aspects of Wikipedia's structure and the differences between Wikipedia articles and TPs are discussed in the following subsections.

3.2.1 Wikipedia Site Structure

In addition to how Wikipedia attempts to create a framework through policies and technological affordances, the website's overarching structure also requires explanation. Wikipedia can be described in terms of Goffman's (1959) front stage and back stage as Herring already indicated (2013, p. 15). This means that Wikipedia's article pages constitute the front stage – the one aimed at an audience. In comparison, the Wikipedia Talk Pages (TP) constitute the back stage not intended for reception by the public. Still, in contrast to previous understandings of Goffman's front stage and back stage, the back stage is actually accessible to Wikipedia visitors if they so choose, even though it is at times challenging to make sense of some of the discussions post hoc.

3.2.1.1   The Article Page

First and foremost, Wikipedia articles aim to be encyclopaedic entries that are collaboratively produced by a potentially infinite number of Wikipedia editors. These texts continuously evolve or, as Ferschke et al. put it "Wikipedia actually is a dynamic resource that is constantly changed by its millions of editors" (Ferschke, Zesch, & Gurevych, 2011, p. 97). This possibility to update articles almost in real time allows immediate addition of state-of-the-art insights into the topic a Wikipedia article addresses.

An element connected to this is that the complete article history is accessible. That is, each version of an article that has ever existed – each snapshot of a transitory consensus amongst Wikipedians concerning what shape an article ought to take – can be accessed. While this feature allows the examination of article development (e.g. Kopf & Nichele, forthcoming), the present project is limited to brief discussions of what the TP debates resulted in in terms of the article on the European Union.

In terms of maturity, an article goes through four stages of development: stub – article – good article (GA) – featured article (FA). This evolution is not always unidirectional, as the article on the EU shows: the article progressed to FA but was later downgraded to GA. A 'stub' is "too short to provide encyclopaedic coverage of a subject" and is merely the first version of an article (Wikipedia:Stub, Wikipedia, 2016). The lines between stub and article are blurred but, as the stub evolves, at some point an editor can remove the 'stub status' and thus implicitly assign article status (Wikipedia:Stub, Wikipedia, 2016).

'Good Articles' (GA) and 'Feature Articles' (FA) have to meet criteria which are similar for both but are defined rather vaguely. For example, FA status includes the idea that an article has to be well-written and comprehensive, well-researched, neutral and stable (i.e. not subject to constant change). It is further supposed to have an "appropriate structure", be consistent regarding its citation system, use additional media where appropriate and deal with the topic in question at some length but not in unnecessary detail (Wikipedia:Featured article criteria, Wikipedia, 2016). GA status also requires these elements but to a lesser degree than FA status (Wikipedia:Good article criteria, Wikipedia, 2016).

With respect to how a regular article progresses to GA status, a Wikipedian can decide to nominate an article for 'Good Article'. Then a process starts that is not unlike

academic peer-review[5] – an "uninvolved and registered user with sufficient knowledge and experience with Wikipedia content policies" reviews the article, decides whether the article is awarded GA status or suggests revisions on the associated discussion page, e.g. the thread "GA review" in my TP data (Talk:European Union/Archive 7, Wikipedia, 2006; Wikipedia:Good article nominations, Wikipedia, 2016). By comparison, to attain FA status, nominators are advised to seek community support for making improvements to an article before they move to decide to nominate an article. Furthermore, even after the FA assessment is provided by a reviewer, the Wikipedia community is asked to vote on the associated talk page on whether to accept or reject an article as FA. Finally, two coordinators oversee the FA process and make a final decision for or against awarding FA status based on the community's input and review (Wikipedia: Featured article review, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:Featured articles, Wikipedia, 2016). It is also worth noting that, while the criteria for FA are only vaguely defined in Wikipedia policy, the concrete deficiencies of any nominated article are addressed in the course of the review process: when voters support the FA status of an article, they ought to give clear reason for this support. Inversely, rejection of an article needs to be explained as well in the form of operationalisable criticism. If this is not the case, the FA coordinators may even disregard the vote (Viégas, Wattenberg, & McKeon, 2007, p. 449).

As already alluded to in 3.2, the fact that each article contains numerous links to other related articles on Wikipedia, to websites outside of Wikipedia or to the source material of any given article is also notable. While this element of Wikipedia structure presents an interesting venue for further study, this project does not focus on this aspect of intertextuality. Last but not least, the article page typically contains and is even recommended to contain images or even videos relevant to the topic at hand (Wikipedia:Good article criteria, Wikipedia, 2016). Thus, researchers aiming to provide a comprehensive examination of Wikipedia article data ought to consider how to take this fact into account.

3.2.1.2   The Talk Page

Another site of struggle concerning Wikipedians' attempt to reach consensus is Wikipedia Talk Pages (TP). Each article on Wikipedia can be discussed on its TP, which, not least due to their conversational nature, have been found to be notably less formal than the

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[5] In contrast to academic peer-review, Wikipedia does not require reviewers to be experts with respect to the subject matter at hand.

associated article page (e.g. Emigh & Herring, 2005). The TPs provide a space for a potentially unlimited number of Wikipedia contributors to discuss editing issues regarding the article the particular TP accompanies. Important in this context is that "[t]alk pages are for discussing the article, *not* for general conversation about the article's subject" (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016) – a point that is reiterated frequently on Wikipedia policy pages, e.g. "we don't […] have a general discussion about the subject" (Wikipedia:Don't lose the thread, Wikipedia, 2017). My discussions of data in chapters 5 to 7 show that the Wikipedia community does not necessarily adhere to this policy since the TP discussions do go beyond mere editing-focused debates.

TP discussions can become quite extensive because of the fact that there is no limit to the number of contributors to each discussion and because contributions, i.e. postings, are not subject to character or word limits per posting. In order to keep current discussion(s) manageable and clear, it is possible to archive "resolved or stale discussions" (Help:Archiving a Talk Page, Wikipedia, 2017). This archiving system might serve to explain peculiar aspects of my data, e.g. why Wikipedians start new conversations about one and the same topic again and again. By merely visiting the TP they would not necessarily have seen that a discussion about e.g. 'EU as country' had already taken place in the TP because it may have been moved into one of the TP archives either manually by a Wikipedia contributor or a so-called bot, that is, a programme designed to automatically carry out a particular task.

Principally, TPs are organised in headings with subsequent postings (see Figure 3). These postings can but need not include links to sites from within or outside of Wikipedia and additional multimodal signifier such as pictures (Herring, 2013, p. 5). The headings preceding the first posting of a discussion are created by the contributor who starts the discussion or can be added later by other contributors. After the heading, the contributor expands on the topic they wish to discuss, may give their user name and timestamp the posting. Other contributors then respond and (may but also do not have to) sign and timestamp their contribution. Thus, the headings can be identified as each introducing a different conversation 'thread'.

GDP figures

No source for GDP figure of $15 trillion. What was the dollar conversion rate, and what is the source for that conversion rate? The cited nominal GDP figure of €11.5 trillion is a *projection* for 2006 (note the statistics are dated November 2006 and therefore can not include a definitive figure for that year). First official estimates of 2006 GDP should be online soon at Eurostat.█████████, 18 March 2007 (UTC)

    11.5 * 1.33 (which is the current exchange rate given by google) = 15.3. The cited gdp is not a projection, or at least isn't marked as one. Some of the figures for individual countries are marked as a forecast. Don't know what the explanation for that is. The November date is for the last revision of the document you clicked on, not for the data in the table. You can find this table by going to Eurostat than clicking on Data tab, then Main economic indicators, economy overview, long term indicators, national accounts, gdp and main aggregates, and finally gross domestic product at market prices (what a horrible website.)

Figure 3 Sample TP thread (Talk:European Union/Archive 11, Wikipedia, 2007)

To clarify, Hewitt explains that 'threads' are a "hierarchically organized collection of notes in which all notes but one (the note that started the thread) are written as 'replies' to earlier notes. Indented text is often used to depict the 'reply' relationships" (2005, p. 568). In addition, threads are understood as conversations where one contributor is forced to post after the other and cannot go back to edit the original post or even delete or alter their own posting (Hewitt, 2005, p. 568). In contrast, in terms of technological affordances, on Wikipedia each posting could potentially be edited by contributors, even years after the original contribution was made. What is more, Wikipedians could even alter other contributors' postings (Black, Welser, Cosley, & DeGroot, 2011, pp. 625–626). Thus, Black et al. conclude that Wikipedia TPs "are not actually threaded discussions" but that the Wikipedia community treats the TPs as *de facto* threaded conversations, that is, contributors respond to each other in thread format and do not alter postings post hoc (Black et al., 2011, pp. 625–626). Indeed, Wikipedia policy urges editors to maintain a thread structure in their discussions: Wikipedia recommends contributors to use "standard formatting and threading" i.e. to indent postings, to sign and timestamp postings, all in order to "to facilitate threaded discussion on talk pages" (Help:Using Talk Pages, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:Indentation, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2015). Hence, my data analysis is carried out based on the understanding that each posting was made by one contributor in response to another, and each heading and subsequent postings will be treated as one thread (Help:Using Talk Pages, Wikipedia, 2016).

      A policy that makes Wikipedia TP data perfectly suitable for the application of van Dijk's macro-proposition theory (see 4.2.2) is the fact that each TP thread constitutes a topic, as can be seen from the Wikipedia guidelines explaining how and when to start a new thread:

> To discuss a *new topic,* click the "*New section*" tab [i.e. new thread] at top of most talk pages. Fill out the "Subject/headline" box with a suitable title, preferably not something generic like "Question" or "Problem" [italics added] (Help:Using Talk Pages, Wikipedia, 2016)

These 'new section' tabs then appear as the thread headings in the TP and are followed by the creator's elaboration on the topic introduced by them. What is more, this Wikipedia guideline of 'one topic – one thread' (Help:Using Talk Pages, Wikipedia, 2016) is enforced by the community itself as my data show: for instance, one Wikipedian responds to another who introduced a new topic unrelated to the one discussed by stating "Please begin new header when discussing new topic" and assigns the new topic a thread heading (Talk:European Union/Archive 11, Wikipedia, 2007). There are numerous further instances throughout the data set where contributors explicitly enforce topic retention and focus in each thread, e.g. "we're starting to go a bit off topic" (Talk:European Union/Archive 16, Wikipedia, 2007) or a Wikipedian explicitly referencing the macro-proposition of the thread: "we went a little off topic here, I was asking about views on the Single Market and Single Currency sections" (Talk:European Union/Archive 17, Wikipedia, 2007) (see 4.2.2).

Another notable policy in the context of this study and macro-proposition theory is that each thread name ought to adequately reflect the content of the thread: "Make the heading […] specific as to the article topic discussed" (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016). Moreover, a post-hoc change of heading is acceptable if a new heading is found to describe the content of a thread more aptly: "[it is] acceptable to change headings when a better header is appropriate, e.g., one more descriptive of the content of the discussion" (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016).

On the whole, there are three elements that are particularly important concerning Wikipedia TPs. First, TPs serve as threaded discussion fora for Wikipedians, which means that the data are structured dialogically and can but need not contain multimodal elements. Second, Wikipedia threads each deal with one topic throughout and third, thread names reflect the topic under discussion. I will return to the latter two points in 4.2.2.

Moving on from Wikipedia's technological affordances, structure and policies, the next section discusses the website's role in society. On the one hand, I focus on the reach and impact of Wikipedia. On the other hand, I explore Wikipedia as a platform that encourages debate on a transnational plane.

3.3 Wikipedia and Society

This section deals with Wikipedia's role in society with 3.3.1 focusing on outwardly-oriented aspects, e.g. the site's readership and Wikipedia's potential impact in the sense of perceived credibility of Wikipedia content. Section 3.3.2 addresses what is understood by a public sphere and whether Wikipedia could fulfil the function of a transnational public sphere.

3.3.1 Wikipedia's Reach and Impact

A central aspect of describing Wikipedia's place in society is exploring its reach and accessibility. Before homing in on Wikipedia specifically, it is worthwhile to give some information on internet access in general.[6] According to the International Telecommunication Union, 46.4 per cent of households – globally – had internet access and 43.4 per cent of the global population actually used the internet in 2015 (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, p. 1). This means that less than half of the human population uses the internet and, thus, even has the option to visit Wikipedia. Still, as Figure 4 shows, this figure has risen steadily between 2001 and 2015.

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[6] Not least because Wikipedia content is often recontextualised on other websites (Graham, Straumann, & Hogan, 2015, p. 1160), so limiting this discussion of reach to Wikipedia only would distort its impact.
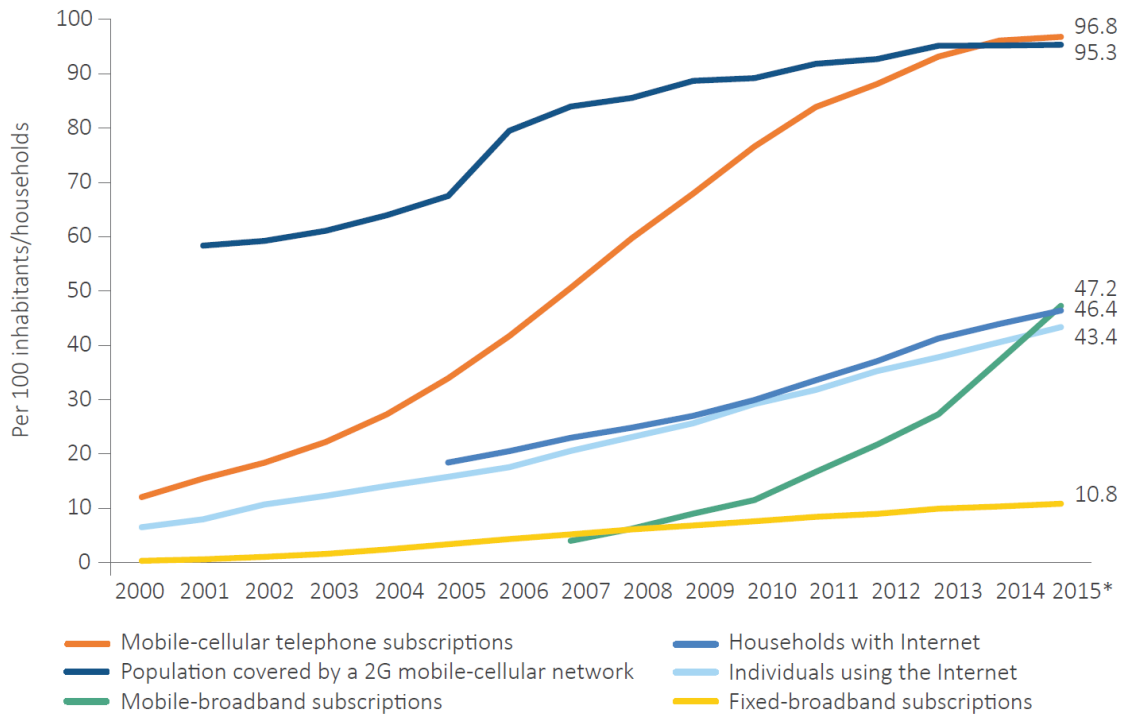
Figure 4 Global Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, p. 1)[7]

With respect to global distribution of access and reach of information technologies, the International Telecommunication Union uses the ICT Development Index to give an indication of the regional reach of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This index takes into account ICT access, ICT usage including the percentage of individuals using the internet and ICT skills including literacy rates (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, p. 11). As Figure 5 shows, 2015 still saw a considerable global digital divide.[8] Europe (including but not limited to the EU countries) has the highest ICT development index average although also a considerable range including Denmark with the strongest index at 8.88 and Albania with the weakest index of 4.73 (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, p. 21). Overall, it stands to reason that, globally, European citizens are highly likely to have access to Wikipedia and might be impacted notably by its content.

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[7] International Telecommunication Union estimates
[8] A caveat worth noting is the International Telecommunication Union's data treatment. In its study, the Union clustered heterogeneous regions, e.g. South and North America are combined. This obviously affects the findings presented in Figure 5.
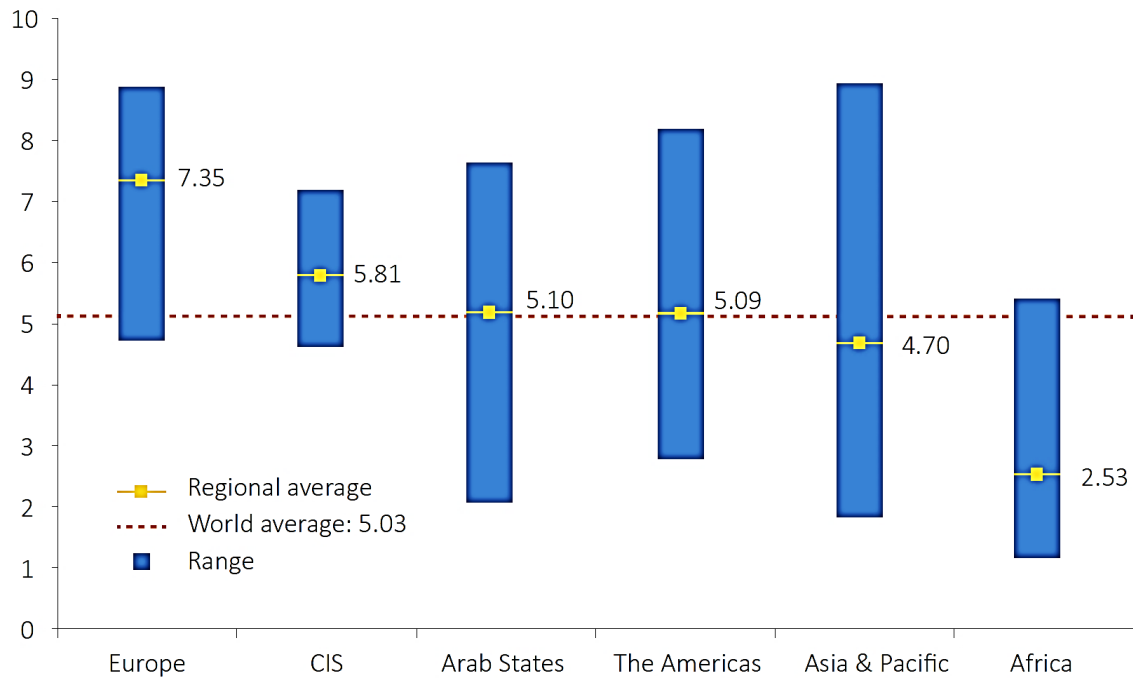
Figure 5 Regional ICT development index compared to world average (International Telecommunication Union, 2015, p. 19)[9]

Wikipedia's reach and readership

Concerning Wikipedia's reach specifically, the problem is that polling institutions tend to focus on national rather than global data. For example, a 2007 study showed that 36 per cent of US Americans had consulted Wikipedia before, which increased to 53 per cent of US Americans in 2010 (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 1; Zickuhr & Rainie, 2011). Independent of country of origin, Alexa finds that Wikipedia consistently ranks between fifth and sixth of the globally most visited websites (Alexa, 2016). What is more, Wikipedia has enjoyed a steady increase in page views but there is a disparity in who visits the site. According to Zachte, page visits are more likely from economically wealthy countries with high literacy rates and widespread internet access – Europe in general accounts for more than 37 per cent of monthly visits to the English Wikipedia (Zachte, 2017). This confirms the more general ICT development index in which Europe ranks high (see Figure 5). Taking both Zachte's and the International Telecommunication Union's findings together, it stands to reason that Wikipedia's reach in Europe in general might be stronger and more impactful than in other regions of the world.

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[9] CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States; refers to a loose union of former Soviet Union areas, now countries

While there are many different language versions of Wikipedia, the English version was the pioneer edition. More importantly, as the graph below shows, the English version of Wikipedia is still the most visited amongst the different language Wikipedias, with approximately 97 billion views in 2015 alone. The English Wikipedia is followed by the Japanese version by a wide margin – for every Japanese Wikipedia page view, the English Wikipedia was viewed more than six times (Anderson, Hitlin, & Atkinson, 2016). All in all, the English language Wikipedia embodies the prime platform in terms of global reach.
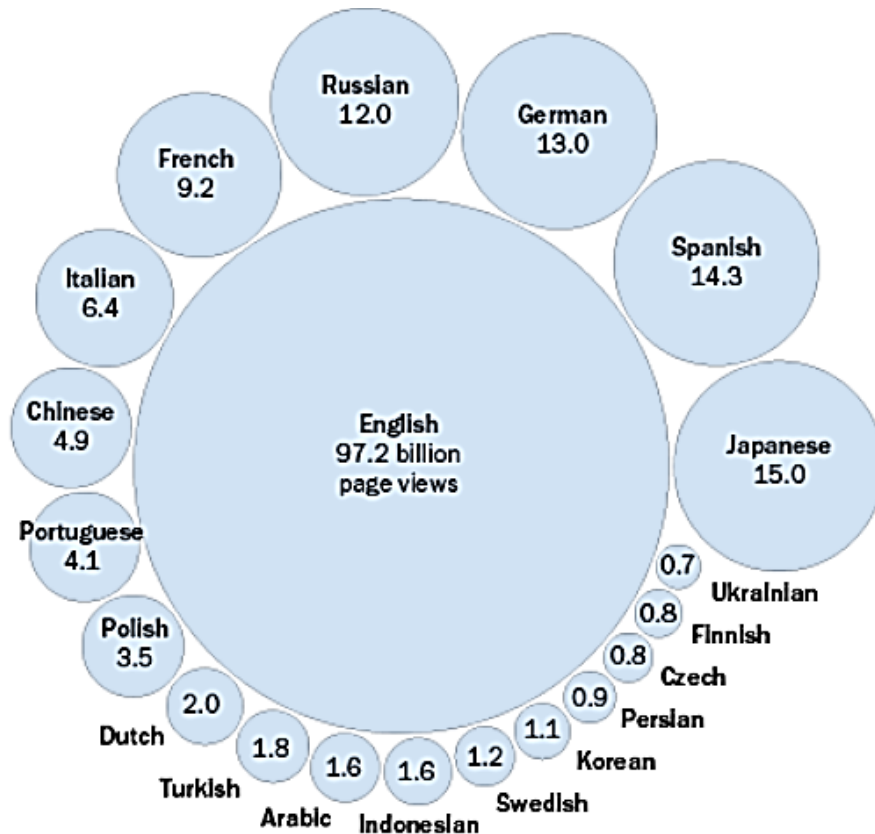
Figure 6 Wikipedia page views 2015 (Anderson et al., 2016)

While Wikipedia itself allows a more detailed insight into the page views of specific articles in the course of time, unfortunately this page view tool (see Figure 7) is a relatively recent development and only takes into account data produced after 1 July 2015 (Wikipedia:Pageview statistics, Wikipedia, 2017). Using this imperfect source of information shows that, on average the article on the EU was visited approximately 12,000 times a day between July and December 2015 (Wikimedia Foundation, 2017a). Apart from not giving an insight into page views from before July 2015, this tool also does not give information on whether these page visits were individual views, i.e. unique visitors, and

whether the article was actually read in its entirety. What is more, the tool does not give an insight into visitors to the Wikipedia TP accompanying the article.
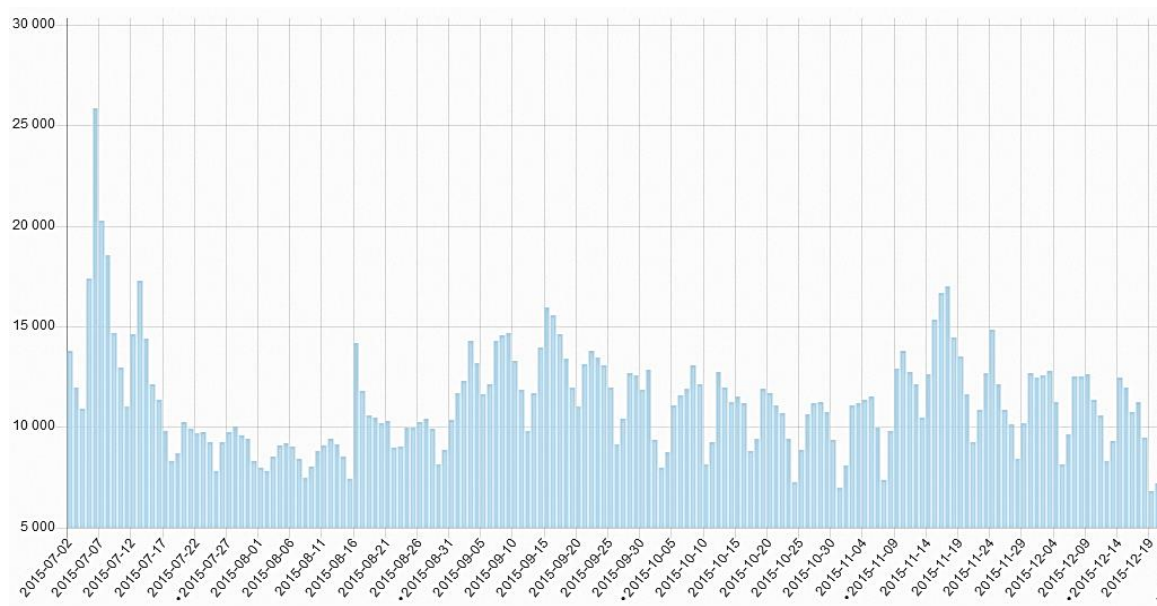
Figure 7 Page views 'European Union' July to December 2015 (Wikipedia:Pageview statistics, Wikipedia, 2017)

A 2011 Wikimedia survey of 4000 individuals from 16 countries including but not limited to the US, UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain addresses the issue of who the typical Wikipedia reader is. This survey finds that the average age of Wikipedia readers is 36.59 years (Pande, 2011). Fifty-six per cent of readers are male, i.e. there are fewer female than male Wikipedia readers (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011a).

Connected to Wikipedia's readership, it is important to also consider the trust this readership has in information provided by Wikipedia. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give precise numbers on Wikipedia's reputation and ascribed credibility on a global scale since studies pertaining to such issues are again often limited to a national level or even on subsets of these populations. To give an example of a national survey, the British polling company YouGov found that 67 per cent of British adults trust the site's accuracy. This level of trust is higher than British citizens' faith in the accuracy of news media reporting. However, at 83 per cent, their trust in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is still markedly higher (Jordan, 2014). Another, qualitative study on Swedish teachers showed that Wikipedia is still contested in terms of credibility and reliability – the questioned teachers argued that Wikipedia could be used as a first entry point into a topic but then other sources ought to be consulted (Francke & Sundin, 2012, p. 173). A survey of children and adults in the US

showed that both groups evaluate Wikipedia information as reliable; however, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was again cited as the more reliable source (Flanagin & Metzger, 2011, pp. 367–368). After reviewing these and other studies that could not be addressed here in more detail due to spatial limitations (cf. Calkins & Kelley, 2009; Chen, 2010; Eijkman, 2010), Okoli et al. conclude that Wikipedia is often consulted but that Wikipedia users generally exercise caution concerning ascribing credibility to Wikipedia content (2014, p. 2391). All in all then, Wikipedia is widely used but its perceived credibility is lower than that of the traditional *Encyclopædia Britannica.* Thus, the article on the EU might be consulted by numerous, especially European, Wikipedia users, but its content will not be taken as unquestionably factual.

Wikipedia's contributors – 'Wikipedians'

Another important issue that deserves attention is Wikipedia's *editors*. Unfortunately, it is impossible to present precise demographic information regarding Wikipedia contributors since, potentially, every person with internet access can make a contribution as registered or unregistered user or even as both. Still, according to Wilson, 70 per cent of edits are made by registered users and at least this group can be surveyed to a degree even though results, especially concerning demographic information, depend mostly on self-reporting (Wilson, 2014, p. 877).

Concerning geographical origin of contributors and contributions, Rask finds that there is a positive correlation between Wikipedia editing activity and economic wealth of country of origin (Rask, 2008, p. 4). This is confirmed by Graham et al. who find that 45 per cent of all edits to the English Wikipedia are made by editors from five countries – four of which are European countries and still EU members at the time of writing: the UK, Germany, France and Italy (Graham et al., 2015, p. 1174).

With respect to the size of the contributor group and their level of activity, in November 2016 there were approximately 30 million editors (Wikipedia:Wikipedians, Wikipedia, 2017). Interestingly, most of the registered users do not contribute significantly to the site and only a small number show high activity levels, that is, create most Wikipedia content. For example, as of December 2004, half of all edits were made by only 2.5 per cent of all registered users (Kittur et al., 2007, p. 1). This tendency of a highly active 'elite' contributor group versus a large group of mostly inactive Wikipedians is also reflected later in Wikipedia's development: in 2013, only approximately eleven per cent of registered users made more than one edit (Wilson, 2014, p. 877). Wikimedia also found

that the number of editors who make more than ten edits is decreasing steadily (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 4). On the basis of this consistent trend that only a small number of Wikipedians contribute to the encyclopaedia, Wilson concludes that the common conception of Wikipedia as harnessing the wisdom of the crowd is misplaced (Wilson, 2014, p. 879).

According to a 2011 survey by Wikimedia 76 per cent of respondents report that they are English Wikipedia contributors[10] and the typical Wikipedian was found to be male, "[have] a college degree, [be] 30-years-old, [be] computer savvy but not necessarily a programmer, [not] actually spend much time playing [computer] games, and [live] in [the] US or Europe" (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 3). Apart from confirming the above-mentioned Western-centric bias, this survey also finds a disconcerting gender gap in contributors – only approximately ten per cent of Wikipedians are women (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 30, Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 4). This figure has remained relatively stable, with studies from 2008 and late 2011 yielding similar results (Wilson, 2014, p. 885). Concerning age groups, the 2011 Wikimedia survey focusing on the English Wikipedia suggests the following distribution:
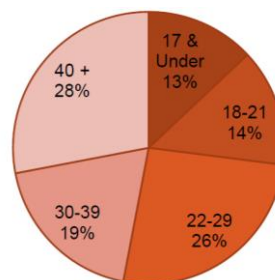
Figure 8 Contributor age distribution (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 20; Wilson, 2014, p. 886)

As noted above, the 2011 Wikimedia survey suggests that the majority of Wikipedia editors holds at least an undergraduate college degree:

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[10] Therefore, this survey presents an insight predominantly but not exclusively into the backgrounds of English Wikipedia editors (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b).
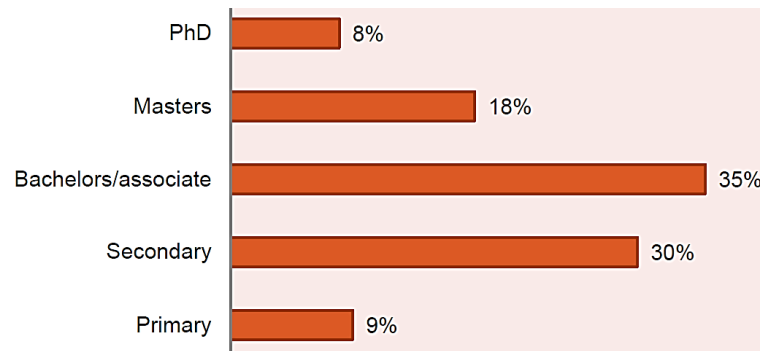
Figure 9 Wikipedians' educational backgrounds (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 19)

Interestingly, only 52 per cent of respondents of the 2011 Wikimedia survey, which predominantly polled English Wikipedia editors, reported English to be their first language, followed by German at 18 per cent (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 31). Thus, and as suggested by the above information on geographical origin of editors, the English Wikipedia edition is not a product of the 'English as L1 world' but represents the work of contributors from a broad spectrum of linguistic and cultural backgrounds with, as mentioned already, a Western-centric bias (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 31).

The next section deals with Wikipedia's potential to provide a transnational public sphere – a question that is particularly relevant due to three factors. First, public spheres are key for the continued functioning of democracies. Second, the internet as a global phenomenon might provide spaces for public spheres beyond nation states. Last, the EU has repeatedly been faced with criticism for suffering a lack of public sphere(s) (Eriksen, 2005; Thiel, 2008; Triandafyllidou et al., 2009; Wodak & Wright, 2006; Wright, 2007).

3.3.2   Wikipedia as an Emerging Transnational Public Sphere?

The central role of a functioning public sphere in democratic society is widely acknowledged. As discussed in 1.2, spaces that serve as transnational public spheres are considered essential for democratic cooperation within the EU and research has repeatedly discussed and lamented the lack of a European public sphere, a sphere beyond individual member states' public spheres (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 11; Eriksen, 2005, p. 341; Wright, 2007, p. 1168 – see 1.2). Hence, Wikipedia, as a transnationally accessible website that provides spaces for discussion, deserves consideration as a platform that could possibly contribute to resolving this lack of a transnational, if not European, public sphere.

Section 3.3.2.1 presents the understanding of the public sphere underlying this study. This is followed by a brief review of existing literature that has addressed the internet or parts of the internet as potential public sphere. Finally, Wikipedia is evaluated as potentially functioning as transnational public sphere.

3.3.2.1 Defining the Public Sphere

First, the question arises as to what purpose a public sphere serves and why a functioning public sphere is essential for democracies. A public sphere is necessary to facilitate processes of legitimisation. That is, democratic decision-making (and the entities/individuals making decisions on behalf of the electorate) require(s) public legitimisation. This means that only if the electorate approves, i.e. legitimises the deciding entity and consents to decisions, can we speak of a functioning democracy. In order to allow for such processes of legitimisation, democratic societies require a sphere where citizens can engage in debate, form opinions and, finally, consent to or object to decisions. It is not even necessarily active *participation* in debates that legitimises structures and practices in a democratic society. Rather, it is the mere *possibility of access* to participation in a sphere of critical debate, the mere option to participate in deliberation rather than actual participation that is integral to validate these practices/structures (Habermas & Pensky, 2001, p. 110).

Habermas, emphasising the public sphere's importance for the development of modern democracies but fearing its decline in the 20th century, dedicated a substantial body of his work to the concept of a public sphere. In his discussion, Habermas focuses on European history and pinpoints the emergence of the first public sphere in 17th, 18th and 19th century Europe, for example, in coffee shops and *Tischgesellschaften* (cf. Habermas, 1990; Poster & Aronowitz, 2001, pp. 102–103). He defines the public sphere as a network for the communication of information and stances, i.e. opinions (Habermas, 1992, p. 436) where ideally anybody who chooses to can engage in rational debate until a shared opinion and consensus is reached (cf. Habermas, 1990; Poster & Aronowitz, 2001, p. 103). A prerequisite for the creation of such a sphere is that participants' civil liberties, in particular, their right to freedom of expression, are protected by law to allow for debate without fear of persecution (Fossum & Schlesinger, 2008, p. 25).

Habermas' modernist perspective on the public sphere exhibits a striking flaw which becomes obvious when reading Habermas' account of 17th and 18th century public sphere – the issue of who was actually able to participate in this public sphere, namely

predominantly white males of certain social standing (Wodak & Koller, 2008, p. 2). By addressing this and connected points, Fraser moves to a postmodern understanding of the public sphere (Fraser, 1995, p. 288; cf. Wodak & Koller, 2008, pp. 3–4): she identifies three issues concerning Habermas' "bourgeois conception of the public sphere" (Fraser, 1990, p. 77). First and as already mentioned, the reality of social inequality and the resulting inequality of access to the Habermasian public sphere, second, the view that a multiplicity of publics that exist in parallel is disadvantageous for democracy, i.e. that a unified overarching public sphere is the ideal, and third, that the borders between private and public are fixed, that is, that discourse in the public sphere should only address the "common good" without any reference to alleged "private issues" (Fraser, 1995, p. 288).

Relating the first two issues, Fraser explains that a postmodern understanding of the public sphere embraces the existence of multiple public spheres based on the issue of access and ability to participate in Habermas' unified public sphere (Fraser, 1995, p. 291). The ideal of every citizen being able to participate in Habermas' overarching public sphere is not a reality in societies characterised by systemic inequality (as is and was the case throughout European history). Instead, Fraser argues that since we do live in unequal societies, we cannot but prefer a multiplicity of different public spheres which, altogether, should allow everyone access to at least one public sphere rather than one unified but extremely discriminatory and exclusionary one (Fraser, 1995, p. 295; Wodak & Koller, 2008, pp. 3–4).[11] Having said that, it is vital to point out that not all public spheres are equally influential in terms of societal decision-making processes or even merely opinion and will formation processes since, for instance, mediatisation and reach of a specific public sphere determine the impact is has (Papacharissi, 2002, p. 11). To give an example, a prime time television format where politicians engage in Q&A with citizens might be more effective with respect to guiding a public and wide-reaching opinion formation process – even though not every citizen actually has access to contributing to this public sphere – than a closed town hall meeting in a small countryside village.

With respect to Fraser's third point, the researcher demonstrates how the distinction into private versus public issues is an ideological rather than a neutral, natural classification. Using the example of feminism, Fraser points out how, initially, the dominant norm group (i.e. white normatively gendered males) participating in 'their'

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[11] The segmentation into multiple public spheres might also lead to problems, e.g. social media echo chambers (Krasodomski-Jones, 2016). However, the fact alone that we as a society are faced with such issues, supports Fraser's conception of multiple parallel pubic spheres.

public sphere might not have considered feminism an appropriate topic to be deliberated on publicly. Still, feminists formed a counter public sphere and established feminism as a relevant topic open for public debate (Fraser, 1990, p. 71). This leads to the conclusion that determining whether a particular realm functions as a public sphere based on an observation of the topics under discussion would be problematic.

Another aspect of public spheres that deserves brief mention here is whether the existence of a public sphere can and should go beyond opinion formation to will formation or even political action. In this respect, Eriksen developed the concepts of *general* versus *strong* public spheres. General public spheres are fora for deliberation and opinion formation "not aimed at achieving particular results" (Eriksen, 2005, p. 345; Wright, 2007, p. 1170), whereas strong public spheres have connections to the political system and political actors and are aimed at formation of will, which then ought to translate into political action (Eriksen, 2005, p. 349; Wright, 2007, p. 1170). Generally, this distinction shows that public spheres are gradable in terms of intensity of concrete, tangible impact in the sense of political action.

All in all, this project adopts Fraser's postmodern conception of public sphere as a multiplicity of co-existing public spheres that allow for rational-critical debate oriented towards opinion formation, formation of will and resulting political action. I evaluate Wikipedia's potential to function as a platform that enables the emergence of a transnational public sphere with the understanding that a multiplicity of public spheres co-exist simultaneously.

3.3.2.2   The Internet as a Transnational Public Sphere

Before discussing Wikipedia as a transnational public sphere, it should be noted that a considerable body of research has addressed the question of whether the internet might facilitate the emergence of such a public sphere. Drawing on different conceptions of public sphere but predominantly inspired by Jürgen Habermas' work, Dean and Dahlberg, for instance, weigh arguments for and against such an understanding of the internet (Dahlberg, 2001; cf. Dean, 2003). Among other aspects, Dean criticises the lack of actual effect internet interactions have and argues that the internet thus cannot be viewed as a public sphere (Dean, 2003). In contrast, Dahlberg does not reject the internet as a potential public sphere with such vehemence but points out that the quality of the online interactions usually does not meet the standards of rational deliberation required as part of his understanding of a public sphere (Dahlberg, 2001, p. 17). Gerhards and Schäfer do not

outright reject the possibility of the internet as a public sphere either, but, by comparing treatment of a particular issue in print and online media, they present evidence that the Web 2.0 still privileges institutional players. They find the internet not as empowering of the individual as expected (Gerhards & Schäfer, 2010, p. 13).

A common issue of these works is that the authors tend to fail to emphasise that public spheres do not exist a priori but are created through communication and that the internet might merely provide the (metaphorical) public *space(s)* to give rise to public spheres. Another problematic aspect of these works is that they tend to assume a relatively simplistic view of the internet by attempting to capture it as public sphere or not. However, the internet incorporates and reflects the complexities and multifaceted activities that are society, e.g. it allows for commercial activities such as buying and selling of products/services, for transnational interaction, for traditional one-way communication such as broadcasting videos, etc. Consequently, trying to draw conclusions about its functioning as a public sphere in its entirety is a naïve approach to a (metaphorical) space where, at this point, the whole range of thinkable social practice(s) take(s) place.

Jones implicitly acknowledges this breadth of the internet and the spaces it opens to users. Subscribing to the idea that public spheres arise from people engaging in discussion, which is enabled by the right to free speech granted to, at least, a part of the population of the world (Eriksen, 2005, pp. 344–345), Jones notes that, in the age of the Web 2.0, individuals have substantial power to create spaces on the internet that might become public spheres (Jones, 2008, p. 430). He explains that the shift away from a traditional top-down distribution of information enables even individuals with limited resources to participate in information creation and dissemination, which privileges the development of public spheres (Jones, 2008, p. 430; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016, p. 210). Barton also highlights the Web 2.0's potential to function as a public sphere, specifically blogs, fora and wikis (Barton, 2005), and Warleigh and later Bohman also take a cautiously optimistic view concerning the internet's potential to give rise to public spheres. However, the latter two make a point of emphasising that this can only occur when individuals take action and decide to fashion such public spheres through finding spaces they can appropriate for their purposes, and engaging in deliberative interaction (Bohman, 2004; cf. Warleigh, 2003).

The following section evaluates Wikipedia's potential to function as a transnational public sphere. It argues that Wikipedia can be defined as public sphere to a degree but it also discusses limitations of Wikipedia as a transnational public sphere.

3.3.2.3   Wikipedia as a Transnational Public Sphere

Wikipedia is indeed a platform that allows a degree of freedom for how it is used; in particular, the Wikipedia talk pages (TP) allow some freedom in this regard. Against this backdrop of a cautiously optimistic view concerning Wikipedia's potential to serve as a public sphere, the following discussion addresses three main points to evaluate whether and to what degree Wikipedia and, in particular Wikipedia's TPs, may function as a transnational public sphere in accordance with the understanding of public spheres cited above, i.e. based on Habermas with the advancements proposed by Fraser. First, I discuss participation in and access to this potential public sphere, second, I deal with the idea of rational-critical debate and third, I add a brief discussion of whether Wikipedia constitutes a general or strong public sphere in Eriksen's typology, which focuses on political action emerging from a public sphere (Eriksen, 2005, p. 349).

Participation and access

Concerning participation and issues of access, anyone with the required literacy skills and internet access can, potentially, choose to participate in Wikipedia article creation and talk page debates (see 3.2 and 3.3.1). While Wikipedia encourages private individuals of any background to contribute, there are elements that affect this inclusiveness: a) Wikipedia's protection policy, b) disproportional participation of particular social groups and c) different degrees of freedom of expression.

Wikipedia protection policy limits whether changes to the article can be made and, for example, an elite group of Wikipedians is equipped with the power to grant or limit this ability to contribute when an article is protected or semi-protected (see 3.2). In this context it is important to point out that, as mentioned in 3.2, blocking editing activity to Wikipedia predominantly affects articles, rather than talk pages. Still, specific users can be blocked from contributing to talk pages as well, although Wikipedia policy strongly urges caution when blocking individual contributors (Wikipedia:Blocking policy, Wikipedia, 2017). All in all, Wikipedia talk pages are considerably less restrictive in terms of excluding participation and are thus potentially better suited to function as public spheres in regards to accessibility and right of participation.

With respect to who contributes to Wikipedia, there are groups that are overrepresented on Wikipedia (see 3.3.1 for a discussion of Wikipedia contributors) – well-educated and wealthy males are the most dominantly represented group participating

in Wikipedia and, it stands to reason, contribute to Wikipedia talk pages. Regardless of this, Wikipedia itself actually encourages individuals from all over the world to participate and post on Wikipedia talk pages – indeed the talk page on the EU has not been restricted and thus anyone with internet access is allowed to post. Altogether, it is not Wikipedia itself that limits access to a particular subgroup of society (in contrast to e.g. Habermas 17th century public sphere where access was actively restricted).

Having said this, it is vital to acknowledge that protection of civil liberties, specifically freedom of expression without state incursion, is a privilege not shared globally. That is, though Wikipedia might welcome participation, posters from particular countries might not be afforded the right to fully participate in critical debate about controversial issues. However, at least a considerable part of the global population does enjoy such freedom of expression (cf. Graham, 2008, p. 54).

Another issue connected to participation and, specifically, participant groups, is Eriksen's argument that a public sphere can only emerge when there is a common self-understanding, a collective identity in order to permit arriving at a "collective opinion" (Eriksen, 2005, p. 345). At first glance, Wikipedia does not meet this criterion – Wikipedia contributors do not share one common denominator, e.g. belonging to the same social class or even sharing a national background. Rather, it can be argued that Wikipedians do form such a collective – a Community of Practice (CoP). A CoP is defined as a "group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2010, p. 4). Wikipedians meet these criteria: the community shares the site's overarching concern of creating an encyclopaedia, and they face certain problems, share information and insights into topics in the process of doing so. Wenger further discusses CoPs as sharing "a set of frameworks, ideas, tools information, styles, language" (Wenger et al., 2010, p. 29). Again, Wikipedia matches this understanding perfectly. As section 3.2 shows, Wikipedia has a body of policies and guidelines which constitutes the community's framework and directs user behaviour concerning article editing as well as interaction on the Wikipedia TPs. Moreover, and not unlike the linguistic concept of speech communities, Wenger also mentions styles and language as part of the shared aspects of CoPs. In this context, van Dijk claims that the Wikipedia community exhibits this hallmark of CoPs and actually shares a certain jargon (van Dijk, 2010, p. 24). Indeed, my data confirm this: for instance, there are numerous shorthand references to

various Wikipedia policy, e.g. "You have already violated WP:3RR many times"[12] or "this needs amending per WP:CRYSTAL".[13] On the whole, while Wikipedians from various backgrounds might not flock around a collective identity (apart from possibly identifying as a Wikipedia editor), they flock around a topic they are all interested in, they have the common goal of creating an encyclopaedia and, in order to do so, they use Wikipedia-specific language and are guided by Wikipedia's site structure and rules – Wikipedians' forming a CoP aids the arrival at a shared "collective opinion" (Eriksen, 2005, p. 345).

Summing up, in terms of *participation* and *accessibility*, even though Wikipedia suffers from a certain imbalance in the sense of who does and can contribute without potential negative repercussions, the website can still be appropriated to function as a public sphere for individuals from numerous countries who wish to engage in transnational debate. What is more, even the view that Wikipedians do not share enough common ground to engage in collective opinion formation can be rejected on the basis of the idea of a CoP – a "Wikipedia community" (Wikipedia community, Wikipedia, 2017).

Rational debate

Before dealing with the idea of whether a debate can be considered rational, it is first key to briefly discuss whether Wikipedia facilitates interaction in general. In fact, Wikipedia in its entirety is not a space of debate – Wikipedia articles are not sites of explicit interaction amongst contributors. However, in parts of Wikipedia, interested parties are encouraged to engage in debate, e.g. on Wikipedia talk pages (and other spaces, e.g. contributor profile sites). All in all Wikipedia indeed provides space for debate.

In this context, the question arises whether Wikipedians' postings on TPs are dialogic since, as Bohman notes, some internet platforms "may increase interactivity without preserving the essential features of dialogue, such as responsive uptake" and are thus inadequate in terms of providing space for a public sphere (Bohman, 2004, p. 135). That is, users may post but not necessarily in response to one another, e.g. Twitter users stating opinions but not engaging in actual debate with each other. With respect to this, it is important to consider Wikipedia's goal-oriented and consensus-driven modus operandi (see 3.2 on Wikipedia policy) because attentive listenership and responsive uptake are

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[12] WP:3RR states "An editor must not perform more than three reverts on a single page" (Wikipedia:Edit warring, Wikipedia, 2017)

[13] WP:CRYSTAL means "Wikipedia does not predict the future" (Wikipedia:What Wikipedia is not, Wikipedia, 2017)

indispensable in a situation where decisions towards a common goal have to be taken consensually. My data confirm that Wikipedia is indeed consensus-driven in practice and Wikipedians are very aware of this – in the following example, a Wikipedian directly addresses another Wikipedian to dissuade them from proposing a particular change: "The chances of achieving consensus on your proposal is incredibly unlikely, and the current status of the introductory sentence reflects a long-drawn out compromise." Thus, with respect to Bohman's concern of lack of responsive uptake on some internet platforms, Wikipedia TP interactions have to remain dialogic in order to allow for consensus-building.

In connection with this, Habermas' idea(l) of *rational* debate amongst private individuals deserves some attention. Habermas characterises rational debate as non-violent determination of what is true and right (Habermas, 1990, pp. 152; 115-116). Despite this elaboration, rational debate cannot be defined in absolute terms, that is, judgement of whether an exchange is rational is subject to personal evaluation. Here, drawing on Habermas' concept of communicative rationality adds to a more comprehensive understanding of rational debate:

> communicative rationality recalls older ideas of logos, inasmuch as it brings along with it the connotations of a noncoercively unifying, consensus-building force of a discourse[14] in which the participants overcome their at first subjectively based views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement (Habermas, 2007, p. 315)[15]

As mentioned above, Wikipedia underscores the importance of consensual decision-making. Hence, with respect to this first aspect – consensus-building – the website meets Habermas core criterion of communicative rationality, which can be viewed as prerequisite for rational debate. Secondly, Habermas' non-coercive element of consensus-finding is also given since Wikipedia and Wikipedians cannot, de facto, exert pressure on fellow-editors and force interlocutors' compliance.[16] The third important criterion is the idea of a "rationally motivated agreement". Indeed, even in this respect, the Wikipedia body of rules creates the ideal conditions for communicative rationality and, by proxy, rational debate: as mentioned above, pillar four mandates civility and mutual respect, which is, of course, not the same as rationality. However, urging interlocutors to retain a degree of civility might prevent a devolution of arguments into disrespectful angry fights. Additional rules

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[14] not to be confused with discourse as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis
[15] It is questionable if such an exchange divorced from emotion is even possible as Habermas et al. later acknowledge (Habermas, Demmerling, & Krüger, 2016, p. 813).
[16] The exception is attempts to exert peer pressure on individuals, e.g. by singling them out and publicly attempting to shame them into compliance.

that boost rational debate are, for instance, the aim to arrive at the Neutral Point of View and the policy to always base proposed content on reliable secondary sources (see 3.2). What is more, as my data show, Wikipedians themselves function as regulators since they demand defensible arguments and debunk fallacies on a regular basis in the course of their debates, e.g. "This is gibberish, not to mention a logical fallacy: does such a union imply a state?". On the whole, Wikipedia TPs indeed provide a space that allow for rational debate amongst interested parties.

In connection with this, the original purpose of Wikipedia talk pages – in contrast to what Wikipedians actually use these spaces for – plays a noteworthy role. As mentioned in 3.2.1.2, TPs are principally intended to:

> provide space for editors to discuss changes to its associated article or project page. Article talk pages should not be used by editors as platforms for their personal views on a subject (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2016)

This core purpose of Wikipedia talk pages is reiterated repeatedly, for example:

> there are people who go to the pub just for a drink and a general chat with their mates, while some go with the prime intention of playing pool or darts and organising matches, and having a drink and a bite to eat while they are doing it. An article talk page is even tighter though. […] we don't even have a general discussion about the subject; we only discuss the content of the article about the subject – what goes in, what gets removed, and how it should be presented. (Wikipedia:Don't lose the thread, Wikipedia, 2017)

The latter description is particularly noteworthy because it refers to an institution not dissimilar to Habermas' coffee shops as spaces that allow the development of public spheres – pubs. While Wikipedia states that TP are *not* to be confused with such spaces, Wikipedians actually eschew this policy and appropriate the TP space to exchange (political) opinions and attempt to convince their interlocutors of their views beyond what is required for consensus on article development. Without going into too much depth on this point here, instances where broader political debate, as could occur in the Habermasian coffee shop, rather than article-editing is the focus of discussion are:

> Scotland could leave the UK, if there was a referendum and Scotland declared independence against the wishes of Whitehall, there would be no war and Whitehall would have to concede on the principle of democracy

and "the EU should eventually become an advanced federal state." The former example comments on an issue only indirectly related to the EU while the latter gives an opinion on the EU's desired future development – neither example strictly deals with the subject matter of the Wikipedia article in question or is limited to mere editing-related aspects of

the Wikipedia article on the EU. Thus, as these examples and, even more strikingly, the data discussion in chapters 5 to 7 show, Wikipedia TPs have the potential to be appropriated as spaces of public and transnational debate and opinion formation beyond what is necessary for article editing. A caveat here is that my findings are limited to one particular TP on a controversial political body – the EU. It is possible that not all Wikipedia TPs are utilised as such. Regardless, my evaluation of Wikipedia TPs suggests that, in general, these are spaces that *can* be appropriated and used to establish a public sphere by individuals interested in doing so, which recalls Bohman's view that "the Internet is a public sphere only if agents make it so" (Bohman, 2004, p. 132).

A general public sphere with limitations

Drawing on Eriksen's typology of strong versus general public spheres (Eriksen, 2005, pp. 345–349), Wright describes general public spheres as "independent of the state, though institutions shape the precise nature of the public sphere" with the aim of deliberation and opinion formation but without the agenda of delivering concrete results, e.g. in form of political action (Wright, 2007, p. 1170). In contrast to, for instance, the Futurum forum (Wright, 2007), Wikipedia is indeed independent of any institution except the Wikimedia Foundation. That is, as long as Wikipedia itself is not subject of discussion, Wikipedia debates are separate from the body/institution/issue they address. Additionally, as demonstrated above and as my data discussions from chapter 5 to 7 illustrate, on Wikipedia TPs, Wikipedians engage in debates that aim to give opinions, legitimise their views and persuade. However, Wikipedia debates do not aim to lead to a concerted formation of will and subsequent political action. Thus, altogether, Wikipedia TPs serve as fora for individuals to form opinions and these TPs are separate from the institution(s) they address – Wikipedia TPs or, more narrowly, the TP accompanying the article on the EU, can be classified as a *general public sphere*.

Furthermore, even though the evaluation of Wikipedia talk pages has shown that they can function as public spheres, it is central to, again, highlight that different public spheres are not be equally influential. Here Wikipedia's considerable reach, in particular in Europe, deserves mention (see 3.3.1) but with the caveat that TPs, as the Wikipedia subsections that actually permit the creation of a transnational general public sphere, are not as widely received as the article pages and might not impact public opinion formation[17]

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[17] i.e. opinion formation among a public audience beyond the TP discussants

directly. However, it is also worth pointing out that the *results* of the Wikipedia-internal opinion formation or, at least, the achievement of consensus amongst the Wikipedians, are received globally by readers accessing *Wikipedia articles.*[18] Moreover, much more so than is the case with Habermas' examples of historical public spheres, which rigorously excluded a number of groups, Wikipedia TPs *can* at least be accessed and people are free to choose whether to do so.

Still, there are noteworthy limitations concerning the impact Wikipedia has or can have on alleviating the problematic lack of a European public sphere. The first issue is that while a potentially unlimited number of private individuals, i.e. everyone with internet access and adequate literacy skills, is encouraged to participate in the deliberative processes, the actual number of interlocutors is limited. Secondly, the platform does not serve as discussion space for a collective that shares a set of interests concerning social or political developments, for instance, it is not limited to EU citizens who might at least share the collective interest of (re-)defining the EU from inside and who then form one European public sphere on Wikipedia. Finally, a limitation connected to this is that Wikipedia merely functions as a general public sphere, that is, it is a forum for transnational opinion formation but does not aim to lead to a concrete formation of will and concerted action.

On the whole, Wikipedia TPs can be used to function as a *general transnational public sphere*. In connection with the fact that various research studies have focused on the issue of a European public sphere, it is important to underpin that the site is not limited to EU citizens, that is, it cannot function as a strictly *European* public sphere.

The next chapter addresses different aspects pertaining to the data used for this study. It gives an insight into data selection, methods of data treatment and data analysis.

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[18] A minor caveat in this respect is that Wikipedia readers might not revisit one and the same article repeatedly, i.e. might not be affected by changing consensus on an issue.

4   Data and Methodology

Section 4.1 and 4.2 focus on describing the data, how the data were collected and treated. While 4.2 already discusses how van Dijk's macro-proposition theory (van Dijk, 1977) is applicable to talk page data, 4.3 presents the methods of data analysis used in the context of this study. Finally, 4.4 elucidates which subcorpora were chosen for this fine-grained textual analysis.

The following section details issues of data selection including ethical considerations, the general layout of the two different types of data referred to in this study and questions concerning when data collection was completed.

4.1   Data Selection

All Wikipedia data are free to use and the website's terms of use stipulate: "all users contributing to the Projects are required to grant broad permissions to the general public to re-distribute and re-use their contributions freely" (Terms of Use – Content we host, Wikipedia, 2015). Despite this carte blanche, I endeavour to protect contributors' identities by anonymisation, i.e. no reference to contributors even by their user name. This will not adversely affect my research since I do not seek to find out *who* precisely holds what views on the EU. On the contrary, taking this measure might have the advantage of increasing awareness regarding protecting the right to privacy in digital communication, where there is still a view that whatever individuals post online is in the public domain and can therefore be used for research without ethical concerns (see discussion on ethics with respect to online data in Sixsmith & Murray, 2001; D'Arcy & Young, 2012 or Page, Barton, Unger, & Zappavigna, 2014).

Concerning the nature of the data, there are two types of data, viz. the article and the talk page. However, only one data set is subject to in-depth textual analysis, namely the talk page (TP) accompanying the Wikipedia article 'European Union', including archived material (see 3.2.1). In this context, it is worth mentioning that references to 'TP' are to be understood as referring to all TP data, even those that can now be found in one of the archives.

Since the inception of the article 'European Union' on Wikipedia, the TP in question has provided Wikipedia contributors with the opportunity to engage in discussion about the article, presumably with a focus on editing decisions rather than general background debates (Wikipedia:Talk Page guidelines, Wikipedia, 2015) (also see 3.2.1.2

for a discussion of the purpose of TPs). I sampled all TP data produced from the inception of the Wikipedia article to the end of 2015 without exception. On the whole, the collected TP and its archives comprise 611,431 tokens (i.e. clusters of characters separated from one another by spaces or punctuation marks) and cover a time span from 2001 to 2015. The TP is structured by 971 headings which introduce topics of debate (Talk:European Union/Archive index, 2015).

The second data set consists of one version of the Wikipedia article 'European Union', which is not analysed in detail. Rather, this study merely examines how the TP controversies are resolved in the article, i.e. what the outcome of the TP debate is. To give a brief overview of the article, the sampled version comprises 10,728 tokens and is structured with subheadings that are given in a Table of Contents preceding the main body of the article. The article contains links to sites within and outside Wikipedia and incorporates tables and pictures of politicians, landscapes, EU-related symbols and maps.

Figure 10 Wikipedia article 'European Union' (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015)

Concerning article sampling, the chosen version is dated 18th December 2015. All sampled TP data was produced *before* that date, so it is possible to understand what the TP discussions culminated in. The particular date in December 2015 was chosen because this cut-off date takes into account both article editing and TP editing trends. Generally, there

had been a decline in activity on both the TP and article sites over the years, that is, article and TP editing trends are aligned in that respect. With regard to the article, there had been a steady decrease with only 251 edits in 2015 in comparison with 2014's 417 and 2013's 668 edits (European Union: Revision history, Wikipedia, 2016). Figure 11 below gives an overview of the editing history of the *article* with the blue bar indicating all edits occurring at a certain point in time.
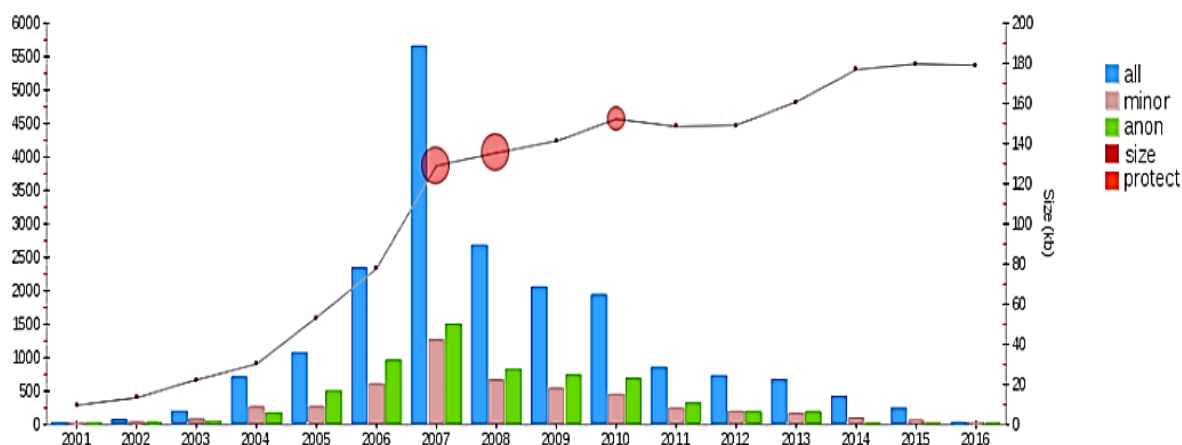
Figure 11 Editing history of article 'European Union' (Revision History Statistics, 2008-2015)[19]

The lull of activity on the *talk page* is also noteworthy. In 2015, the debate on the TP under investigation comprised only 16 threads with a total of 4472 tokens. By comparison, in 2014 the TP discussion amounted to 25 threads with 22,054 tokens, i.e. almost five times as much language material as in 2015 (Talk:European Union, Wikipedia, 2001-2015).

With respect to the article, a lull in editing indicates that apparently no aspect of the article is controversial enough to cause editing (or that the article is protected against modification, which was not the case then). Thus, sampling a version from a period with little editing activity ensures that a stable article version is examined. Apart from the general decrease in editing activity in 2015, there is an eight-day lapse of editing activity after the 18th of December 2015 – this constitutes a duration in non-activity between edits that had last occurred in October 2015 (European Union: Revision history, Wikipedia, 2016). Therefore, the sampled version is indeed relatively stable.

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[19] Figure 11 uses differently coloured bars to indicate which type of editors were involved in the article creation and which fraction of all edits was minor. The graph further shows article size (black line with red nodes) and when the article was set in 'protection' mode against vandalism and to which extent (differently-sized red circles), i.e. locking the article, so it cannot be edited for a certain period of time.

Paying attention to editing trends is advantageous for sampling the TP as well. My cut-off point does not cut into any ongoing controversy among contributors because there was no active discussion at that point in time. The last addition to the discussion in 2015 was made on 24th November, with subsequent discussions only occurring in January 2016 (Talk:European Union: Revision history, Wikipedia, 2016). Since all TP discussions ceased or, at least, experienced a lull between November 2015 and January 2016, my TP data can be understood as containing resolved discussions or, at least, are not part of any active debates.

The next section addresses different aspects pertaining to the TP data used in this study, reaching from data treatment to the identification of topics and ultimate division into subcorpora in accordance with these.

4.2 The Talk Page

The following three subsections focus on aspects of the talk page data. First, I discuss data treatment. The subsequent section details how I identified aspects of the EU that elicited controversy amongst Wikipedians. Finally, the last subsection deals with how I created subcorpora to enable a more detailed examination of how the Wikipedia community deals with these controversial elements.

4.2.1 Data Treatment

In a first step of the corpus building process, I manually copied the text material into a .txt file. To ensure that all content was retained and to increase familiarity with the data, the sites were read thread by thread in direct comparison with the downloaded version.

In this process, original formatting, links and pictures were lost. The only way to retain this information would have been to download the data in HTML form including all the metadata on extra-textual information. However, I chose to manually collect my data instead of downloading data including this meta-information for four reasons.

First, the aim of this thesis – the investigation of the Wikipedia TP – is relatively narrow. It enquires about Wikipedians' perspective on the EU as manifest in language material. Thus, detailed information on how much spacing or how much of an indent a contributor provides is not particularly relevant. A noteworthy caveat is that information on contributors' choices to italicise or bold their contribution was also lost – choices in that regard potentially affect textual meaning-making in the sense of emphasising a certain

point while backgrounding another. Still, formatting choices do not affect the semantics given in the text to a degree that justifies the inclusion of all meta-information. Second and connected to this, the Wikipedia TP focuses on discussion of controversial points. Since the main mode of meaning-making is textual, the deletion of meta-information is justifiable. In this context, it is worth noting that I marked up instances where editors supplemented their postings with pictures and hyperlinks. Third, Figure 12 illustrates that the meta-data mark-up is extensive. Hence, it was more efficient to add relevant mark-up myself than to reduce the overly rich HTML source to a manageable level. Fourth and finally, the decision to manually mark up the data was also motivated by the understanding that doing so would further increase my familiarity with the data set (see 4.3 for the discussion of approaching corpus examinations via an a priori reading of the corpus).

```
class="toctext">Map</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-6"><a href="#Applying_Country_template"><span class="tocnumber">6</span> <span
class="toctext">Applying Country template</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-7"><a href="#Accession_votes"><span class="tocnumber">7</span> <span
class="toctext">Accession votes</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-8"><a href="#Mangled_Map"><span class="tocnumber">8</span> <span class="toctext">Mangled
Map</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-9"><a href="#Territories_not_in_EU"><span class="tocnumber">9</span> <span
class="toctext">Territories not in EU</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-10"><a href="#Gibraltar"><span class="tocnumber">10</span> <span
class="toctext">Gibraltar</span></a></li>
<li class="toclevel-1 tocsection-11"><a href="#History_of_EU"><span class="tocnumber">11</span> <span
class="toctext">History of EU</span></a></li>
</ul>
</div>
<p></p>
<h2><span class="mw-headline" id="three_pillars.3F">three pillars?</span></h2>
<p>I couldn't follow this article. what are the three pillars? where does the EC (EEC) fit in?</p>
<hr />
<p>Hope it is clearer now. At present the article mentions a lot of obscure legal and historical points, which probably
should be moved into seperate sections. E.g. an introductory article which outlines what the EU is, and a more detailed
article with all the legal and historical technicalities. -- <a href="█████████████████████████████████████████
█████████████████████████████████████████████████████p>
<h2><span class="mw-headline" id="right_to_reside">right to reside</span></h2>
<p>Someone wrote</p>
<dl>
<dd>Citizens of member states have the right to reside in other member states for up to three months. This can be extended
by applying for a residence permit, which must be automatically granted in some cases, e.g., if the person is employed in
the state or has means to survive without government support. Some states (only the <a href="/wiki/United_Kingdom"
title="United Kingdom">United Kingdom</a>?) waive the requirement for a permit or any requirement to report to the local
police.</dd>
</dl>
<p>IIRC there is no need to apply or hold a residence permit for EU or EEA citizens. EU and EEA citizens are basically
free to live anywhere in the Union they want, provided they can support themselves; they don't need permits. Only non-
EU/EEA citizens need to. -- <a href="/wiki/████████████████████████████████████████' class="mw-redirect">Simon J
Kissane</a></p>
<p>No, you are mistaken, Simon. In order to get tax and social security status in <a href="/wiki/Luxembourg"
title="Luxembourg">Luxembourg</a>, you need a residency permit. This applies to other EU countries (France, Netherlands
are for sure). <a href="██████████████████████████████████></p>
<dl>
```

Figure 12 HTML source text in .txt format – archive 1

All TP threads were marked up for beginning/end of thread as well as year of creation, as provided by contributors' timestamping their contribution. This form of mark-up allows the diachronic and thread-based categorisation of all data. As already mentioned, non-textual additional information (such as links and pictures) was also marked up and can, therefore, be taken into account in the course of data analysis. Information on beginning/end of each contributor's turn is given via the original timestamp/signature at the end of postings. Additionally, I set apart each contribution by leaving an empty line in between – this visual separation has the advantage of also making each turn easily discernible in AntConc's file view (see Figure 13) (Antony & Thomas, 2010).

```
<thread name="2006">Reliability of GDP (PPP)?

Chinese GDP(PPP) goes in EU. after four years. Will you be true? If I continue an anual rate of 10% growth. —The preceding
u▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓) 10:36, 9 December 2006 (UTC).</thread>


<thread name="2006">European Identity

"Part of the process of building a national identity for the European Union will be to produce a history of Europe that
justifies the EU's existence." How about "millenia of war"? Is that justification enough for a peaceful union?▓▓▓▓
14:45, 26 October 2006 (UTC)

The quoted sentence seems to have been dropped into its section with little regard to the flow of the article. More
importantly, it's dripping with POV and begs all sorts of questions. The purpose of this article is to review what the EU
is, has been and may become, on the basis of published sources. It is not its business to say or imply that the EU is a
good or bad thing, or that particular forms of future development are or are not desirable. ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓, 26
October 2006 (UTC)

Agree. It's extremely POV. Delete it. ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓, 19 November 2006 (UTC)</thread>
```

Figure 13 Tagged and cleaned corpus file

A final noteworthy point is that I did not standardise my data in terms of orthography. Since the data are associated with a rather informal manner of interacting, possibly owing to the fact that Wikipedia TPs are a form of semi-private back stage communication (see 3.2.1) and because Wikipedia editors come from diverse linguistic backgrounds (see 3.3.1), there is a degree of non-standard orthography and grammar.[20] To facilitate readability of my data discussion in chapters 5 to 7, I do not include '[sic]' to signal deviation from the standard each time such an instance occurs.

While the data used for this study are freely available online, the marked-up corpus is also available to anyone interested (please contact susanne.kopf(at)wu.ac.at for access to this corpus).

The following subsection details how each thread's topic is inferred, how the threads are grouped together by topic and how these form subcorpora for analysis.

4.2.2 Macro-Propositions

One research question is – slightly rephrased – 'Which *topics* are discussed on the TP accompanying the Wikipedia article on the European Union?' Thus, the aim is to find out whether there are certain topics/thematic fields pertaining to the EU that are particularly controversial for the Wikipedia community. However, categorisation in terms of textual 'aboutness', i.e. according to topic, is problematic not least due to the danger of the researcher arbitrarily assigning text material to topics or vice versa (Péry-Woodley & Scott, 2006, p. 11). Taking this critical perspective on topic identification as a starting point, the following discussion elucidates what van Dijk's (1977) theory of semantic macro-propositions is and how it can be applied to Wikipedia talk page data. It also details

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[20] This also affects data analysis to a degree as non-standard orthography impacts, e.g. frequency rankings.

how Wikipedia policy – and Wikipedians enforcing this policy – make van Dijk's theory the ideal approach to ensure a systematic and traceable process of topic identification.

First, what are macro-propositions? Van Dijk defines semantic macro-propositions as "semantic structures of discourse whose meaning and reference is defined in terms of their constituents' meanings" and "macro-meaning [as] the unifying property of the respective meanings of a sequence of propositions" of a discourse sample (1977, p. 7). Hence, such macro-propositions "represent the global meanings, topics, or themes" (Bey, 2015, p. 109) in a discourse sample, with 'discourse sample' here understood as comprising a sequence of (micro-)propositions (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978, p. 365). In order to facilitate the identification of such macro-propositions, i.e. topics, van Dijk proposes macro-rules (van Dijk, 1977, p. 8). How a specific macro-proposition is realised, i.e. by which rule it can be retrieved, varies and depends on the data set's characteristics.

Indeed, the discussion of Wikipedia in 3.2 shows that Wikipedia TPs have certain features that facilitate applying van Dijk's theory and, in particular, some specific macro-rules rather than others. First, it is crucial that a) Wikipedia policy stipulates that each TP thread ought to introduce one topic and b) that my data show that this guideline is enforced by the Wikipedia community (see 3.2.1.2). Secondly and connected to this, Wikipedia policy states that thread names ought to reflect the topic under discussion (again see 3.2.1.2). In other words, Wikipedia policy strongly recommends a 'one thread – one topic' and a 'thread name = thread topic' organisation of TP threads. Moreover, these policies are enforced by community members, as can be seen by the excerpts from the data in 3.2.1.2, e.g. "we're starting to go a bit off topic" (Talk:European Union/Archive 16, Wikipedia, 2007).

Based on this information on Wikipedia policy, the central macro-rule used in this study is 'integration' (van Dijk, 1977, p. 12). In accordance with this rule, "more specific information of [a] passage may be deleted by the simple fact that its global information has already been expressed in the text by the proposition that also serves as a macro-proposition" (van Dijk, 1977, p. 12). In the given data set the identification of which part of the discourse sample contains this 'global information', i.e. macro-proposition, could be addressed easily – as mentioned above, each thread heading ought to introduce a "new topic" (Help:Using Talk Pages, Wikipedia, 2016) and this topic ought to reflect thread content. Thus, in this study thread headings were identified as macro-propositions, i.e. topics.

However, reviewing the data set showed that in some instances (and irrespective of the connected Wikipedia policy cited above) thread headings do *not* give an insight into the topic a contributor wishes to discuss, for example the thread heading "WTF" (Talk:European Union/Archive 28, Wikipedia, 2015). In such cases, another macro-rule could be applied – 'construction': even though not always readily apparent on the text surface, a macro-proposition can be realised by numerous micro-propositions, i.e. propositions on a sentential level. In principle, construction means that when faced with "a sequence of propositions, replace it by a proposition that is entailed by the joint set of propositions of the sequence" (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983, p. 190). An excerpt from a thread entitled "WTF" ought to illustrate how this macro-rule is applicable:

> Editor 1: "I think there's a mistake at largest cities. Berlin is much bigger than Paris"
> Editor 2: "And London only has about 7500 inhabitants."
> Editor 3: "Is there even a need to put the two largest cities, rather than simply the largest city?" (Talk:European Union/Archive 28, Wikipedia, 2015)

Common to these sentences that each contain a different (micro-)proposition is the topic '(largest) cities in the EU'. Thus, this was identified as the overarching macro-proposition. Generally then, if the thread heading did not provide adequate information on the topic of discussion in a thread, the individual propositions constituting the thread were read and constructed into a macro-proposition, which was aided by the Wikipedia policy mandating that threads have a strong topic focus. Therefore, the micro-propositions indeed address the same topic throughout each thread.

To sum up, I applied the macro-rule 'integration' where possible. 'Construction' was drawn upon when the thread headings gave no clear indication of topic focus. Although determining 'aboutness' might still be a contested area in a general sense, this discussion shows that my data set is perfectly suited to the application of van Dijk's theory because: a) there are guidelines concerning topic adherence and b) these guidelines are enforced by the Wikipedia community.

Another important point, especially concerning the grouping of threads, is that macro-propositions are hierarchically structured (Kintsch, 2002, p. 158). That is, a discourse sample can potentially be summarised by one overarching macro-proposition. However, it is of course also possible to keep to a lower level of condensation, e.g. identifying the macro-proposition of each paragraph. On the whole then, the question arises which level of macro-proposition this analysis aims to achieve. As can be seen above, the initial goal was to identify the macro-proposition of each thread. In a second

step, these macro-propositions were then again grouped together to arrive at several superordinate macro-propositions given throughout the data.

The decision to go beyond the level of categorising each thread into a topic was based on three considerations. First, the threads are relatively short in many cases (e.g. "History of the EU" at 87 words or "sui generis" at 31 words). Second, with 971 threads it is impractical if not impossible to discuss each thread as each addressing one individual topic. Lastly and most importantly, the nature of the data invites the grouping of threads into macro-propositions through a process of 'construction'. In fact, the same topics were raised *repeatedly* throughout the years, so it was possible to cluster the threads around several controversial issues connected to the EU. To give an example, Table 2 lists a number of threads that are subsumed under the macro-proposition "What is the EU?" and illustrates how closely related the threads are in thematic focus:

Table 2 Sample threads "What is the EU"

Thread	Year
sui generis	2001-2002
Applying Country template	2003
Country?	2004
Federal?	2004
Country?	2004-2005
Confederation?	2004
Sui generis	2005
Comparison with other blocs/countries	2005-2006

This macro-proposition deals with the nature of the EU – with the question of whether the EU is a country, a union, a federation, a sui generis, etc. Table 2 also illustrates that Wikipedians began new threads addressing the same topic repeatedly on the TP, e.g. whether the EU is a 'sui generis', a novel, hitherto unknown type of entity (in 2001-2002 and 2005), or whether it is a country (2003, 2004, 2004-2005). Generally, this repeated focus on similar issues allowed me to 'construct' macro-propositions beyond the level of individual threads.

Figure 14 gives an overview of the topic distribution of the TP discussion and section 4.2.3 briefly discusses the contents of each topic. This addresses my research question pertaining to which aspects of the EU the Wikipedia community discusses on the TP.
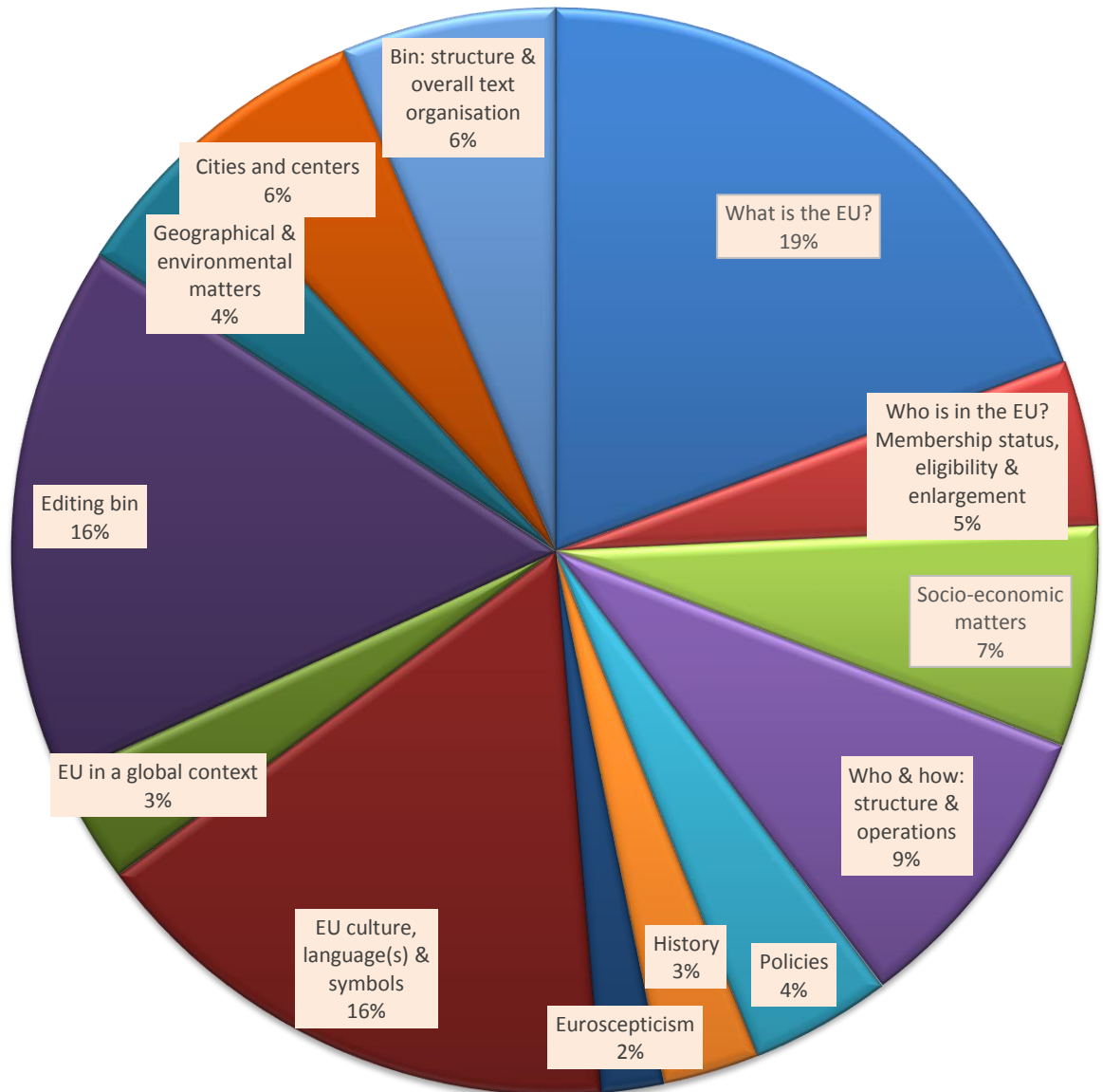
Figure 14 Topic distribution

After I had grouped all threads into topics they cluster around, I compiled .txt files of each topic. That is, each topic constitutes one subcorpus, with each of these corpora having retained the form and tagging discussed in 4.2.1. The decision to form subcorpora was taken since examining smaller chunks of data separated by thematic focus allows a more fine-grained investigation of how particular topics were negotiated.

4.2.3 The Topic Clusters

Before discussing further methods of analysis and presenting an analysis of three topic clusters, I would like to outline, briefly, the content of each cluster.

1, What is the EU?

2, Membership status, eligibility and enlargement

3, Socio-economic matters

4, Who and how: structure and operational matters

5, EU policies

6, The history of the EU

7, Euroscepticism

8, EU culture, language(s) and symbols

9, The EU in a global context

10, Editing bin

11, Geographical and environmental matters

12, Cities and centres

13, Bin: structure & overall text organisation

Cluster 1: What is the EU?

This topic cluster deals with controversies concerning the nature of the EU. Wikipedians discuss how to define the EU in terms of the type of institution they perceive it to be. In 126 threads consisting of 118,175 tokens, the Wikipedia editors draw on various known concepts such as country and confederation, for example in threads such as "Country?", "Confederation?" and "What the hell is it?". However, they also entertain the notion that the EU cannot be described in terms of existing concepts of institutions but requires a definition as a unique and hitherto unknown type of entity in threads such as "sui generis" and "sui generis supernationalism".

Cluster 2: Membership status, eligibility and enlargement

In this cluster, consisting of 89 threads and 30,172 tokens, Wikipedians focus on who is part of the EU. The community discusses which nations are (not) EU members and how changes in a country's policies might affect EU membership, e.g. in the thread 'Scotland', where the Scottish referendum's effect on the country's EU membership is debated. The community also addresses which countries are or should be eligible for membership in the EU, for example in the thread "Extra paragraph about accession of Turkey". Wikipedians

also debate the blurred lines of EU membership, for example, the issue of whether former colonies and current territories should be considered part of the EU, one instance is the thread "Question about African country under France".

Cluster 3: Socioeconomic matters

In 104 threads with 40,221 tokens, the Wikipedia community deals with issues such as whether to consider the EU one united market and, thus, calculate the GDP for the EU as a whole, for example in "Economic figures". Furthermore, this topic cluster addresses regional difference in wealth and income of EU citizens, e.g. in "Regional development ref". Wikipedians also address how the single market is affected by the four EU freedoms (free movement of capital, services, goods and workers within the EU (European Policy Centre, 2016)), for instance in "Some problems in single market section". Lastly, this cluster also contains discussions on how economic success can be calculated, e.g. "GDP figures".

Cluster 4: Who and how: structure and operational matters

This cluster consists of 77 threads and 54,353 tokens. Here, the community grapples with who runs the EU and how this is done. Posters discuss the different sub-institutions of the EU, what their tasks are and even where they are located, for example, in threads such as "institutions of the EU" and "EU administrative structure". Furthermore, EU politicians are discussed in the sense of whether individuals and, if yes, which individuals ought to be mentioned in the Wikipedia article, e.g. in "Barroso" and "Klaus or Topolánek".

Cluster 5: EU policies

This small cluster comprises 25,675 tokens and 41 threads. Wikipedians consider unclear aspects of EU policies, e.g. in the threads "Agriculture" and "Energy" and "right to reside".

Cluster 6: The history of the EU

The cluster is formed by 33 threads with 17,426 tokens. Here, the Wikipedia community debates the origins of the EU, its potential predecessors and motivations behind the establishment of the EU, e.g. in the thread "The EU -- A 'German Ploy'?"

Cluster 7: Euroscepticism

In this cluster of 16 threads and 11,454 tokens, the posters debate whether a Euroscepticism section should be part of the Wikipedia article, that is, whether criticism of the institution ought to be provided in the article, e.g. "Scepticism section??" and one thread with over

4000 tokens "Criticism of the EU". The focus in this cluster is actually partially on Wikipedia policy, i.e. whether the Neutral Point of View mandates a Euroscepticism section in the article.

Cluster 8: EU culture, language(s) and symbols

127 threads and 99,105 tokens make up this topic cluster. Arguably, this cluster constitutes the broadest corpus in terms of issues debated: first, the Wikipedia community repeatedly addresses whether there is a coherent European or an EU culture, e.g. "Culture section". Second, Wikipedians debate the languages of the EU, e.g. "Lingua franca". Finally, different potential symbols of the EU are debated, e.g. "EU anthem".

Cluster 9: The EU in a global context

This cluster consists of 20,250 tokens and 34 threads. It deals with the role of the EU in the world (e.g. "G8 and UN representation") and the relationship between the EU as a globally operating institution and the rest of the world/other global players ("Foreign relations"). It also addresses the global significance of the EU, e.g. in the thread "Emerging superpower".

Cluster 10: Editing bin

The second-largest cluster (97,700 tokens, 207 threads) deals with issues the Wikipedia talk pages were designed for originally, namely purely editing or even merely copy-editing issues, such as issues with hyperlinks ("external link to Europedia") and problems with computers/browsers ("Bugs" and "NPOV Tag is stuck on page?"). It also addresses questions concerning copyright violations ("Images with copyright") or which maps are most accessible and aesthetically pleasing ("Maps in relations articles"). Another major aspect of this cluster are discussions about article quality and whether the article could be considered a Good Article or even a Featured Article under Wikipedia guidelines (Wikipedia:Featured articles, Wikipedia, 2016; Wikipedia:Good article, Wikipedia, 2016) (e.g. "FA", "GA Review"). A part of this cluster is dedicated to edit-wars, that is, debates among contributors that have devolved into lengthy arguments about communicative and editing behaviour, for instance "User:[anonymised]". Connected to this, discussions of whether the article ought to be protected in some form constitute part of this cluster, e.g. the thread "Permanent semi protection".

Cluster 11: Geographical and environmental matters

With 23,900 tokens and a thread count of 39, this is another relatively small topic cluster. Its focus is to determine whether Europe as a continent and the EU as an institution are identical (e.g. "Primarily in Europe?"), whether certain EU countries are located in Europe or not (e.g. "Dispute: Cyprus") and what the climate and environment of the EU area are like ("Biodiversity").

Cluster 12: Cities and centres

This topic cluster comprises 34,122 tokens and 41 threads. It debates if the EU has a capital city and, what the most important cities of the EU are. Thus, this cluster also focuses on discussions of how an 'important' city is defined, for example by size or population or by EU institutions being located in particular cities. Threads that exemplify this are "Brussels", "EU headquarters" and "Largest city".

Cluster 13: Bin: structure & overall text organisation

38,878 tokens in 37 threads focus on structural issues pertaining to the article with one of the longest threads of more than 5,000 tokens entitled 'Structure in light of recent edits'. Among others, the selection of pictures and photographs that should complement the article and, specifically, where in the article these should be placed, is debated repeatedly (e.g. "Mendelson image"). Generally, this topic cluster contains a large portion of edit warring with various editors expressing dissatisfaction with the whole structure of the Wikipedia article (e.g. "Delisting as Good Article").

　　　Still, this cluster is to be treated as separate from the 'edit bin' since issues connected to Wikipedia article structure give an insight into Wikipedians' view of the EU, e.g. in the thread 'structural change' a Wikipedian proposes to merge "'candidate countries' […] with 'members', rather than international relations". This structural change actually suggests a different status for EU membership candidate countries than previously given.

Following this overview of topic clusters, section 4.3 details the methods of data analysis. First, it gives an insight into Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies and explains how corpus linguistic tools and purely qualitative means of textual analysis are combined. It explains

corpus linguistic tools and discusses the means of textual analysis used to complement the corpus linguistic perspective on the data.

4.3   Methods of Data Analysis – a Corpus-Assisted Approach

Taking a corpus linguistic (CL) approach as part of a CDS project might overcome some of the profound criticism levelled against the field, namely that samples often lack representativeness and are cherry-picked to support the researcher's political agenda (Mautner, 2009, p. 35). Indeed, CL tools allow me to take into account *all* data available (with the limitations discussed in 0). Still, I would like to underscore that the notion that a CL approach is generally more objective than studies focusing on qualitative linguistic analysis is flawed – it is still a human researcher who decides how to address an issue, which items to focus on and how to interpret findings. Pointing to the subjective elements of (any) research is particularly important in this context since traditional CL is associated with quantitative data analysis that, seemingly, permits more 'objectivity' than qualitative analyses (Baker et al., 2008, p. 297, 2008, p. 277; Partington, 2010, p. 89).

With regard to different realizations of CL situated between the poles of quantitative and qualitative study, my CL investigation decidedly veers towards the qualitative end of the spectrum. While quantitative CL attempts to "classify features, count them and even construct more complex statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed" (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 76), qualitative CL can "offer a rich and detailed perspective on the data" and "the aim is complete detailed description" (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 76). McEnery and Wilson further state that qualitative corpus analysis can provide a deeper and more varied understanding of the complexities of human language and other social phenomena (2001, pp. 76–77). It is precisely such a comprehensive and multifaceted examination that is required to adequately address my research questions concerning the Wikipedia community's treatment of the EU.

Still, Hunston's view that quantitative measures of analysis can contribute a valuable element to qualitative CL stands – observing recurring structures and identifying patterns add to my addressing my research questions (2007, p. 28). Baker, while cautioning against the widespread misconception that CL is a purely quantitative methodology, also stresses the importance of quantifying tools to qualitatively-oriented corpus-assisted discourse investigations. He points out that frequency lists, in particular, present a viable entry point into corpus examination (Baker, 2006, p. 47).

Partington succinctly summarises a discourse-oriented approach to corpora – in discussing Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), he explains that it combines the

> so-called *quantitative* approach, that is, statistical overviews of large amounts of the discourse in question […] with the more *qualitative* approach typical of discourse analysis (that is, the close, detailed analysis of particular stretches of discourse […]) [original italics] (Partington, 2010, p. 89)

Indeed, my project meets this description – it draws on quantitative corpus tools, e.g. word frequency lists and collocation calculation, but always views items as embedded in co-text, that is, always takes a qualitative view on data.

Furthermore, this study takes a corpus-*driven* approach, which means that the corpora are examined without any a-priori hypotheses regarding possible findings. The data are the source informing any conclusions (although an element of unconscious bias cannot be fully eliminated) (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, p. 84). However, this does not imply that the corpus is examined without any limitations set before beginning the examination – indeed, my investigative attention is centred on particular search terms, which aim to yield insights concerning my research questions.

While Baker et al. draw on world knowledge to select specific search terms for their corpus-driven study in advance (2008, p. 277), Partington recommends a-priori engagement with the data to do so (2010, p. 90). Mautner expands on this suggestion of a-priori engagement with the data and proposes to begin a corpus examination

> with a close reading of selected texts in the corpus, identify salient items and patterns and then search both the whole corpus and any reference corpora we may be using, to see how the item or pattern 'behaves' (Mautner, 2009, p. 35)

I combine both views to select search items. Based on world knowledge, I can assume that 'eu', 'european union' and 'union' deserve attention. Interestingly, my reading of the data also showed repeated use of 'ue' in reference to the EU.[21] Thus, in order to shed light on the Wikipedia community's treatment of the European Union, I pay particular attention to the terms 'eu', 'ue', 'union' and 'european union'.

4.3.1   Combining Corpus Linguistics and Other Analytical Tools

Qualitatively-oriented corpus-assisted approaches can take many different shapes, e.g. data can be examined purely by drawing on corpus linguistic tools but home in on concordance lines to recognise patterns of usage without losing the understanding of how an item is

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[21] This might be because UE is the Spanish acronym for the institution or it might be a common typographic error.

embedded in co-text (Baker, 2006). By comparison, Baker et al. (2008) demonstrate the benefits of combining such an approach to corpus analysis with the analysis of longer text extracts.

The methodological triangulation applied in this thesis consists of a three-forked approach: it incorporates a CL approach *and* presents analyses of stretches of text. What is more, I also draw on additional analytical tools *during* the corpus-assisted examination of data (see Table 3).

Table 3 Elements of analysis

data	type of examination
subcorpus X	corpus tools, e.g. collocations, concordances
concordance lines of subcorpus X	other analytical tools (argumentation analysis, aspects of SFG)
selected extracts of subcorpus X	other analytical tools (argumentation analysis, aspects of SFG)

To briefly explain this choice to combine a CL perspective with other qualitative tools of text analysis: Ultimately, corpus tools only serve to rearrange data to facilitate the recognition of patterns the analyst then attempts to make sense of. While corpus tools alone already facilitate the recognition of "non-obvious meanings" (Partington, 2010, p. 88), drawing on additional means of textual analysis aid in the interpretation of these patterns and might thus elevate the overall *Erkenntniswert* and allow an insight into the data potentially overlooked otherwise.

The corpus-assisted approach to the data provides an entry point to choosing text extracts for in-depth analysis. That is, extracts of the corpora are examined by expanding concordance lines to a degree that includes entire postings and even threads. One option to select data for this extended analysis is randomisation by some means, e.g. average speaker turn/token ratio per thread could be used to choose data for analysis. However, while this method of data selection certainly prevents cherry-picking, it might not lead to the most relevant data. 'Relevant' here means language material that reflects aspects of Wikipedians' treatment of the EU – I cannot ensure this is the case by choosing a randomised means of data selection. I can, however, identify the most salient aspects via my corpus-assisted approach. I then progress from this bird's eye view on the data and

zoom in and expand the concordance view to a degree that includes whole postings or even threads.

The decision to take this non-random approach is supported by two interconnected factors. First, all my corpora are small, which makes it feasible to thoroughly examine all concordance lines pertaining to a search item or collocation. Based on this comprehensive understanding of all data, I can make a well-founded choice of which lines[22] to expand for in-depth textual analysis. Second and connected to this, the topic range of each of my corpora is densely focused and my examination quickly homes in on a relatively narrow range of items that, for instance, collocate with my search terms. This, in addition to the small size of my corpora, enables a qualitatively-oriented corpus examination, which, in turn, permits the identification of stretches of data for more fine-grained textual analysis.

The following gives an overview of the analytical tools applied. First, in section 4.3.2, corpus linguistic tools will be discussed. This is followed by a brief discussion of additional tools of textual analysis in 4.3.3.

4.3.2   Corpus Linguistic Tools

As mentioned above, a concordance line shows the occurrences of a search item in its co-text (Baker, 2006, p. 71). A list of concordance lines can be sorted alphabetically on several levels, e.g. one word to the left of the node word (Hunston, 2002, p. 39). In addition, concordance lines can be expanded to include more or less co-text left and right to the node word – following Partington's recommendations, I take a wide-angle view quasi "equivalent to text extracts", that is, I include a margin of at least 80 tokens on each side of the node to account for how precisely an item is embedded in co-text (Partington, Duguid, & Taylor, 2013, p. 18).

'Collocation' refers to statistically significant co-occurrence of items with one another (Baker, 2006, p. 96) and a collocation calculation can be manually adjusted to take into account a wider or narrower range of items left and right to the node item, here a span of five items to the left and to the right is used (Anthony, 2015). For the collocation calculation, I use t-score where the "probability of the co-occurrence of two specific words [i.e. expected co-occurrence] in a random sequence of words is used as the null hypothesis" (NetAdvance Inc 2015). By calculating "absolute frequency of joint occurrence of node and collocate" (Stubbs, 1995, p. 34), "t-score will be a lot more likely to highlight

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[22] i.e. concordance lines

frequently recurring items […] strongly associated with the node" (Sánchez Martínez, p. 766). In contrast, for example, the Mutual Information (MI) value "can become abnormally large if each word's frequency of independent occurrence is also sufficiently small" (NetAdvance Inc 2015). This means that, especially when faced with a small corpus where certain lexical items occur relatively rarely, MI is problematic since items that co-occur only once or twice might still score a high MI value. In terms of degree of significance, I follow Stubbs recommendation by setting the t-score cut-off point at 2.0 (Stubbs, 1995, p. 34).

In accordance with Baker et al., this corpus linguistic analysis starts with "frequencies and emerging statistically significant lexical patterns" in the corpora involving the pre-identified items "and the close examination of their concordances" (Baker et al., 2008, p. 277), e.g. I examine the concordance lines of 'eu' and attempt to identify patterns of usage. In addition, I calculate the collocations of this item and examine the concordance lines of top collocates (above cut-off point 2.0) to arrive at an understanding not merely about which items co-occur with 'eu' but to observe the form these co-occurrences take, e.g. if there are patterns, such as 'eu' and 'country' co-occurring as 'the EU is not a country'.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, using the concordance software AntConc for my corpus examination (Anthony, 2015), I set the programme to treat all data as lower case data in order to overcome potential orthographic variation in that regard. Token definition is set to exclude the apostrophe as token separator since doing so would lead to the separate count of 'EU' and the informal contraction of 'EU has' or the possessive: 'EU's'.

4.3.3   Additional Tools of Textual Analysis

The qualitative analytical tools used here have long since been associated with CDS: aspects of systemic functional grammar (SFG) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) and argumentation analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Toulmin, 2003; van Eemeren & Garssen, 2012) are the main analytical instruments taken from the metaphorical analytical toolkit of textual analysis. This selection of analytical instruments is data-driven, i.e. faced with my data I drew on the tools helpful to interpreting the data.[23] This section gives an overview of the main instruments used in this context.

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[23] While there is a subjective element to these choices, my discussion of the selected tools also contains why each analytical instrument is particularly helpful in the context of Wikipedia TP data.

Argumentation analysis

For the purpose of textual examination via argumentation analysis, Toulmin's basic model of argument structure (Toulmin, 2003) has proven an invaluable and insightful means of investigation. This is because Wikipedia TPs consist of conversations aiming to build consensus amongst Wikipedians. Wikipedians consistently argue for or against issues connected to the EU. Hence, an examination of what Wikipedians argue for and how they do so allows an understanding into different conceptions of the EU.

Toulmin identifies three elements that are necessary for a well-formed argument – claim, data and warrant – but also emphasises that there is no clear form-function relationship, that is, the linguistic realisation of different parts of arguments may vary (Toulmin, 2003, pp. 87–88). Toulmin defines claim (C) as the assertion a party, here a Wikipedian, attempts to make and the element a Wikipedian attempts to convince their interlocutors of (2003, pp. 88–90). By comparison, ground, also called data (D), is the "foundation upon which [a] claim is based". Put in other words, data are the pieces of information – the fact or facts – the claim builds on and follows from (Toulmin, 2003, pp. 90–91).

In addition to these two components of an argument, the warrant (W) is crucial for any functioning argument since it establishes a connection between C and D. That is, it bridges the facts presented as basis to the claim and the claim itself (Toulmin, 2003, p. 91). However, as Toulmin emphasises, warrants often remain unstated and leaving this omission for interlocutors to infer and fill can, of course, be used to hide that the connection between data and claim is tenuous or questionable (Toulmin, 2003, p. 91). For the operationalisation of his model, Toulmin also highlights that since there is no clear form-function relationship, the distinction between data, warrant and claim, especially between data and warrant, is not absolute but is subject to an analyst's interpretation (Kienpointner, 2018, p. 233; Toulmin, 2003, p. 87, 92). Figure 15 gives an overview of how Toulmin's three basic elements of argumentative patterns can be visualised:[24]

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[24] This model can be complemented by additional elements such as backing and qualifier. While a discussion of these goes beyond the scope of this section, these elements are explained as drawn upon in chapters 5-7.

D (data or ground) ────────────┬──────────────────────▶ So C (claim)
                               │
                          W (warrant)
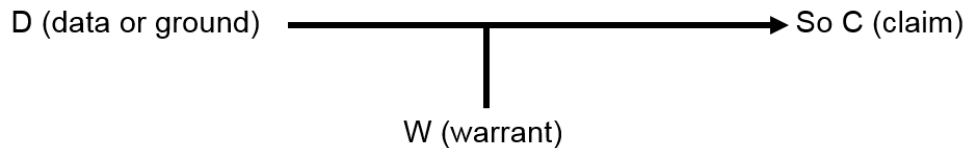
Figure 15 Structure of arguments (Toulmin, 2003, p. 92, 94)

Another aspect worth noting in the context of this thesis is interlocutors' reactions to an argument. Apart from accepting the argument as valid, they may attempt to refute a claim by focusing on different parts of the above argumentative pattern. Not only could they challenge the claim by casting doubt on the data, but they could also question the validity of the warrant (Toulmin, 2003, pp. 91–92). For instance, the argument in Figure 16 can be challenged by questioning whether Raj was born in Austria, i.e. the data, but also by calling into question, for instance, if Austria is indeed a member of the EU or if place of birth actually determines citizenship, i.e. the warrant.

D: Raj was born in Austria ─────────┬──────────────▶ C: Raj is an EU citizen
                                    │
                                    W:
                 1, Austria is part of the EU
            2, Austrian citizenship entails EU citizenship
        3, place of birth (Austria) makes Raj an Austrian citizen
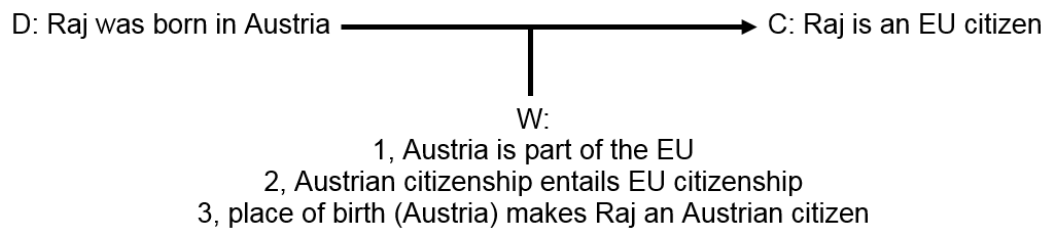
Figure 16 Sample argument

Considering the fact that claims can be vulnerable to such challenges, there are numerous argumentation strategies that either aim to elevate an argument's (apparent) validity or discredit the opponent's position.

In the context of this thesis, a number of strategies are worth mentioning. First, argumentum ad verecundiam is an appeal to authority that is valid as long as the cited authority is indeed a qualified source in the given context (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 72). Thus, when faced with an appeal to authority it is important to consider the reliability of the cited authority. Another argumentative strategy that can be used fallaciously is shifting the burden of proof, that is, one forces the opponent to justify their position by presenting support such as data and/or warrant rather than doing so oneself (van Eemeren, Garssen, & Meuffels, 2012, p. 334). By comparison, an argumentum ad populum attempts to persuade by citing the 'masses' or at least a relevant part of the masses, as taking a particular position and thereby eliciting the impression that the claim must be true and right

(Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 72). A strawman argument is understood as the misrepresentation of an opponents' position in order to then proceed to attack this position and thereby challenge the opponent's argument (Talisse & Aikin, 2006, p. 345). Another argumentative fallacy is an argumentum ad lapidem, that is, an opponent's argument is dismissed as absurd without any evidence why it is indeed absurd (Rowlands, 2016, p. 103). Finally, an ad hominem argument is a personal attack of the opposing party rather than their argument (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 72)

Systemic Functional Grammar (and metaphors)

With regard to systemic functional grammar (SFG), my investigation focuses on transitivity or, more specifically, on social actor representation (SAR) (van Leeuwen, 1996) and the process types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) these actors are involved in. This analytical focus addresses, in principle, the representation of "who did what to whom" (Thompson, 2004, p. 86). Understanding whether the Wikipedia community discusses the EU as an active player or as passively acted upon, whether the EU is actually even discussed in terms of action or maybe in the form of perception or condition – all of these aspects allow an insight into the Wikipedia community's conceptions of the EU.

Social actor representation (SAR) elucidates on the social actors drawn upon (or not) in textual practice and how they are represented (Koller, 2012, p. 23). However, it is also important to note that how SAR is realised linguistically can vary (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 32). In line with Reisigl and Wodak, the following brief discussion does not provide a comprehensive treatment of van Leeuwen's systematisation of SAR but is limited to the aspects of SAR focused on in the data examination (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 46).

On the whole, four elements receive particular attention in my examination of SAR in my data set. First, who is *included* or *excluded*, i.e. who is represented in the discourse material and who is not. Second, I examine who is depicted as *active force* and who is not. Third, I am mindful of how *specific* or *genericised* references to social actors are. Fourth, I pay attention to *metonymic references* as social actors and who these metonymies possibly refer to.

Concerning the first element, the question is which actors are included and excluded in the text. Regarding exclusion, van Leeuwen distinguishes between suppression and backgrounding. The former refers to absence of a social actor without a trace in the text, i.e. the reader cannot retrieve any information on this from the text alone. In contrast,

backgrounding means that the social actor can be assumed to be known or is referred to as some point in the text and thus can be traced (van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 38–39).

With regard to the second aspect, one can inquire about the social actors' roles, that is, are they the 'doers' or are they the ones something is 'done to', i.e. activation and passivation (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 43). Activation and passivation refer to "sociological agency" (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 32) – this category addresses the extent to which a participant is the "active, dynamic force in an activity" or passively undergoing an activity and being "at the receiving end of it" (van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 43–45). It is important to underscore that this form of semantic activation and passivation can, but does not have to, coincide with grammatical passive and active voice (Darics & Koller, forthcoming, pp. 5–6; van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 43).

Van Leeuwen's genericisation versus specification refers to a co-text-dependent continuum ranging from references to identifiable individuals (specification) to generic class or group (genericisation). Genericisation, in particular, is a referencing strategy used in my data and can be realised by various means, e.g. plural reference without article (van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 46–48), for example 'Europeans are happy to vote'.

The fourth aspect I pay particular attention to in the context of this study is van Leeuwen's objectivation, that is, social actors are "represented by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the activity they are represented as being engaged in. In other words, objectivation is realised by metonymical reference" (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 59). While Reisigl and Wodak identify instances of 'Austria' as in "Austria is bringing in […]" as spatialisation, i.e. a subcategory of objectivation (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 54), I cannot do so in the context of the EU. This is because the Wikipedia community actually questions whether the EU is even a 'space' and, if so, if its borders can be clearly defined (e.g. see concordance lines seven and eight in Table 16: "the Union isn't a country with a well-defined culture and geography. It's a set of political and legal structures" and cluster eleven 'Geographical and environmental matters'). This is why, in contrast to the seemingly comparable instance given in Reisigl and Wodak's data, I still refer to metonymic references in the form of e.g. 'the EU deports […]' as objectivations.

The examination of process types aims to identify 'what' is done. Halliday and Matthiessen discuss a variety of different processes and identify different participants involved in these (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 213–309). Due to spatial limitations

I merely provide an overview of the different processes and then explain the one most notable in the context of this thesis.

Halliday and Matthiessen find that material, mental and relational processes are the most common ones used in English (2004, p. 215). As Figure 17 indicates, material processes are ones of action – they involve an actor but might also involve a goal and a beneficiary who is recipient of the action – the latter two can but need not be social actors in the sense of referring to live beings (cf. van Leeuwen's beneficialised versus subjected passivated social actor (1996, pp. 43–45)). By comparison, mental processes refer to aspects of perception, involve a sensor and a phenomenon and, notably, can involve a projection. This projection gives the content of mental processes that focus on thinking and perceiving (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 253–254). To give an example, 'He believes that the EU is a country' – here the mental process 'to believe' is directed at the projection 'EU' connected to 'country' in form of a relational process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 517–519).

Process type	Core meaning	Participants
material	'doing', 'happening'	Actor (Goal) (Scope) (Beneficiary)
mental:	'sensing':	Senser, Phenomenon
perception	'perceiving'	
cognition	'thinking'	
emotion	'feeling'	
desideration	'wanting'	
relational:	'being and having':	
attributive	'attributing'	Carrier, Attribute
identifying	'identifying'	Value, Token/Identified, Identifier
verbal	'saying'	Sayer (Receiver) (Verbiage) (Target)
behavioural	'behaving'	Behaver (Behaviour)
existential	'existing'	Existent

Figure 17 Process types (Thompson, 2004, p. 108)

Relational processes have proven particularly noteworthy in the context of the given data set. Such processes "serve to characterize and to identify" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 259). Non-reversible intensive attributive relational processes, such as "the EU is a confederation" are particularly recurrent in my data (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 266). There are several subcategories to relational clauses (see Table 4) – the most notable one in the context of this study is the relational process where a "nominal group

functioning as Attribute [which] construes a class of thing and is typically indefinite: it has either an adjective or a common noun as Head and, if appropriate, an indefinite article" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 268), e.g. 'the EU is a country'.

Table 4 Categories of relational processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 265)

	(i) Attributive '*a* is an attribute of *x*'	(ii) Identifying '*a* is the identity of *x*'
(1) intensive '*x* is *a*'	Sarah is wise	Sarah is the leader; the leader is Sarah
(2) possessive '*x* has *a*'	Peter has a piano	the piano is Peter's; Peter's is the piano

A limitation of this categorisation of process types is the lack of accounting for metaphoric uses of language, e.g. the conduit metaphor 'she gave me an idea' would be treated as a material process within this framework but does not address the metaphoric nature of the action referred to.

This leads to a last analytical aspect that ought to be mentioned briefly – metaphors, i.e. the idea that one concept is used to describe another. The tenor is the aspect of the world that is actually referred to, whereas the vehicle is the field that is drawn upon to describe the tenor. In accordance with Lakoff and Johnson, ontological metaphors describe concepts in tangible terms, i.e. concrete objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 25–30), e.g. sovereignty (tenor) as a liquid (vehicle) that can be pooled.

Chapters 5 to 7 present the main findings of my data analyses. To do so, I synthesise my findings achieved via corpus and other tools of textual analysis to present a discussion of how the Wikipedia community makes sense of the EU and how they discursively construct/represent the EU. In connection with the fact that the following chapters present the *discussion* of my data analyses, it is crucial to point out that I do not refer to all tools mentioned above in equal measure in each chapter. This is because the nature of my corpora varies and, therefore, the results yielded by the different means of analyses vary in terms of insight and *Erkentniswert*.

4.4 Choosing Subcorpora for Analysis

Chapters 5 to 7 present the discussion of three topic corpora, namely cluster one "What is the EU?", cluster eight "EU culture, language(s) and symbols" and cluster six "The history of the EU". These were chosen for fine-grained analysis for different reasons.

The subcorpus "What is the EU" was selected for analysis since it addresses the central question of how to characterise the EU. Apart from dealing with the most fundamental issue of what the EU as an institution actually is, this is also the largest subcorpus, i.e. an examination of this topic cluster allows an insight into a sizable set of data.

"EU culture, language(s) and symbols" is analysed because, first, it complements the Wikipedians' conceptualisation of the EU as a particular type of institution (see chapter 5). This subcorpus adds how the Wikipedia community makes sense of the EU as a *cultural* body, as a body that is unified or fragmented on the basis of shared aspects of what can be considered 'cultural'. Second, this topic cluster is the second largest in size.

Last, cluster six on the history of the EU is examined. This subcorpus allows an insight into the Wikipedia community's attempt to arrive at an understanding regarding the EU's history. The reason for my selecting this corpus for analysis is the importance of historicisation – historicisation has been found crucial to creating a coherent institutional identity, for instance, Martin and later Delanty highlight that creating and negotiating a collective identity includes elaboration on its past, often including a "myth of origin" (Delanty, 2009, p. 36; Martin, 2010, pp. 5–8). Wodak also stresses the significance of historical narratives in the context of her discussion of national identity: "identity is conveyed to others in the form of a narrative, and in this process it is possible […] to rearrange and to reinterpret past events" (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2009, p. 14). Indeed, the EU itself devotes a considerable amount of space to giving its version of its history on the institution's website (European Union, 2017), i.e. the institution presents a particular narrative of its development and thereby constructs a particular version of itself.[25] All in all then, although this corpus is relatively small, the analysis of the Wikipedia community's debates about the EU's history and its historical narrative adds an important component to my examination.

The following three chapters present discussions of my analyses of the topic clusters 'What is the EU?', 'EU culture, language(s) and symbols' and 'The History of the EU'.

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[25] This narrative might also serve to legitimise the EU's existence, e.g. by presenting the EU as a peace-building project its continued existence might be validated (Wodak and Weiss (2005, p. 131 "Legitimization through idea"); also refer to Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) for more on legitimisation through history).

5   Data Discussion – What is the EU?

The corpus 'What is the EU?' comprises 19 per cent of all TP data and consists of 118,175 tokens in 126 threads. The corpus' frequency ranking brings up a reference to the institution 'eu' at rank eleven with approximately 1,650 occurrences (see Appendix A). Since 'european union' only occurs 105 times[26] and 'ue' only five times, my examination focuses on 'eu'.

The list of collocates (see Table 5) of 'eu' already gives an inkling of what the Wikipedia community discusses in this context.

Table 5 Collocates of 'eu'

1	42.34393	the
2	24.41684	is
3	21.74470	a
4	20.60124	of
5	16.75491	and
6	16.58504	to
7	15.68931	that
8	14.98023	not
9	14.77206	in
10	13.46453	as

While top collocations are usually grammatical items due to their omnipresence in text, the uses of 'is' (rank 2) and 'not' (rank 8) in this corpus are noteworthy. The concordance lines of 'is' and 'eu' show that 363 of 639 co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'is' are statements that describe the nature of the EU – what the *EU is*. This happens in form of intensive attributive relational processes or, to a lesser degree, passivated mental processes where the EU is perceived/understood in certain ways by a suppressed social actor/sensor. To give an example of the former: "the EU is a federal state in its infancy" and of the latter: "the EU is seen worldwide primarily as a […]".

The Wikipedia community also addresses what the *EU is not:* 110 of 247 co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'not' actually refer to what the EU is not. The most common realisation consists of negated intensive attributive relational processes regarding what the *EU is not*: "EU is not a country" – there are 72 occurrences of such or related statements including ones with insertions of intensifying adverbs or adjective-adverb combinations such as "EU is most definitely not a federation." The remaining 38 instances of 'what the

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[26] excluding references that also contain 'eu' (e.g. "The European Union (EU) is") or references to an archive (e.g. "Talk: European Union/Archive 22#")

EU is not' take two forms, for instance, Wikipedians opposing the use of a certain label for the EU: "we should not state that the EU is a sovereign unitary state" or grammatical passivisations with suppressed or backgrounded actor, such as "EU is not normally defined as a confederation".

The Wikipedia community puts forth numerous ideas of what the EU is (not) and how to capture the nature of the EU in the article 'European Union'. Section 5.1 addresses Wikipedians' debates concerning this issue in some detail.

5.1 "The EU is …" – Quibbling over Words?

5.1.1 The EU as Country

One heavily-debated issue is whether the EU can be described as a country or not. This is already apparent from 'country' collocating with 'eu' at a t-score of 7.6 (rank 29 in the collocation list of 'eu').[27] Exploring the concordance lines of 'country' and 'eu' more closely shows that 53 of 61 lines actually refer to the debate whether the EU is a country or not (see Table 6).

In this context it is also important to point out that merely citing the number of concordance lines distorts the picture of prominence of occurrence to a degree. This is because two or more lines can be part of one single posting, e.g. lines 56 and 37 in Table 6: "If it were a *country the EU* would come first in GDP. It is true that The *EU is not a country*" [italics added]. Thus, it is worth noting that the given 53 lines are actually part of 42 postings.

Table 6 Concordance lines of 'eu' and 'country'

1	e in a number of ways doesn't make the	EU a country. As you rightly observe elsewhe
2	" This is NOT a relaunch of the "is the	EU a country or an organisation?" debate. I'm
3	ntioned anyway. Anyhow, I believe the	EU (a semi-country. Not a standard 'organisa
4	o understand the difference between the	EU and a sovereign country. The European U
5	er do not associate themselves with the	country and nation of the EU anywhere near as
6	pts to treat it as if this were a standard	country article. The EU doesn't have a culture
7	end article II A BBC poll including the	EU as a 'country' entity among others. Note th
8	It also says they have a page about the	EU because it is country like in some respects.
9	etimes coherent ravings concerning the	EU being a country (and the bestest one evar!).

[27] The plural 'countries' takes rank 47 in the collocation list – the co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'countries' show that such uses refer to specific (non-)member countries, e.g. "Twenty-one EU countries are members […]".

10	ystem which has the same effect. In the	EU case, if a country really doesn't like the ru
11	ost editors for this article are from an	EU country, and so have been exposed to the t
12	ountries and several institutions. If one	EU country held control of it, then it would be
13	2008 (UTC) So how can you define a	country?EU if you look at all things is a CO
14	ion blows up the infobox unnecessarily.	EU has country like characteristics; read the ar
15	the argument about the inclusion of the	EU in some country lists, please just say so. [a
16	our attention Once again the argument	EU is not a country is used to make a case aga
17	nt central government. The idea that the	EU is a 'country' would horrify most Europea
18	ies. Finally, no-one is implying that the	EU is a "country". By ranking the EU as an a
19	ulation? All of this acting as though the	EU is a country is very debatable. What counts
20	hat discussion does it conclude that the	EU is a country. If you're trying to reopen the
21	the article regarding whether or not the	EU is a country or not. [anonymised] (talk)
22	ny semi-intelligent person can claim the	EU is a country. But it clearly isn't, perhaps w
23	to do with the question of whether the	EU is a country or not. I made reference to the
24	this is not the same as declaring the	EU is a country or nation-state. But again, my
25	nuinely not bothered if people think the	EU is a country, nation or neither and I'm not t
26	07 (UTC) Sorry [anonymised] but the	EU is not a country so it does not and should n
27	s would help reinforce the point that the	EU is not (yet) a country in it's own right. G
28	king. Perhaps we need to stress that the	EU is not a country, does not have its own ec
29	rs are ok, but ranking is nonsense as the	EU is not a country and this would introduce a
30	) 20:00, 5 September 2008 (UTC) The	EU is not a country, nor does it have a unified
31	l leave you with a final message. THE	EU IS NOT A COUNTRY, IT IS AN ORG
32	e same. Military is a national thing, the	EU is not a country, hence we can, and should,
33	) 22:03, 31 December 2009 (UTC) The	EU is not a country. Full stop. [anonymised] (t
34	talk) 00:41, 1 January 2010 (UTC) The	EU is not a country and this article should def
35	much detail for the lede. Also since the	EU is not a country the history really does not
36	versies concern of many countries" The	EU is NOT a country. So it would need additi
37	come first in GDP. It is true that The	EU is not a country and therefore a "sui gener
38	Surprisingly, that may be because the	EU *is* "somehow almost" a country, but I ca
39	talk (en-2) 11:04, 26 April 2014 (UTC)	EU is not a country: True it is not described as
40	nymised] 14:49, 26 April 2014 (UTC)	EU is not country but it does not matter. Abso
41	tional government, but as things are the	EU isn't a country in the sense that its member
42	ting case by over-statement. While the	EU isn't a country, it does have a tendency to
43	ial about stating the simple fact that the	EU isn't a country. As for "recognised", that w
44	discussed before. GDP is determined at	country level. The EU is not a country, hence i
45	hengen area is a good idea, as these are	country-like elements of the EU, which clarifi
46	to do the EUs job for it by making the	EU look like a country. Instead concentrate on
47	tative. The only ones who are "forcing"	EU membership are the country's own politic
48	lk) 21:02, 3 July 2009 (UTC) I see the	EU more like a country. It's definitely not an
49	nd edit of yours: correct / support! The	EU must use some country like formats to iden
50	d larger. However, in the world the only	EU operate almost as a country – despite the fa

51	reign", confederation is not synonym of	country or sovereignty. Second: "ALL EU me
52	Russia, Brazil, Japan or any other major	country outside the EU have its supreme court
53	erning bodies do not qualify as that of a	country. So no, the EU lacks democratically ch
54	e level of a country (not even a federal	country), so no the EU does not have these ins
55	e EU is not anything like a nation or a	country. Stop pretending the EU is something i
56	o change or delete this part: If it were a	country the EU would come first in GDP. It is
57	re vast areas or countries ruled by one	country. The EU is a vast area run by 27 count
58	nonymised] 22:05, 11 Apr 2004 (UTC)	Country? The EU is not a country in that sove
59	e common currency and open borders.	EU this is not country, but this is (sure) confe
60	ould seem more appropriate to say the	EU was a country, rather than an economic a
61	and specifically because they think the	EU will become a country. We do not crystal b

The Wikipedia community is aware that the question 'EU – country or not?' has been a contentious aspect throughout the article's development – of the 42 individual postings that deal with country/not, there are several references to it merely as a topic of discussion, i.e. as metadiscursive comment: e.g. concordance line two: "[t]his is NOT a relaunch of the 'is the EU a country or an organisation?' debate" and concordance line 16 "[o]nce again the argument EU is not a country is used". In the former example, the contributor mentions 'relaunch', which indicates that the issue had been discussed before – a discussion this Wikipedian apparently does not wish to revisit. Line 16 is a one-turn thread where a Wikipedian gives a hyperlink to a similar discussion that took place on another Wikipedia site. On the whole, there are *37 individual postings* to 44 lines that either *support* or *reject* the conception of the EU as country.[28]

Table 7 Supporting/rejecting 'EU as country'

28 rejection postings/35cl	-	unsupported rejections	14 postings/15cl[29]
	-	based on sovereignty	7 postings/10cl
	-	based on lack of unity	3 postings/3cl
	-	not country, but: Wikipedia country formatting might work	2 postings/2cl
	-	future speculation	2 (+2 postings)/5cl[30]
9 support postings/9cl	-	strong support	1 posting/cl
	-	weak support	8 postings/cl

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[28] There might be more postings doing so, however, these 37 each contain co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'country', i.e. were found in the course of my corpus-assisted investigation.

[29] cl = concordance line(s)

[30] Posters sometimes draw on different strategies simultaneously, i.e. there are two postings referring to sovereignty that also speculate about the future.

The EU is not a country

Evidence suggests that the counter-country view is the dominant conception of the EU in this data set. One piece of evidence that supports this is the sheer number of statements to that effect. Altogether, 28 of 37 individual postings reject 'eu as country'. This constitutes a 75 per cent rejection rate.

The examination of the data via *argumentation analysis* supports this finding – Wikipedians do not support their view in 14 of the counter-country postings, which might indicate that they do not see the need to defend this view or make a convincing case for it. In the context of these unsupported counter-country statements, Wikipedians pursue two strategies. On the one hand, they present 'EU is not a country' as a claim without any supporting data. That is, the editors do not give information that aims to convince interlocutors, e.g. "The EU is not a country. Full stop". This example is particularly illustrative since the poster even emphasises that they do not support to their claim by adding a spelled out version of sentence final punctuation 'full stop'. Alternatively, Wikipedians do *not* present their view as the claim of an argument but use the idea 'EU = not country' as ground/data to support other claims. To give an example: "the EU is not a country so it does not and should not follow the normal country style guide"[31] – the claim is: 'article should not follow country style article' the unstated warrant: 'following this style guide (wrongfully) implies the EU is a country' and the ground/data: 'the EU is not a country'. Drawing on 'EU = not country' as the data of an argument evokes the impression that the case for 'EU = not country' does not need to be made anymore. Rather, the Wikipedians' behaviour presumes that this view ought to be understood as a given and can already serve as the basis to argue for connected issues.

The remaining counter-country statements (see Table 7) provide an understanding of why 'EU as country' is rejected, that is, Wikipedians give reasons for their rejections. In this context, seven postings cite *sovereignty* of the EU versus the sovereignty of the member states. An example to illustrate this point is the posting containing concordance line four: "[anonymised] doesn't seem to understand the difference between the EU and a sovereign country. The European UNION is a collection of separate, sovereign nations". Here the editor highlights the "difference between" EU and a country by use of "sovereign" – according to this editor the difference between country and EU is that the former concept

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[31] The country style guide is a template used to format Wikipedia articles on countries.

describes a sovereign entity.[32] This posting also incorporates line 31: "note the words independent, sovereign countries. Im not sure how to explain it any simpler than that. But i will leave you with a final message. THE EU IS NOT A COUNTRY". Here, the Wikipedian again highlights "independent, sovereign" country and then proceeds to negate 'EU as country' in capitals letters, i.e. rather forcefully.

Argumentation analysis also allows a more detailed understanding of how sovereignty is used in the following 2004 posting (a posting that incorporates lines 17 and 58):

> The EU is not a country in that sovereignty ultimatly lies with the member states, who can leave the union at any time. […] The idea that the EU is a 'country' would horrify most Europeans!

The structure of the argument is: data: member countries can leave and sovereignty "lies with" them → warrant: since sovereignty (and the ability to "leave") are defining characteristics of a country → claim: EU is not a country i.e. not a sovereign. Thus, apart from representing the EU as a non-sovereign entity, this posting sheds light on how EU members are envisioned in relation to the EU: the members' retention of sovereignty eliminates all possibility that the EU is a sovereign entity, i.e. a country. That is, an either/or situation is constructed where 'members = sovereign' means 'EU = not country'. The inversion of this argument is also thinkable 'EU = country' would mean that 'members = not sovereign'. Another interesting point is that the data of the argument are at least partially incorrect – at the time of posting there was no formalised way for an EU member to leave the EU since the Lisbon Treaty, which stipulates exit procedures, came into force only in 2009 (see 1.2).

Connected to this, the posting also exemplifies that the Wikipedia community does not wish the EU to attain a status of sovereignty – the editor states that the notion that the EU was a country would horrify 'Europeans' and emphasises this by use of an exclamation mark. *Social actor representation* is also notable here. First, the reference to 'Europeans' serves to hide that it might be the poster's emotional reaction that is mentioned here since the poster definitely cannot speak for "most Europeans". Reference to Europeans also serves to strengthen the argument against not defining the EU as country since allegedly even a part of the EU in-group – Europeans – does not appreciate the idea. Moreover, the

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[32] Wikipedians understand 'country' as synonymous with 'sovereign entity' – this is supported by numerous attempts to define 'country' throughout the TP discussion: "usually defined by sovereignty", "Countries are defined by a set of powers", etc.

vagueness of the passivated genericised 'most Europeans' makes the claim of this group having such an emotional reaction almost impossible to contest since the group cannot be clearly defined and then questioned for opinions. It is also noteworthy that the alleged negative response of 'most Europeans' to the idea of EU as country follows the claim 'EU = not country' based on the idea 'EU members are sovereign (and not the EU)' with the implied reversal of the argument: 'the EU as country would mean loss of members' sovereignty'. Thus, the poster implies that a loss of sovereignty on the level of the EU members would "horrify most Europeans".

Argumentation analysis also aids in making sense of three postings containing three lines that reject 'EU as country' on the basis of the degree of unification and integration in the European Union (see Table 7). To give an example:

> The US is an ethnically and culturally diverse place, but it undoubtedly has a common legal and political culture, which wouldn't be possible without a cohesive wider culture. We can't say that of the EU […] as things are the EU isn't a country in the sense that its members and the US are. […] The EU doesn't have a culture in the sense that a country has.

The given passage presents a comparison argumentation (Garssen, 2001, p. 92) – the poster presents their view of the US as factual and then proceeds to negate a similar state of being for the EU. They argue that the EU is not a country based on the diversity of cultures/lack of united culture within the Union. A similar negated comparison is used in: European citizens "do not associate themselves with the country and nation of the EU anywhere near as strongly as your Chinese American would to the US". This indicates that Wikipedians view the EU as a diverse entity without cohesion in the sense of one overarching "culture", in particular concerning legal and political frameworks – it is considered more diverse than the US and too diverse to be a country.

Two of the 28 statements that reject 'EU as country' contain speculations about the EU's future and/or about the EU's motivations and another two postings that reject 'EU as country' on the basis of sovereignty also speculate about the EU's future. Drawing on aspects of *argumentation analysis* and *social actor representation* aids in unpacking these occurrences. For instance, "the CIA […] think the EU will become a country. We do not crystal ball gaze in this way". This editor ascribes the belief that the EU is moving towards becoming a country to a respected outside agency and, thereby makes this view more credible (argumentum ad verecundiam) but then also separates the Wikipedia community from this source by using 'we' as in-group marker in reference to Wikipedians – the poster

posits that 'we' do not engage in such speculation by drawing on the metaphor of a fortune teller's crystal ball.

Lines one and 42 are part of a posting that touches upon aspects of sovereignty as well as containing speculation about the future. These lines even go beyond future speculation but ascribe a particular teleology – a goal-orientation – to the European Union. The poster rejects 'EU as country' as follows:

> decision by some or all member states to cooperate in a number of ways doesn't make the EU a country […] the member states are the 'masters of the treaty'. […] while the EU isn't a country, it does have a tendency to attempt to acquire more country-like attributes, and that might or might not eventually lead to its transformation into a country [comm.: 'treaty' is a reference to the treaties that formed the EU]

In terms of *social actor representation*, the poster already emphasises member states' position of power/authority by *activating* them as decision-makers in terms of increasing cooperation. The subsequent use of 'masters' further evokes the idea of the EU member states as having dominance, power and authority over the treaty(ies) that form the EU and, by proxy, the EU itself. This is followed by the EU as actor who 'attempts to acquire X' – the use of the verb 'attempt' ascribes the EU with goal-orientation and the goal is the accumulation of country-like characteristics. Since the poster first rejects the label 'country' on grounds of the member states' 'master' status, and then claims that the EU aims to acquire country-like characteristics, this Wikipedian implies that the EU aims to reduce member states' authority and power. Another interesting point here is the metonymic reference to the EU – the reader does not learn who is the human actor hidden in this reference but this reference still represents the EU as already able to have goals it can "attempt" to reach.

Another notable example in terms of *social actor representation* is line 46, which is even more outspoken about the EU's suspected motivations: "stop trying to do the EUs job for it by making the EU look like a country." This line presents an unhedged claim – the EU, again a metonymy hiding, possibly, designated EU politicians, is activated as doing/having a job, namely to "look like" a country. 'Look like' can be interpreted in two ways here: the Wikipedia community ought to stop making the EU look like a country through its article on the union while a) the EU's aim is actually to *be* a country or b) the EU merely aims to look like (but not actually be) a country. Regardless, the institution is thus again represented as an entity capable of action.

Finally, of all 28 rejections, two statements concede that the EU shares enough characteristics with countries that using the Wikipedia formatting guide for articles on countries might be useful. However, these statements still reject the EU-as-country idea since they make explicit that the formatting guide needs to be modified, e.g. "EU must use some country like formats to identify the complexity, but has to create own sections to characterize itself".

The EU is a country

It is clear that, predominantly, the EU is not considered a country by Wikipedians. Apart from the low number of pro-country statements (nine pro-statements out of 37 altogether – see Table 7), only one of the nine pro-country statements identified via an examination of the collocation 'eu' and 'country' presents a relatively straightforward view to that effect: line 13: "So how can you define a country?if you look at all things [the EU] is a COUNTRY". Here, a Wikipedian poses the question of how to identify a country but immediately follows this by an unhedged claim without presenting substantial data (except for vague reference to "all things") to support this claim, i.e. without answering their own question and specifying what features the EU has that make it a country except for the imprecise "all things". Only one other comparable, although mitigated, pro-statement is made in concordance 60: "it would seem more appropriate to say the EU was a country".[33] It is noteworthy that this Wikipedian also does not provide any data that gives details on what characteristics make the EU a country.

Process type analysis shows that the remaining pro-country statements present very weak forms of the pro-country perspective. One means of weakening pro-country statements is that Wikipedians avoid formulations that claim that the EU *is* a country – they use material processes instead of the intensive attributive relational processes used for stating that the EU is not a country. That is, they focus on how the EU *acts* (material processes) or on possessive attributive relational processes – what attributes it *has*. For instance, concordance line 50 states that "EU operate almost as a country" instead of e.g. 'EU is almost a country'.

This example already points to another strategy, namely how 'country' is modified and graded – the Wikipedia community discusses the EU as "almost as a country". Other

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[33] Although it is not the goal to determine linguistic / cultural background of individual Wikipedians, it is important to point out that these backgrounds might affect conversation strategies, i.e. hedging when expressing disagreement might serve as politeness rather than show insecurity about the claim that is made.

examples are "semi-country" (cl three), "'somehow almost' a country" (cl 38) and the EU having certain "country-like elements" (cl 45). The use of the quotation marks in line 38 is indicative of the unease with which Wikipedians have started to establish a continuum between country and not-country rather than capturing this relationship as polar opposites.

Line seven (Table 6) presents another noteworthy instance of giving a very weak pro-country view – it can be explained by drawing on *argumentation analysis.* A Wikipedian refers to an article they found: "A BBC poll including the EU as a 'country' entity". The contributor makes an argumentum ad verecundiam, i.e. they make no personal claim but rely on increasing credibility by citing a respected source. Furthermore, they only mention 'inclusion' of the EU in the BBC's understanding of what is a country and what is not – there is no claim that the EU actually *is* a country but only the hint that the BBC's inclusion of the EU implies that the EU has qualities that allow such inclusion. The use of 'entity' also points to a degree of insecurity concerning the definition of the EU; while the term 'country' has a (relatively) clear definition, 'country entity' does not. Apart from that, the contributor provides quotation marks around 'country' and thereby further weakens the statement. Finally, the contributor also immediately distances him/herself from 'EU as country': "[…] not advocate the opinion that the EU IS a country".

Apart from only constituting nine pro-statements in contrast to an overwhelming 28 counter-statements, it is also important to point out that the pro-country Wikipedians generally neither discuss why, specifically, the EU could be classified a country nor what elements of a country the EU incorporates. Concordance line 45 is an exception: "eurozone, mobility of the citizens and the Schengen area is a good idea, as these are country-like elements of the EU". The fact that 'country-like elements' is introduced without a definite article indicates that the listed items do not give a full account of what this poster considers 'country-like elements'.

Change over time

The idea that the EU can be understood as a country (or not) is first discussed in 2003 when a Wikipedian proposed using the Wikipedia country template for the article on the EU. Already then, the counter-country view proves dominant, although 'sovereignty' is not the principal reason for the rejection then. Rather, there are instances of non-supported rejections, e.g. "the table make it look to much like a country" and the second one gives an intensive attributive relational process complemented with an inserted prepositional group that intensifies the negation of the idea: "EU is not in any way, shape or form a

conventional country" without giving an explanation why and how the EU cannot be classified as a country.

Regardless of this initial rejection, the issue is discussed repeatedly throughout the years with the introduction of *sovereignty* and *unification* as reasons to reject EU-as-country. Sovereignty enters into the conversation in 2004: "The answer is simple. What's a country and what's not is 1, defined by whether it considers itself a sovereign country; 2, defined by what other countries recognise as a sovereign country". Lack of unification and speculation about the EU's future/its motivations become points of debate from 2007 onwards but 'EU as country' is always summarily dismissed.

Finally, as the corpus' temporal mark-up shows, 'EU as country' is last addressed in 2014 in a one-turn thread, that is, no Wikipedian contests or even responds to line 37: "[i]t is true that The EU is not a country". It can be concluded that the issue does apparently not warrant a discussion at that stage any more. Subsequent threads attempt focus on debating the EU as e.g. confederation.

To sum up, the Wikipedia community repeatedly engages in debate until 2014 whether the EU can be defined as country or not. The overwhelming majority of statements opposes this classification although there is some speculation concerning the EU's future and its potential evolution into a country. The main reason cited for the rejection of country as descriptor is the issue of sovereignty of the EU. With respect to this, the community expresses a desire for EU members to retain sovereignty.

Blurring of concepts: country and state

Before discussing the EU as federation, an issue that blurs the distinction between 'country' and 'federation' to a degree deserves brief mention. At rank 28 (t-score 8.1) in the collocation list of 'eu', the term 'state' illustrates this point: more than half of the co-occurrences relate to the debate whether the 'EU is a state'. However, it is not always clear whether 'state' refers to unitary state, i.e. synonymous to country ("these two words [country and state] are often synonymous"), or federation ("[n]ot all sovereign states are unitary"). Wikipedians repeatedly attempt to define 'state', but the term's ambiguity persists.

Irrespective of this blurring of concepts and references, 'state' reflects the community's attitude both towards 'EU as country' and 'EU as federation' – 'state' is comprehensively rejected. For instance, 18 uses of 'state' are clearly identifiable as referring to country – 14 of these oppose defining the EU as such, i.e. as country. As with

'country', only four occurrences present approximations to the state (= country) concept and ascribe the EU "many state-like characteristics" or deem the "EU is more like a state". These state-like characteristics are listed merely once as a "parliament, general elections, a currency, a seat at G8 summits etc".

5.1.2   The EU as Federation

The term 'federation' ranks 110 in overall frequency (Appendix A) and collocates with 'eu' at a t-score of 4.6 (collocation rank 87). The Wikipedia community repeatedly defines federation in terms of sovereignty, e.g. in 2004:

> A Federation is a group of states that maintain local control of affairs but have a stong central governemnt which also represents the group internationally as a single sovereign power.

The community also draws on 'confederation' to capture different degrees of sovereignty, for instance in 2008, a Wikipedian claims that "the difference between a federation and a confederation is sovereignty" and again in 2012: "difference between a confederation and a federation is that constituent parts of the former are legally sovereign". These definitions emphasise the fact that federations are seen as having constituents – "parts" and "group of states" – that are not fully sovereign.

Table 8 Supporting/rejecting 'EU as federation'

50 rejection postings/64cl	- based on sovereignty	13 postings/14cl
	- EU as something different/mix of concepts	10 postings/12cl
	- unsupported rejections	11 postings/16cl
	- speculating about EU's future	9 postings/10cl
	- other (e.g. based on lack of legal basis/sources/vagueness of term)	7 postings/12cl
5 support postings/9cl	- strong support	1 posting/1cl
	- weak support	4 postings/8cl

The EU is not a federation

The number of rejections of the concept 'federation' points towards the dominant conception of the EU as not a federation. There are altogether 25 concordance lines of the collocation 'eu' and 'federation' (in 20 individual postings). 21 of 25 lines, that is 85 per cent, reject 'federation' as an applicable concept. However, it is important to point out that

in order to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of how the community rejects this concept, I broaden my examination to taking into account each occurrence of 'federation' (not just as collocate of 'eu') in the corpus. This yields 73 lines in 55 postings where the discussion actually focuses on the question of whether the EU can be defined as a federation or not. This widening of the concordance pool reflects and confirms the original finding of approximately 85 per cent rejections, i.e. 64 of 73 lines take a counter-federation stance.

Argumentation analysis also supports that 'EU as not-federation' is the dominant conception of the EU. Altogether 16 lines in eleven postings (see Table 8) present claims to that effect without any support to back the claim, e.g. ""federation" is used to denote federal states, which EU is not", "The European Union is not a federation" or "I cannot believe this comment about the EU as a federation… the EU is simply not a federation. Not in any sense. At all. […] absolutely not a federation" The last example is also notable in term of intensity of rejection ("Not in any sense. At all", "absolutely not"). Not unlike the unsupported rejections of 'EU as country', the fact that Wikipedians make such claims suggests that they are confident that they do not need to support or defend this position but that it is accepted as a given.

Argumentation analysis also sheds light on *why* 'EU as federation' is rejected, namely that editors draw on issues of sovereignty, lack thereof and its general distribution between EU and its member states as reason(s) to reject 'federation'. More than 20 per cent of rejections cite aspects of sovereignty (14 lines in 13 postings): e.g. one Wikipedian rejects 'EU as federation' and adds "A federation is a type of sovereign state". Here the claim 'EU = not federation' is supported by data: 'federation = sovereign state'. The warrant is only implied: 'since the EU is not a sovereign state', that is, the EU is represented as non-sovereign entity. Another Wikipedian also claims that the EU is not a federation and then provides the data to their claim: "A federation is […] a state in which the federated units lack total sovereignty" but this poster again omits and merely implies the warrant 'since the EU members are totally sovereign'. Another example is a poster rejecting 'EU as federation' and adding "[t]oo much associations with a sovereign state, which the EU is not" which presents the following argument structure: data: 'EU is not a sovereign state'; warrant: 'since using the term 'federation' elicits association with sovereign state', therefore the claim: 'EU is not a federation'.

The examination of the remaining lines that reject 'federation' shows an additional pattern, namely that Wikipedians perceive the EU as a mix of several concepts or

something novel/different entirely without detailing the characteristics of the EU that allegedly make it such a mixed/novel entity. Twelve lines in ten postings reject EU-as-federation based on the view that the nature of the EU cannot be described by use of 'federation' because the institution does not neatly fit the criteria of a federation. To give examples to illustrate this point: "The EU has elements of federation, confederation, and international organization" or "EU is neither a federation nor a confederation in the classical sense". A common structure in the context of explaining the EU as a 'mix' is a spatial metaphor – the EU as entity is placed in space, i.e. it is or lies in-between concepts, e.g. "The EU is currently somewhere between a country/federation and an international treaty organisation", "the EU lies between a federation and confederation" and "the EU […] nowhere near a federation" followed or preceded by suggestions of alternative terms of reference to capture the nature of the EU (see 5.1.5 for a discussion of the alternative terms of reference the Wikipedians suggest).

Connected to this, the concordance view of these twelve rejection lines makes another metaphoric pattern observable, namely the representation of the EU in terms of an ontological metaphor, as not merely 'between' but also as being a substance that is 'more than' or 'less than' certain concepts can capture: "Although the EU is not a federation in the strict sense, it is far more than a free-trade association" and "it is more than a free trade association, but less than a federation". This spatialisation and gradation of the EU is notable as it already gives an inkling of the Wikipedians' conception of the EU along a continuum (find a more detailed discussion of this continuum in 5.3).

Table 9 'federation' – speculating about the EU's future

1	Be a confederation. It could be a	federation, it could be none of these, it could be l
2	ition, but it could become either a	federation or confederation in the future. <link "ht
3	EU Parliament is calling for a "	federation of nation states" (an interesting concept,
4	Barroso called for a European	Federation in his recent "State of the Union" spee
5	elements to develop the EU into a	federation, but the term does not belong in the
6	conventional country nor is it a	federation, a situation likely to remain for quite a few
7	(UTC) Agreed, the EU is not a	federation. Some want it to become but that certainly
8	ppose The Union is simply not a	federation, maybe it will be in the future, but it is not
9	The European Union is not a	federation, some want it to become one. But
10	e one. But it is not at present a	federation. [anonymised] (talk) 18:28, 5 Sept

As with 'country', the rejections of 'federation' also show that the Wikipedia community draws on the term to speculate about the EU's future. The ten lines in Table 9

can be seen as a separate category of rejections since they reject 'federation' and add speculation about whether the EU could be a federation in future. *Social actor representation* helps unravel these lines; for instance lines five and seven state that the EU is not a federation but ascribe this agenda to an unspecified actor: in line five by using a nominalisation that suppresses the individuals who are driving the movement: "there are *elements* to develop the EU into a federation" [italics added] and in line seven by referencing a genericised social actor: "*Some* want it to become one, but that certainly would not be accurate at present" [italics added]. The suppression of social actor in line five might serve to make the claim that such movements exist incontestable, since if no particular group is ascribed this agenda then nobody can question if said group actually pursues the cited agenda. Examples of concrete social actors cited as pursuing the goal of a creating a federations are lines three and four. However, in both lines, an EU representative merely 'calls for' the creation of a federation, that is, they engage in a verbal process to elicit action rather than in a material one – in an action to create such federation – themselves.

Line one in Table 9 is a reaction to a discussion of the Treaty of Rome's preamble, which states that the EU's goal is the creation of an "ever closer union" (see 1.2 for an overview of the EU's development and treaties): "It could be a confederation, it could be a federation, it could be none of these, it could be less than it is at the moment". Without going into too much depth, the responses make clear that the ultimate form of unification – creating a single country – is not desired or rather, only desired by a "minority", e.g.:

> about 10 countries alone, if not more, […] would not accept the interpretation [that the EU will become a single state] […] whilst there remains still a relatively significant minority out there that would like a single state, there will always be room for justifiable concern

Apart from expressing reluctance concerning European integration, other Wikipedians bemoan precisely the fact that 'ever closer union' is a vague goal that each member might interpret differently, reaching from a loose 'token' cooperation to the creation of a single state, e.g. "it may represent something major, whilst for others it will simply represent a token commitment".

To briefly account for the remaining rejections – twelve lines in seven postings point to the lack of legal basis for calling the EU a federation or find that the term 'federation' is too vague or confusing, e.g. "Federation in itself is vaguely defined, so that it becomes too arbitrary to say the EU [is one]" and "The EU is not de jure a federation".

The EU is a federation

The low number of statements expressing support for 'EU as federation' indicates that the Wikipedia community opposes the application of this concept. Only five postings (nine lines) are Wikipedians' statements that argue for the use of the term 'federation'.

Moreover, there is only one statement that expresses unmitigated support for the application of 'federation' to the EU: "very strongly support. Very good term for EU. "Federation is a political entity characterized by a union of partially self-governing states or regions united by a central (federal) government"". Apart from the repeated use of 'very', which serves as an intensifier (Vukovic, 2014, p. 46), this posting is remarkable in terms of *argumentation analysis*. First, the posting hinges on an argumentum ad verecundiam because the poster quotes and links to an outside source (as indicated by the quotation marks and the presence of a hyperlink to the source). The poster – similar to Wikipedians rejecting 'federation' – makes reference to the idea of sovereignty ('self-governing'). However, here sovereignty is used to support 'EU as federation'. Moreover, the argument structure shows that the warrant remains implicit but is actually a vital aspect of how this Wikipedian conceives of the EU.
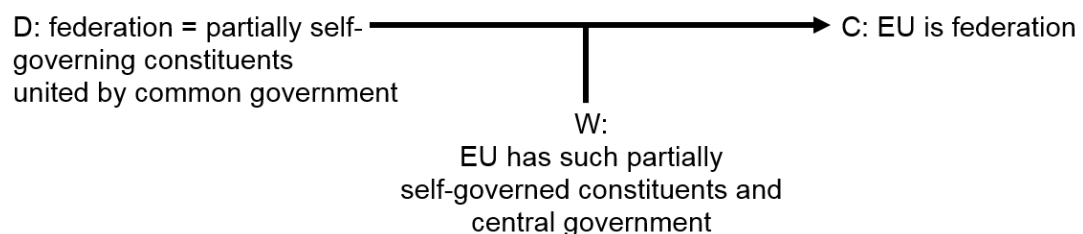
Figure 18 EU as federation

The data: 'federation = partially self-governing constituents' supports the claim: 'EU = federation' connected by the warrant: 'since the EU has partially self-governing members'. Thus, this Wikipedian implies that the EU member states are (only) partially self-governing – a view that is markedly different from the above idea of member states as 'masters of the treaties' (see 5.2 for more on the EU's versus member states' sovereignty).

The remaining statements supporting 'EU as federation' do not claim that the EU is, in fact, a federation as is. Not unlike the Wikipedians who reject 'federation' on the basis of the EU being a mix of concepts, the pro-federation postings acknowledge that the term and concept 'federation' does not capture the nature of the EU entirely. However, in contrast to the rejections of 'federation', these pro-federation postings argue that the EU

can be best described by likening it to a number of concepts *including* 'federation', e.g. "I would add the term "federation"" to the mix", i.e. to the mix of concepts that is already used to describe the EU. Another Wikipedian also suggests using a hybrid term of reference to describe the EU – they draw on an argument from authority to do so: "CIA fact book describes it as a hybrid Confederation-Federation". Another Wikipedian proposes that the article introduction should contain the phrase: "[e]conomic and political union and Federation".

On the whole, the community is aware that this issue is controversial since numerous additional lines of 'federation' make reference to the debate, e.g. "the federation debate is one cluttered with POV/OR issues"[34] and "the question of naming the EU a confederation or federation has no real consequence".

Change over time

With respect to change over time, 'federation' as a concept potentially applicable to the EU is first discussed in 2004. Back then, the label was actually met with a supportive statement but this support was merely based on a technicality:

> The parts of some federation cannot leave the Federation, but the Federation cannot abolish its own parts. […] EU's Member-states cannot leave EU (at least theoretically), since there are no provisions for that in the present treaties (which are binding until all member-states decide that they shouldn't be – that's the reason the Constitution needs to be approved by all States). However, the Draft Constituion specifically allows states to leave EU. So, if we use this criterion, EU is a federation until the Constitution is approved (which is kind of ironic).

Initially, this editor argues that 'federation' means that constituents cannot leave the federation. Thus until the Constitution (later revised to the Lisbon Treaty to pass ratification by member states), which – as the editor points out – provides an EU-exit procedure, was ratified, the EU was a federation: The addendum in brackets suggests that this Wikipedian does not view the EU as federation as such but that it is merely this technicality that equips the EU with federation status. Responding Wikipedians already dismiss this idea of 'EU as a federation' in 2004 due to the issue of sovereignty and the idea that the member states remain 'masters of the treaty'.

The term 'federation' is debated repeatedly throughout the corpus with reference to sovereignty as the issue that prevents the EU from being a federation. Additionally, the

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[34] These are references to Wikipedia policy to avoid personal opinion and original research: POV = Point Of View and OR = Original Research (Wikipedia:Neutral Point Of View, Wikipedia, *2015*).

community laments the fact that the EU has been/is a mix of concepts with federal elements and speculates about future developments, in particular in 2009 when the meaning of 'ever closer union' is discussed. However, the only conclusion is that opinions on the matter differ and that 'federation' cannot be used to describe the EU. 'Federation' is again dismissed in a 2012 poll where Wikipedians are asked to support or reject use of the term. Irrespective of this dismissal, the term is discussed again in 2013 and 2015 but always with reference to the idea that the complex nature of the EU cannot be described by calling it 'federation'. The term is rejected last in 2015 where the EU is seen as "nowhere near a federation".

All in all, the idea that the EU is a federation is summarily dismissed in the Wikipedia talk page discussions between 2001 and 2015. This rejection is based on considerations of sovereignty, ambiguity and vagueness of the term 'federation' and the idea that the EU is a mix of several concepts or even an entirely new form of entity that cannot be captured by using the term 'federation'. Interestingly, there is some speculation about the institution's potential development towards becoming a federation.

5.1.3   The EU as Confederation

Another concept the Wikipedia community debates to describe the European Union is 'confederation'. 'Confederation' takes the overall frequency rank of 63 (see Appendix A) and collocates with 'eu' at a t-score of 7.1 (rank 36). In order to gain an understanding of the *community's* definition(s) of 'confederation', I searched the corpus for postings where Wikipedians attempt to define 'confederation' and found that sovereignty of its constituents is central to Wikipedians' understanding of the concept. In 2004, confederation is initially discussed as "a large state composed of many self-governing regions" but this view is immediately contested with 'confederation' defined as "a group of independent nations, states or tribes more or less permanently united by treaty or alliance for joint action". This latter understanding is reinforced in 2006 ("an association of sovereign states or communities, usually created by treaty but often later adopting a common constitution"). In 2008, another poster defines confederation as a "permanent union of sovereign states for common action in relation to other states". Repeatedly, varying degrees of sovereignty are used to distinguish 'confederation' from 'federation', e.g. in 2012 – in response to a poster's definition of 'confederation' as "permanent union of political units for common action in relation to other units", 'sovereignty' is drawn upon:

the "difference between a confederation and a federation is that constituent parts of the former are legally sovereign".

Examining the co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'confederation' yields 52 lines (see Table 10).

Table 10 Selected concordance lines 'eu' and 'confederation'

asked told me (after some thought) that the	EU really was a confederation. [anonymise
lease cite any influential sources defining	EU as a confederation? Without them, this
The EU is a federal state in its infancy','	EU is a confederation' (hope that [anonym
here are also many differences between the	EU and a confederation. A confederation
there is no law or constitution to say that the	EU is a confederation, nor does the EU des
that the EU is a confederation, nor does the	EU describe itself as a confederation. All EU
source provided on the page saying that the	EU is a confederation, futhermore when has
is a confederation, futhermore when has the	EU described itself as a confederation? I say
. According to this article on whether the	EU is a 'confederation' or 'federation' it says:
provide an official source describing the	EU as a confederation or it needs to be re
here are sources out there that describe the	EU as a confederation, I suspect it is deb
provided a reliable source to say that it is a	confederation. The EU is better descibed as
s no set constitutional law to say that it is a	confederation. The EU website describes i
of the EU. Legally, I would never say the	EU is a confederation or federation - the qu
adjective because it is falsely describing the	EU as a confederation without evidence to ba
nal agreement and it did not establish the	EU as a confederation, nor did it expand any
'partnership', the other asked whether the	EU should even become a confederation, so
rce? It says it "makes sense" to compare the	EU to confederation but that it is not on its w
quote from 1953 does not actually say the	EU is a confederation And as I also said, it i
plenty of descriptions that do not describe	EU as a confederation, cant find any at all that

40 of these lines (28 postings) comment on the idea of the EU as confederation. Of these, 16 postings with 24 concordance lines reject 'the EU as confederation', whereas six postings incorporating ten lines support applicability of the term/concept – see Table 11.

Table 11 Supporting/rejecting 'EU as confederation'

16 rejection postings/24cl	- lack of sources/evidence	10 postings/17cl
	- unsupported	4 postings/4cl
	- based on sovereignty	2 (+1) postings/3cl[35]
6 support postings/10cl	- strong support	1 posting/1cl

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[35] One statement draws on the issue of sovereignty but also refers to a lack of sources defining the EU as a confederation.

	- weak support	5 postings/9cl
6 'neutral' postings/6cl	- no stance based on lack of sources	3 postings/cl
	- indifference	3 postings/cl

The EU is not a confederation

As with 'federation' and 'country', 'confederation' is rejected as a descriptor, even though the number of outright rejections is lower than with regard to the former concepts. Only 16 of 28 postings present counter-confederation views. Still, the rejections outweigh the pro-statements and four rejections even present unsupported claims to this effect, e.g. "it is falsely describing the EU as a confederation" or "completely wrongheaded, EU is not a confederation" – the latter example is even intensified ('completely').

The rejection postings also show that that the Wikipedia community's rejection of 'EU as confederation' is very different from what I observed with respect to 'country' and 'federation'. Indeed, the dominant reason for Wikipedians' to reject confederation is based on the idea that there are not enough or no reliable *sources* and *evidence* that describe the EU as a confederation (see Table 11) – ten postings make use of this strategy:[36] "[e]ither provide an official source describing the EU as a confederation or it needs to be removed" and "it does not matter much whether we believe the EU meets the criteria listed in the article 'confederation'. Only reliable secondary sources do matter".

While two[37] postings reject the idea of an EU confederation, 'sovereignty' does not serve to reject 'confederation' as comprehensively as it does, for example, with regard to 'federation'. Apart from this markedly lower number of rejections based on the idea of sovereignty, it is also notable *how*, precisely, sovereignty is drawn upon and debated in the context of 'EU as confederation'. Indeed, *argumentation analysis* sheds light on how Wikipedians reject 'EU = confederation' by referring to issues of sovereignty and, what is more, how they are challenged by their peers. The following example demonstrates how a Wikipedian draws on both the issue of sources and the issue of sovereignty to back their claim that the EU is not a confederation:

> […] no law or constitution to say that the EU is a confederation, nor does the EU describe itself as a confederation. All EU members are independent states, this must be reflected in the opening sentence. 'confederation' is speculation and clearly

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[36] One of these postings also refers to sovereignty.
[37] plus one posting that uses sovereignty as well as the question of source material

> POV, it implies that the EU is sovereign, which it currently is not. ALL EU member states are themelves, independent sovereign states, there is NO confederation

This posting presents one claim with two supporting data and warrant combinations. To start with the overarching argument, the claim of the argument remains implicit until the last sentence – the EU is not a confederation. One set of data presented to back this claim is given in the first sentence: the aforementioned lack of sources that declare the EU a confederation and an argumentum ad verecundiam that the EU itself does not use 'confederation'. The warrant for this is given in "is speculation and clearly POV", that is, they remind interlocutors of core Wikipedia policy (NPOV, see 3.2) – here the poster proceeds from: data: 'lack of sources' ("no law or constitution to say […]") → claim: 'EU=not confederation' with the warrant: 'since that would be speculation/POV and Wikipedia does not speculate'. The Wikipedian also presents another set of data aimed at supporting the same claim: the poster states the data 'EU members = independent and sovereign" twice and inserts additional data: 'EU is not sovereign'. Altogether the structure is as follows: data: 'EU members = sovereign and independent' and 'EU is not sovereign' → claim: 'EU=not confederation' with implied warrant: 'since confederation implies that EU is sovereign'. This posting gives a noteworthy perspective of the relationship between the EU and its members: the statement 'EU=not sovereign' is supported by 'members=fully sovereign' which sketches an either/or situation – either the members are fully sovereign and the EU is not sovereign or the EU is sovereign and the members are not.

With respect to how this posting is challenged by the poster's peers, this Wikipedian's understanding of the term 'confederation' is questioned as falsely implying that EU members' sovereignty is restricted. That is, subsequent postings focus on correcting the poster's understanding of confederation, for instance: "To [anonymised], no one is saying that the individual member states are not sovereign. That is not what being a confederation means." Thus, respondents do not focus on whether the EU is a sovereign. Rather, they emphasise the constituents' role and point out that the term 'confederation' does not mean that a confederation's constituents' sovereignty is in any way limited.

Generally, the matter of source material is the most persistent aspect of Wikipedians' considerations with regard to classifying the EU a confederation or not. Three further statements in three concordance lines do not take a stance for or against 'EU as confederation' but also address the issue of source material: "I don't know if there are sources out there that describe the EU as a confederation". Three more statements maintain

that defining the EU as such or not does not have any bearing on the article ("the question of naming the EU a confederation […] has no real consequence").

The EU is a confederation

Condensing the concordance lines of 'eu' and 'confederation' into individual postings shows that there are six pro-confederation statements in ten lines. This constitutes the minority of statements and it can be concluded that 'EU as confederation' is the non-dominant perspective given on the EU in the Wikipedia TP.

The finding that the pro-view is the non-dominant conception of the EU is supported by the fact that five of these supportive statements (in nine lines) contain mitigating devices. To give an example, "it seems to me that EU is indeed a confederation" with 'seem to me' effectively conveying that this might be a subjective impression, even though this is slightly counterbalanced by 'indeed', which lends emphasis to 'EU is a confederation'. In one statement an editor contends that "'confederation' is obviously contentious, though it can be (and sometimes is) argued that the EU is a type of confederation". This Wikipedian exercises particular caution concerning the concept: first, the poster acknowledges that there is controversy concerning the term. Second, they passivate the verb 'to argue' and thereby suppress the sayer. Thus, they do not assume responsibility as an individual that argues this point. Third, in terms of epistemic modality, they weaken their claim with the modal verb 'can'. Although they acknowledge that the argument 'eu=kind of confederation' *is* made, the poster does so in brackets which, again, weakens the impact of the claim since brackets commonly indicate less emphasis on the proposition given within brackets. Finally, the poster also uses the adverb of time "sometimes" which further mitigates the claim.

Interestingly, one pro-editor picks up on the issue of evidence and sources to prove/disprove 'EU as confederation' – after acknowledging that evidence that supports the EU as confederation is problematic, they proceed to commit the fallacy of putting burden of proof on the counter-confederation side of the argument. Thereby they actually violate a central Wikipedia policy, which mandates that information included requires sourcing (see 3.2):[38]

> the evidence the EU is a confederation is somewhat lacking. […] we should adopt colloquial use [of the term confederation], which can be based on a dictionary

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[38] This is also possibly why their peers do not accept this shift in burden of proof and continue to reject EU as confederation based on a lack of sources.

definition. So in my view, the task for editors objecting to the EU being labelled confederation should provide a reliable source

Moreover, and not unlike given in the pro-country discussions, the above example of "the EU is a type of confederation" illustrates the strategy to grade and adapt the concept 'confederation' with respect to statements in support of 'EU as confederation'. Another example of this is the use of 'most of' in a statement expressing weak support but at least acceptance of using the term 'confederation': "Acceptable The EU fits most of the definition of a confederation, but the term is never used in practice". This editor also weakens support by not giving a straightforward classification of what the EU *is* (no intensive attributive relational process), but merely uses a metaphorical material process – the EU is considered as meeting (most of) the unnamed criteria that define a confederation. Then the poster further weakens their pro-confederation stance by adding an adversative conjunction 'but' and drawing attention to the idea that, though 'mostly' applicable, the term is not used in practice.

Only one pro-confederation statement takes an unmitigated pro-stance: "all lowers i asked told me (after some thought) that the EU really was a confederation" – drawing on an argument from authority, i.e. citing lawyers ("all lowers I asked"), this Wikipedian claims the EU a confederation.

Change over time

With respect to change over time, pro-confederation statements were made particularly throughout the first few years of the discussions, e.g. in 2006: "it seems to me that EU is indeed a confederation" and 2008 "[i]t seems to me that the EU fit well in there [concept of confederation]" with 'seem to me' effectively conveying that this is a subjective impression. However, in 2008, the issue of source material is mentioned for the first time – the given 2008 pro-confederation statement was met with "it does not matter much whether we believe the EU meets the criteria listed in the article confederation. Only reliable secondary sources do matter". By 2012, this focus on source material had gained momentum and led to rejections such as "[t]here is no reliable source provided on the page saying that the EU is a confederation". 'Confederation' is last mentioned in 2015 as an aside (which is indicated by the whole statement being given in brackets) but does not elicit any discussion, which points towards this issue being resolved: "(I would argue that the EU is less than a confederation)".

On the whole, the Wikipedia community rejects 'confederation' as a concept applicable to the EU on the Wikipedia TP between 2001 and 2015. However, the intensity of the rejection is notably weaker than (and the reasons for the rejection differ from the rejection of) for instance, 'country'. That is, even though the Wikipedia community does not necessarily reject the concept as applicable, a lack of sources determining the nature of the EU as confederation mandates a rejection in their view.

5.1.4 The EU as Supranational and/or Intergovernmental Entity

Two more items whose use on the Wikipedia front stage is debated enough as to warrant a brief discussion of their treatment by the Wikipedia community are 'intergovernmental' and 'supranational'. Both items are high-ranking collocates of 'eu' with 'supranational' at a t-score of 6.84 and 'intergovernmental' at 4.33. In addition, the community discusses these two terms jointly (e.g. 'intergovernmental' ranks fourth in the collocation list of 'supranational' at a t-score of 9.13). To give some evidence of this co-occurrence:

Table 12 Selected concordance lines 'supranational' and 'intergovernmental'

litical and economic community with	supranational and intergovernmental dimensions" i
of the Regions. ". ie it involves both	supranational and intergovernmental elements.
atement just saying there exists both	supranational and intergovernmental elements - full
litical and economic community with	supranational and intergovernmental features. I don't
of states. I also have problems with '	supranational and intergovernmental features', on th
sense from either perspective. But on	supranational and intergovernmental features, stop l
c community of sovereign states with	supranational and intergovernmental features" or "a
d economic community" and "with	supranational and intergovernmental features", this k
of twenty-seven member states with	supranational and intergovernmental features, loc
. You didn't like the explanation of	Supranational, and intergovernmental features. So

In order to make sense of these terms, the Wikipedians consult and quote the EU glossary (Welcomeurope, 2017), which states that the EU incorporates both supranational and intergovernmental aspects:

> 'Many EU decisions are taken at 'supranational' level in the sense that they involve the EU institutions, to which EU countries have delegated some decision-making powers.' […] About intergovernmental it says 'This literally means 'between governments'. In the EU, some matters – such as security and defence issues – are decided purely by intergovernmental agreement (i.e. agreement between the governments of the EU countries)'

This combination of aspects of both, at first seemingly contradictory concepts, is reflected in the discussion, for instance, by the nouns that are pre- or postmodified by both adjectives: 'elements', and 'features' are already apparent in Table 12, while further nouns are 'mix', 'mixture', 'aspects' and 'dimensions'. To give two concordance lines: "community with supranational and intergovernmental dimensions" (in a prepositional phrase complementing the noun phrase) and "it [the EU] combines intergovernmental and supranational elements" (metaphoric material processes with the EU as actor).

Supporting versus rejecting 'supranational' and 'intergovernmental'

In principle, the Wikipedia community accepts use of the terms, as the number of acceptances versus rejections shows. Thirty-five of 47 statements[39] argue that both terms are applicable simultaneously. In addition, these posters do not go to any length to justify or support their choice but focus on another edit connected to the terms – they argue that a brief explanation of what these two terms mean ought to be included to aid readers in understanding the Wikipedia article: "I am happy mentioning supranational and intergovernmental if their meaning is immediately provided. (in fact I rather like it, I don't object to educating people […]" or "a slight amendment explaining supranational and intergovernmental as we go along would help."

The nature of the rejections also supports the finding that 'supranational' and 'intergovernmental' are not too controversial. The twelve rejection statements are not based on disagreement with the meaning of the terms. Instead, use of the terms is questioned on the basis of them being too technical, for instance, "have problems with 'supranational and intergovernmental features', on the grounds that this is singularly complicted" and "[w]e should translate 'supranational' and 'intergovernmental' into English" or too vague "[i]t may actually be a sensible move to remove the Supranational/Intergovernmental discussion from the lead and allow the reader to find out the information in more detail elsewhere".

Interestingly, two lines argue that the term 'confederation' or 'loose confederation' should be used instead of the terms 'supranational' and 'intergovernmental' but this proposal is rejected on the basis of an argument from authority: the respondent cites Wikipedia policy (OR = original research) to elucidate why 'confederation' is rejected – due to a lack of sources (as mentioned in 5.1.3): "according to WP:OR it does not matter

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[39] postings that contain at least one co-occurrence

much whether we believe the EU meets the criteria listed in the article confederation. Only reliable secondary sources do matter." Two further Wikipedians propose using the term 'sui generis' without giving a reason beyond claiming that either terminology is too technical for the uninformed reader, e.g. "I think sui generis by itself is fine. (Yes, its rather incomprehensible, but supranational and intergovernmental are incomprehensible to the uninitiated as well.)" (See 5.1.5).

All in all, the only truly controversial issue is a question of *degree*: "degree to which it is supranational or intergovernmental is fraught with difficulties. It is seriously contested between editors exactly where the balance lies." This means that while the majority of editors seems to be in agreement that the EU comprises elements of both, there is controversy to what extent the EU operates intergovernmentally versus supranationally. The following proposed resolution of the conflict also touches on this:

> Maybe we should just try and aim at a sentence which is neutral between to what extent supranational and intergovernmental aspects exist. Like just a statement just saying there exists both supranational and intergovernmental elements - full stop -

This editor implicitly acknowledges that degree is the issue, not the terms themselves, by proposing that merely leaving the terms in the Wikipedia article without any specification "to what extent" the EU is supranational and intergovernmental would be a viable solution.

Change over time

The two terms first elicit discussion in 2007, when a Wikipedian proposes to put them in the article's introduction section: (i.e. "I propose to use this version: […] 'The European Union (EU) is a supranational and intergovernmental […]'"). This initially leads to discussion of whether the EU is predominantly supranational *or* intergovernmental in nature, e.g. "Economic politics are clearly handled supranational. The EU institutions govern the EEC with directives without intergovernmental treaties" versus another poster's "EU itself cannot setup legislation for its members states, it has to be approved and incorporated in the relevant national legislations. Hence the EU is not truly supranational". However, the thread concludes with the decision to use both terms. Later discussion focuses on the only true controversial aspect – the "supranational/intergovernmental balance". That is, to what degree the EU is supranational, i.e. an entity that wields power itself, versus to what degree the national governments retain power but collaborate in some respects. One example from 2008 is

> I think a neutral account of the EU has to recognize that it has evolved as a compromise between the proponents of the supranational and intergovernmental approaches, and as such can't coherently be said to be a pure version of either, but rather as acting in a more supranational manner in certain areas and in a more intergovernmental manner in other areas

This view of the EU is then retained throughout the discussion. What is more, the community resolves the continuous conflict by resorting to not specifying supranational and intergovernmental aspects of the EU as proposed by the excerpt mentioned above: "Maybe we should just try and aim at a sentence which is neutral between to what extent supranational and intergovernmental aspects exist".

Rather than promoting one term over the other, the Wikipedia community focuses on collecting evidence that either or both of the terms apply, e.g. "The Council is an institution that is largely regarded as intergovern and the ECB is a body that is largely regarded as supranational". Sometimes the editors include their personal view predominantly with a bias towards favouring the intergovernmental perspective, but they generally agree that both terms apply: "the ECJ[40] [...] I don't mind counting it as an essentially supranational body. [...] Similarly, the ECB[41] is a good example, but I remain convinced the overall balance is more towards IG than SN decision making".[42] Another example is "Wherever there is supranationalism in the EU, there is always a hint of IG present". By 2008, community agreement that both terms apply is solidly established and one Wikipedian's attempt to question this does not elicit debate anymore. The last time the two terms are mentioned as part of a discussion is in 2013 when their validity is confirmed by drawing on the EU as source, i.e. on an argument from authority: "the proposed introduction relies on current linked pages to agreed terms of the Union, such as supranational and intergovernmental".

5.1.5 Other Terms

There are a number of alternative concepts and terms the community attempts to apply to the EU. However, these terms occur with less frequency in the discussion, which could either indicate that they are non-dominant conceptions of the EU or that they are not considered controversial enough to warrant debate, i.e. are actually the dominant conception of the EU.

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[40] European Court of Justice
[41] European Central Bank
[42] IG=intergovernmental; SN=supranational

Sui generis

First, and as mentioned above, when debating the applicability of, for example, 'federation', the Wikipedia community notes that the EU is a unique construct and cannot be captured by any pre-existing conceptualisations. The community considers applying the term 'sui generis', e.g. "I am pretty sure that most of the reliable sources refer to the EU as a sui generis entity, and not as a confederation". Ultimately, the Wikipedia community decides not to use the term in the introduction of the article, however, not because the community does not believe the EU to be unique and the term acceptable, but due to technical reasons – on the one hand, the community arrives at the conclusion that there is not enough source material declaring the EU a sui generis, e.g. a Wikipedian asks: "Why am I not allowed to make the article say outright the E.U. is a sui generis entity?" and receives an answer that refers to Wikipedia policy of verifiability and using reliable sources (see 3.2): "we'll have to do it as a citation of someone authoritative saying that the EU is best described as a sui generis". On the other hand, the term is viewed as confusing to the reader and a form of non-definition since it does not give any insight into what the EU actually is. To give examples of Wikipedians objecting to the use of sui generis based on confusion/non-definition: "If we were really trying hard to discourage people from reading the article, an obscure legal latinism in the lede is a good way to go about it" and "as Orwell pointed out, do not use an esoteric term when a generic one will do" or "It means nothing. That term could be applied to everything".

Community and union

In 2007, the term 'community' is discussed on the basis of the term's connotations. As Musolff (2004) notes, certain terms may evoke notions of close, even familial relation – the following posting demonstrates Wikipedians' increasing awareness of particular term's potential to frame the EU as a metaphorical family: "Have to say I didn't like the word 'community'. […] The word 'community' is not normally used to describe something as hard-edged as a complex business deal like this." The same Wikipedian later repeats the point: "I remain bothered by 'community', which still to me implies too much a collection of happy friends living together." After extended debate, the other Wikipedians involved concede the point to a degree – finally, on 19 November 2007, they arrive at 'community of states' in order to avoid association with personal relationships, i.e. a community of *people*.

However, the discussion continues, e.g. "I prefer the terms political and economic union and sui generis" and then "[s]urely the European Union can be described as a Union?". Finally, on 23 June 2008, the word 'union' is introduced on the Wikipedia article page (European Union: Revision history, Wikipedia, 2016). The Wikipedia community retains 'union' as their descriptor of choice on the front stage with minor disagreement on whether to link to the Wikipedia article 'union' or not based on the fact that this article describes 'union' as a form of state: "The first sentence of Wikipedia's article on political unions says: 'A political union is a type of state which is composed of or created out of smaller states'". The Wikipedians then decide to leave the term 'union' in the article but without a hyperlink to the article on 'union' in order to, again, avoid implications of the EU in any form being a 'state' or 'country'. In 2012 the term 'union' is once again confirmed for usage: "Strongly support. This was the long-standing consensus, arrived at after lengthy discussions. The European Union describes itself as a union." All in all, the Wikipedia community arrives at a tautology as outcome of its discussions.

Miscellaneous terms/concepts

Other terms the Wikipedia community discusses briefly and rejects are 'association' (six concordance lines), 'partnership' (five lines) and 'organis[z]ation' (twelve lines). Examining all occurrences of each item shows that neither of these terms are heavily debated as applicable to the EU or not. Principally, they are rejected since they are not deemed 'enough'/'strong enough', for instance, a Wikipedian rejects 'association' as "it implies something considerably weaker that what is currently there", another Wikipedian opposes 'association' as the term is deemed "FAR FAR too weak" and, with respect to organisation: "The EU is more than an organisation", "EU is more than a simple organisation" and, finally pointing to 'union': "I'm not too keen on 'association' (though I could perhaps live with it) because the European Union is, and designates itself as a union".

5.2 Negotiating Sovereignty

Section 5.1 has shown that the discussions of whether the EU is a country, a federation, a confederation or something else entirely consistently address issues connected to the sovereignty of EU member states and the institution. This thematic focus detected through the qualitative examination of concordance lines is reflected in the quantitative perspective

on the data – 'sovereignty' and related terms consistently rank above the significance threshold in the collocation list of 'eu': 'sovereign' collocates with 'eu' at a t-score of 4.50, 'sovereignty' at 2.93, 'power' at 4.18, 'powers' at 2.15 and 'independent' at 2.18. What is more, the Wikipedia community shows some awareness that sovereignty is a difficult and problematic subject matter in the context of their discussions about the nature of the EU, e.g. "someone will revert the lede […] because of a confusion between ultimate sovereignty and currrent constitutional primacy" and "[s]overeignty […] is the conflict at the heart of the EU".

This section, therefore, presents a more in-depth discussion of findings pertaining to this central issue.

5.2.1   The EU's Sovereignty

The Wikipedia community rejects various terms proposed to describe the EU on the basis of the idea that these descriptors would overstate the EU's status as a sovereign (see 5.1) – this fact alone already gives an inkling that the dominant conception of the EU amongst the Wikipedia community is not one of a sovereign.

The EU is not a sovereign

Indeed, the concordance lines of 'power*', 'sovereign*' and 'independen*' confirm that the EU is *not* represented as a sovereign, for example: "[the EU] has no sovereignty of its own", "[t]he EU is not sovereign", "the EU is not a sovereign nation", "the EU is not a sovereign entity", "EU has only the authority and powers which the countries decided to give to it" and "[m]ember States remain completely sovereign and independent" and "the countries governments still have supreme independent authority over the European Union".

Of 15 co-occcurrences of 'souvereign*' with 'eu' that address whether the EU is a sovereign or not, only one posting (in two concordance lines) actually accepts this notion of a sovereign EU. This posting, made in 2012, suggests that the Treaty of Lisbon (see 1.2) might have changed the EU's status to that of a true sovereign:

> there is a strong argument that the EU is now "sovereign" with the Treaty of Lisbon changes as it now has its own legal personality in international law […] Obviously this is just my opinion, but I think some views expressed her regarding "sovereignty" of the EU are based on a pre-2009 concept of the EU, which has changed drastically since then

Interestingly, subsequent postings do not acknowledge or respond to the EU's supposed change in status regarding sovereignty. Additionally, the EU is consistently portrayed as not sovereign or at least not fully sovereign throughout the corpus even after the above posting, e.g.: "the EU is not a sovereign" and "[i]t has no sovereignty of its own and its members enjoy full sovereignty".[43]

The most intense rejection of the EU as a sovereign portrays the European Union as a mere instrument to the member states:

> Sovereign nations derive their right to act from their existence. They can do whatever they like internally, and whatever anyone lets them get away with externally. The EU is not a sovereign entity (though it is attempting to become one). For the most part it is simply the arbiter of treaties agreed between the member states, where each has agreed to do something. It is literally simply an administrative bureaucracy set up by those states to carry out their wishes freely agreed to.

The poster opens with an explanation of what makes nations 'sovereign' with an emphasis on these actors' 'right to act' – they do not have to do anything in order to achieve this. Rather, their mere existence validates them as entities – actors in terms of *systemic functional grammar* – that have maximum freedom of action: they "can do whatever they like" internally and to the degree the unspecified "anyone" allows them, externally. After this discussion of what being sovereign entails, the posting gives an insight into a particular conception of the EU. First, the poster rejects the EU as sovereign: "the EU is not a sovereign entity". Then, they immediately ascribe an agenda to the institution, namely the acquisition of sovereign status, which, in line with this poster's description, would mean an increase of freedom to act internally and externally limited only by outside forces. The poster weakens this statement concerning the institution's motivations slightly by putting it in brackets. Then the Wikipedian proceeds to give their understanding of the EU as is: it is "simply the arbiter of treaties agreed between the member states". After the focus on sovereign entities' ability to act, to even do "whatever they like" and declaring the EU non-sovereign, the use of 'simply' serves to further highlight the EU's lack of sovereignty and inability to act independently. The nominalisation of the process 'to arbitrate' might serve to portray the EU as relatively static, inactive entity. In addition, the treaties are described more closely as 'agreed between the member states' – circumstantialised, the member

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[43] This is especially notable as even scholars working in the field are not entirely clear or at least have not reached consensus on the EU's and its members' status in terms of sovereignty even after the inception of the Treaty of Lisbon (see 1.2).

states are here referred to metonymically as social actors that first have to agree on treaties which are only then arbitrated by the EU. The poster drives home their point about the almost negligible role of the EU in their last sentence: "literally simply an administrative bureaucracy set up by those states to carry out their wishes freely agreed to". The repetition of 'simply' again serves the purpose to represent the EU's role as minor, which is intensified with 'literally'. It is, also again, the member states that are actors of a (metaphorical) material process – they set up this bureaucracy which then engages in a material process: it carries out the states' wishes that they 'freely agreed to'. Thus, the EU engages in action but only after it was acted on (set up) and only to serve as an instrument. Finally, the peculiar phrasing of 'freely agreeing to wishes' drives home that the states have ultimate power to do as they will: not only does the EU serve to realise their "wishes" but the members have to 'agree to' these wishes voluntarily. The view that the EU is conceived of as mere instrument is reinforced by the same Wikipedian's later posting: "[the EU] is a bureaucracy set up by treaty to administer and enforce those treaties already agreed to by the states involved".

Despite the fact that the dominant view is that the EU is not a sovereign, the corpus contains statements that propose that the EU has evolved and that the institution does have at least certain characteristics associated with sovereign entities. The following contribution, for example, refers to the institution's changing nature – it proclaims that in the beginning the EU was subject to the member states but that the situation has changed somewhat: "The EU has become much more independant with time, but it was created as a servant of the member state". Even more permissive with respect to the EU's status is: "The European Union has many features that are normally only held by sovereign countries." The possessive attributive relational process here does not define the EU as sovereign but ascribes at least features of sovereign countries to the union. The poster then lists some of these features apparently associated with sovereignty: "flag", "anthem", "currency", "supremacy of its law over that of its member states" and "direct applicability of (some of) its laws in member states". Thus, among the listed items that the EU is said to have in common with "sovereign countries" are symbolic items, such as the flag and anthem but also references to the degree of power the union has in terms of its laws potentially superseding member states' laws.

Overall, the EU is discussed as a non-sovereign entity. However, the Wikipedia community also acknowledges the EU's evolution towards exhibiting more and more

aspects associated with sovereign entities. In this context the Wikipedia community also mentions who wishes for, or works towards, increasing the EU's sovereignty.

The agenda of attaining sovereignty and future speculation

Systemic functional grammar aids in making sense of how the community discusses the agenda of making the EU a sovereign, e.g.: "whilst there is no doubt that the EU behaves like (and certain people would like it to be) a sovereign nation in it's own right, at the moment it is not" – this editor proclaims that the EU as social actor behaves in certain ways, namely as a sovereign, without specifying what this behaviour entails. In addition, they then ascribe an agenda to a genericised group of people – wanting the EU to be a sovereign. At last, they claim that the EU is not a sovereign at the time of posting. Apart from the juxtaposition of 'agenda: sovereignty' versus 'EU as is', the posting is remarkable because it does not only ascribe a certain behaviour to the EU, but also an agenda supporting this behaviour to an unknown group of people. In this context, the following posting is also remarkable:

> a sovereign nation would be any state that has been recognized in the past or the present as independent nation state. The EU, rightly, has never claimed to be one. The only confusion stems from the fact that there are people out there who (and everybody is entitled to their opinion) would like the EU to become a federal united states of Europe, but sometimes mix up the idea of what they would like the EU to become with what the EU presently is.

This poster explicitly states that the EU, as sayer, has not "claimed" sovereignty – the choice of verb is remarkable since 'to claim' implies that this might be contested. The use of 'rightly' can best be interpreted by drawing on Martin and White's *appraisal theory*: 'rightly' expresses attitude by constituting positive judgement in the subclass social sanction: propriety, i.e. how ethical something/someone is (Martin & White, 2007, p. 52). Thus, it can be argued that the poster approves of the EU's non-claim. Then, comparable to the above example, the editor claims that a genericised group of people wishes for the EU to become a federation, i.e. a sovereign with dependent constituents. They add that these people "sometimes" confuse wishful thinking with present reality – the editor states that the EU is not a federal country "presently".

Another noteworthy posting discusses the EU's state of being, an alleged agenda regarding the EU's future as sovereign and, in this context, references particular member states. These references take the form of objectivation, i.e. metonymic references to the people of, and who act on behalf of, these members:

> His stance is that of the German media in general, that the EU should eventually become an advanced federal state. […] this will never be the case. Unsurprisingly this then leads people in this camp to attack countries such as Poland and the UK for "holding the EU back", when instead it is simply that there is no common interest in integrating beyond what is necessary

Here, the poster uses a strawman argument to ascribe an agenda to another editor and the German media. The poster claims that these actors want to create a federal state, which can be interpreted as referring to increasing the EU's sovereignty since the concept of federation is defined in reference to its meaning in terms of sovereignty (see above). The poster then strongly denies that that is a potential future development ("never"). Thus, this editor implies that desires with respect to the EU's future are tied to member states/parts of member states, e.g. German media as wishing for European integration. The editor proceeds with a genericisation: "people in this camp" attack countries, for "holding the EU back" (with examples in the form of the UK and Poland), which implies that the union is undergoing a process that can be stalled by member countries and again reinforces that differences concerning wishes for the future development of the EU can be delineated on the level of member states (rather than for instance being tied to individual preference). The poster closes with the claim that, in actuality, there is no common interest in further integration – the complete suppression of social actors with regard to this lack of interest serves to represent it as a commonly shared perspective detached from any particular member state.

Apart from ascribing an agenda to certain people, another Wikipedian merely speculates about future developments sketching a development from confederation to unitary entity. Any actors bringing about such development are curiously absent:

> The EU currently resembles an alliance or maybe a confederation more than anything, and bear in mind that historically confederations either dissolve or become federations. And that federations either dissolve or become unitary states.

This Wikipedian is in principal agreement with the preceding poster – they do not ascribe the EU status as sovereign. However, they sketch their anticipated evolution of the EU – either from confederation to federation to unitary state or from confederation to dissolution. While they do not refer to the EU when sketching this move, their opening statement establishes the EU as confederation. Therefore, when taking a historical perspective on the evolution of "confederations", it is actually the EU's development that is alluded to and the EU's future is speculated about in form of an argument from history.

Furthermore, this posting already gives an insight into the continuum of sovereignty reaching from unitary state to loose confederation; this is discussed in more detail in 5.3.

On the whole, the idea of the EU as *full* sovereign is rejected. Furthermore, sovereignty inspires speculation about the EU's future, and the EU or certain groups of people are ascribed an agenda of wanting to increase the institution's power and sovereignty. Additionally, it is important to point out that there is no change over time given – throughout the corpus, the Wikipedia community reiterates the EU as not fully sovereign. Moreover, throughout the corpus, i.e. across the observed time period, the community continues to oscillate between views of the EU as holding no power whatsoever to having some but rather limited authority. Moreover, the fact that the community speculates on potential future developments in these discussions allows the conclusion that the EU is not represented as a finished product, but rather as still a developing entity. This is confirmed by a relatively recent posting from 2013:

> Until a Treaty comes about in which the signatories explicitly state that they are surrendering their sovereignty to a new sovereign entity […] then the situation remains that the EU is merely a pooling of powers given to it (in perpetuity, though redeemable) by its members, who are sovereign.

This last quotation connects to the following subsection as it touches upon another important aspect of the discussions surrounding sovereignty, authority and independence – it is also the state of the EU *members'* sovereignty that concerns the Wikipedia community.

5.2.2 The Member States' Sovereignty

The concordance perspective on 'sovereignty' confirms that the Wikipedia community discusses members' sovereignty and the extent thereof. For example, alphabetically sorted concordance lines of one and two places to the left of the node word 'sovereignty' show that of 51 lines of 'sovereignty' altogether, 29 lines discuss EU member states' treatment of sovereignty including their retention, loss or sharing of partial or full sovereignty.

Member states as predominantly sovereign

First, the idea of gradability of sovereignty is drawn upon in 13 of the 29 concordance lines, that is, sovereignty is discussed in degrees, such as "limited sovereignty", "full sovereignty", "degree of sovereignty" and "ultimate sovereignty". Expanding the concordance view shows that this gradable view of sovereignty indeed pertains to the EU

member states, for instance, "states of EU are of limited sovereignty", "Members of EU not has full sovereignty" and "the degree of sovereignty of the members".

Some 15 of the concordance lines dealing with members' sovereignty refer to the passing/non-passing of sovereignty[44] between the *EU* and its *member states.* Unsurprisingly, the focus is on members as having retained sovereignty. Eleven lines in Table 13 depict the members as fully sovereign (lines one, four, seven, nine to fifteen) and the majority of these lines also present the member states in actor position and EU as beneficiary. Only four lines have the EU as actor: two in 'depriving' members of sovereignty, or 'deriving' it from the members, while two lines refer to 'respecting' and 'maintaining' members' sovereignty (see Table 13). This focus on members as actors might have the effect of portraying the members as the ones who are in power to make decisions (even if this decision means a reduction in independence).

Another perspective is that the EU's member states have partially transferred their sovereignty. However, this perspective is less dominant and only lines two, three, six and eight (Table 13) propose that the members have not retained full sovereignty. What is more, except for line six,[45] these lines merely suggest a transfer of a *degree* of sovereignty.

Table 13 Passing/nonpassing of sovereignty

	Sovereignty transferred or not [italics added]
1	[states retain sovereignty] [u]ntil a Treaty comes about in which the signatories explicitly state that they are **surrendering** their sovereignty
2	member states have **delegated** part of their national sovereignty
3	the member states have **ceded** some of their sovereignty
4	don't […] regard joining the EU as **giving up** any sovereignty
5	without it in any way **deriving from** the sovereignty/identity of the nations involved
6	the **Transfer** of sovereignty has been very unequal
7	[the EU is not a full union since] full union would require **loss of** [members'] sovereignty
8	you **hand over** a lot of sovereignty too
9	[this is not the case but there are] fears that it will ultimately **deprive** member states of their sovereignty
10	sovereignty ultimately **lies with** the member states
11	the component states **retain** sovereignty
12	sovereignty in things like […] **is retained** by the constituent states
13	its members **enjoy** full sovereignty
14	EU **respects** the sovereignty of its members

[44] as an ontological metaphor – a substance or body that can be moved
[45] where the actor of this 'transfer' is backgrounded, i.e. the members' alleged lack of sovereignty is hidden

15	EU […] still **maintains** the sovereignty of the member states

The concordance lines of 'power*' and 'authority' confirm that the community debates the give and take of power between the EU and the member states in the sense of members for the most part retaining power, e.g. "national government have not given the EU the power to do so" and "EU has only the authority and powers which the countries decided to give to it".

The verbs and nouns that express the transfer of sovereignty (listed in bold in Table 13) between EU and member states are noteworthy since they are overwhelmingly negatively charged – the occurrence of 'to lose', 'to surrender', 'to deprive of', 'to give up' in this context exemplifies that reduction of member state sovereignty is not desired. This is supported by the use of positively connoted verbs when discussing members' retention of sovereignty, such as 'respect' and 'enjoy' sovereignty.

There is also an alternative to this oppositional framing 'EU versus members – give/take sovereignty': member states are represented as combining their sovereignty. In this version of the EU, the member states as actors cooperate and metaphorically 'pool' their sovereignty. The EU does not take a beneficiary role in this context, rather the focus is on nation states cooperating; this focus backgrounds the EU and evokes the idea of the EU as merely a result of members' decision to share/pool sovereignty and power (see Table 14).

Table 14 Grouping sovereignty

sovereignty as collected/grouped [italics added]
It is a community of nation-states which have decided **to pool** their sovereignty
have twenty-seven countries that fully decided to work together and **to pool** their sovereignty
solve our common problems through the **sharing of** sovereignty
their [members'] sovereignty is **"pooled"** (but not to the same extent as
EU is the opposite, 27 countries **pooled** their souvereignty and are still enacting legislation

The concordance lines of 'power*' and 'authority' again support this finding, for instance, "nations have pooled their authority" and "EU is merely a pooling of powers given to it", "it is a 'pooling' of powers".

The limitations of member states' sovereignty

A thread produced in 2007 addresses various perspectives on EU members' sovereignty and, thereby, serves to illustrate the community's treatment of the EU perfectly. What is more, this more than ten year old thread already touches upon recent political developments, namely the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU and the Scottish Independence Referendum, and is, in that sense, particularly topical. Thus, the following discussion homes in on this thread and teases out the competing positions presented.

The thread opens with the abovementioned posting and idea of the EU as an administrative bureaucracy with the purpose to arbitrate the treaties agreed on by the member states – to facilitate readability, the majority of the thread is given here, including the first posting already cited in section 5.2.1:

> Sovereign nations derive their right to act from their existence. They can do whatever they like internally, and whatever anyone lets them get away with externally. The EU is not a sovereign entity (though it is attempting to become one). For the most part it is simply the arbiter of treaties agreed between the member states, where each has agreed to do something. It is literally simply an administrative bureaucracy set up by those states to carry out their wishes freely agreed to.

Another poster disagrees:

> The base idea of a "Sovereign nation" is a load of --round objects-- as there is no such thing. But if you want to apply it, lets switch it round to the member state. Can they do what they like internally? No, they are bound by the EU. Hence, neither are sovereign. There has never been complete sovereignty as external forces have always limited the capability of a state to act to its full theoretical degree. Hence I totally disagree with the above, further more an administrative bureaucracy can be applied to any state, all they do is make and apply laws all day and night. So what is the extra point that makes an administrative bureaucracy a state? Foreign policy? Well the EU conducts that, might not be as dramatic but even outside the CFSP, look at ECHO,[46] a huge aid provider. That is not the world of an administrative bureaucracy.

This poster focuses on the range of action available to the members as allegedly 'sovereign nations' and argues, through a question they proceed to answer, that their freedom to do "whatever" is not unlimited. The poster uses a metaphoric material process – 'to bind' highlights 'imprisonment', 'restricted freedom' when saying that the member states are "bound by" the EU,[47] who is the actor of a grammatically passivised statement while the

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[46] CFSP = Common Foreign and Security Policy; ECHO = European Civil and Humanitarian Protection Aid Operations
[47] 'EU' is here a metonymic reference to the people who represent and work for the institution.

member states are recipients of action. The Wikipedian proceeds to declare neither the member states nor the EU a sovereign drawing on the idea of sovereignty as a gradable concept which has never been "complete" but restricted by "external forces". This suppresses who might have had limited sovereignty in the past and, due to this lack of a definitive actor, makes the point difficult to challenge. More importantly, the historicisation in the sense of this limitation "always" having been the case serves to legitimise the EU's role as impeding on the absolute sovereignty of member states now since, according to this poster, sovereignty has never been absolute anyway. The poster then asks another question in which they make clear that 'statehood' is understood as enveloping 'administrative bureaucracy' by using the phrase "extra point". This is where the key claim is introduced: 'the EU is not (merely) an administrative bureaucracy (it could even be classified as state)'; the warrant is 'since an entity with foreign policy etc. is not an administrative bureaucracy' and the data on which the argument hinges are ECHO, CFSP and the EU as "huge aid provider". The final sentence reiterates that the EU is not an administrative bureaucracy but does not go as far as stating that it could be classified a state.

The subsequent long posting was made by the same Wikipedian who started the thread. In order to facilitate readability, the posting is here split up into several parts interspersed with discussion. The Wikipedian first refutes the preceding perspective on members' limited sovereignty and reinforces member states' independence. This representation of the members as all-powerful reinforces the EU's above representation as relatively powerless and entirely dependent on its members:

> The individual nations are free to do whatever they want. France can simply announce it no longer wants to accept the treaties, just pass a law annulling them, and erect border controls with all the other nations. I doubt they will, but they have the right to do so.

So far, the poster has reiterated the idea that member states are "free", i.e. sovereign.[48] The data that support the poster's claim is the example: 'France: rejects EU treaties (EU treaties and the Schengen borders)' with the warrant: 'since members are able to eschew EU rule anytime'. The poster expresses doubt that the vision they created will come to pass but asserts with certainty that, in principle, EU member states have the "right" to reject the EU, its treaties and its effects (e.g. the Schengen area).

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[48] 'Free' can be interpreted as reference to sovereignty here since the Wikipedian referred to sovereignty as meaning such freedom in the preceding posting.

The poster then switches to the EU as actor but still focuses on what the EU is powerless to do:

> The EU, under its new president, can not tear up the treaties and expell all foreign nationals from its borders. It has no territory. Now, if it had an army then it could try occupying some teritory and claiming it as its own, but on the whole I thing this idea is a nonsense

The second sentence speculates about a hypothetical scenario: if EU had X, it "could try" to claim territory. Apart from condition X not being given, the EU is only said to be 'able to try', that is, even though actor of the clauses, it is represented as rather powerless. Additionally, the EU is, implicitly, represented as not having or being a territory but an entity divorced from any land mass. Finally, the whole scenario is dismissed as 'nonsense'. A notable aspect of this posting with respect to the representation of the EU is that the metonymic reference to the union cannot be interpreted as spatialisation (since the poster explicitly rejects the idea of the EU as geographic body). Rather, 'EU' can be interpreted as referring to representatives of the institutional bodies of the EU.

The Wikipedian then adds:

> Even within the UK there are scots nationalists who seek a free, independant Scotland. All they have to do, basically, is get all the other Scots to agree, and tear up the treaty making the scottish parliament subordinate to the English one. Ok, there is no legal mechanism to do that, but I'm sure a good revolt and a bit of shooting (even shouting) would suffice. The point is that Scotland has territory which could be reclaimed.

The poster here gives another example of an entity that does not have full sovereignty but has territory and could, according to their logic, regain full sovereignty: Scotland. The poster charts potential action for "scots nationalists" to establish independence from the UK (convince the rest of Scotland, etc.) – their main point is to demonstrate that Scotland has territory that could be reclaimed[49] to attain independence. This is contrasted with the EU, which would have to first, form an army and second, define "some teritory" to claim.

> There are probably historical precedents where states have voluntarily combined and created a new entity, but I think this only becomes a state in its own right when it has the power to hold those component parts against their will to depart. At present there still exists a straightforward mechanism for any nation to go its own way, or for all the states to do so and dissolve the EU. It isn't going to happen, but all that says it the club is so self-evidently a good thing to belong to that few want to leave it. But they could.

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[49] 'reclaim' indicates that the territory was under Scottish power at some point

The poster speculates about historical predecessors to the EU as they see it: 'states that voluntarily join forces to create a new entity'. According to this editor, such an entity only attains state-status when it has the power to retain its components "against their will". After this statement, the editor refers to the existence of "straightforward" procedures that allow departure of an EU member state or even the total dissolution of the EU – this was and still is not true. First of all, the Lisbon Treaty was not in effect in 2007, that is, there were no procedural steps detailing potential exit mechanisms, let alone procedures to dissolve the EU. As part of the Lisbon Treaty, article 50 came into effect in 2009 but even this article does *not precisely* stipulate the form such an exit scenario takes, as can be seen from the current situation regarding Brexit. The Wikipedian then expresses their conviction (dissolution of EU/leaving of EU members "isn't going to happen") but states that this is due to the fact that the EU – "the club" – is "self-evidently a good thing to belong to", so members would not want to leave *even though they could*. The full stop before the final adversative conjunction reinforces the power of this last statement. This is further supported by the fact that in the original formatting, the poster concludes the paragraph with this statement and then begins a new one (even though using multi-paragraph format in Wikipedia's thread-system is an exceptional occurrence).

In the next part of the posting, the Wikipedian continues to demonstrate what they perceive as member states' independence/sovereignty and the EU's relative powerless status as mere proposer of laws within very narrow guidelines given by the member states. The poster details the British situation in 2007 as they see it to make this point:

> The EU does not make any laws in the UK. Every law in the UK is made by the british parliament at westminster. The EU proposes new laws in accord with the founding regulations in the treaties which created it, and acting upon the instructions of the representatives of member states. OK, these laws are frequently just enacted on the nod, but the important principle is that under British law, any and all of them could be repealed or revoked within a week, if the UK government wished.

The excerpts begins with the EU as actor in a negated material process: EU does not make laws. This is followed by a grammatical passivation but social actor activation of the by-agent – the British parliament at Westminster. Here, adding the location might have the function of emphasising that decision-making occurs on British soil. This is followed by a verbal process: the EU 'proposes' (but does not make) laws limited within the framework of the treaties that set up the EU. Then, in a material process, the EU acts but only 'on instructions' of member state representatives, i.e. the members' representatives are sayer

in this nominalised verbal process that instigates EU action. The poster then concedes that there might not be much resistance to these EU proposals ("on the nod"); however, the poster also argues that "any and all" EU-inspired laws could be taken out of British law within an extremely short period of time ("within a week") if the government so wished. While we do not know yet if and how Brexit will play out, it is now at least certain that the proposed scenario is more than questionable – immediate withdrawal is obviously not possible.

The last two parts of this 2007 posting address a fellow Wikipedian who had claimed the EU as beyond administrative bureaucracy due to the negotiation of an EU constitution and the Lisbon Treaty (which was being negotiated at the time of this debate). Here, the poster again reinforces EU members as powerful versus the EU as relatively powerless but with an agenda to achieve state-status (i.e. having all the freedom this Wikipedian previously ascribed to states).

> [Wikipedian's name], I am sure the official position of the british government is that the treaty currently under consideration is just another treaty which will make no difference to the status of the EU. I agree the idea of a constitution was intended to solidify the slightly ghostly existence of the EU, but that is one of the objections to it which has caused it to be downgraded to a 'treaty'. As to your point that the current new treaty may have the effect of creating something more than a bureaucracy, er, this is wiki and what you just said is that currently it is simply a bureaucracy, at least until there is a new treaty, so as wikipedians we ought to be calling it what it is now, not what it may become.

Here, the poster ascribes an "official position", i.e. an outwardly-directed position, to the British government: the new EU treaty does not and will not change the above description of how the EU and its member states function together. In the second sentence the poster agrees with the other Wikipedian: the formerly planned constitution had the purpose to "solidify" the EU's "ghostly" existence – the metaphor here expressing that the constitution would have lent more power to the EU. The poster then claims with certainty that it was precisely this intended strengthening that led to objections to the constitution (with suppression of sayers who 'objected'), which, in turn, led to a 'downgrading', i.e. weakening from 'constitution' to merely a 'treaty' (see 1.2). The Wikipedian then re-iterates that "currently" the EU is still "simply a bureaucracy" and Wikipedia should focus on the current situation. They attempt to elevate credibility of this claim by use of a strawman – they assert that it had been the addressee who had stated that the EU was such a bureaucracy (which the addressee had actually not done).

Finally, the poster ends with:

> If you want to say it is simply a bureaucracy set up to administer a treaty, but it has aspirations to become a state in its own right, that might be correct and we could say it. I do not think that would do as an introduction, because it would then underplay the complexity and large degreee of autonomy which the EU does enjoy. However, at present I don't think the introductory sentence and definition quite hits the mark. The EU as an entity is servant, not master.

The Wikipedian seemingly offers a compromise that represents the EU as an instrument to the all-powerful members but also as an entity with 'aspirations' of becoming a state, i.e. this objectivated 'EU', possibly a metonymy for EU representatives and politicians, is depicted as having goal-orientation. This apparent compromise is immediately followed by a statement about the problem with such a representation of the EU in the Wikipedian article – according to this editor, it would understate the EU's complexity and considerable autonomy. The poster does not elaborate what autonomy they refer to here, even though this appears to be a surprising change of opinion. Regardless, the poster finally returns to their core claim: the EU as entity "is servant, not master", which again portrays the relationship between EU and its members with a strong focus on who has power (members) versus who does not (EU).

To conclude the discussion of this thread, finally one Wikipedian lists what the Wikipedia community should (not) do with respect to the EU's and members' sovereignty. The following list proclaims the EU as somewhere in-between sovereign and arbiter of treaties amongst members:

> - we should not state that the EU is a sovereign unitary state in international law;
> - we should not state the EU is simply an administrative bureaucracy;
> - we should not state that the EU is a supranational entity in all respects;
> - we should not state without qualification that British law has supremacy over EU law
> - we may state (with suitable qualification) that EU law has supremacy (or priority) over national law in specific areas.

These points are not contested in the given discussion thread. Consequently, the EU is confirmed as non-sovereign but beyond a mere administrative bureaucracy. With respect to the member states, despite the lengthy post discussed above, the community arrives at agreeing to the EU's laws as having supremacy over state law in certain respects. The reverse, i.e. the idea that member state laws have supremacy, is negated.

Change over time

All in all, the question of whether member state sovereignty is completely retained is exceptionally heated, as the 2007 thread demonstrates. It is also not fully resolved in the sense of the community agreeing on a clear 'yes' or 'no'. However, the dominant view is that member state sovereignty is retained and this view does not change over time: e.g. in 2004 it is stated that sovereignty ultimately "lies with" the members and the same view is still echoed in 2013: "EU countries remain sovereign states, until treaties making this explicitly different come into action". The notion that Wikipedia should represent the EU as not constituting an imposition on member states' sovereignty is also highlighted in the following 2008 posting:

> Wikipedia should follow mainstream accepted interpretations (which tend to err on the safe side) hence we do not attribute the EU anything that conflicts with the sovereignty of its members (without clear agreement of these countries)

This editor indicates that there is a dominant – a "mainstream" and "accepted" – construction of the EU and that this tends to be the 'safe' version of the EU, which could be interpreted as referring to the representation that is supportable by sources or being the least controversial view of the EU. Then a causal connection is made: we (in-group marker for the Wikipedia community) should present a safe, dominant perspective on the EU → no representation of the EU that impedes on the *sovereignty* of EU *members*. Thereby this Wikipedian makes clear that the least problematic representation of the EU is one where member state sovereignty is maintained.

5.3   Interim Conclusion

Sections 5.1.1 in particular has shown that the Wikipedia community discusses various terms/concepts and whether to apply them to the EU and, in their debates about certain terms, the editors consistently refer to sovereignty. Especially the terms 'federation', 'confederation' and 'country' are defined and distinguished by their implications concerning sovereignty. Thus these three concepts can be conceived of as placed along a continuum that is graded with respect to the degree of sovereignty the overarching entity and its constituents hold. Figure 19 illustrates this scale of sovereignty reaching from unitary state to confederation; however, it does not incorporate certain terms – 'sui generis' could not be classified since the term is merely a placeholder to describe a unique entity. Additionally, 'community' cannot be classified in terms of sovereignty as the term's

rejection is based on its implications concerning interpersonal relations (cf. Musolff, 2004, pp. 13–29). There is little discussion on the terms association/organisation. However, the repeated emphasis on these terms as being 'too weak' for the EU could be interpreted as reference to entities that are less sovereign than confederations (see 5.1.5).

Constituents' sovereignty

low   high

Country / unitary /   federal state /   confederation
nation state   federation

Figure 19 Scale of sovereignty

It is not possible to draw ultimate conclusions with regard to where the Wikipedia community places the EU on this continuum of sovereignty. Still, the community appears to favour a position close to the 'confederation' end of the spectrum, which is indicated by several factors. Firstly, this is a heavily debated descriptor and it is rejected with least intensity (apart from the agreed upon 'union'). Secondly, the main reason for rejecting 'confederation' is a lack of source material stating that the EU can be defined as such. In contrast, both country and federation are rejected to a higher degree on the basis of issues connected to sovereignty. Thirdly, section 5.2 illustrates that the Wikipedia community ascribes sovereignty to the EU member states. By comparison, the community does not discuss the EU as fully sovereign but only acknowledges that the union has attained some autonomy and decision-making power.

The community also ascribes an agenda to the EU or to certain groups of people, namely the goal to further empower the EU and maybe have it move from confederation to federation to, finally, sovereign state. This move is represented as not desirable, not least due to the focus on the member states' sovereignty and the expressed wish for member state sovereignty to be retained.

Another point worth noting here is the broader conception of the EU that the analysis of this subcorpus brings to light – the community predominantly discusses the EU as an entity and institution that is separable and indeed separate from its constituents with its own behaviour and agenda; working for or even against its constituents. Regardless of whether the community argues for or against a particular point, one constant throughout the corpus is that the EU is sketched as non-identical with its members and the people and peoples that inhabit the territory associated with the EU. Apart from the fact that the

consistent discussion of (non-)transfer of sovereignty *between* EU and members already drives home this division, there are also numerous other examples that illustrate the overarching conception of the EU as a removed and separate entity, e g. the EU was "set up by those states to carry out their wishes freely agreed to", "the formation of a single state is not an explicit goal of the EU" and "the EU behaves like […] a sovereign nation".

With respect to the Wikipedia article, 'union', as the name the European *Union* chose for itself, is the Wikipedians' non-resolution of the ongoing controversy. In itself it does not make a statement concerning sovereignty because the Wikipedia community ensures that using 'union' does not in any way touch upon or refer to sovereignty – the Wikipedians even discard the option to create a link to the Wikipedia article on 'union' (which describes 'union' as a form of merged entity with a degree of sovereignty). Another point is that in the article, the Wikipedia community refers to the difficulty of categorising the EU and acknowledges the controversial nature of the issue: "The classification […] has been much debated […] by some criteria, it could be classified as a confederation; but it also has many attributes of a federation" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015).

6   Data Discussion – EU culture and language(s)

This subcorpus 'EU culture, language(s) and symbols' consists of 127 threads and 99,105 tokens. The item 'eu' takes place thirteen in the frequency ranking with 1094 occurrences (see Appendix B) and another 42 occurrences when adding the asterisk ('eu*') to account for uses such as 'EU's' (also see rank 364 in Appendix B). This amounts to 1136 occurrences of 'eu*'. The fact that this subcorpus focuses on debating *aspects* of the EU rather than grappling with the EU in its entirety becomes apparent when examining the concordance lines of 'eu*': almost half (580 of 1136) of all lines use it either as noun phrase complement in the form of a prepositional phrase ('X of the EU') or, alternatively, these lines present possessive usage as in "EU's official languages". Third, Wikipedians use compounds with 'eu*' premodifying aspects of culture, symbols and language, e.g. "all official EU languages" and "the EU flag". The collocation list of 'eu*' confirms which aspects the Wikipedia community deals with in this corpus: 'languages' at rank 38, 'culture' at 51, 'motto' at 59 and 'flag' at 77.

It is also important to point out that the following discussion of the data does *not address the symbols of the EU*. This is because the threads on different EU symbols do not provide any new insights with regard to the community's conceptions of the EU. Rather, an examination of these has shown that the associated conversations focus on technical issues. To give an example, 75 per cent of uses of 'motto' (66 of 88 lines) are discussions of whether the alleged EU motto 'In varietate concordia' should be given in all EU languages in the article, whether the source of the translations is reliable and what language the motto was created in, e.g. "[t]here are many official versions of the motto (one of them is the English version)" and "the motto was created by a Luxembourgh youngster in an EU wide contest, in the French language".

6.1   The EU and Culture

The item 'eu' collocates with 'culture' at a t-score of 5.47 (rank 51) and 'cultural' at 2.83 (rank 160). To gain an insight into what the community discusses when referring to culture/cultural/cultures,[50] all 189 occurrences of 'cultur*' are taken into account.

Of 189 concordance lines, 31 focus on the question whether 'sports' should be part of the Wikipedia article's culture section. This issue will not be discussed in detail here

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[50] The plural 'cultures' is only used twice – the low number of plural uses is already indicative of the discussions' focus on one overarching EU culture.

because the debate is actually only driven by one Wikipedian who is then blocked from editing Wikipedia altogether (User:[anonymised], Wikipedia, 2017). This poster is unwilling to accept that the community principally rejects the idea of including sports in the article's culture section and repeatedly posts that 'sports' should indeed be mentioned. Finally the community seemingly gives up, and allows the inclusion of a sports section in the article's culture section, e.g. "Its amazing that we have to compromise with this one person", "The sport section was only really ever there to appease [anonymised]" and "The problem is that [anonymised] has declared the sports section unilaterally sacrocanct". Apart from being driven by one disruptive Wikipedian only, these discussions on sports using 'cultur*' devolve into discussions about culture and/or sports without presenting notable insights concerning the focus of this thesis – the EU. To give an example: "freeze the current sport version (ie subsection of culture, current text and image) and fight it out" and "television is far more a 'major cultural phenomenon of daily interest' than sport".

Another 80 uses of 'cultur*' focus on, e.g. posing general questions on culture, e.g. "I wonder why climate influence on culture is questioned" or they are instances where 'culture' is used as the headline of a thread. Additionally, these uses refer to editing summaries Wikipedians inserted into actual debates on 'culture', e.g. "I made some minor changes towards improvement, mainly some framing of the section and reference to culture of Europe" or are instances where Wikipedians actually discuss another aspect of the EU and mention culture in that context, e.g. a discussion of the EU motto 'In varietate concordia': "varietate would translate to variety which can be of anything, people, culture, language, food".

The remaining 78 lines provide insights into how the community debates the existence of an EU culture and cultural policy in the context of the Wikipedia article (see Table 15). Before discussing these 78 lines it is worth mentioning that the community does not define the term 'culture', even though the lack of a clear and shared understanding of the term is lamented, e.g. "Unless the term [culture] is defined, we're likely to get generalisations".

6.1.1 An EU Culture?

Table 15 Culture and the EU

22 postings: EU culture (does not) exist(s)/46cl	- rejection: no EU culture	10 postings/21cl
	- support: there is an EU culture	7 postings/13cl[51]
	- awareness of issue, no opinion given	5 postings/12cl
28 postings/32cl	- EU policy/EU influence on culture	

A prevalent issue in the discussions involving 'cultur*' is whether there is an EU culture and whether there is a common, shared culture across the EU and/or Europe[52]. This can be seen, for instance, from the fact that 'common' collocates with 'cultur*' at a t-score of 2.97. Apart from this, 'eu' (rank 6, t-score 6.23) and 'european' (rank 10, t-score 4.69) are both collocates of 'cultur*', which gives an inkling of the fact that the Wikipedia community debates EU culture but also draws on the broader idea of European culture.

Moving to the concordance view of the data shows that 46 lines in 22 postings refer to the idea of whether a common EU/European culture exists or not (see Table 16). This is indicated, for instance, by vocabulary that belongs to the semantic field 'similarity and difference', such as 'common', 'homogen*', 'same', 'unit*' and 'differ*'. Apart from this, references to "pan-European", "pan-European Union-culture", "an EU culture", "a EU-European heritage", "core identity" and 'culture in/of/across the EU/Europe' indicate that the focus of discussion is the idea of an overarching shared EU/European culture.

Table 16 'cultur*' – common EU / European culture or not?

1	out scope. A full treatment of European	culture belongs in the 'Europe' article, not this one.
2	or example I am pretty sure the Swedish	culture has more in common with the Norwegian cul
3	s more in common with the Norwegian	culture (non-EU) than with the Romanian culture (E
4	ture (non-EU) than with the Romanian	culture (EU)). that not-withstanding there is some ef
5	e is some effort to come to a common	culture / identity in Europe not only with the educa
6	tion and funding but also in relation to	Culture (cultural capitals), and research (the EU fr
7	ion isn't a country with a well-defined	culture and geography. It's a set of political and le
8	better or worse) over a diverse range of	cultures and places. [anonymised] 12:21, 2 February
9	. Plus, there is a EU-European heritage /	culture and it is mentioned. And for the last times : T
10	scheme are important, and that there IS	cultural aspect? Your link there above, the only t
11	However, there may be some European	culture at a higher level; perhaps a Roman-Hellenis
12	states of the EU share some significant	cultural heritage, but they're not unique in that. The

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[51] Two of these postings are made by one Wikipedian.
[52] The EU and Europe are conflated repeatedly as the discussion below illustrates.

13	itage, but they're not unique in that. The	cultural and geographical entity we know as Europe
14	its predecessors, and is not a part of EU	culture, issue belongs in International relations sec
15	e can talk about all aspects of European	culture in a subsection, while cutting the EU off f
16	think we should have a link to European	culture, and don't talk about anything unless it has a
17	about a political culture??? - European	culture / history being used to bolster the EU. For ex
18	Europe's collective heritage. On generic	cultural issues though, I don't think we can claim to
19	that the EU is helping create a common	culture across Europe? Opening borders beyond the
20	rticles. AND : Of course there is an EU	culture which is present in most of the EU countries;
21	itself, lets not get into if there is an EU	culture or not, it is possible to argue in favour of it or
22	have understood there is a difference in	Culture of the EU and culture in Europe (that coinc
23	is a difference in Culture of the EU and	culture in Europe (that coincidently also is culture in
24	lture in Europe (that coincidently also is	culture in the EU). With your statement about foot
25	culture) AND Football is not part of the	culture of Ukrain and Russia (as they are Europe but
26	450 million people from diverse ethnic,	cultural and linguistic backgrounds." and "German i
27	out that? We could talk about European	culture while linking it firmly to the EU to avoid di
28	d the problem of mixing pan-European	culture and pan-European Union culture by making
29	opean culture and pan-European Union	culture by making such a link in the text. Flights! T
30	se of that leading to a greater mixing of	culture (I for one haven't had an English breakfast in
31	eutral) it comes down to: Yes sports and	culture are essential to show the EU is more than a s
32	r states, there is no specific EU sport /	culture; hence it should not be included. I think this
33	ction that there is an increasing level of	cultural interaction leading to a notable level of cu
34	interaction leading to a notable level of	cultural homogeneousness. In such a case it may be
35	ieved a similar level of homogeneous	culture. [anonymised] (talk) 10:22
36	ot is a particular example of of this	culture, as demonstrated by parallel organisations s
37	n serve as an example of the increasing	cultural connections as a by-product, and indeed in
38	ion of sport here, but something in the	cultural domain at least just to give a more human fa
39	has already merged politics, economy,	culture and interests. This has to be exemplified in t
40	hard to find things that differentiates the	culture of Europe, and the common culture of the
41	the culture of Europe, and the common	culture of the EU. But it's easy do differentiate the
42	e EU. But it's easy do differentiate the	culture of the people of the Middle-East and the p
43	a continent of stark rivals, legal system,	cultural ideas etc etc were all changing and moving i
44	is the quote : "Europeans have different	cultures but the same approach of culture"" I could
45	ferent cultures but the same approach of	Culture"" I couldn't seem to log in (problem with t
46	there is no united approach towards	culture in Europe (particularly post-enlargement for

Twelve concordance lines (in five postings) which address the idea of a shared EU/European culture do not give opinions on the matter. However, they indicate how contentious the issue is – one poster even suggests foregoing discussion of the topic: "lets not get into if there is an EU culture or not, it is possible to argue in favour of it or [not]". Another poster sums up their understanding of opposing standpoints:

> it comes down to: Yes [culture is] essential to show the EU is more than a set of treaties and a bureacracy; hence it should be included. No it is impossible to distinguish between Europe, EU and member states, there is no specific EU sport/culture

While this posting actually touches upon key elements of the controversy, e.g. the differentiation between the EU and Europe, the discussion below gives a more comprehensive understanding of both pro and counter views concerning whether there is an EU culture or not. Thirty-four of the 46 lines, that is, 17 postings of 22, give opinions to that effect (see Table 15 for details on number of postings and lines with respect to pro/counter positions).

An EU culture

The idea that a common EU culture exists is the non-dominant conception. This is indicated already by the low number of supportive postings in this regard – only 13 lines of 'cultur*' (in seven postings) take this position. What is more, the wide-angle co-text view of the associated concordance lines shows that two postings are identifiably one and the same Wikipedian's contributions. This contributor is blocked temporarily – and finally indefinitely – from editing Wikipedia pages due to their edit warring, i.e. unwillingness to engage in constructive editing and debate (see Wikipedia discussion: User:[anonymised], Wikipedia, 2017). Indeed, from the perspective of *argumentation analysis* this editor claims that EU culture exists but does not support this claim: "AND : Of course there is an EU culture" and "there is a EU-European heritage/culture" (lines 20 and nine in Table 16). It is worth noting that the latter example conflates the EU and Europe, i.e. EU and European culture (and heritage) are represented as identical in this posting.

Argumentation analysis also aids in making sense of the remaining five postings and confirms that the pro-perspective is the non-dominant understanding of the EU with regard to culture – an expanded co-text view shows that there are two argumentative strategies. The first relates to how the EU ought to be represented to Wikipedia readers and the second strategy refers to the idea of increasing cooperation across the EU and resulting cultural homogeneity.

With regard to the first strategy, the four postings that use this strategy do *not* actually focus on arguing that an EU culture as such exists but claim that it is important to mention some cultural elements in the Wikipedia article on the EU in order to "to show the EU is more than a set of treaties and a bureacracy". In line 38, a Wikipedian argues that the Wikipedia article on the EU should include reference to "something in the cultural

domain at least just to give [the EU] a more human face". Thus, this Wikipedian argues for inclusions of an aspect of EU culture as a means to an end – in order to create a particular version of the EU for article readers, to humanise it and, arguably, to represent it as an entity beyond a mere institution. Another poster also does not argue that there is an identifiable and overarching unified EU culture per se but merely argues that it is important to "mention what EU citizens have in common" in the article's culture section. The editor supports this with data "[t]he EU is today more than an economic community. I don't see why this article must underline that there's allegedly 'no such thing as an EU identity' and 'the EU is more like a federation than an ordinary organisation':
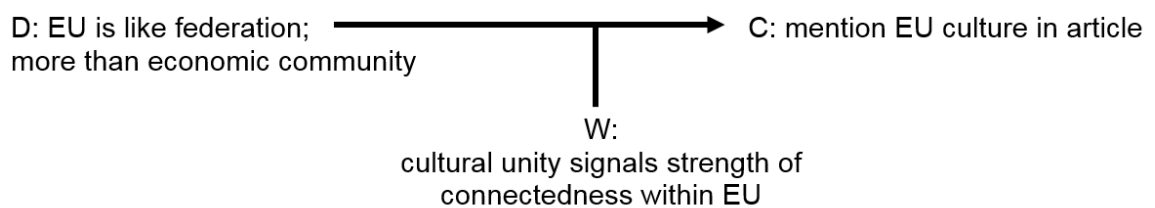
Figure 20 Refer to cultural elements in Wikipedia article

This posting in particular recalls the discussions on the nature of the EU in section 5.1 and whether the EU is more or less than a specific form of organisation. Generally, the focus on *mentioning* EU culture and the lack of definitive claims concerning the existence of a unified EU culture indicates that the pro-unified-culture perspective is the non-dominant one.

The remaining one posting that argues that there is a unified EU culture draws on the abovementioned second strategy: the Wikipedian argues that there is increasing cultural cohesion due to closer cooperation/contact within the EU (lines 33 and 34 in Table 16): "due to the [EU] […] there is an increasing level of cultural interaction leading to a notable level of cultural homogeneousness". Here, cultural unification is presented as a work in progress rather than a given condition. Moreover, the EU is presented as the cause for this increasing interaction and integration.

On the whole, the position that there is a unified EU culture is the non-dominant perspective as indicated by the low number of pro-postings and confirmed by the closer examination of these pro-postings. Interestingly, the postings suggest that reference to cultural communality in the EU ought to convey that the EU is 'more than' and 'beyond' a bureaucracy, which touches upon the findings presented in chapter 5. The following section addresses the postings that reject the idea that a unified EU culture exists.

No EU culture

21 concordance lines (ten postings), i.e. the majority of postings that give opinions on the matter, take the view that there is no EU culture at present. Moving from a mere corpus-assisted perspective on the data to an examination in terms of *argumentation analysis* shows that this claim is made on the basis of three strategies: first, one posting makes reference to EU enlargement and resulting cultural diversity. Second, two postings draw on the view that the EU is not a country (also see 5.1.1) and therefore does not have a culture and third, six postings suggest that the EU and Europe are difficult to distinguish and an EU culture separate and distinguishable from 'European' culture does not exist.[53]

One 2008 posting that incorporates concordance line 46 in Table 16 uses the first strategy. This Wikipedian responds to the idea of a common European 'approach' to culture:

> Many people would argue that there is no united approach towards culture in Europe (particularly post-enlargement for goodness sake how anybody can claim it is insane).

Four aspects deserve particular attention here. First, the Wikipedian refers to "culture in Europe" and then mentions enlargement – this enlargement is an *EU* process and does not refer to Europe as a whole, i.e. this posting presents an instance where a Wikipedian conflates the EU and Europe. The second noteworthy aspect is that the poster presents their claim 'no unified culture' in form of an *argumentum ad populum* ("[m]any people") to elevate credibility. However, the continuation of the posting makes clear that the claim is, apparently, rather *personal* as indicated by the interjection "for goodness sake", which serves an emotive function (cf. Norrick, 2011, p. 247). The editor then judges the idea that anybody could make a claim for a common culture "insane". Thereby, they draw on an *argumentum ad lapidem*, i.e. the poster dismisses pro-common-culture claims as absurd without giving sufficient support regarding why that is the case. The third and connected notable aspect is that the claim is based on data left very vague – it is limited to the mention of EU enlargement and readers are left to infer the intended meaning of this reference to enlargement. The warrant that connects data and claim can also be inferred: the view that the member states participating in the enlargement are particularly culturally diverse and different from the culture(s) that comprised the EU until then (see Figure 21). Thus, the

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[53] This leaves one posting where the Wikipedian rejects the idea of an EU culture without any support.

post-2004 and 2007 EU (see 1.2 on background information on the EU) is represented as diverse and non-unified, at least culturally.

D: enlargement, in particular, leads to cultural diversity in the EU / Europe ⟶ C: no shared European / EU culture

W: enlargement means the addition of different cultures to the EU
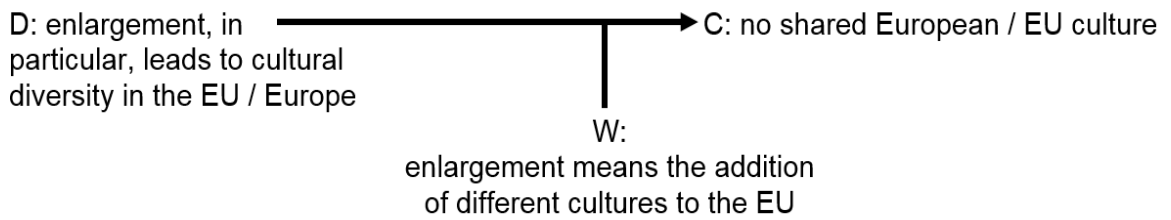
Figure 21 EU culture and enlargement

Fourth and finally, the poster's use of "particularly" implies that this editor views the post-enlargement EU as *especially* non-unified but also implies that there was a lack of unification *to begin with*. That is, the poster implies that enlargement exacerbated an already given condition but does not give any data that supports this idea. Altogether this posting represents the EU as non-unified culturally, in particular, the post-enlargement EU is presented as culturally diverse.

As mentioned above, the second argumentative strategy hinges on the idea that the EU is not a country. To give an example, one Wikipedian claims that "the Union isn't a country with a well-defined culture […] It's a set of political and legal structures imposed (for better or worse) over a diverse range of cultures" (lines seven and eight in Table 16).

D: EU is not a country but a set of political and legal structures ⟶ C: no "well-defined" EU culture

W: countries have well-defined, distinct cultures
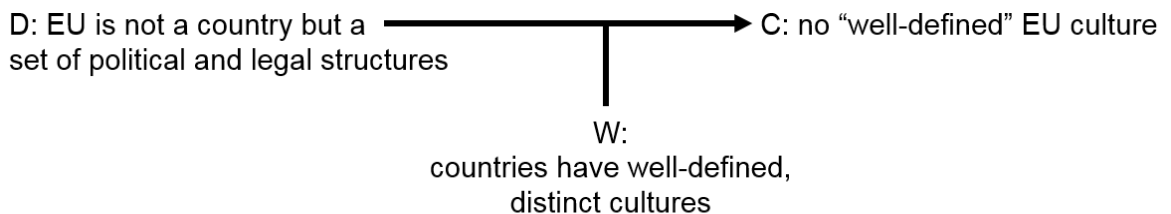
Figure 22 EU culture – the EU is not a country

It is important to point out that the unstated warrant is problematic: the assumption that countries have distinct cultures and that country is quasi-synonymous with cultural homogeneity is highly contestable. Additionally, referring to "a diverse range of cultures" hides the problematic nature of the data since the vague phrasing permits the poster to avoid the difficult task of distinguishing one culture from another.[54] It is also notable that the poster uses the EU defined as not-country as data (see 5.1.1). Indeed, the EU is depicted not even an entity as such. Rather, it is merely a "set of […] structures" – this depicts the

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[54] Moreover, this phrasing can be interpreted as a metonymic reference to the peoples of the EU.

EU as rather devoid of human elements. Moreover, these structures are "imposed" on various cultures – a brief examination of 'impose' in the British National Corpus (Davies, 2004) shows a distinctly negative semantic prosody, i.e. the term "is primed to co-occur with unpleasant events" (Partington, 2004, p. 135): among the top fifty collocates that are 'imposed' are: obligations, sanctions, penalties, constraints, restrictions and taxes to name but a few, i.e. the EU is not depicted as positive and welcome. The specific actor who imposes these structures is backgrounded, which serves to further hide any human element involved in the EU. Then there is the addition of "for better or worse", which can be interpreted as alluding to the inexorability with which these structures are imposed irrespective of whether they do harm or good. Thus, altogether, the poster gives an extremely critical perspective on the EU and paints a version of the EU as a rather cold set of paradigms imposed on various peoples, who as passivated recipients of the action 'impose' are depicted as rather helpless to object to this.

The third argumentative strategy is used in six postings – these postings reject the notion that there is an EU culture based on the importance of distinguishing between the EU and Europe. That is, these editors do not necessarily object to the idea that the peoples of the EU might possibly share certain cultural traits but they ascribe this to them all being located on the continent Europe rather than viewing the EU as connected to or responsible for potential cultural similarities. Concordance line 18 in Table 16 exemplifies the emphasis on distinguishing between the EU and Europe: "I don't think we can claim to an EU cutlure, would be rather arrogant to claim the EU as Europe". Lines twelve and 13 illustrate this idea of cultural similarity across Europe – a Wikipedian rejects the existence of an EU culture and adds: "I agree that the member states of the EU share some significant cultural heritage, but they're not unique in that. The […] entity we know as Europe isn't the same as the EU". This Wikipedian indicates that similarity in terms of "cultural heritage" goes beyond the EU and, thus, one cannot claim the existence of a distinct EU culture. The editor does not elaborate on which other European areas/countries/etc. might also share "cultural heritage" apart from the EU members, but the explicit warrant indicates that it is the rest or a part of European "states" beyond the EU that share in this (see Figure 23)

D: shared cultural heritage is
not unique to EU member states ————————————→ C: no 'EU culture' as such

W:
1, the EU ≠ Europe
2, cultural similarity between EU members does
not automatically mean that there is an 'EU culture'
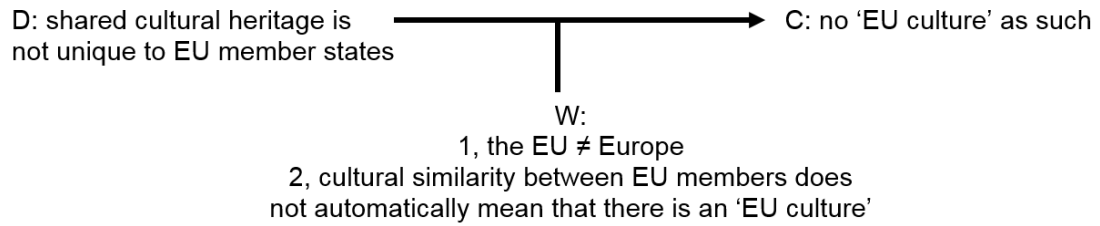
Figure 23 No EU culture since the EU ≠ Europe

Future EU culture

Of ten rejection postings, four postings (seven lines) also entertain the notion of a common culture in the future. For instance, the posting encompassing lines two, three, four and five in Table 16 uses the abovementioned third strategy, i.e. a rejection on the basis of distinguishing between the EU and Europe. That is, while cultural similarity between EU member states is acknowledged, it is not the EU as institution that is associated with this similarity. Instead, the editor implies that the geography of Europe as a continent is the source of similarity. The poster rejects the idea of an EU culture and adds:

> I agree with [anonymised] that we have to distinguish carefully between EU and Europe (for example I am pretty sure the Swedish culture has more in common with the Norwegian culture (non-EU) than with the Romanian culture (EU)). that not-withstanding there is some effort to come to a common culture/identity.

In terms of *argumentation analysis*, this posting opens by providing *backing* to the warrant of the overarching argument 'there is no EU culture' – backing is defined as an additional body of information with the purpose of supporting the warrant (Kienpointner, 2018, p. 233) (see Figure 24 for argument structure including backing).

D: shared culture is not ————————————→ C: no 'EU culture' as such exists
unique to EU member states

W:
1, the EU ≠ Europe
2, cultural similarity between EU members does
not mean that there is an 'EU culture'

Backing:
EU member and non-member (SE & NO)
more culturally similar than EU member and EU member (SE &RO)
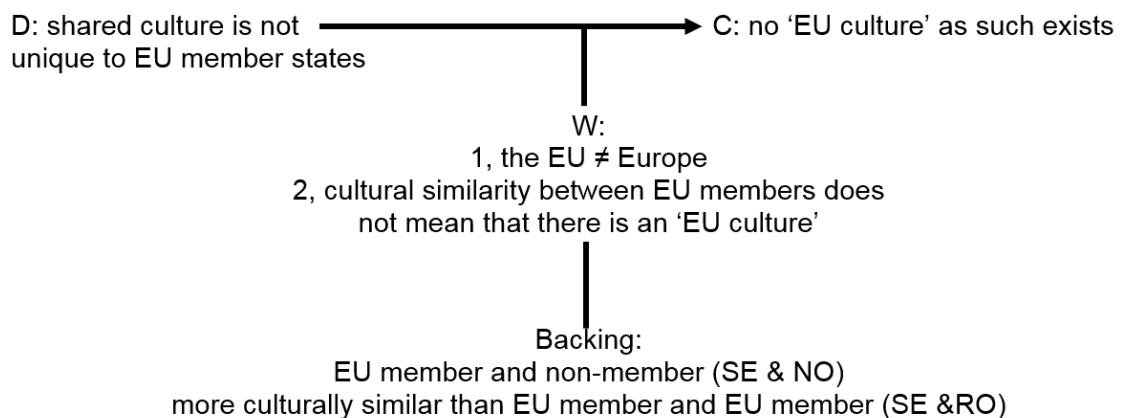
Figure 24 Backing the warrant 'EU ≠ Europe'

Before discussing this posting's reference to future cultural sharedness, the backing information is noteworthy – in principle, backing the warrant 'EU ≠ Europe' by providing

additional information might serve to compensate for the lack of specific data and strengthen the argument overall. The poster proposes – with a high degree of certainty ("pretty sure") – that a particular EU member and a non-member state are more alike culturally than two EU member states and thereby implies that nation state is quasi synonymous with cultural identity, i.e. cultures can be distinguished in accordance with nationality. Apart from this notable point, the posting touches upon possible future sharedness as follows: building on the examples of Sweden, Norway and Romania, the poster introduces *contrast* to the preceding sentence with the conjunction "notwithstanding" following "that", i.e. a deictic marker referring to their backing information. Thus, the poster builds on the idea of cultural difference in the EU. They propose that, while presently there is no "common" EU "culture/identity", an unknown, suppressed social actor makes an "effort" in the present to arrive at a shared EU "culture/identity" at some future point.

Another example also illustrates how the idea of an EU culture is rejected on the basis of distinguishing the EU from the continent of Europe (line one in Table 16) but then the editor continues to, again, entertain the possibility of a common culture or "identity" in the future: "those elements of the institution that want closer integration are attempting to encourage a common sense of identity […]. This is an interesting development". This posting refers to an effort at present to come to a common EU culture. The topicality of this effort is expressed by use of the present progressive tense ("are attempting"). However, this posting differs from the preceding example as it gives a fragmented perspective on the EU: the institution is depicted as consisting of various parts that do not all work towards the same goals. Instead, only some "elements" push for further integration and a shared "sense of identity". Furthermore, referring to "elements" rather than an identifiable actor or group of actors evokes a rather cool, mechanical, non-human picture of the EU – it is not human beings who are part of the EU that "want" certain things.

Change over time – focus on EU policy

The majority of discussions on the issue of EU culture or not take place in 2007 and the view that, presently, there is no identifiable EU culture as such prevails, with ten versus seven postings. The majority of rejection postings emphasises the importance of distinguishing between the EU and Europe and, while they do not necessarily reject the idea of cultural similarities amongst particular EU members as such, they do not ascribe such possible homogeneity to the existence of an EU culture.

Based on this rejection, from 2008 onwards, the community considers an alternative solution, namely a focus on EU cultural *policy*. A corpus linguistic perspective on the data allows the observation of this pattern: a right sort of the concordance lines of 'cultur*' (see Figure 25) shows that the community discusses EU policy and programmes or, more generally, EU influence/action on culture, in 32 lines of 'cultur*' (28 postings).[55]

Figure 25 Excerpt right-sort of 'cultur*'

Only six lines in five postings refer to concrete aspects of what is EU cultural policy, namely the cultural capital (four lines in four postings) and cultural month (two lines in one posting) schemes: "when Sibiu is replaced as Cultural Capital in 2 month" or "we mention the European culture month scheme".

Of the remaining 26 lines (23 postings), 24 lines in 22 postings indicate that restricting the culture section in the Wikipedia article on the EU to policies and programmes is the way forward, for instance:

> We can certainly include EU cultural and sporting policy, and the ways in which they're implemented; they wouldn't exist as such without the EU. But the sports, literature, music, art, philosophy etc exist independently of the EU, except inasmuch as they are the subject of EU policy

This decision to focus on policy is reiterated repeatedly, e.g. a Wikipedian suggests they might "get it [the article] to work if we rewrote culture along those kind of lines EU acts which have influenced culture", another states that "[i]f there is a policy then we mention it" and yet another editor cautions the community only to mention aspects "relevant to a discussion on the EU's influence over culture".

Only two lines in one postings counter this consensus: "The top of the section is dealing with some cultural pollicies [...] we should give somethign more about the actual EU culture". Unsurprisingly, this posting is met with Wikipedians' rejecting the notion that an EU culture exists and the original consensus to focus on EU cultural policy is maintained.

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[55] Check Table 15 for distribution of concordance lines.

Thus, focusing on describing EU policy or, at most, concrete EU action and influence on culture, concludes the discussion for the time being.[56] Even though the Wikipedia community's debates concerning 'sports and culture' are not discussed in depth in this thesis, it is worth pointing out that these debates confirm that the community agrees to focus on EU policies in the article. To give a brief example of how this is reflected in a debate on whether to incorporate 'sports culture', a Wikipedian argues against this on the basis of lack of EU input: "football […] not relevant to a discussion on the EU's influence over culture".

Overall, the Wikipedia community rejects the idea of a shared culture distinct to the EU. Instead, the Wikipedians resort to focusing on EU cultural policy. However, despite the fact that the community ultimately rejects the notion of a shared EU culture (not least due to the difficulty of delineating a possible EU culture from European culture), in the course of their discussion, the Wikipedians refer to some concrete cultural elements that might be shared across the EU – section 6.1.2 homes in on these.

6.1.2   Potential Cultural Elements Shared across the EU

The question that is as of yet unanswered is *what*, precisely, the Wikipedia community discusses in regards to shared elements of EU culture. In order to gain an insight into concrete elements the Wikipedia community evaluates as possibly part of an EU culture, the following discussion revisits all concordance lines of 'cultur*' and extracts those lines that are part of postings that mention such elements. Additionally, since culture is regularly discussed jointly with identity, (e.g. "have a policy to create a European identity or culture"), this discussion also examines the 25 occurrences of 'identity'.[57] In turn, 'identity' is discussed jointly with 'values', e.g. "circle of influences around the values/identity". Therefore, of the 27 occurrences of 'value*', the nine relevant ones are also examined for mentions of such cultural elements.[58]

First and foremost, it is noteworthy that 'value*' is used exclusively to mention that the issue of EU values is controversial. That is, throughout the entire corpus, the Wikipedia community does *not* actually enter into a debate about concrete potential 'EU values', e.g.

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[56] Apart from one Wikipedian (now blocked indefinitely) who continuously insists that there is a (sports) culture that should be discussed in the article.

[57] This search was done without the asterisk as wildcard since there is no occurrence of the plural in the corpus.

[58] There are only nine occurrences that are 'relevant', i.e. refer to 'value*' in the sense of attitudes, norms and outlook.

"there are and will be editors who will almost hysterical react about these 2 words 'Identity and values' in context with EU. It triggers very explosive irrationality". Particularly noteworthy with respect to accusations of bias beyond the individual is this posting: "['identity and values'] seems to be coloured by the POV of an editor from a single EU-state, reflecting things that are probably closer to the national outlook of that country on the EU then a neutral view". The posting presumes two things – first, that the unnamed contributor is from an EU member state and second, and more strikingly, that it is not just editors' – as individuals – POV and potential bias that is the issue. Rather, they suggest that the collective people from each EU member state have a specific outlook and perspective on the EU.

In addition to not debating concrete EU values, the sparsity of postings that refer to concrete cultural elements is worth mentioning. Only 23 postings incorporating 51 lines of 'cultur*' (49 lines) and/or 'identity' (two lines), discuss concrete elements. Apart from the references to concrete cultural policy (see e.g. reference to cultural capital scheme above), there are three aspects of culture and identity that are considered amongst the Wikipedians. First, the community debates history and common heritage as a shared cultural element, second, the community debates religion, and third, the Erasmus programme, i.e. part of the EU's education policy, is discussed as concrete cultural element. The following sections address postings on these topics in more detail.

History and heritage

One aspect is the idea of a common *history* and resulting *heritage*. Of 23 postings that mention specific cultural items as connected to EU culture and identity, nine postings draw on the idea of a common heritage based on common history.

It is notable that the Wikipedia community is aware that historical narratives play a central role in legitimising the EU's existence. The first thread on identity and culture (produced in 2006) already shows this:

> Part of the process of building a national identity for the European Union will be to produce a history of Europe that justifies the EU's existence. How about "millenia of war"? Is that justification enough for a peaceful union?

First, this posting underscores the importance of a historical narrative for the creation of a collective "national" identity. Interestingly, this presumes that a process aimed at creating an EU national identity is underway (see 5.1 for a discussion of the EU as a country). Second, it posits that the history of Europe ought to serve to justify the EU's existence,

that is, the poster differentiates between the EU as institution versus the continent Europe. It is also interesting that the poster suggests 'producing' a history of Europe, i.e. they implicitly acknowledge that history is constructed post hoc and this construction can be used to certain ends – here to justify the EU's existence.[59] Third, this Wikipedian already enters into creating such a legitimising narrative for the EU. In terms of *argumentation analysis*, their argument is structured as follows:

D: Europe – history of war ⟶ C: existence of EU justified

W:
EU is a peacebuilder
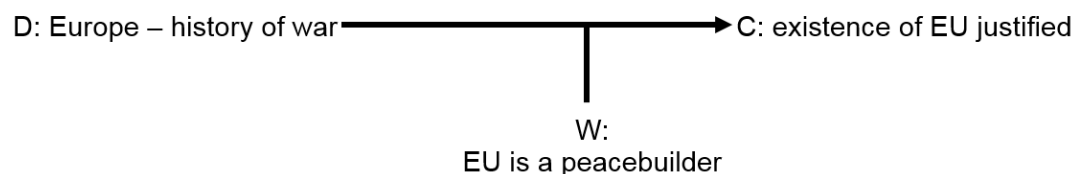
Figure 26 Legitimising the EU

The Wikipedian bases their claim on the idea that European history has been dominated by war. The warrant can be inferred from the Wikipedian's reference to the EU as "peaceful union" – the existence of the EU is justified since the EU is a peacebuilder.[60] Overall, the EU is represented as a peacebuilding institution or even a guarantor of peace. Regardless, responding Wikipedians consider this representation too coloured by POV and reject the inclusion of such a representation of the EU in the article.

Apart from postings that generally suggest the existence of a shared history, there are also Wikipedians who propose concrete aspects of history that might be shared and could possibly be mentioned in the Wikipedia article on the EU. Before discussing these elements in more detail, it is worth noting that these posters consistently conflate the EU with Europe as indicated by the fact that the editors repeatedly refer to 'Europe' and 'European' in spite of the fact that they are posting on the Wikipedia TP underlying the article on the EU, i.e. the subject matter is the EU and not the broader 'Europe'. Even though the community is generally aware that the institution is not identical with the continent (see 6.1.1), it can be concluded that the Wikipedia community's conception of the institution EU is closely tied to Europe as a continent – not merely geographically but also culturally.

One Wikipedian proposes that the following items/time periods are indicative of a "European identity" and could be included in the culture section of the article on the EU:

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[59] The legitimising power of constructing history and a historical narrative is a key reason for my decision to focus on the 'history of the EU' for my examination presented in chapter 7.
[60] Another part of the warrant is 'since peace is preferred to war'.

"greek democracy, latin language, roman law, middleage, christianity, reformation, enlightment, liberal tradition and pluralism." The posting consists of a listing of mostly consecutive historical developments. It incorporates elements, time periods and evolutions tied to world view: apart from 'Greek democracy' and 'Roman law' which are aspects of how societies function and are organised, the poster mentions 'Christianity', 'Reformation', 'Enlightenment', 'liberal tradition' and 'pluralism'. Thereby, the posting gives a particular perspective on the EU: the poster chooses to mention several historical developments rather than others and thus highlights these as particularly notable concerning the EU and, more generally, "European identity" today. Implicitly, the EU is framed as a democratic institution with Roman legal structures. Additionally, the alleged importance of Christianity (and connected issues, e.g. Reformation) concerning the EU is emphasised.[61] The references to enlightenment, liberalism and pluralism are slightly problematic since these terms cover many different meanings, that is, leaving them undefined leaves room for interpretation and controversy regarding their precise meaning. Still, the Wikipedian's decision to mention these concepts complements their sketch of the EU as an institution that, allegedly, relies on notions of, for instance, rational-critical thought, individual liberty(ies) and the acceptance of a society consisting of individuals with diverse interests.[62] Comparably, another posting speculates about a "European culture" in the form of "a Roman-Hellenistic past; individualistic outlook". This posting could be interpreted as another generalised reference to these aspects of Graeco-Roman history and liberalism.

Another extensive posting – aiming to rework the EU article's culture section – also discusses aspects of Greek-Roman history but again focuses on "Europe":

> - The history of Europe is heavily influenced by Greek-Roman. Many roads follow the old roman highways, the whole empirical scientific approach (as opposed to the eastern holistic outlook) is based in Roman-Greek philosophy, our law system is based on Roman law (where the state prosecutes instead of the harmed party being allowed to take revenge), the architecture especially in the renaissance is based on Greek and Roman architecture. Everybody knows or at least has heard about the Homerian stories about the Trojan Horse, the Cyclops, or the legend of Hercules (albeit the Disney version). So I think the Greek-Roman heritage is a bit more influential […]
> - There is undeniable evidence the of the influence of Judeo-Christianity. The monotheistic belief system (pretty rare except Christianity, Judais, and Islam), the

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[61] see more on religion below
[62] These notions are my interpretation of what "enlightenment", "liberal tradition" and "pluralism" signify, which is shaped by my Western background and education.

seven days weeks with a 'divine' resting day (Sunday). Religious holidays (Christmas, Easter). Church towers dominating many of the European landscapes.

The first bullet point presents a claim-data-claim structure, i.e. the first and the last sentence state the claim. Despite some imprecision concerning phrasing,[63] the intended claim can be identified as 'Graeco-Roman heritage influences Europe (and the EU)'. Figure 27 shows that the argument's data give a remarkable insight into this Wikipedian's understanding of modern-day Europe and the EU.

D:
- Roman highways → roads today
- Graeco-Roman philosophy
→ empirical scientific approach
- Roman law → our legal system
- common knowledge in Europe:
'everybody' knows Homer's stories

C: Graeco-Roman heritage
   influences Europe (and the EU)

W:
1, since having today's roads following Roman highways, etc.
is indicative of the past (specifically the Graeco-Roman era) influencing the present
2, European culture = EU culture

Figure 27 Graeco-Roman heritage

Apart from reference to architecture and infrastructure, the poster's reference to 'Europe' as taking an "empirical scientific approach" in contrast to the "eastern holistic outlook" is notable. By establishing opposition, the Wikipedian grounds Europe and the EU in the West and ascribes a different "outlook" to the 'East'. Moreover, the reference to Roman law is noteworthy – here the poster assumes insider status, i.e. speaks from the perspective of 'Europe' or even the EU, which might elevate their credibility, i.e. they refer to "our" legal system. Then they elaborate on their understanding of the difference between Roman law and other legal systems: the focus is on the right to take "revenge" – an idea that conflicts with the notion of rule of law, which rejects vigilante justice and pushes for fair trials and an independent court (World Justice Project, 2017). Lastly, pursuing an *argumentum ad populum* strategy, the poster presents their last piece of data: 'everybody' knows Homer's stories but does not detail how they presume to know that that is the case or explain how this alleged sharedness of stories/body of knowledge influences Europe. The warrant of the argument has to be inferred and deserves brief attention: one part is

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[63] The poster claims that the "*history* of Europe" [italics added] is influenced when, actually, their examples refer to present-day Europe. There is one exception where the poster's questionable phrasing of the claim makes sense, namely the reference to Renaissance architecture – here it is actually European history that is described as affected.

especially remarkable as it illustrates the problematic conflation of the EU and Europe. The editor, despite posting on the Wikipedia TP focused on the EU, refers to "Europe" when listing potential cultural traits in their contribution.[64] All in all, the poster's sketch of Europe and the EU includes a particular understanding of how to achieve insight (empirical approach) and how society is organised in terms of legal structure, i.e. in accordance with Roman law. Furthermore, the poster gives an insight into the physical appearance of Europe/the EU – Roman roads as underlying current roads – and presumes shared common knowledge among the population: Homer's stories.

Claim and data two of the posting above hint at another cultural/identity aspect discussed amongst Wikipedians – a common religion. The poster claims that 'Judeo-Christianity influences Europe'. The data to the claim consist of: monotheism, resting day (with reference to Sunday, i.e. Christian resting day), religious holidays (reference to Christian festivities) and church towers in European landscape. Without going into a detailed examination of this part of the posting due to spatial limitations, it is central to point out that three of these four listed items refer to *Christian* religious aspects. Thus, the focus here is on a representing Europe/the EU as influenced by predominantly *Christianity* both in physical appearance (church towers) and everyday life (resting day).

Religion and religious heritage

As the example above shows, religion is another point of discussion in terms of EU culture – seven of the 23 postings citing cultural elements in the EU refer to aspects of religion.

In discussions on EU culture with respect to religions, the community agrees that the EU ought to be represented as secular and as a non-religious organisation, e.g. "the EU is a secular organisation". To give a more extensive example that also illustrates that the EU's secular status is not controversial, there is a brief discussion whether to include information on a Roman Catholic patron saint for the EU. The following posting argues against the inclusion on the basis of the EU's secularity:

> [i]t would give undue weight to the arbitrary and irrelevant announcement of one religious denomination. Such an announcement […] does not affect the state, actions or the sources/motivations of actions of the organization we are describing

In terms of *argumentation analysis*, the poster claims that a patron saint should not be mentioned. This is based on the data: 'EU and its actions and motivations are not affected

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[64] As my discussion in 6.1.1 shows, the Wikipedia community identifies this a problematic, highlights the importance of distinguishing the EU and Europe and ultimately rejects the idea of a distinct EU culture.

by a religion's representatives' actions'. The warrant is also made explicit: since mentioning the announcement would unduly tie the EU to Roman Catholicism. The community does not challenge this posting, illustrating the Wikipedia community's uncontroversial consensus that the EU, in principle, ought to be understood and represented as a secular institution. In spite of this explicit consensus, it is important to highlight that the community repeatedly focuses on (strands of) Christianity when discussing religion (see example above in *History and heritage* and see discussion below).

While there is no notable controversy with regard to religion in the context of EU culture, in the course of the debate, the Wikipedia community touches upon another issue that deserves to be examined briefly in spite of the fact that it constitutes a slight departure from the community's focus on EU culture. When discussing cultural elements, the Wikipedians briefly debate the potential effects of members' religious heritage on the EU and, in this discussion, explore potential sources of tension within the EU. One posting proposes that religious heritage is such a source of tension and is met with:

> I personally don't believe that religious heritage is a particularly significant source of division between member states. The EU has three dominant religious heritages – Catholicism, Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy – and I don't really see any evidence of relationships between EU states based on these heritages. Many Catholic-heritage countries have more in common with Protestant-heritage countries than with other Catholic-heritage countries.

This Wikipedian claims: religious heritage is *not* a significant divisive factor. Then they introduce the first part of data where they focus on the three presumably "dominant" *Christian* strands. Then, they restate and narrow their claim: no impact of *these* heritages, i.e. the mentioned Christian ones, on relationships between member states. The subsequent sentence on communality and difference between member states is the second part of the data "[m]any Catholic-heritage countries have more in common with Protestant-heritage countries" – incidentally, this data statement also incorporates the idea that each member country has one identifiable religion. Altogether, this Wikipedian represents the EU in terms of religious past, again, as predominantly shaped by *Christian* religious strands. Furthermore, the editor minimises the role of religious past on intra-EU relations and, interestingly, these relationships are limited to nation state's relations and do not, for instance, move to the level of societal subgroups' or even individuals' relations with one another. It is also notable that the Wikipedian attributes particular religions to specific member countries and does not consider the breadth of religions present within member states.

While also not strictly pertaining to EU culture as such, the remainder of the posting still deserves some attention as it points towards another potential source of tensions within the EU: after rejecting religious heritage as a source of division, the Wikipedian presents their idea of what might actually be divisive factors – past political systems of member states and religious versus non-religious member states:

> […] significant determinant of relations between EU member states is political heritage, manifested in the divide between the old and new member states as well as (arguably) the divide between those states which had authoritarian regimes up until the 1970s and those which have an entrenched history of democracy. Another source of division is that between the more secularised and irreligious members of the Union, and those where religion plays a more significant role.

The data underpinning the claim are relatively vague and present dichotomies of one versus another, even though polar representation is slightly weakened by gradation in the form of 'more' in the last sentence.

D:
1, divide of old vs. news members
2, divide of history of democracy vs. authoritarian regimes
3, divide of more vs. less religious members

C: political heritage affects relations amongst members, relations ("division") among members affected by religiosity

W:
lack of similarity is a reliable indicator of division
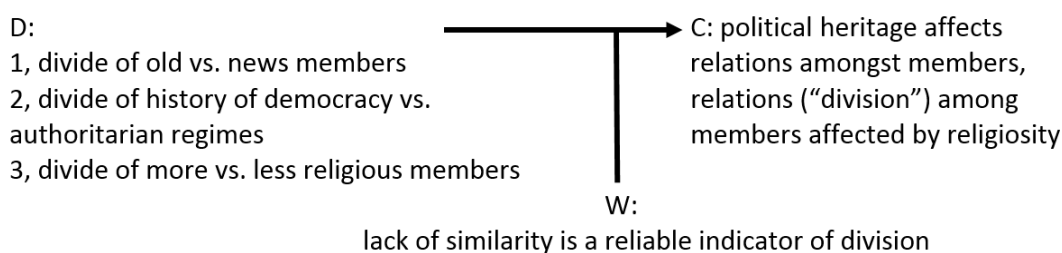
Figure 28 Another reason for perceived division

The 'old' and 'new' members are not specified, which might serve to strengthen credibility of the main claim but hides the fact that EU enlargement is a gradual process and there are no absolutes which are 'old' and 'new' members. The Wikipedian also does not specify states that have, presumably, an "entrenched history" of democracy versus a non-democratic past or the ones that are perceived as more or less secular. By leaving these members unspecified, the editor again avoids the complex reality, e.g. the fact that democratic versus non-democratic history does not always align with state borders[65] or that democracy might be a relative concept itself. Moreover, they use of "entrenched history" is conveniently vague – no time period is specified that qualifies the use of "entrenched". Another point worth noting briefly is that this Wikipedian apparently considers "authoritarian regimes" in the past, i.e. EU members do not have such forms of

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[65] For example, it is doubtful if Germany can be described in its entirety to be a member state with "an entrenched history of democracy" as parts of it were not governed democratically until 1990.

governance anymore. The warrant can be inferred, namely that the existence of differences amongst EU members is indicative of a "divide". Finally, it is worth mentioning that the community does not challenge the given focus on Christianity, nor does it challenge the broader idea that there is indeed division in the EU on the level of the member states.

Erasmus programme

The last element that deserves brief mention is the repeated and uncontested postings with respect to the Erasmus education programme: "things like Erasmus are part of the pan-EU culture", "Erasmus yes, you could call that part of identity" and "things like the Erasmus scheme are important, and [are] a cultural aspect". The Erasmus programme is defined repeatedly, not merely concerning the concrete actions taken as part of the programme, but purpose and effect are cited – these definitions contain vocabulary that emphasise, for lack of a better phrase, 'international togetherness': "And the core experience, or lets say value, is that European students learning together *coming together*", "The Erasmus programme […] is an exchange (or better) part time international programme where the students are educated in a foreign country […] different nationalities *coming together*" and "Erasmus […] an *interaction* of people" [italics added]. The Wikipedia community apparently understands the EU education policy 'Erasmus' as boosting international communication and exchange and, possibly, part of an EU identity/culture.

All in all, in terms of concrete cultural elements, the community refers to a common past, religion/religious history with emphasis on Christianity and, finally, the EU's Erasmus programme. Generally, the discussion of concrete cultural elements is very limited, possibly due to the community's aforementioned decision to focus on EU cultural policy. Another notable point is that the Wikipedia community does not touch on aspects of institutional culture at all.

In contrast to this lack of debate about a potential EU institutional culture, the following section demonstrates that the Wikipedia community's treatment of EU languages largely focuses on institutional policy.

6.2   The EU and Its Language(s)

The prominence of the debate on the EU's languages is reflected by the fact that the search term 'eu' collocates with 'language' at 6.05 (rank 50) and 'languages' at 6.80 (rank 38). In turn, 'language*' collocates with 'official' at a t-score of 10.45, which indicates that the

community focuses on the EU's official language(s) when debating language in connection with the European Union. Comparably, 'language*' collocates with 'foreign' at a considerable but still markedly lower t-score of 3.14 and with 'second' at 3.13.

6.2.1 The EU's Official Languages

A corpus perspective on the data shows that 61 of 90 co-occurrences of 'official' and 'language*' are part of discussions about what the official language or languages of the EU are.[66] These 61 lines discuss the EU languages with focus on two aspects: first, 44 concordance lines encompass uncontroversial conversations on whether particular languages are official EU languages, e.g. "Latin isn't an official EU language", "Turkish is an official language of Cyprus, but not of the EU" and "English isn't the official language, it's just the most commonly spoken one". The latter example already leads to the second and particularly notable usage of 'official' as premodifying 'language*' – 17 lines are part of threads where Wikipedians focus on the EU's language policy and the role of English.

English as the official EU language

The majority of these 17 lines are explanations of the EU's multilingual policy, e.g. "[t]he EU has several official languages in which it conducts its business" and "it's also possible to address any EU agency in any official language you want". There is only one thread (encompassing six lines) where this multilingual approach to EU operations is challenged.

First, this 2006 thread shows that the Wikipedia community reacts strongly against the claim that English is *the* official EU language. The thread's initial statement is "In CBC Canada news on the March of 24 to 26 ask the EU put a Offical Language: Engish !" This ungrammatical and therefore slightly ambiguous statement can be interpreted as an argument from authority – it is at least interpreted as a claim by other Wikipedians as their responses in form of refutations of the claim show: e.g. "No it is not! The EU has 20 official languages, and soon even more" – here, the unhedged objection is emphasised by use of an exclamation mark.

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[66] The remaining lines occur as part of thread headings, give editing information and discuss Wikipedia source material or issues relating to EU symbols, e.g. the EU motto or the name of the institution in different languages.

While all responding editors object to the claim of English as the official EU language, one editor argues that English *should* be the only official EU language: "English should be the official language. We don't need 20 official languages cos that's ridiculous."
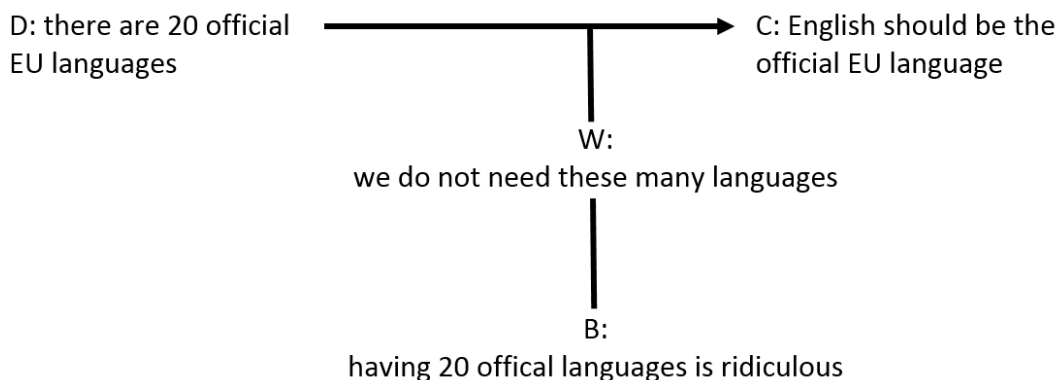
Figure 29 English as the official EU language

The warrant hinges on the implicit data that there are indeed 20 official EU languages, i.e. by use of the warrant the poster acknowledges the existence of the EU multilingual policy even if they do not see the need for it or do not appreciate it. In turn, the warrant is backed by personal judgement only, namely of a variety of official languages as "ridiculous". Moreover, in terms of *social actor representation,* the use of 'we' highlights the in-group status of the poster (as part of the EU) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 45), which might be intended to elevate the speaker's expert status as resident/citizen of the EU and hence serve to legitimise the otherwise questionable argumentation.

The subsequent posting also deserves brief attention. Instead of discussing language, it passes judgement on the EU as a whole: "This is the EU we're talking about. What makes sense has nothing to do with it." In merely two sentences, the EU as a whole is represented in a less than favourable light: after pointing to the EU as main subject matter, the poster disparages the EU as a whole as irrational, illogical and non-sensible.

The last posting in this 2006 thread refutes the claim that English *should* be the official EU language and also makes reference to the preceding disadvantageous conception of the EU.

> Oh, come on! As much as I would like to see English spreading in Europe, it's tendentious to say that English alone should be the only official language. Having 20 official languages makes sense and perpetuates equality throughout the union.

The initial exclamation can be interpreted as another instance of an editor rather forcefully objecting to the original claim about English as official language. Then, the poster implies

that, on a personal level, they would welcome "English spreading in Europe". This personal agreement with the desire behind the original claim serves to strengthen the subsequent rebuttal since the poster refutes the claim irrespective of this personal preference. Moreover, the original claim is deemed "tendentious". Since the NPOV (see 3.2 on Wikipedia policy) is a key goal of Wikipedian, suggesting that a fellow-Wikipedian does not adhere to this policy constitutes a profound challenge. Finally, the poster makes a rather POV statement himself/herself – they claim that the EU's multiplicity of languages not only actually "makes sense" (and thereby reject the previous idea of 'EU=irrational' or at least 'EU's language policy=irrational') and add a broader statement about this policy perpetuating 'equality' across the union, without any data to support this claim. Interestingly, the EU is here represented as a spatial entity – "throughout the union" implies that the EU has a geography. This phrasing also implies an understanding of the EU beyond its institutional body but as enveloping the people(s) of the EU. This posting marks the last instance of discussion on whether English should be the official language of the EU.

Generally, EU's language policy is not particularly controversial and the majority of postings merely focuses on elucidating which languages are official EU languages. The only site of controversy is one thread when English is proposed as the sole official EU language and when the EU's multilingual policy is ridiculed. However, the thread is concluded with the idea that EU multilingualism promotes equality.

In contrast to this focus on institutional language policy, 6.2.2 predominantly addresses how the Wikipedia community deals with language use amongst the people(s) of the EU and how the Wikipedians address the question of which language is used as a means of communication amongst EU residents.

6.2.2 The EU's Lingua Franca and Wikipedia's English

Returning to a corpus-assisted perspective on the data shows that 'language*' also collocates with items such as 'foreign' and 'second' with t-scores above 2.0 (see 6.2). The concordance lines of these co-occurrences give an insight into how Wikipedians debate languages known and used by EU residents in contrast to the focus on the EU as institution, as in 6.2.1. The point of discussion here is the prominence of certain languages within the

EU, e.g. seven of ten concordance lines of 'foreign' and 'language*' and six of eight co-occurrences of 'language*' and 'second'[67] address this.

English as a lingua franca?

The prevalent view is that English is the most dominant language in the union, e.g. "official EU figures state that English is the most spoken/understood language" or "[t]hat English is the most widely spoken foreign language is a claim based on European Commission".

Despite the lack of controversy, the community's discussion of language is notable not least because of its continued focus on national identity, even though national borders clearly do not always coincide with language borders. A 2011 thread called "Lingua franca" incorporates concordance lines of 'language*' co-occurring both with 'foreign' and 'second'. Expanding my examination to the whole thread shows that two postings from this thread illustrate the community's focus on nationality:

> English may be (close to) a lingua franca in specificEU domains (e.g. academia, or international governments, Wikipedia editing) but there is no way that a lowly educated person Estonia can use English to communicate with an equally lowly educated person from Portugal.

In terms of *argumentation analysis*, this poster presents the claim 'English is no EU lingua franca' by first entertaining a partial concession (English used in special domains such as academia) and then creating opposition to this by use of 'but' followed by data that supports 'English as not lingua franca':
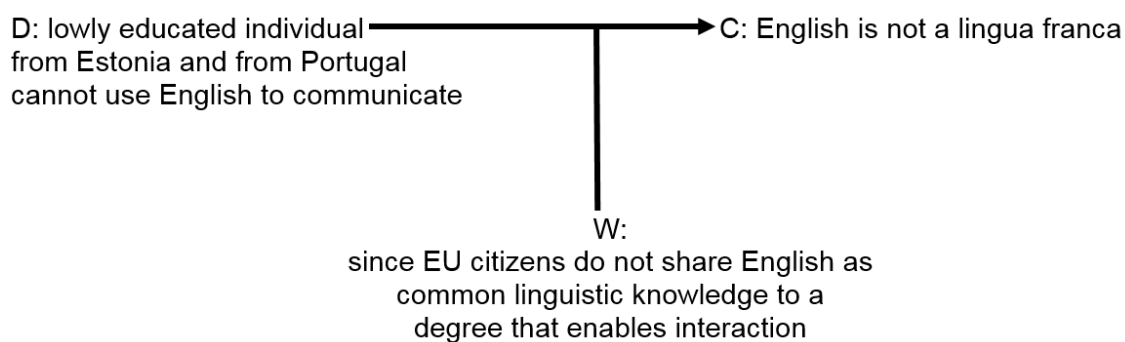
Figure 30 English is not a lingua franca

The data and the implied warrant shed light on the poster's understanding of 'lingua franca in the EU' as reference to a language that allows *citizens from the EU member states* to

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[67] The remaining three lines of 'language*' with 'foreign' and two lines with 'second' are editing comments.

communicate with one another, not merely, for example, governmental institutions. Interestingly, the focus on the EU as institution is finally expanded to incorporate individuals living in the EU. It is also notable that the key identification of the genericised "person" is their nationality.[68]

Nationality as a key identification is also apparent in the second posting from the same thread. Here the poster claims that English is the lingua franca in Europe (and, arguably, the EU as the debate takes place on the TP focused on the EU) and then continues:

> What we do in Europe is speaking the national language at home but English across European borders. It is typically not so that two guys from Spain and Poland speak French or German with each other. If one has to speak another language than one's own one switch to English. […] One simply don't go to Finland to speak French or Portugese if one is born and raised in Greece. […] That is, one speak English when communicating "across borders", such as on the Internet. It means everybody has a national language and English is becoming the common second language across Europe. […] Now, such is the very definition of a [lingua franca]

Without going into too much depth, *argumentation analysis* and *social actor representation* shed light on the central point here:
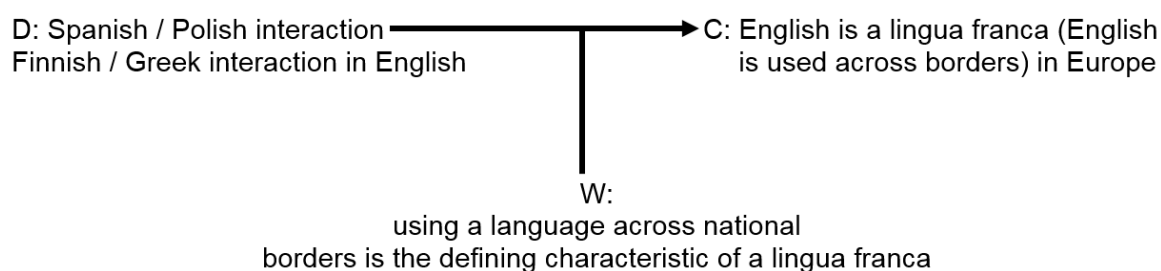
Figure 31 English as a lingua franca

Similar to the preceding poster, this Wikipedian homes in on genericised individuals ("guys", "one", "everybody") with focus on their national identity as a differentiating factor. In the penultimate sentence this focus on national difference is again highlighted by reference to "national language" and English, allegedly as an additional cross-border language, i.e. lingua franca. It is also worth noting that the Wikipedian, at the very beginning, creates an in-group 'Europe(an)' by use of 'we': the Wikipedian subsumes him/herself in the first person plural and adds some information on which group of individuals this 'we' refers to, i.e. 'we in Europe' as acting in certain ways. By assimilating

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[68] Additionally, the poster alludes to an educational divide, i.e. they acknowledge academia as possibly having English as a lingua franca and premodify their sample individuals from different countries as "lowly educated".

him/herself into this group, the Wikipedian creates expert in-group status for him/herself – they are part of this group who adheres to a particular practice (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 45). Thus, they establish credibility and readers are more likely to subscribe to their argument. Moreover, the editor repeatedly adds emphasis by use of the adverbs 'simply', 'typically', and 'very'. Indeed, the status of English as a lingua franca is not challenged after this posting.

There is only one posting in which English as the most dominant foreign and second language is challenged. In a posting from 2007, a Wikipedian proposes alternatives and also provides an insight into which nations they consider central to Europe and the EU:

> their is sometihng wrong. they said that English is the most foreign language people speak there. French is, also, pretty much every country now will teach French as a second[69] language in School. […] France is the main country of Europe, having Paris as the center of economic. FrankFurt is second […] With time, French is becoming more and more used in Europe, while english sits after French. Their is big chances that German language knocks off the Enlgish language also.

After an initial rejection of English as the dominant foreign language in Europe (and, arguably, the EU), the poster claims that French is equally important ("also"). The posting's final two sentences restate, further elucidate on and slightly change the claim concerning the relative importance of French, namely not as equal to English but as leading foreign language ("english sits after French"). These sentences also provide an overview of this Wikipedian's more general ranking of languages: 1, French as most spoken foreign/second language (at the very least "becoming more and more used"), 2, English and 3, German (possibly even upsetting English). Generally, the argument can be interpreted as following this structure:

D:
1, France is the main country of Europe (and presumably the EU) and Paris is the economic centre;
2, Frankfurt (Germany) is the second most prominent economic centre;
3, "every country" teaches French in schools

C: English is not the dominant foreign language – French is most spoken foreign / second language; French is more prominent than English; English takes second place and may be overtaken by German

W:
1, since the idea that France is the central country and that its official language is taught in schools means that French is the dominant language and English is not (2, a similar connection is implied for Germany and the German language)

Figure 32 French as more important than English

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[69] The Wikipedian conflates 'second' and 'foreign' languages.

The given data are obviously highly vulnerable to attack. They also shed light on a notable perspective on the EU[70] – apparently, this poster views France as the key member nation of the European Union and connects this to the idea of its capital as alleged economic centre. Moreover, this editor also comments on the role of Frankfurt as second most important economic centre and highlights the importance of German as potentially overtaking English as second most "used" language. Thus, it could be argued that they view Germany as the second most important EU member.

> Unsurprisingly, interlocutors call the data into question:

> But surely the idea that "France is the main country in Europe" a bit non-NPOV? And if not, your own research? We need a citation for that. Again, with your following statements, we need a citation PROVING French is the most commonly-spoken language in Europe.

Arguably, the two questions opening this posting and the hedge 'a bit' are politeness markers – after all, this Wikipedian presents a profound challenge as this editor casts doubt on observance of central Wikipedia policy, i.e. NPOV and original research (see 3.2). Moreover, the editor thoroughly debunks the preceding argument in two respects. First, the poster challenges the given data – they deem the data of the argument non-compliant with Wikipedia policy ("non-NPOV") and demand source material to support 'France as main country'. What is more, the editor demands additional data that support the claim by demanding source material for 'French is most spoken foreign language'.

Throughout this 2007 thread, the original claim that highlights the role of French is rejected, not least due to the problematic choice of data to support the claim – one Wikipedian responds: "France is not the 'main country' of Europe. […] In terms of European politics – France itself has an equal amount to contribute with Great Britain and Germany". While challenging the above editor's data about France as "main country", the posting implies an interesting understanding of the EU as apparently comprising three main countries: Germany, Great Britain and France are depicted as the central EU members and as equally influential with regard to contributing to the EU or Europe in general.

All in all, nationality figures heavily in the Wikipedia community's discussion of languages even though the status of English is only contested in the given 2007 thread. Nationality also factors into the last aspect of the Wikipedians' discussion of language-related matters that is discussed briefly in this thesis – the decision whether to use American and British English in the Wikipedia article.

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[70] here conflated with Europe

Wikipedia's language – American or British English

Examining the occurrences of 'english' in the corpus shows that there is a brief debate about which variety of English the Wikipedia article should adhere to; this discussion is notable in particular in light of the UK's more recent decision to leave the EU. In 2012, one poster argues that: "This article should be changed to American English [claim], because no one in the European Union likes the Britons [data one], and they don't want to be in the European Union either [data two]."[71] Another Wikipedian challenges the relevance and accuracy of data one, i.e., the idea that liking British people is relevant to the argument's claim as well as the idea that "no one" – presumably no EU citizen – likes British people: "liking the Britons has nothing to do with it, but even if we do not like the Britons (which I doubt) do we dislike the Americans less?". After challenging the relevance ("has nothing to do with it"), the Wikipedian pseudo-entertains data one in form of a conditional clause "even if we do" – they immediately cast doubt on how factual 'we do not like Britons' is by adding weakening epistemic modality ("I doubt"). Last, the Wikipedian poses a rhetorical question to further dismiss the previous poster's argument for American English – generally, the poster appears to subscribe to the idea that 'we', i.e. speaking from an in-group perspective as part of the EU, do not, as a rule, dislike "Britons". Interestingly, the second data set concerning British people not wanting to be in the EU is not challenged – it could be argued that the Brexit referendum in 2016 confirms this Wikipedian's assessment.

Change over time

There are no notable developments over the course of time. The EU's language policy is accepted as fact and not subject to opinion-forming debates. The discussions on languages used in the EU are also no subject to major evolution – English as dominant language (in terms of speakers including English as a foreign/second language speakers) is recognised or at least not particularly controversial. With regard to the language variety used in the Wikipedian article, the community resolves the issue in 2012 by retaining the use of British English as Wikipedia guidelines suggest (Wikipedia:Manual of Style, Wikipedia, 2017).

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[71] The implied warrant is that Wikipedia's spelling choices reflect the attitudes and relationships of EU members and citizens.

6.3 Interim Conclusion

One of the overarching themes the community grapples with in this cluster is diversity versus communality, both with regard to culture and language.

Concerning culture, the community considers if there is a common EU culture. In this context it is crucial to emphasise that the community does not comprehensively reject the idea of a certain cultural homogeneity amongst EU members. However, the community does *not* attribute this to the existence of an EU culture, but connects potential cultural similarities to Europe, as an entity different from the institution EU. Indeed, the majority of statements reject the idea that an EU culture as such exists.

In the course of the discussions about culture, the community touches on concrete ideas of possible communality across the EU (or Europe) in terms of religion (with a focus on Christianity) and Graeco-Roman history. However and not least because the conflation of the EU with Europe is deemed problematic, the community ultimately resorts to focusing on EU cultural policy. Indeed, the examined article version only features a very short culture section that is focused on listing EU cultural policies:[72] "Actions taken in the cultural area by the EU include the Culture 2000 7-year programme, the European Cultural Month event, […] and the European Capital of Culture programme" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015).

When discussing EU languages, the community homes in on the EU's institutional, i.e. official, languages and discusses whether retaining linguistic diversity is sensible or whether English ought to become the official EU language. By comparison, the article takes note of the multilingual policy of the EU but, unsurprisingly, does not provide an evaluation or criticism with regard to it. Moreover, on the TP, the community debates language use across the EU, focusing on English as the most prominent second/foreign language or even lingua franca. In this context, the Wikipedia article also refers to English as "the most spoken language in the EU, being spoken by 51% of the EU population when counting both native and non-native speakers", but does not comment on the possible status of English as a lingua franca (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015).

All in all, the community's treatment of the EU as a whole is notable in this corpus: instead of solely focusing on the EU as an institution separable/separate from its members (as in chapter 5), the Wikipedia community attempts to connect the EU with its peoples as

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[72] Even though 'sports' is not addressed in detail here, it is worth noting that even the respective article section focuses on EU *policies*, e.g. "there are some EU policies that have had an impact on sport" (European Union (Wikipedia, 2015)).

it debates the existence of a shared and distinct EU culture, i.e. one culture connected to and spanning the EU. However, the issue remains controversial not least due to the perceived difficulty of separating the EU from Europe and, ultimately, the community resorts to a focus on EU *policy*, i.e. again returns to a focus on the EU as an institution almost separable from its constituents (though influencing them via policy). To a degree, a similar pattern can be observed concerning the community's treatment of EU languages – although the community dedicates some discussion to the languages used/spoken across EU members, the focus is on the EU's institutional languages.

Finally, it is striking how prominently nation state and national identity figure in Wikipedians' discussions. For instance, the discussions on EU culture illustrate that the community assumes that nation states have clear-cut ("well-defined") cultures. The community also predominantly discusses cultural similarity and difference on the level of the EU *member states*, and not on the level of individual EU citizens, e.g. discussions of religious and political past are only discussed in terms of national histories. The same holds true for discussions about EU languages – in these cases, the editors refer to genericised individuals/EU citizens but the focus is still on these people's nationality.

Having addressed how the Wikipedia community has grappled with defining the nature of the EU as it is today (chapter 5) and has negotiated questions with respect to the institution's current cultural and linguistic situation, the following chapter presents an insight into the history of the EU as debated by Wikipedians. First, chapter 7 addresses the community's debates about potential forerunners of the EU predating the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (see 1.2). This is followed by a discussion of the Wikipedia community's views on the driving forces behind the creation of the European Union.

7   Data Discussion – History of the EU

This topic cluster consists of 17,426 tokens in 33 threads and is one of the smallest subcorpora, albeit one of considerable importance and interest in the context of Wikipedians' debates about the EU. In addition to the fact that historicisation is key in the context of legitimising or questioning the legitimacy of institutions (see 4.4 for more on this), the corpus' small size is worth noting as it allows a comprehensive data discussion despite the spatial limitations of this thesis.

The frequency ranking already reflects some of the key points of discussion in this corpus. While 'eu' takes rank twelve, further noteworthy high-frequency tokens are 'history' at rank 19, 'german' at 65, and 'nazi' at rank 104 (see Appendix C). Unsurprisingly, 'history' also collocates with 'eu' at a t-score of 3.87.

Of all 105 occurrences of 'history' (see Appendix C), 16 concordance lines deserve particular attention because they give an insight into notable debates on the EU's origin, i.e. these lines, while not impressive in number, give an insight into whether Nazi Germany or another historic entity can be identified as a precursor to the present-day EU. The remaining 89 lines can be disregarded for the purpose of this discussion, which aims to shed light on novel aspects concerning the Wikipedia community's treatment of the EU. These 89 lines use 'history', for instance, in thread headings such as "History of the EU", in a thread dedicated to a discussion of the history of the name 'Europa' and in comments on whether the history section in the article is too long or too short and connected conversations about US history[73], e.g. "US history is so long because they have more history than the EU".

The following section presents a more detailed discussion of how the Wikipedia community addressed Nazi Germany as a potential precursor of today's EU.

7.1   Nazi Germany as a Precursor to the EU?

As already indicated by the fact that 'nazi' and 'german' rank high in the corpus' frequency list, the Wikipedia community debates whether Nazi Germany can be viewed as a precursor to the EU and should thus be mentioned in the Wikipedia article's history section. Of the 16 lines of 'history' that address pre-ECSC predecessors to the EU, eleven

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[73] While this assumed comparability of the EU and the US is interesting in itself, a more detailed treatment of this aspect goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

debate Nazi Germany.[74] An examination of terms associated with Nazi Germany 'german*', 'nationalist socialist', 'reich' and 'hitler' shows that all occurrences of these are part of threads that contain 'nazi*'. Therefore, the focus of the discussion in this section is on the co-text of all occurrences of 'nazi' since such occurrences also account for uses of other relevant items.

Before discussing the Wikipedia community's references to Nazi Germany in the context of the EU, it is important to make clear that these debates are not merely the product of internet trolls, i.e. users whose "intention(s) is/are to cause disruption and/or to trigger or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement" (Hardaker, 2010, p. 237), even though the term 'Nazi' is regularly used as a formulaic insult by trolls (Thibault, 2016, p. 401). Indeed, there are several reasons why I conclude that the invocations of Nazi Germany in connection with the EU are not formulaic insults that would not provide any valuable new insights into the Wikipedians' construction of the EU: First, the Wikipedians who propose reference to Nazi Germany in the Wikipedia article on the EU also engage in constructive debate on other aspects of the institution, i.e. they are not merely visiting the TP in order to insult the EU or disrupt Wikipedia editing. Second, these Wikipedians do not merely visit the TP to call the EU 'Nazi'. Instead, they present arguments why Nazi Germany could be understood as EU *precursor* and use source material to do so, e.g. a poster mentions that "[i]n 1943, the German ministers Joachim von Ribbentrop and Cecil von Renthe-Fink eventually proposed the creation of a European confederacy" and then establishes a connection to the EU today. Third, the posters are willing to engage in debate and are willing to accept community consensus, i.e. they do not disrupt Wikipedia procedures. Finally, the Wikipedia community's reaction also supports the interpretation that the editors proposing reference to Nazi Germany are not trolls: the community, while questioning the proponents' neutrality, does not question their good faith or instigate disciplinary proceedings such as blocking these contributors.

Altogether five threads and 31 lines of 'nazi*', produced between 2004 and 2007, address the idea of Nazi Germany as part of the EU's history. Expanding the concordance lines shows that 24 of these lines (18 postings) give opinions on whether Nazi Germany should or should not be mentioned as a potential precursor to the EU (Table 17). The overwhelming majority rejects this – only four postings support the idea that there is a connection between Nazi Germany and the EU, while 14 postings reject the idea. Further

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[74] Five lines propose the Benelux Union as a pre-1950 EU precursor; however this suggestion is rejected immediately: "[Benelux Union] gave an example or inspiration but it is not like the ECSC".

expansion of this corpus perspective on the data to entire threads confirms this finding: the community concludes these discussions with definitive rejections of the notion that Nazi Germany should be associated with the EU, e.g. "we don't bother debating these absurdities" and "The idea that the Third Reich attempted to create an European Union is quite bizarre".

Table 17 Concordance lines of 'nazi*'

14 rejection postings/19cl	- 8 postings/13cl ideological dissimilarity	5 postings/8cl EU's voluntary unification 1 posting/3cl EU's liberal constitution and human rights 2 postings/2cl EU's tolerance of diversity
	- 1 postings/1cl structural dissimilarity	
	- 1 postings/1cl ad hominem attack	
	- 1 posting/1cl ad lapidem	
	- 3 postings/3cl source questioned	
4 support postings/5cl	- 1 posting/1cl ideology	
	- 1 posting/1cl structural similarity	
	- 1 posting/2cl role of Germany	
	- 1 posting/1cl unsupported pro-statement	
1 neutral posting/2cl	- request for infomation if and how EU and Nazi Germany are "similar"	

Analysing the argumentation underlying these pro and counter concordance lines and postings allows an insight into how Wikipedians attempt to support their positions. The argumentative patterns these 18 postings encompassing 24 lines share is similar with respect to the warrant. That is, Wikipedians who argue for the idea that Nazi Germany is a precursor to the EU (and thus should be mentioned in the article on the institution) use the warrant 'since the EU and Nazi Germany are similar', therefore claim: 'Nazi Germany is predecessor of the EU'. By comparison, Wikipedians who reject this claim do so by negating the warrant of similarity, e.g. "[t]he Nazi German project definitelly was something entirely different" and "it is nothing like the Nazi project". Interestingly, the community does not challenge whether the warrant is relevant in the context of discussing Nazi Germany as predecessor at any point.

Figure 33 illustrates that all argumentative patterns hinge on the same claim and warrant, or negations thereof, and only the data used to back these views vary, i.e. the postings draw on different aspects of data, as can be seen from the discussion below.

D: ideology and motivation, structural dis/similarity, role of Germany ——————→ C: Nazi Germany is (no) predecessor of the EU and should (not) be mentioned in history section

W: Nazi Germany and the EU are (not) similar
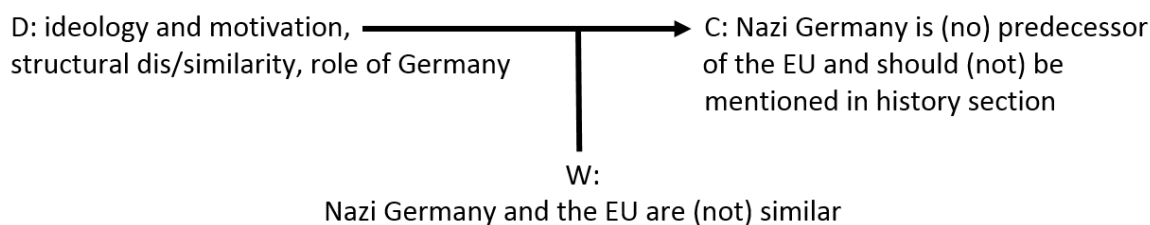
Figure 33 Nazi Germany and the EU

Nazi Germany is a precursor of the EU

Three strategies can be observed in terms of the data that are used to support the overarching claim: 'Nazi Germany is precursor of the EU and should thus be mentioned in the article'. First, posters point out alleged similarity in motivations/ideology and second, they point towards the alleged structural similarity of Nazi Germany and the EU. Third, the community debates Germany's role in the EU and the country's role as the centre of the Third Reich as a potential similarity.

The first strategy is realised in one posting that argues for Nazi Germany as predecessor on the basis of the data that "[t]he Nazis sought conformity, as do those who support the EU". The poster refers to Nazis' alleged aim in the past tense and then transfers this to the present ("do"). In terms of *social actor representation*, the poster genericises supporters of the EU, which makes the claim difficult to contest because these supporters cannot be approached and asked for their aims. It is also noteworthy that initially it is the genericised "Nazis" that seek conformity and then it is the genericised group of EU supporters. Thereby, the poster relates, if not equates, Nazis with EU supporters. Additionally, 'seeking conformity' encompasses various material processes Nazis might have engaged in in order to achieve this conformity, that is, instead of mentioning or listing concrete actions geared towards establishing conformity, the editor refers to a vague overarching material process or even mental process[75] to ascribe this particular goal to the Nazis/supporters of the EU. The lack of identifiable actions allegedly taken by Nazis/supporters of the EU to achieve conformity also serves to make this statement

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[75] This is a mental process if interpreting 'to seek' in terms of a sensor wishing for/longing for/desiring something instead of the material process of searching.

difficult to contest. On the whole, this posting portrays the EU as an institution whose ultimate result ought to be homogenisation and "conformity" and due to the association with National Socialism, the idea of homogenisation is definitely disadvantageous.

Another supporting posting hinges on data that are more easily verifiable or falsifiable, namely potential structural similarities between Nazi Germany and the EU: "the current European central bank is located in the same city as the Nazi central bank". Expanding this concordance line to take into account the entire thread shows that this editor, in a later posting, elaborates on their data, i.e. alleged structural similarities: "single currency, a central bank in Berlin, a regional principle, a labour policy and economic and trading agreements".

D: central bank, labour and economic policy, etc. ⟶ C: Nazi Germany is predecessor of EU and should be mentioned in history section

W: Nazi Germany and EU are similar
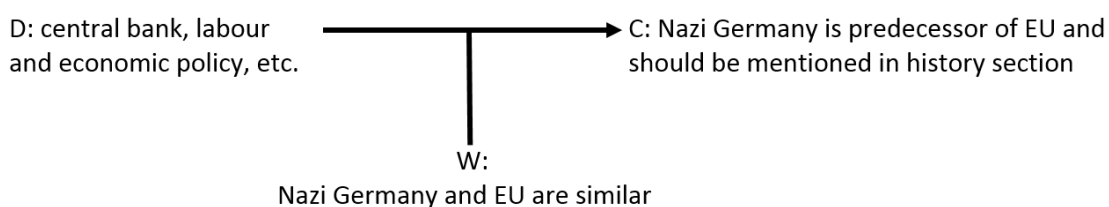
Figure 34 Nazi Germany as EU predecessor – structural similarities

Interestingly, the data are flawed as the EU's central bank is located in Frankfurt, which another Wikipedian points out: "obviously you got your facts wrong". Instead of withdrawing or modifying their data, the original poster responds with a question that already connects to the third strategy used to argue for a connection between Nazi Germany and the EU: "do you deny that the German economy dominates continental Europe? And how is this different from German aims in WW2?". Thus, in this posting the EU is represented as having Germany in a position of particular power at least with respect to economic matters.

As the latter example already demonstrates, the third strategy used to support the idea of Nazi Germany as a predecessor of the EU is the role and standing of Germany. In two lines of 'nazi*', a Wikipedian argues that Nazi Germany and the present-day EU are similar on the basis of the data that the EU "is dominated by the German economy. This is exactly how the Nazis ran it". The lack of clear referent of 'it' is worth considering – referring to the EU does not make sense since the EU did not exist for Nazis to "run", so the poster must have intended Nazi Germany as referent. This omission or ambiguity might function to blur the distinction between Nazi Germany and EU, an equation that obviously does not cast the EU in a favourable light. All in all, this third strategy highlights the idea

that Germany is a particularly powerful EU member state in particular in economic terms and that this is not good. Finally, it is striking that the idea that Germany takes a supreme position in the EU is not actively challenged whatsoever – the responding Wikipedians accept these data while still rejecting the claim 'Nazi Germany as predecessor of the EU'.

All three strategies used to argue for similarity and thus justified inclusion in the article are met with opposition and, ultimately, rejection.

Nazi Germany is not a precursor of the EU

The Wikipedians rejecting the idea of Nazi Germany as precursor to the EU argue that there is no or not enough similarity between Nazi Germany and the EU to warrant inclusion of the former as a precursor of the EU in the Wikipedia article. That is, these Wikipedians reject the warrant of similarity and present alternative data to counter the argument.

Eight postings in 13 concordance lines suggest ideological and motivational differences between the EU and Nazi Germany.[76] Homing in on these shows that eight lines in five postings focus on discussing European integration and subjugation, i.e. the involuntary nature of European 'unification' under the Nazi regime. The following example demonstrates how structural similarity is partially accepted but the motivations underlying Nazi Germany's European unification, and its approach to bring about this unification, are seen as differing vastly from the EU's, e.g.

> Ok some Nazi said that [comm.: single currency and central bank as crucial for Europe], but basically they just wanted to conquer the lot [European countries] […] There would be no way that France would have equal say in anything

This poster ascribes a particular motivation to the Nazis, i.e. subjugation of other European countries ("the lot" is interpreted as reference to 'countries' due to the subsequent sentence giving the example of France). This idea – here realised by use of 'conquer' – is already alluded to above in the postings on perceived German economic "domination".

Additional examples of this focus on involuntary unification as an ideological difference between the EU versus Nazi Germany are as follows: "Nazi ideology wanted to grab Eastern Europe to expand the 'Lebensraum' [comm.: space for living] of the Aryan race - this Lebensraum would be taken from the Slavs" and "economic and monetary union under (surprise, surprise!) the mighty Deutschmark. But this should be seen in the context

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[76] Only one line of 'nazi*' rejects the connection Nazi Germany and EU by focusing on attacking the data 'structural similarity – central bank in Berlin' by pointing out that the EU's central bank is in Frankfurt "So obviously you got your facts wrong" (se above).

of Nazi totalitarian domination - it wasn't to be a 'union' but a 'pseudo-community'". The former example is of involuntary integration of Eastern Europe into the Third Reich ("to grab"). It also points towards the unequal standing of groups of people – the acquisition of land was supposedly aimed to provide "Aryans" with more space and land. In contrast, the "Slavs" are the receivers of material action that is charged negatively – space and land are "taken from" them. In the latter example, the poster presents data to suggest that the EU and Nazi Germany are fundamentally different in respect to the conditions under which European unification was and is approached. Generally, terms such as 'grab' and 'taken from' from the former example and 'totalitarian domination' from the latter convey that European integration relied on coercion and force and did not build on voluntary participation. The use of these terms confirm that the Nazi approach is depicted as negative. By default, the EU is represented here as a voluntary unification project or – as the poster of the latter example then states – the EU "came together gradually as the result of democratic acts by states signing treaties".

Another posting incorporating three lines of 'nazi*' also touches upon the different approach to European integration taken by Nazi Germany versus the EU but also presents other aspects of ideological differences:

> Equating the EU with the Nazis is deeply insulting, and a perversion of the historical background of the EU. It was founded by people like French resistance hero Pierre Mendès-France who was tortured by the Nazis, democratic states and peaceful treaties. It has a liberal constitution and advocates human rights and equality before the law […] it is nothing like the Nazi project

In the beginning and at the end of the posting, the editor rejects the warrant of similarity let alone sameness ("[e]quating", "nothing like") of the EU and Nazi Germany. Then, the Wikipedian implicitly casts the EU in a favourable light by referring to one initiator thereof as a "hero", i.e. the existence of the EU is validated by the fact that one person, who opposed the Nazis and contributed to the establishment of the EU, is deemed a hero. The Wikipedian further legitimises the EU's existence by referring to "democratic states" as totum pro parte actors involved in the creation of the EU, i.e. states whose representatives' power to make decisions is legitimised by their electorate. The poster further draws attention to the fact that EU-related treaties did not involve military action ("peaceful"). Altogether, this Wikipedian describes the process of the EU's creation in positive terms and implies that Nazi Germany's process was very different (as indicated by the preceding and subsequent rejection of equating the two institutions). Finally, the posting also suggests differences in what the EU has and does today – supposedly, the institution as

actor (or sayer) "advocates" for human rights and fair trial. Thus, the EU is represented as empowered to act and engaging in positive action – working in support of human rights. Interestingly, the poster does not claim that the institution necessarily *acts* accordingly itself per se. They only state that the EU "advocates" for human rights/fair trial and "has" a "liberal constitution" – the latter is not true now and was not true in 2007 when the posting was made because the EU did not and does not have a constitution.

The two remaining postings that cite *ideological differences* mention diversity, e.g. after rejecting the idea of similarity, a Wikipedian adds: "the EU, right from the start, represented the […] tolerance of diversity that were very anatemic to Nazi ideology". While these postings that refer to diversity do not provide details on how diversity is realised in the EU, their view contrasts with the idea of 'conformity' used in support of the pro-argumentation (see discussion above).

Three of the remaining rejections present profound criticism in light of Wikipedia's policy to use reliable source material, e.g. "you need a published scientific book or scientific article where a modern historian states that the EU was modelled after this Nazi plan". One rejection is an ad hominem attack: "[anonymised] has systematically denied that he is motivated by an anti-EU POV, but equating the EU with the Nazi project above he makes his views plain for all to see" – in light of Wikipedia's NPOV policy, this is a major attack. Lastly, one rejection uses an ad lapidem argumentation strategy: "the Nazi story is just as likely as to say that the EU was forecast and founded by Jesus Christ Himself".

All in all, the notion that Nazi Germany is a precursor of the EU or even that there is significant similarity between these institutions to warrant mention in the Wikipedia article on the EU is comprehensively rejected. In the course of accepting or rejecting the notion of Nazi Germany as a precursor of the EU, the community also touches upon the issue of the EU's standing as a democratic (or undemocratic) body.

Democracy

An expanded perspective on the concordance lines of 'nazi*' gives an insight into Wikipedians' views on whether the EU today is a democratic body or not. In addition to referring to ideological differences (see above), two of the rejection postings also touch upon the idea of a democratic or undemocratic EU: "There may be undemocratic structures within it that need revision but it is nothing like the Nazi project" and:

the EU could be more democratic, but it has always been composed of democratic governments (a condition of entry that kept out Franco's Spain) and commits itself to diversity, quite unlike Nazi ideology.

Both postings attack the warrant of similarity but both also concede that the EU might not be an entirely democratic institution. The former example weakens the proposition by use of "may" and adds that these "undemocratic structures" ought to be changed. While the poster does not specify which structures they refer to, they make clear that these ought to be changed ("need revision"). Moreover, they suppress the social actor that ought to undertake this task of changing these structures and do not go into detail on what form this "revision" ought to take. The latter example suggests a gradable conception of democracy in which the EU does not meet the ideal of absolute democracy. This poster also does not detail in what respect the EU is not fully democratic but proceeds to highlight the EU members' status as democracies. Together, both postings represent democratic governance as desired but not completely met by the EU. Additionally, these postings conceive of the EU as a container and construct: "within" the EU there might be undemocratic structures but it is "composed of" democratic entities.

An examination of all occurrences of '*democra*' confirms that the EU's form of governance is not entirely undisputed. Twenty lines of '*democra*' in ten postings make statements about EU democracy – seven postings encompassing twelve lines state that the EU is not fully democratic and only three postings in eight lines argue the opposite. Thus, the dominant conception of the EU is as rather undemocratic.

This is further confirmed by an expansion of the concordance lines of 'democra*' to include whole threads. Indeed, this expansion shows that one thread on Nazi Germany as precursor to the EU produced a 2004 sub-thread called "EU undemocratic?". While this thread opens with a posting that represents the EU as democratic ("It's false to imply the EU is not democratic"), the discussion is concluded with a rejection of this: "I don't think anyone should deny the EU, is *currently* undemocratic and very technocratic. They are slowly attempting to repair this". The last sentence implies that this democratic deficit is being addressed, without going into detail who precisely does so and how this attempt to "repair" this is being made.[77]

The issue is taken up again in 2006. One posting touches upon this idea of the EU as undemocratic and refers to necessary improvements: "The democratic deficit of

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[77] The use of 'repair' indicates that something – arguably the EU's democracy – is broken and that democracy is definitely a desired characteristic.

Strasbourg needs to be addressed". In terms of deontic modality, here, like in the posting above ("needs revision"), the Wikipedian points out that action ought to be taken ("needs"), i.e. an evolution towards a democratic EU is desired. Similar to the postings above, this Wikipedian also suppresses the social actor who ought to take action.

Interestingly, this Wikipedian then adds:

> But with globalism on the rise I think the EU is the only way to be influential beyond our tiny corner of the world. EU politics are hard and to get things your way you need to find allies. There are now two blocs within the EU. One bloc led by France and Germany, which centers around the social welfare state and one led by the UK which favours liberal laissez-faire economics. I tend to favour the UK-bloc. Anyway, the EU is flawed.

Thus, this Wikipedian paints a picture of the EU as "flawed" and as having a "democratic deficit" but also as the only available means to exert influence in a globalised world. This Wikipedian also constructs the EU as a container "within" which there is division in accordance with two blocs with different economic systems and members – social market economy versus economic liberalism. The editor identifies France and Germany versus the UK as spearheading these different systems. This perspective of an EU divided already in 2006 is particularly noteworthy in light of the UK's decision in 2016 to leave the EU. It is also worth noting that this view of the EU as undemocratic is not challenged – rather, two more postings on the topic echo the idea that the EU is undemocratic, e.g. "it is run by undemocratic, unelected Eurocrats".

Altogether, the EU is discussed as a rather undemocratic institution, an issue that ought to be redressed. Still, the EU as less than ideal is still portrayed as the way forward in a global context. Moving on from this, the following section briefly deals with potential driving forces behind the establishment of the EU.

7.2 The Driving Forces Behind the EU's Creation

The item 'eu' collocates with 'founded' (t-score 2.77), 'founding' (t-score 2.19) and 'establishment' (t-score 2.21).[78] This already gives an inkling that there is debate about the EU's creation. Indeed, an examination of these co-occurrences shows that the community debates the EU's creation. While all these collocations were examined, the following focuses on findings from the co-occurrences of 'eu' and 'founded' (and expansions of these co-occurrences) since the other collocations do not present any additional insights.

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[78] All uses of 'establishment' refer to the 'foundation' of an institution, etc. and not to 'establishment' in the sense of 'elite'.

All co-occurrences of 'founded' and 'eu' are passivised statements on the EU's establishment. The first two lines in Table 18, which are the only ones referring to *who* supposedly founded the EU, have already been addressed above because they deal with the idea of Nazi Germany as a predecessor of the EU, e.g. line two is part of the ad lapidem argumentation referred to in section 7.1. The remainder give an insight into the forces behind European integration into the EU.

Lines five to eight can be addressed with notable brevity – these are merely parts of brief discussions on founding dates of different EU predecessor organisations. The only controversy in these contexts is whether signing of a treaty or its coming into effect ought to be cited, e.g. line five "the catch being that we create ambiguity by citing both dates. […] The EU was founded on 1 November 1993" in response to the posting "date of establishment of the EU in the intro gets repeatedly changed between 1992 (when the Maastricht Treaty was signed) and 1993 (when the treaty came into force)".

Table 18 Collocation 'eu' and 'founded'

1	ersion of the historical background of the	EU. It was founded by people like Fre
2	azi story is just as likely as to say that the	EU was forecast and founded by Jesus
3	have a comment in the intro implying the	EU was founded in 1957 with the EC, r
4	s is if we can categorically state when the	EU was founded. If we can state this, w
5	fer to be authoritative above all else. The	EU was founded on 1 November 1993.
6	20 January 2009 (UTC) What about: The	EU was founded on 1 November 1993,
7	1:16, 19 June 2014 (UTC) Year the	EU was founded Under the "Environ
8	entence leads off with "In 1957, when the	EU was founded, " The Wikipedia articl

Outside versus inside forces

More notably, the community debates different ideas concerning the driving forces behind the EU's establishment. An expanded perspective on lines three and four in Table 18 allow an insight into a thread that proposes different ideas concerning the forces that led to the creation of the EU. In this thread, one Wikipedian proposes the Marshall Plan[79] as sparking the creation of the EU:

> The Marshall Plan has also long been seen as one of the first elements of European integration, as it erased tariff trade barriers and set up institutions to coordinate the economy on a continental level. So maybe the EU traces its origins to this?

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[79] The Marshall Plan, also called "European Recovery Program", was a US American policy aimed at stimulating European economy after World War II (Dixon, 2017).

Argumentation analysis and *Systemic Functional Grammar* shed light on noteworthy aspects of this posting. The Wikipedian's claim is given in the last sentence and is weakened with a question mark and the use of 'maybe'. Still, the sentence does not take interrogative form and the poster does present data to support the claim. They do so by providing a description of the Marshall Plan that depicts it as aiming for European integration especially on economic cooperation, i.e. the motivation behind European integration is depicted as an economic one. This description is given as a passivised mental process where the sensor is suppressed, that is, this plan "has been seen" instead of drawing on a relational process – the plan 'is' or 'was'. This reference to perception only and the omission of the sensor makes the argument's data less vulnerable to question since first, this sensing entity cannot be clearly identified and questioned and second, making a statement about an unknown entity's *perception* of the Plan's purpose is difficult to challenge. Then, the Marshall Plan is depicted as an actor 'erasing' tariffs and 'setting up' institutions, i.e. the actual people conceiving of the plan and carrying it out are suppressed entirely.

Another Wikipedian rejects this view and proposes another scenario that actually incorporates concrete entities/individuals as driving forces behind European integration:

> The earliest and most concrete ideas and attempts to unite Europe […] were Churchill's 1946 call for a "United States of Europe", the Council of Europe and the failed Defence Community.

The difference to the preceding posting is striking. Here the poster specifies an alleged initiator of European integration – Winston Churchill, who as sayer ("call for") is not the one who 'attempted this unification' but is represented as the one with "concrete ideas" mentioned in the first sentence of the posting. Then the poster refers to two pan-European institutions who, be default, are implied as the ones driving "attempts to unite Europe". Altogether, the Wikipedian conveys two ideas. First, they relocate the driving force behind the EU's creation (or that of its predecessors) from the US to Europe, that is, instead of an outside force sparking European integration (Marshall Plan), this posting proposes the view that it was an idea generated in Europe. Second, European integration is not depicted as one country's or even just one country's representative's programme. Rather, the Council of Europe as an international organisation and the failed but international Defence Community (see 1.2) are cited as driving or at least attempting this unification.

Another Wikipedian gives yet another, if related perspective on this issue. This posting proposes an even more Europe-centred approach and suggests that the driving forces were the involved countries themselves:

> we should consider the EU as the result of "self organisation" of the countries; for that reason alone I would not go back to the Marshall plan. Interesting in this discussion is of course the evolutionary, rather than revolutionary course towards uniting Europe

This rejection is based on the idea of a European-centred move to European integration driven by the countries involved themselves rather than an outside force ("for this reason alone I would not […]"). Furthermore, this poster allows for the widest possible scope of who might have participated in this "self organisation" resulting in the EU since the actors here are "countries", which suppresses the concrete individuals who took action[80]. Apart from this, it is also worth noting that the poster does not actually reject the Marshall Plan as a key point of origin. Rather, they merely "would not go back" to it based on the idea that European countries' actions and "self organisation" ought to be seen as the central factor resulting in the EU. In terms of deontic modality, their use of "should" makes clear that the idea of "self organsiation" is this editor's preferred historical narrative of the EU's foundation and they also use "we" as in-group marker for the Wikipedia community to possibly persuade their interlocutors to entertain the idea; however, they also mitigate their proposition by use of "consider", i.e. a mental process, rather than, for instance, using a verbal process in the sense of 'we should state in the article that X'. Arguably, this form of mitigation is not to be understood as insecurity with respect to the proposition 'EU as result of countries' self-organisation' but serves to avoid alienating interlocutors and thereby further persuade them to subscribe to the given perspective.

Finally, the posting's last sentence deserves brief mention because it adds a noteworthy aspect concerning the construction of the EU. The idea here is that instead of revolution, the path to the EU was an evolutionary one. The reference to revolution versus evolution emphasises the juxtaposition between human-made upheaval and natural non-violent progression. Thereby, the poster insinuates that the EU's development is natural, possibly inevitable and definitely a sign of progress.

Altogether, this thread presents three remarkable elements concerning who the driving force behind the EU's establishment was – first, one perspective is that the EU was initiated by an outside source (Marshall Plan), second, another view is that particular

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[80] This once more illustrates the community's preoccupation with nation states.

European entities/individuals drove European integration. Third, the loss of reference to specific individuals or even specific countries who worked towards the unification of Europe allows maximum inclusion of which European "countries" were the driving forces behind the 'self-organised' creation of the EU.

The discussion of who or what drove European integration is not continued, nor is it ever discussed again. This might be the case since the Wikipedia article on the EU does not strictly require content on the motivations and impetus behind the creation of the EU.

7.3   Interim Conclusion

Generally and in contrast to the discussions touching upon history in chapter 6, the community focuses on the EU's institutional history in this corpus. That is, here, the community only refers to broader historical events in connection to the institution's establishment and, thereby, the prevalent construction/representation of the EU is one of an institution that, on the one hand, might be comparable to previous entities (Nazi Germany) and, on the other hand, is the result and consequence of other entities' actions (e.g. European countries, Winston Churchill). It is also worth noting that the Wikipedia community repeatedly emphasises the construction of the EU as an institution resulting from its constituents' voluntarily joining – both when countering the idea that EU and Nazi Germany are similar and when discussion the driving force(s) behind the institution's creation. Interestingly, the focus is again predominantly on the level of the nation rather than on the individual citizens' actions. Hence, the preoccupation with the nation state as fixed category by which the Wikipedia community operates is once more demonstrated and reinforced.

All in all, the EU is found not to be a successor of Nazi Germany based on a perceived lack of similarities between the institutions. While different aspects of similarity are proposed, the community continuously and irrevocably rejects the notion on the basis of ideological differences between these institutions. The prevalent issue cited in this respect is the fact that European countries voluntarily moved to join the EU, whereas Nazi Germany pursued a violent annexation of parts of Europe. Additionally, the debate on Nazi Germany and its alleged connection to the EU elicits a discussion about the EU's standing as a democratic or undemocratic institution. The Wikipedia community concludes that the EU is indeed lacking in the sense of not being an entirely democratic institution and states that this ought to be changed. Interestingly, the view that the EU, even though suffering

from a democratic deficit, is the best means to go forward in a globalised world, is expressed and not challenged by the community

In the debate about the impetus of European unification and integration in the form of the EU, the community does not arrive at any conclusions but considers options ranging from an outside force setting the course for the EU to forces from within, i.e. from players that are now part of the EU. The forces working to establish the EU from within are not specified beyond reference to particular institutions or, generally, "countries".

There is one more element that deserves attention, namely the issue of what is *not* dealt with, i.e. what is apparently *not* controversial: the Wikipedia community does not challenge the EU's official version of its history whatsoever (European Union, 2017). This is indicated, e.g. by the fact that none of the concordance lines of 'history' propose alternative versions of the EU's historical narrative. The expansion of lines five to eight in Table 18 confirms this as these lines are part of threads dedicated to discussing the sequence of the EU's development, e.g. "ECSC is unquestionably the de facto forerunner of the EU" is not questioned at any point in the corpus.

Indeed, the Wikipedia article mirrors the EU's historical narrative of the European Union (European Union, 2017). Additionally, the Wikipedia article does not refer to any EU forerunner entities before the ECSC. Thereby, any further potential controversy about the role of Nazi Germany in the development of the EU is avoided in the Wikipedia article.

8   Conclusion

The conclusion of this thesis is divided into three parts. Part one addresses the research questions centred on Wikipedia as an under-researched but undoubtedly rich source of data for future linguistic and, especially, discourse analytical work. The second part deals with the research questions aimed at teasing out the Wikipedia community's treatment of the European Union, in particular on the Wikipedia talk page that accompanies the article on the institution. Finally, part three presents the limitations of this study and potential future venues of research.

8.1   Findings – Research Question A

One set of research questions addressed in this thesis focuses on various aspects of Wikipedia that require attention when dealing with Wikipedia data, in particular when presenting a critical (discourse) study of Wikipedia data that also aims to account for their societal relevance:

A, What are notable aspects of Wikipedia that deserve particular attention in the context of a critical discourse approach to Wikipedia data? That is,

1. what characteristics specific to Wikipedia shape and constrain contributors' text production, what are core rules and policies that guide Wikipedia operations and thus affect Wikipedia data?

2. what is the societal impact and relevance of Wikipedia? To what extent can the platform, in particular Wikipedia talk pages, potentially function as a transnational public sphere?

With respect to research question A1, it is technological affordances and a number of core Wikipedia policies that play a central role in guiding the community's actions and shaping Wikipedia data. The following section touches upon some key technological affordances and policies that guide Wikipedia operations (see a more detailed discussion in 3.2) and are essential for CDS' principal tenet of never separating data from their environment but always anchoring their interpretation in contextual information.

Wikipedia – technological affordances and policies

The basic parameter of Wikipedia operations that researchers have to understand when dealing with Wikipedia data is the principal division into article and talk pages. The characteristics of the data differ significantly, i.e. the encyclopaedic articles on Wikipedia

include multimodal signifiers and hyperlinks to sources and other topics within and outside of Wikipedia. By comparison, the talk pages consist of conversation threads, which can also incorporate multimodal signifiers and links – a factor that critical discourse analysts ought to consider, even though this study of Wikipedia data did not address this aspect in any depth.

A technological affordance worth mentioning again is the fact that every version of a Wikipedia article that has ever existed is saved and accessible. This also affects TP data inasmuch as the Wikipedians in their discussions might refer to article edits or article versions from a certain point in time. These referenced article version can then be accessed and aid in understanding Wikipedians' postings even years after their contributions were made. Moreover, and particularly notable from a CDS perspective, by providing this feature Wikipedia actually facilitates the observation of possibly changing consensus on how to represent a topic by comparing article versions over time. Additionally, the fact that article editing can be restricted to particular user groups is also notable. While examining the resulting power inequality would be an interesting CDS project in itself, this element also directly affects Wikipedia TP data; as my data show, requests for specific edits to an article are made on the associated talk page, e.g. "Semi-protected edit request on 25 June 2014". Finally, TPs are freely accessible even years after discussions are concluded and time of posting can be traced due to the timestamping of the data. Hence, interested CDS scholars can examine how the Wikipedia community has made sense of an issue over time and can actually embed and connect the data to the historical context and pertinent world events.

Concerning Wikipedia policy, the idea of the Neutral Point of View (NPOV) is especially important in order to make sense of Wikipedia data and understand the gravity of Wikipedians' attacks on other posters' positions when these are made on the basis of this core Wikipedia policy. As my data indicate, Wikipedians repeatedly challenge interlocutors' contributions on the basis of this policy, e.g. "'confederation' is speculation and clearly POV" and "surely the idea [is] a bit non-NPOV? And if not, your own research? We need a citation for that". The latter example also alludes to two additional Wikipedia policies associated with the NPOV, namely verifiability and the exclusion of original research. These two policies are also regularly used in the TP discussions and it is, therefore, integral for researchers working with Wikipedia data to be familiar with them, e.g. "according to WP:OR it does not matter much whether we believe […]. Only reliable secondary sources do matter" or "most of the reliable sources refer to the EU as a sui

generis entity". In the former example the poster uses the abbreviation referring to *Or*iginal *R*esearch to counter an argument; in the latter, an editor makes an argument from authority using Wikipedia policy jargon as given in the website's policy on verifiability, i.e. "people using the encyclopedia can check that the information comes from a *reliable source*" [italics added] (Wikipedia:Verifiability, Wikipedia, 2015).

Another Wikipedia policy that is particularly relevant for researchers working on and with Wikipedia data relates to the usability of Wikipedia content. One of Wikipedia's central pillars stipulates that contributed content is free, i.e. can be used and even distributed. In this context, and, in particular from the self-reflexive perspective of CDS research, it is important to consider questions of ethics when using internet content, even when the hosting website allows its use. Consequently, researchers interested in working with Wikipedia data ought to consider measures of possibly anonymising contributors to, at least, impede the easy identification of individuals, even if it is just by their user names.

Finally, there is a particular Wikipedia rule that the community does not adhere to strictly – the idea that Wikipedia talk pages should only be used to discuss editing decisions rather than, for example, political debates with respect to the topic under discussion. It is true that most of the TP discussions are focused on editing decisions as indicated by the size of the topic cluster dedicated to such endeavours alone (see 4.2.3) and the fact that even content discussions predominantly connect back to concrete article editing decisions (e.g. discussions of whether to call the EU a federation, whether to include reference to Nazi Germany, etc.). However, it is also true that within these content discussions, the conversations go beyond merely providing sources for/against an issue and thereby 'winning' the argument. Instead, as my data show, as Wikipedians argue for, against or about an issue, they give an insight into their different perspectives on the EU, e.g. "[the EU] is dominated by the German economy. This is exactly how the Nazis ran it" (see details on this posting in 7.1). Severe cases of Wikipedians disregarding the TP policy about focusing on editing issues are rare but still present – these are instances when editors merely insert their personal opinions into debates without attempting to make any discernible pro or counter argument pertaining to the subject matter under discussion, e.g. "This is the EU we're talking about. What makes sense has nothing to do with it".

Wikipedia's place in society – readership and contributors

In contrast to traditional news media whose impact has been measured in readership numbers and whose societal relevance has been theorised as, for instance, a public sphere

and the fourth estate in democratic states, the immediate context and societal relevance of Wikipedia remains under-researched. Therefore, research question A2 enquires about aspects of this – it is a first step towards redressing the lack of exploration as well as theorisation pertaining to Wikipedia. The explorative aspect of this research question relates to the examination and review of data *about* Wikipedia to achieve an understanding of the website's societal relevance in terms of content production and consumption. Connected to this, my theorisation of Wikipedia relates to the question of whether the site can function as a transnational public sphere.

In terms of Wikipedia's *readership*, Alexa, an institution that traces global web traffic, has found Wikipedia to be amongst the top ten most visited websites globally (Alexa, 2016) and Zachte (2017) suggests that 37 per cent of monthly visits to the English Wikipedia are made from Europe. Thus, it can be concluded that Wikipedia figures prominently in internet users' everyday life, especially in internet users from across Europe. Connected to this, it is worth pointing out that internet access is on the rise globally (see 3.3.1, Figure 4) and therefore, Wikipedia might draw even more visits in the future. Still, while there is no precise data available on the readership of Wikipedia talk pages, it is reasonable to assume a markedly lower number than actual Wikipedia article readers – after all, Wikipedia TPs are not outwardly-directed and are, for example, not even listed in google searches on a topic. Finally, in connection with Wikipedia's readership, the encyclopaedia's credibility deserves brief attention. While the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was found to inspire more trust, readers deem Wikipedia content more accurate than traditional news media content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2011; Jordan, 2014). Several studies confirm that the website is consulted often as a first entry point into a topic and while Wikipedia content is considered relatively credible and accurate in general, it is still received with a degree of caution (e.g. Francke & Sundin, 2012; Okoli et al., 2014).

With respect to Wikipedia *editors*, more precise information is available since the majority of edits to the website is made by registered users who can be surveyed. Generally, the Wikipedian community appears to be notably Western-centric as the typical Wikipedia editor was found to be a college-educated, 30-year-old male from Europe or the United States (Wikimedia Foundation, 2011b, p. 3). Interestingly though, the linguistic background of the community contributing to the English Wikipedia is strikingly diverse (refer to 3.3.1 for more on this). In terms of size of the editorship, the number of registered users is approximately 30 million (Wikipedia:Wikipedians, Wikipedia, 2017) but only a minority is highly active – of the 30 million registered users now, i.e. in December 2017,

only approximately 133,000 editors made one or more edits in the preceding thirty days (Wikipedia, Wikipedia, 2017).

On the whole, Wikipedia plays a notable role in and is a frequently visited website in Western societies with their smart phones and tablets and the resulting perpetual access to the internet. As a consequence, the encyclopaedia's relevance in today's world is indisputable – at least with respect to encyclopaedia readers. By comparison, the number of active editors is unsurprisingly lower than the size of Wikipedia's readership. However, this does not mean that the site cannot function as an effective space for debate about various topics for the involved individuals, for them to share, produce and distribute content. Indeed, I would argue that Wikipedia's significance goes beyond a mere encyclopaedia or even social media platform.

Wikipedia talk pages as a transnational public sphere

Wikipedia – talk pages in particular – can serve as a transnational public sphere. This, of course, can only hold true when drawing on a postmodern conception of the public, namely as *multiple* spheres that co-exist in parallel and that allow different groups and segments of society to engage in debate in different spaces (see 3.3.2.1). In accordance with this understanding, Wikipedia talk pages are just one (metaphorical) space of many that facilitate the creation of a public sphere. Indeed, and in addition to my theoretical discussion in chapter 3.3.2, my examination of TP data supports my original conclusion that Wikipedia talk pages can function as a public sphere and that at least the examined TP actually does so.

With regard to the overall issues addressed in the course of the TP debates, the TP examined in this thesis meets Habermas' standards of *what* ought to be addressed in the public sphere – he insists that only topics of public relevance should be debated. As my discussion of topics addressed on this particular TP shows, the community does not limit itself to mere editing discussions. Rather, the Wikipedia community consistently discusses the European Union or aspects thereof; it negotiates its understanding of an institution of global relevance. However, and even though the given talk page is not problematic in this respect, the postmodern conception of public spheres adds an important point to consider here – the understanding of what is public versus private and what ought or ought not to be addressed in the public sphere is determined by social norms, ideology and *zeitgeist*. Thus, even other Wikipedia TPs on more mundane issues cannot necessarily be discounted

as not meeting the requirements of transnational public spheres on the basis of a specific understanding of what is relevant to the public and what is not.[81]

In connection with this, Wikipedia's policies of topic focus and its general orientation towards consensus-building provides a framework for a culture of mutual respect and constructive dialogue. As my data show, Wikipedians do not merely post statements independent from one another. Rather, they engage with, and react to, one another with the goal of reaching agreement. To provide a few concrete examples, there are numerous instances where Wikipedians even address one another by user name and then respond to the addressed poster's comments, e.g. "To [anonymised], no one is saying that the individual member states are not sovereign" and "I agree with [anonymised] that we have to distinguish carefully between EU and Europe". Moreover, the community repeatedly engages in in-group construction – one interpretation of this is that the editors understand themselves as part of a larger Wikipedia community that works together sharing certain practices and possibly ideals, e.g. "the CIA […] think the EU will become a country. We do not crystal ball gaze in this way"[82] (see more on community of practice in 3.3.2).

What is more, the encyclopaedia's emphasis on Neutral Point of View and the presentation of verifiable sources further bolsters the development of rational debate. Indeed, the given TP data show that the community regularly negotiates different views by use of arguments with data to support claims rather than merely presenting unfounded claims. When faced with the latter or with questionable data-warrant-claim structures, the community tends to regulate itself by reference to Wikipedia policy and by emphasising the importance of source material, e.g. "I don't know if there are sources out there that describe the EU as a confederation" and "you need a published scientific book or scientific article where a modern historian states that the EU was modelled after this Nazi plan". Arguably, the examined data support the interpretation that Wikipedia TPs contain rational, argument-driven debate.

Eriksen's typology of public spheres (Eriksen, 2005, pp. 345–349) adds another gradation of such spheres worth considering – as mentioned in 3.3.2, Wikipedia TPs can be used as general public spheres. This still holds true when considering the insights

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[81] Even if one where to subscribe to this seductively straightforward binary opposition of private versus public, it is doubtful that even the people in Habermas' coffee shops only ever discussed matters of public relevance and import.

[82] This comment creates opposition to the CIA by pointing to a practice that "we", i.e. Wikipedians, do not engage in.

achieved by the examination of TP data. First, obviously the given talk page is not associated with the EU as an institution. Therefore, and in contrast to the Futurum forum (cf. Wright, 2007), it meets the criteria of a general public sphere, which ought to be separate from the institutions it debates and legitimises. Moreover, while the TP is not designed to motivate concrete political action, it serves as a platform for opinion formation and deliberation. In the data, this can be seen from the overarching development of agreement on how to represent the European Union in the article over the years, e.g. the EU and its status as non-sovereign entity.

Altogether, Wikipedia TPs can function as *general transnational public spheres* and the TP under investigation is indeed used as such. Still, a limitation of this public sphere is its accessibility and reach. Access to Wikipedia is restricted to individuals with internet access, i.e. while it is a transnational platform, a substantial part of the global population is excluded. Secondly, the reach of Wikipedian TPs is limited to the number of individuals who are actually involved, although the connected Wikipedia articles that are a result of TP discussions reach a wider audience. Connected to this, the fact that the group of Wikipedia contributors is apparently skewed, e.g. concerning gender and region of origin, is extremely disconcerting – not only does a particular social group seemingly dominate this public sphere, but it might also be disproportionally influential due to the fact that Wikipedia's sizable and global readership. Lastly, it is important to mention that Wikipedia contributors are still subject to the jurisdiction of their country of residence, i.e. if civil liberties such as freedom of expression are not part of the associated legal structures, then they might not be able to participate in this public sphere without fear of persecution (see more details on this in 3.3.2.3).

Wikipedia's place in society – implications for findings in chapters 5 to 7

In light of Wikipedia's potential considerable societal impact, the findings presented in chapter 5 through 7 are especially notable. Apart from giving an insight into which aspects of the EU private individuals have struggled with over a period of 15 years and how they have resolved these controversies, this thesis' exploration and theorisation of Wikipedia also illustrates the potential ramifications of talk page debates.

First, the TP indeed functions as a general transnational public sphere, i.e. a space that serves public debate by allowing for opinion formation processes. The involved individuals use this sphere to discuss their perspective on the EU with interlocutors from potentially all over the world (see limitations in terms of editor demographics above). In

these exchanges ideological leanings with regard to the EU are negotiated (in accordance with the understanding of ideology presented in 2.2): while the primary goal is agreement in terms of Wikipedia article editing, these conversations arguably impact on the involved individuals' ideological leanings and opinion formation with respect to the EU. This is worth considering in light of the fact that well-educated males from Europe constitute the core contributor demographic. This means that attitudes towards the EU shaped by these discussions might be perpetuated across Europe in particular, by Wikipedians spreading these ideas in the different contexts they participate in. Additionally, well-educated European males are a powerful and dominant group. Therefore, ideological tendencies shaped by TP discussions might be even more impactful than the mere number of contributors suggests due to the social standing of these contributors.

Secondly, the TP discussions themselves are probably not widely received, although in principle they are accessible to the public. By comparison, the associated article, which is inextricably linked to, and impacted by, TP discussions, is definitely more widely received and, while there are no reliable figures concerning number of article reads, the English Wikipedia in general has a sizable readership, especially in Europe. Thus, altogether, the representation/construction of the EU the Wikipedia community arrives at might have a marked impact on a global scale but is particularly impactful across Europe including the territory that the EU covers. Since the EU's population constitutes a sizable part of the Wikipedia readership, Wikipedia can serve as a powerful instrument in clearing up misconceptions and disseminating information about the institution amongst EU residents.

8.2 Findings – Research Question B

Another set of research questions pertains to the representation and construction of the European Union on Wikipedia:

B, How is the European Union discursively represented and constructed on Wikipedia? Specifically,

1. which aspects of the European Union have been discussed on the Talk Page (TP) accompanying the Wikipedia article on the European Union, that is, which topics connected to the EU have been considered controversial enough to have yielded TP activity?

2. within selected topics, how do the Wikipedians discursively construct the EU on the TP between 2001 and 2015?

3. how are the controversial aspects, identified from the TP examination, resolved on the article page?

Research question B1 was addressed by applying van Dijk's macro-proposition theory. It is worth noting that use of this was facilitated by Wikipedia policy and by Wikipedia data corresponding with this policy. Wikipedia policy mandates topic focus in Talk Page discussion threads and Wikipedians do not merely implicitly adhere to this rule but also explicitly enforce it when necessary (see 4.2.2). Figure 14 gives an overview of the controversial elements identified (see more on this in 4.2.3).

Construction and representation of the EU in three topic clusters

Concerning research question B2, that is, how Wikipedians discursively constructed the EU on the TP between 2001 and 2015, three of these topic clusters were examined.

In its debates, the Wikipedia community continuously constructs/represents the EU as non-identical with and separate from its member states. In the data set discussed in chapter 5 this is realised in debates about the alleged give and take of sovereignty between the EU and its member states, i.e. a field of tension is established between the EU and its constituent parts. In the data set of chapter 6, the community initially attempts to determine if there is a distinct EU culture shared across EU member states, but finally resorts to focussing on EU policies only. Arguably, the subcorpus discussed in chapter 7 exhibits the least notable reference to this defining issue. Still, this subcorpus contains discussion of the EU as resulting from European countries' actions, i.e. in this data set the relationship between current EU members and the institution is one of cause and effect or of voluntary action in the form of creating/joining the EU.

Throughout the data set examined in chapter 5, the Wikipedia community debates how the EU relates to its member states. The community discusses various concepts and terms to apply to the European Union reaching from country/unitary state to federation and confederation to, finally, union. When considering the applicability of these terms, the community consistently returns to evaluating the EU and its members in terms of their status as sovereign entities. In the course of debating how much sovereignty member states hold vis-à-vis the EU, the Wikipedia community invariably constructs and represents the EU and the member states as opposing parties in an uncomfortable struggle for sovereignty as a coveted good that the member states (do not) concede to the EU. Thus, the community constructs/represents the EU's relationship to its member states as problematic and

characterised by tension. The establishment of such a field of tension presupposes a particular conception of the EU, viz. as *separate* from its constituents. Regardless of whether Wikipedians propose that the "EU respects the sovereignty of its members" or they argue that "it will ultimately deprive member states" of sovereignty, such discussions portray the EU as an entity detached from its member states.

The Wikipedia community constructs and represents the EU along a continuum of sovereignty and the overwhelmingly dominant construction of the EU is one of a non-sovereign entity. For example, the application of 'country' and 'federation' are comprehensively rejected on the basis of the EU's perceived lack of sovereignty. Indeed, the examination of references to 'sovereign*' in the given corpus drives home this point, e.g. "the EU is not a sovereign entity and only enjoys delegated authority from the member states". This statement alludes to the key issue with regard to Wikipedians' constructing the EU as non-sovereign, namely the EU member states' predominant retention of sovereignty (see chapter 5 for more on this).

As noted above, chapter 6 also contains reference to the overarching theme of constructing/representing the EU in relation to its constituents. However, this relation is established differently than in chapter 5. Instead of generally constructing the EU as an institution separate and remote from its members, the Wikipedia community discusses whether member states share a distinct EU culture. This presupposes the idea that the EU is somewhat connected to its peoples and constituent countries. Regardless of the fact that the community here negotiates the EU as a cultural space, the community ultimately rejects the notion of an EU culture and returns to a clear separation of the EU as an institution from the peoples that live in EU territory. That is, the Wikipedia community resorts to focusing on EU cultural *policy* only and does not pursue the representation and construction of the EU as cultural space encompassing/consisting of its members. A similar pattern is present in the community's discussions about the EU's languages – while languages used across the territory of the EU are indeed debated, the majority of discussion still relates to the EU's official languages, i.e. to the institutional policy on the issue rather than on lived practice (see chapter 6 for more).

As a brief aside, it is also worth noting here that the Wikipedia community exhibits a striking preoccupation with nation states and nationality. In reference to culture as well as language, the community draws on nationality as a seemingly clear-cut defining category by which to make sense of the world, e.g. "the Union isn't a country with a well-

defined culture" or when referring to French as key EU language based on the notion that "France is the main country of Europe".

Chapter 7 illustrates how the Wikipedia community negotiates controversial aspects concerning the EU's *institutional* history. While this focus on only the institutional historical narrative again implies a construction/representation of the EU as, to a degree, separate and distinct from its constituents, the Wikipedia community discusses the initiating forces behind the creation of the EU in part as the member countries' self-organised move. That is, the EU is negotiated as a result of voluntary action by democratic countries.

In the context of Wikipedians' discussions about EU history and the rejection of Nazi Germany as a predecessor, the EU is again predominantly constructed/represented as an institution voluntarily formed and joined, an institution that appreciates diversity, supports human rights and liberalism. Interestingly, the Wikipedia community apparently does not view the EU as an entirely democratically run institution. Wikipedians represent this as disadvantageous and as an issue that ought to be redressed (see chapter 7 for details).

Realisation in Wikipedia article

Generally, the Wikipedia community exhibits a tendency to resolve controversial issues in the article by avoidance. With regard to the conundrum of how to define the EU, the community resorts to a non-solution, i.e. the editors agree to call the European *Union* a union. Interestingly, they also manage to avoid any reference to the controversial issue of sovereignty, at least in the introduction, by not linking to the Wikipedia article on 'union' because said article comments on degrees of sovereignty. Later in the article, there are repeated references to EU member states as sovereign, e.g. "[t]he following 28 sovereign states […] constitute the union". However, the article also mentions that "the privileges and obligations of EU membership" entail "partial delegation of sovereignty to the institutions in return for representation within those institutions, a practice often referred to as 'pooling of sovereignty'" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015). Furthermore, as discussed in section 5.3, the article also briefly mentions the difficulty of defining the nature of the EU in terms such as federation or sui generis.

The Wikipedia article is relatively limited with respect to the debates addressed in chapter 6. The community's resolution to focus on cultural policies is realised in the article by mention of e.g. the EU Cultural Capital programme. Interestingly, there are also two pictures that show the Acropolis and the Colosseum with the caption "Acropolis and

Colosseum, symbols of the Graeco-Roman world"; however, their connection to the section on culture is not explained. These pictures can be interpreted as remnants of the community's discussion on possibly shared cultural elements (see 6.1.2). Moreover, the article contains a short section on sports after one pugnacious and now blocked Wikipedian refused to compromise. Still, even this section is limited to EU policy that has affected sports, e.g.:

> Sport is mainly the responsibility of an individual member states or other international organisations rather than that of the EU. However, there are some EU policies that have had an impact on sport.

With respect to the EU and its languages, the article names the EU's official languages and explains the policy of multilingualism ("The European Parliament provides translation into all languages for documents and its plenary sessions" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015)). The article also refers to the percentages of "most spoken" languages, with English in the lead as spoken by "native and non-native speakers" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015) followed by German as the "most widely spoken mother tongue" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015). Finally, the article also refers to the languages spoken across the peoples of the EU: "there are about 150 regional and minority languages, spoken by up to 50 million people" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015).

Concerning the history of the EU, the community agrees to exclude any reference to Nazi Germany. The article also does not contain reference to any initiators and driving forces behind the formation of the EU except for individual politicians: "supporters of the Community included Alcide De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, and Paul-Henri Spaak" (European Union, Wikipedia, 2015) – all of which can also be found in the EU's own version of its historical narrative (European Union, 2017).

8.3   Limitations and Outlook

Finally, some limitations of this study deserve discussion. One set of limitations relates to personal choices concerning data treatment and analysis, while another pertains to issues this study does not address. The latter set of caveats already points towards possible future research.

First, despite the fact that both context (i.e. Wikipedia policy) and the data facilitate categorisation of data according to topic, there is a degree of subjectivity to this categorisation. Second, even though corpus size and academic literature were taken into account to aid the selection of subcorpora for more in-depth textual analysis, it is still true

that such choices are coloured by personal interest. Furthermore, all textual analyses depend on interpretation by the researcher. Therefore, my textual analyses and discussions thereof presented in chapters 5 to 7 contain interpretations affected by my personal history and world view. What is more – and is true for any study carried out by a human researcher – even the selection of methodology and analytical means is shaped by personal preference.

Several remarkable elements are not addressed in this study. For instance, this study does not address the Wikipedia community's changing attitudes towards the EU over the observed time period between 2001 and 2015. While the given corpus facilitates such examination, the spatial limitation of this thesis made me decide against pursuing this aspect. The same reason led to my discounting another undoubtedly fascinating research venue, namely the attempt to observe correlation in Wikipedia's changing construction/representation of the EU and world events. Especially in the context of a study located in the broader field of CDS, this aspect would have been notable because of the field's overarching understanding that wider social practice and linguistic practice are interconnected – such a study would have allowed the observation of how this connection is realised in discussions on the EU on Wikipedia. This already points towards a potential and realistic future project since the corpus already contains the required temporal mark-up.

What is more, this study leaves aside notable aspects of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, even though intertextuality (and interdiscursivity) are particularly interesting in the context of Wikipedia, as the website uses hyperlinks to pages inside and outside of the encyclopaedia. Additionally, the website emphasises the importance of sourcing material and therefore, an examination of which sources are used and how these relate to Wikipedia content would prove a worthwhile research project in its own right (see, for example, Kopf & Nichele, forthcoming). It is also worth noting that multimodal aspects of Wikipedia data did not receive attention in this thesis. While my research questions did not require such an examination and the spatial limitations of this thesis forced me to eschew the investigation of remarkable elements of intertextuality, interdiscursivity as well as multimodality, future research should complement this study by addressing these issues.

Additionally, I deprioritised the Wikipedia article on the EU. For this project I was more interested in aspects of the EU that Wikipedians struggle with; issues that they debate and thereby allow an insight into possibly differing conceptions of the institution. The article, even though it is the front stage, i.e. is outwardly directed and reaches a broader

audience than the examined TP, does not allow an insight into these fascinating controversies (cf. Myers, 2010, p. 145). Still, a more detailed discussion of the article's content or even the observation of article development over time, which could give an insight into the changing construction and representation of the EU, would definitely be another interesting future project.

Two other aspects that deserve future research attention pertain to the TP data examined – this data set is a rich source of information on many issues far beyond the EU. For instance, future studies of this corpus could focus on the construction and representation of particular nations, nationalities and their relationships. Secondly, the corpus could be studied with focus on how the Wikipedia community constructs this Wikipedia in-group, how contributors' perform their identities in the course of discussions and generally, examine how this particular community of practice performs certain tasks, that is, the data could be studied through a pragmatic lens. With regard to the second aspect, a future examination could focus on how many (identifiable) individuals actually contributed content to the TP and when, in order to determine how extensive this public sphere actually is and was at different points in time.

With respect to Wikipedia as an object of research, my discussion is limited to the most central policies. Future research ought to present a more in-depth discussion of Wikipedia's policies, their development and the lived practice of these. Moreover, future research should also dedicate more room to debating the Wikipedia hierarchy and people's motivations to contribute to the encyclopaedia, e.g. theorise the significance of Wikipedians' free labour in the context of ideas such as 'prosumption' and 'playbor' (cf. Fuchs, 2014). In addition to my first step towards theorising Wikipedia's relevance in the sense of its potential to function as a public sphere, I would also argue that future discourse and linguistic research ought to address it as a Community of Inquiry, i.e. as institution that possibly allows increased *Erkenntnisgewinn* based on its harnessing the wisdom of the crowd.

This connects to one last but significant point consisting of three subitems – first, the theorisation of online platforms, second, the assessment of reception, i.e. how online data are read (e.g. in a linear fashion or not, etc.) and third, the development of adequate tools of analysis to address the issue of possibly changing ways of how content is received. With respect to the first issue, while numerous researchers have shifted their focus from traditional media such as newspapers to dealing with online data, there is, understandably, still a lack of published research on the societal impact and relevance of different platforms

(beyond surveys attempting to capture, e.g. size of readership). Thus, the existing platforms need to be addressed concerning the functions they can have or the issues they might cause. With respect to the second reader-oriented aspect, since online data are often multi-layered and not even intended for linear reception, eye-tracking and other psycholinguistic research might shed light on the actual processes of reception that such data privilege. With respect to the third issue, changed processes of reception ought to be taken into account when choosing or developing means of analysis.

Having provided but a glimpse of the vast potential for future research in the area, this thesis does present a first important step towards addressing and redressing the existing lack of research, both on Wikipedia, as a young but notable repository of data for discourse analytical inquiry, and on the EU and how private individuals from various backgrounds debate and attempt to make sense of the institution.

Glossary

CADS	Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDS	Critical Discourse Studies
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CMDA	Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis
Digital CDS	Digital Critical Discourse Studies
EU	European Union
NPOV	Neutral Point of View
SM-CDS	Social Media Critical Discourse Studies
TP	Talk Page

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Appendix A

Word frequencies in 'What is the EU?' corpus

1	7714	the	251	69	either
2	3004	is	252	69	example
3	2878	of	253	69	making
4	2849	a	254	69	organization
5	2829	to	255	69	while
6	2373	and	256	68	after
7	2007	it	257	68	j
8	1878	in	258	68	organisation
9	1715	that	259	67	citizens
10	1649	i	260	66	far
11	1625	eu	261	66	sense
12	1410	not	262	65	meaning
13	1197	as	263	64	bodies
14	1192	utc	264	64	find
15	1023	be	265	64	january
16	939	talk	266	64	logan
17	934	this	267	64	quite
18	818	you	268	64	source
19	763	are	269	63	phrase
20	726	union	270	63	reason
21	711	for	271	63	terms
22	654	but	272	63	united
23	648	have	273	62	english
24	645	with	274	62	idea
25	591	an	275	61	articles
26	590	on	276	61	cannot
27	576	or	277	61	debate
28	525	states	278	61	did
29	507	would	279	61	saying
30	503	has	280	61	whether
31	497	by	281	60	actually
32	473	which	282	60	back
33	471	european	283	60	made
34	464	if	284	60	says
35	452	what	285	60	sure
36	436	we	286	60	uk
37	424	there	287	59	further
38	421	political	288	59	least
39	413	article	289	59	nations
40	385	think	290	58	information

41	382	so	291	57	best
42	369	can	292	57	usa
43	366	at	293	56	added
44	363	about	294	56	issues
45	360	no	295	56	place
46	350	was	296	55	another
47	349	its	297	55	changed
48	348	all	298	55	clearly
49	345	one	299	55	had
50	344	should	300	55	power
51	322	more	301	55	system
52	308	from	302	54	comment
53	303	state	303	54	makes
54	299	do	304	54	others
55	298	member	305	53	december
56	297	like	306	53	empire
57	294	just	307	53	eu's
58	282	economic	308	53	indeed
59	280	also	309	53	infobox
60	273	they	310	53	integration
61	270	some	311	53	nature
62	268	does	312	53	suggest
63	254	confederation	313	52	add
64	250	supranational	314	52	certain
65	249	your	315	52	problem
66	239	than	316	51	believe
67	236	country	317	51	bosonic
68	230	any	318	51	less
69	228	march	319	51	must
70	228	other	320	51	powers
71	225	because	321	51	put
72	218	my	322	50	although
73	217	don't	323	50	central
74	210	x	324	50	ever
75	206	february	325	50	g
76	206	term	326	50	list
77	202	first	327	50	mentioned
78	195	been	328	50	sovereignty
79	191	treaty	329	50	whole
80	190	september	330	49	areas
81	188	countries	331	49	changes
82	187	intro	332	49	content
83	187	will	333	49	lisbon
84	184	generis	334	49	never
85	181	only	335	49	nothing
86	180	people	336	49	number
87	180	say	337	48	context
88	179	thread	338	48	described

89	178	here	339	48	dressing
90	178	sui	340	48	proposed
91	173	very	341	48	similar
92	172	arnoutf	342	48	take
93	170	being	343	48	trying
94	169	then	344	47	description
95	166	most	345	47	governments
96	162	see	346	47	start
97	160	it's	347	47	u
98	158	sentence	348	47	using
99	156	between	349	47	within
100	155	intergovernmental	350	47	wrong
101	155	why	351	47	yet
102	153	use	352	46	area
103	151	lead	353	46	can't
104	151	point	354	46	fine
105	150	even	355	46	last
106	146	i'm	356	46	laws
107	146	introduction	357	46	long
108	146	much	358	46	maybe
109	146	used	359	46	previous
110	144	federation	360	46	probably
111	143	how	361	46	try
112	142	could	362	46	under
113	142	such	363	45	court
114	139	agree	364	45	else
115	139	make	365	45	explain
116	139	page	366	45	look
117	138	way	367	45	man
118	137	may	368	45	question
119	137	something	369	45	statement
120	135	section	370	45	strongly
121	134	sandpiper	371	45	wording
122	131	law	372	45	yes
123	131	now	373	44	argument
124	131	up	374	44	citizenship
125	130	well	375	44	independent
126	127	me	376	44	present
127	127	name	377	44	references
128	127	out	378	44	relevant
129	127	their	379	43	august
130	126	discussion	380	43	come
131	126	international	381	43	enough
132	126	nation	382	43	explanation
133	126	word	383	43	kind
134	125	members	384	43	primarily
135	124	when	385	43	therefore
136	123	new	386	42	binding

137	122	lear	387	42	closer
138	122	version	388	42	i've
139	121	many	389	42	line
140	120	important	390	42	someone
141	120	wikipedia	391	41	currency
142	119	am	392	41	every
143	119	fact	393	41	having
144	118	us	394	41	include
145	115	europe	395	41	language
146	115	into	396	41	military
147	115	simonski	397	41	non
148	114	common	398	41	population
149	114	current	399	41	reader
150	112	issue	400	41	reference
151	111	though	401	41	simple
152	110	these	402	41	supranationalism
153	109	council	403	41	true
154	108	federal	404	40	almost
155	108	who	405	40	course
156	107	too	406	40	foreign
157	106	again	407	40	little
158	106	gdp	408	40	lot
159	105	definition	409	40	official
160	105	however	410	40	position
161	104	paragraph	411	40	regional
162	103	without	412	40	subtropical
163	103	world	413	40	war
164	102	consensus	414	40	years
165	102	still	415	39	against
166	101	own	416	39	arguments
167	99	different	417	39	association
168	99	good	418	39	become
169	99	november	419	39	claim
170	99	same	420	39	he
171	99	single	421	39	note
172	98	sovereign	422	39	points
173	97	community	423	39	proposal
174	97	history	424	39	provide
175	95	july	425	39	strong
176	94	know	426	39	talking
177	94	t	427	39	text
178	93	above	428	39	that's
179	93	change	429	38	always
180	93	really	430	38	archive
181	93	time	431	38	cia
182	92	both	432	38	constitution
183	91	read	433	38	correct
184	91	things	434	38	down

185	89	october	435	38	exactly
186	89	over	436	38	form
187	89	two	437	38	level
188	88	please	438	38	market
189	88	where	439	38	matter
190	87	boson	440	38	nor
191	87	need	441	38	rome
192	87	those	442	38	s
193	86	april	443	38	structure
194	86	describe	444	37	accurate
195	86	oppose	445	37	comments
196	86	since	446	37	detail
197	85	etc	447	37	happy
198	85	institutions	448	37	instead
199	85	unique	449	37	latin
200	85	words	450	37	matters
201	84	before	451	37	seem
202	84	e	452	37	set
203	84	entity	453	37	work
204	84	policy	454	36	able
205	84	treaties	455	36	american
206	84	want	456	36	describing
207	83	editors	457	36	each
208	83	support	458	36	i'd
209	83	understand	459	36	re
210	82	seems	460	36	through
211	81	rather	461	36	writing
212	81	them	462	35	body
213	79	view	463	35	created
214	79	were	464	35	currently
215	78	better	465	35	discussed
216	78	clear	466	35	ecj
217	78	get	467	35	geography
218	78	government	468	35	governance
219	78	national	469	35	june
220	78	perhaps	470	35	needs
221	78	right	471	35	neither
222	78	sources	472	35	para
223	77	agreement	473	35	reasons
224	77	go	474	35	subject
225	77	going	475	35	together
226	77	itself	476	35	trade
227	77	said	477	34	completely
228	76	mention	478	34	contribs
229	76	un	479	34	decisions
230	75	legal	480	34	give
231	74	case	481	34	mentioning
232	74	mean	482	34	policies

233	74	might	483	34	thought
234	74	simply	484	33	anyway
235	73	commission	485	33	certainly
236	73	edit	486	33	de
237	73	thing	487	33	done
238	72	anything	488	33	his
239	72	bit	489	33	ig
240	72	economy	490	33	keep
241	72	given	491	33	maastricht
242	72	link	492	33	once
243	71	already	493	33	original
244	71	means	494	33	possible
245	71	parliament	495	33	sorry
246	71	part	496	33	status
247	71	second	497	33	thanks
248	70	doesn't	498	32	continent
249	70	isn't	499	32	end
250	70	opinion	500	32	located

Appendix B

Word frequencies in 'EU culture, language(s) and symbols' corpus

1	6119	the	251	56	non
2	2410	of	252	56	since
3	2371	to	253	55	compromise
4	2246	is	254	55	number
5	1825	a	255	55	policy
6	1785	in	256	55	right
7	1769	i	257	55	whole
8	1752	and	258	54	back
9	1475	that	259	54	citizens
10	1443	it	260	54	did
11	1171	utc	261	54	our
12	1102	not	262	54	understand
13	1094	eu	263	53	arguments
14	979	be	264	53	believe
15	934	as	265	53	word
16	883	this	266	52	after
17	726	for	267	52	having
18	676	on	268	52	probably
19	669	are	269	52	uefa
20	590	you	270	52	view
21	586	we	271	51	indeed
22	586	with	272	51	made
23	574	but	273	51	picture
24	542	have	274	51	under
25	507	if	275	51	whether

26	493	talk	276	50	added
27	477	there	277	50	doesn't
28	460	or	278	50	i've
29	456	would	279	50	idea
30	432	an	280	50	removed
31	406	article	281	50	too
32	374	all	282	49	course
33	370	should	283	49	done
34	364	so	284	49	native
35	363	european	285	49	september
36	362	more	286	48	anything
37	361	think	287	48	last
38	358	section	288	48	level
39	356	about	289	48	march
40	349	no	290	48	others
41	333	what	291	48	speakers
42	330	was	292	48	treaty
43	319	just	293	48	united
44	319	one	294	47	anyway
45	309	by	295	47	sense
46	306	november	296	47	wrong
47	303	has	297	46	against
48	301	do	298	46	mention
49	299	at	299	46	northern
50	287	sports	300	46	quite
51	283	other	301	46	simply
52	272	can	302	46	therefore
53	264	from	303	46	trying
54	264	which	304	46	yet
55	253	english	305	45	cultural
56	249	people	306	45	edit
57	246	sport	307	45	makes
58	242	your	308	45	maybe
59	240	like	309	45	place
60	234	flag	310	45	sorry
61	234	thread	311	45	translation
62	232	than	312	45	words
63	231	my	313	44	give
64	225	t	314	44	population
65	224	here	315	43	british
66	223	ireland	316	43	every
67	220	lear	317	43	include
68	211	languages	318	43	members
69	210	also	319	43	saying
70	208	they	320	43	someone
71	207	see	321	42	boson
72	204	any	322	42	can't
73	204	will	323	42	come

74	196	language	324	42	keep
75	195	only	325	42	less
76	192	its	326	41	best
77	186	don't	327	41	help
78	185	member	328	41	instead
79	185	name	329	41	itself
80	180	august	330	41	says
81	178	states	331	41	world
82	172	some	332	40	american
83	171	agree	333	40	debate
84	171	then	334	40	given
85	170	arnoutf	335	40	second
86	169	point	336	40	support
87	166	official	337	39	end
88	163	does	338	39	issues
89	159	page	339	39	million
90	158	country	340	39	sandpiper
91	158	logan	341	39	sentence
92	154	countries	342	39	take
93	153	europe	343	39	using
94	153	why	344	38	anyone
95	152	very	345	38	feel
96	150	could	346	38	hence
97	150	j	347	38	inclusion
98	150	may	348	38	passport
99	150	union	349	38	poll
100	148	been	350	38	spoken
101	148	most	351	37	confusion
102	147	january	352	37	main
103	146	i'm	353	37	note
104	143	x	354	37	numbers
105	142	even	355	37	pages
106	141	say	356	37	question
107	140	being	357	37	talking
108	138	well	358	36	although
109	137	culture	359	36	arms
110	137	how	360	36	around
111	135	such	361	36	changed
112	134	because	362	36	clearly
113	133	now	363	36	context
114	132	am	364	36	eu's
115	128	list	365	36	further
116	126	who	366	36	maps
117	125	out	367	36	means
118	125	use	368	36	next
119	124	simonski	369	36	ok
120	121	me	370	36	work
121	121	way	371	35	correct

122	120	know	372	35	each
123	118	much	373	35	else
124	116	state	374	35	g
125	115	it's	375	35	little
126	115	where	376	35	original
127	113	need	377	35	religious
128	112	wikipedia	378	35	side
129	110	really	379	35	that's
130	109	make	380	35	there's
131	106	same	381	34	based
132	106	their	382	34	miguel
133	105	up	383	34	religion
134	104	french	384	34	remove
135	104	might	385	34	several
136	104	these	386	34	thought
137	101	rather	387	34	vote
138	100	still	388	34	wp
139	99	discussion	389	33	certainly
140	99	football	390	33	erasmus
141	99	get	391	33	his
142	96	many	392	33	including
143	96	when	393	33	institutions
144	95	december	394	33	irrelevant
145	95	image	395	33	major
146	95	motto	396	33	needs
147	95	republic	397	33	position
148	93	flags	398	33	reasons
149	93	however	399	33	references
150	90	council	400	33	se
151	90	mean	401	33	status
152	89	first	402	33	written
153	89	source	403	32	data
154	89	time	404	32	german
155	89	two	405	32	irish
156	88	popular	406	32	island
157	88	used	407	32	move
158	88	version	408	32	needed
159	87	above	409	32	organisation
160	87	content	410	32	pov
161	86	etc	411	32	readers
162	86	into	412	32	seem
163	86	issue	413	31	involved
164	86	part	414	31	live
165	86	though	415	31	myself
166	86	tomeasy	416	31	never
167	85	consensus	417	31	once
168	85	said	418	31	political
169	85	something	419	31	s

170	84	bit	420	31	sources
171	84	perhaps	421	30	anthem
172	83	information	422	30	consider
173	83	were	423	30	crown
174	82	c	424	30	exactly
175	82	map	425	30	few
176	82	mentioned	426	30	included
177	82	problem	427	30	insignia
178	82	put	428	30	international
179	80	between	429	30	lot
180	80	good	430	30	majority
181	80	seems	431	30	research
182	79	them	432	30	small
183	79	those	433	30	speak
184	78	infobox	434	30	start
185	78	october	435	30	subject
186	78	want	436	30	suggest
187	77	france	437	30	symbols
188	77	july	438	30	team
189	77	opinion	439	30	try
190	76	southernelectric	440	30	you're
191	76	table	441	29	constitution
192	75	argument	442	29	disagree
193	75	both	443	29	parliament
194	75	fact	444	29	points
195	74	case	445	29	pretty
196	74	clear	446	29	society
197	74	over	447	29	solution
198	73	go	448	29	students
199	73	text	449	28	difference
200	73	uk	450	28	down
201	73	without	451	28	economy
202	72	sure	452	28	happy
203	72	things	453	28	logo
204	71	actually	454	28	meant
205	70	february	455	28	names
206	69	had	456	28	played
207	69	read	457	28	putting
208	68	reference	458	28	related
209	67	add	459	28	review
210	67	either	460	28	similar
211	67	long	461	28	tastycakes
212	67	please	462	28	thanks
213	66	again	463	28	top
214	66	editors	464	28	wouldn't
215	66	find	465	27	avoid
216	66	us	466	27	claim
217	65	going	467	27	currently

218	65	least	468	27	diversity
219	64	common	469	27	euro
220	64	example	470	27	fyrom
221	64	latin	471	27	germany
222	64	link	472	27	june
223	64	nothing	473	27	kind
224	63	change	474	27	prefer
225	63	different	475	27	show
226	63	isn't	476	27	ssj
227	63	own	477	27	until
228	62	another	478	27	worth
229	62	better	479	26	almost
230	62	he	480	26	commission
231	61	articles	481	26	listed
232	61	before	482	26	making
233	61	current	483	26	necessary
234	61	far	484	26	portuguese
235	61	new	485	26	single
236	61	while	486	26	standard
237	61	yes	487	26	term
238	59	enough	488	26	three
239	59	i'd	489	26	true
240	59	important	490	26	un
241	59	national	491	25	blue
242	59	presidency	492	25	countersubject
243	59	relevant	493	25	didn't
244	59	within	494	25	editing
245	58	thing	495	25	follow
246	57	e	496	25	future
247	57	reason	497	25	great
248	56	already	498	25	interest
249	56	comment	499	25	law
250	56	look	500	25	lear's

Appendix C

Word frequencies in 'History of the EU' corpus

1	1333	the	251	10	include
2	527	of	252	10	indeed
3	392	to	253	10	liberty
4	378	and	254	10	luis
5	341	a	255	10	make
6	327	is	256	10	markthomas
7	303	in	257	10	might
8	232	that	258	10	policy
9	220	it	259	10	seems
10	208	i	260	10	source

11	195	utc	261	10	such
12	169	eu	262	10	three
13	159	as	263	10	through
14	148	not	264	10	two
15	147	be	265	10	view
16	147	this	266	9	actually
17	143	was	267	9	always
18	133	for	268	9	anyway
19	105	history	269	9	argument
20	104	are	270	9	consensus
21	102	but	271	9	content
22	101	european	272	9	economy
23	91	section	273	9	editors
24	90	with	274	9	enlargement
25	89	on	275	9	etc
26	77	have	276	9	further
27	75	by	277	9	given
28	72	talk	278	9	globalisation
29	71	we	279	9	go
30	69	article	280	9	i've
31	69	union	281	9	last
32	68	should	282	9	left
33	66	think	283	9	less
34	65	which	284	9	luxembourg
35	62	thread	285	9	makes
36	62	you	286	9	me
37	61	about	287	9	member
38	60	january	288	9	nazis
39	60	or	289	9	once
40	59	image	290	9	part
41	59	there	291	9	paul
42	57	all	292	9	perhaps
43	57	more	293	9	pov
44	56	europe	294	9	probably
45	56	from	295	9	schuman
46	56	so	296	9	still
47	56	would	297	9	undemocratic
48	54	an	298	9	united
49	54	has	299	9	want
50	54	if	300	9	wikipedia
51	54	one	301	8	above
52	51	march	302	8	although
53	46	at	303	8	am
54	43	no	304	8	back
55	43	other	305	8	eastern
56	41	euro	306	8	elected
57	41	just	307	8	else
58	39	some	308	8	event

59	39	they	309	8	following
60	38	also	310	8	get
61	38	do	311	8	he
62	38	only	312	8	his
63	38	than	313	8	influence
64	36	were	314	8	itself
65	35	german	315	8	joining
66	35	name	316	8	july
67	34	any	317	8	least
68	34	can	318	8	length
69	34	its	319	8	list
70	34	treaty	320	8	little
71	34	what	321	8	logan
72	32	very	322	8	maastricht
73	31	first	323	8	market
74	31	my	324	8	mention
75	31	page	325	8	model
76	30	date	326	8	never
77	28	currency	327	8	note
78	28	people	328	8	old
79	28	your	329	8	others
80	27	been	330	8	reference
81	27	their	331	8	relevant
82	27	world	332	8	rib
83	26	community	333	8	rome
84	26	countries	334	8	santer
85	26	does	335	8	sections
86	26	it's	336	8	sense
87	26	like	337	8	september
88	26	need	338	8	small
89	26	point	339	8	space
90	26	when	340	8	support
91	25	don't	341	8	wasn't
92	25	many	342	8	while
93	25	states	343	8	ww
94	24	benelux	344	7	banknote
95	24	here	345	7	change
96	24	lear	346	7	creation
97	24	x	347	7	customs
98	23	could	348	7	example
99	23	into	349	7	far
100	23	mentioned	350	7	force
101	23	rather	351	7	going
102	23	then	352	7	info
103	22	much	353	7	join
104	22	nazi	354	7	legal
105	22	tharkuncoll	355	7	longer
106	21	arnoutf	356	7	look

107	21	better	357	7	mean
108	21	important	358	7	modern
109	21	june	359	7	monetary
110	21	say	360	7	netherlands
111	20	agree	361	7	often
112	20	economic	362	7	original
113	20	how	363	7	place
114	20	members	364	7	politics
115	20	new	365	7	possible
116	20	text	366	7	pre
117	20	uk	367	7	put
118	20	why	368	7	question
119	19	eec	369	7	removed
120	19	germany	370	7	says
121	19	historical	371	7	seriously
122	19	most	372	7	simply
123	19	war	373	7	someone
124	19	way	374	7	subheading
125	19	who	375	7	suggest
126	18	even	376	7	sure
127	18	good	377	7	that's
128	18	know	378	7	things
129	18	may	379	7	timeline
130	18	out	380	7	views
131	18	political	381	7	whether
132	18	well	382	7	wiki
133	18	years	383	7	words
134	17	france	384	6	accession
135	17	really	385	6	anti
136	17	solberg	386	6	anywhere
137	17	state	387	6	articles
138	16	because	388	6	bank
139	16	current	389	6	become
140	16	empire	390	6	believe
141	16	integration	391	6	came
142	16	plan	392	6	century
143	16	s	393	6	context
144	16	sentence	394	6	continent
145	16	time	395	6	create
146	16	without	396	6	democracy
147	15	being	397	6	denmark
148	15	coal	398	6	direct
149	15	common	399	6	directly
150	15	ec	400	6	during
151	15	ecsc	401	6	europeans
152	15	find	402	6	eurozone
153	15	founded	403	6	expansion
154	15	had	404	6	federal

155	15	idea	405	6	financial
156	15	information	406	6	found
157	15	mathrm	407	6	freedom
158	15	sandpiper	408	6	future
159	15	them	409	6	gaulle
160	15	these	410	6	general
161	15	thing	411	6	government
162	15	will	412	6	governments
163	14	bit	413	6	group
164	14	formation	414	6	included
165	14	long	415	6	including
166	14	national	416	6	instead
167	14	now	417	6	issues
168	14	similar	418	6	lisbon
169	14	steel	419	6	lot
170	14	t	420	6	made
171	14	under	421	6	major
172	14	use	422	6	marshall
173	14	where	423	6	mind
174	13	added	424	6	necessary
175	13	already	425	6	official
176	13	another	426	6	order
177	13	before	427	6	our
178	13	bilderberg	428	6	portugal
179	13	british	429	6	predecessor
180	13	december	430	6	president
181	13	democratic	431	6	reason
182	13	french	432	6	reasons
183	13	however	433	6	reich
184	13	intro	434	6	reliable
185	13	introduction	435	6	result
186	13	j	436	6	shouldn't
187	13	jun	437	6	signed
188	13	over	438	6	sport
189	13	parliament	439	6	structure
190	13	proposed	440	6	sub
191	13	read	441	6	supporters
192	13	right	442	6	true
193	13	same	443	6	unless
194	13	see	444	6	usa
195	13	similarities	445	6	xb
196	13	single	446	6	year
197	13	though	447	5	according
198	13	treaties	448	5	act
199	13	west	449	5	almost
200	12	berlin	450	5	alternative
201	12	central	451	5	april
202	12	country	452	5	aren't

203	12	course	453	5	arguably
204	12	enough	454	5	around
205	12	having	455	5	base
206	12	i'm	456	5	basically
207	12	issue	457	5	bloc
208	12	main	458	5	blue
209	12	opinion	459	5	book
210	12	please	460	5	boson
211	12	republic	461	5	brussels
212	12	since	462	5	btw
213	12	those	463	5	case
214	12	up	464	5	certainly
215	11	anything	465	5	changed
216	11	best	466	5	charge
217	11	between	467	5	civil
218	11	both	468	5	com
219	11	comment	469	5	come
220	11	commission	470	5	communities
221	11	de	471	5	conspiracy
222	11	did	472	5	continental
223	11	fact	473	5	covered
224	11	february	474	5	crazy
225	11	isn't	475	5	currencies
226	11	joined	476	5	debate
227	11	nothing	477	5	e
228	11	problem	478	5	each
229	11	quite	479	5	east
230	11	roman	480	5	england
231	11	simonski	481	5	essential
232	11	something	482	5	established
233	11	subsections	483	5	establishment
234	11	th	484	5	eurotom
235	11	too	485	5	every
236	11	us	486	5	evidence
237	11	version	487	5	expand
238	11	whole	488	5	facts
239	11	yet	489	5	favour
240	10	after	490	5	frankfurt
241	10	again	491	5	free
242	10	banknotes	492	5	furthermore
243	10	belgium	493	5	goal
244	10	dates	494	5	got
245	10	different	495	5	hand
246	10	discussion	496	5	hard
247	10	either	497	5	high
248	10	founding	498	5	holy
249	10	historic	499	5	i'd
250	10	images	500	5	importance