UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

Euroscepticism Online

A Comparative Content Analysis of Two Online Platforms from Sweden and Denmark.

Dutceac Segesten, Anamaria; Bossetta, Michael

Publication date:
2014

UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

EU-Skepticism online: A comparative content analysis of two online platforms from Sweden and Denmark

DRAFT – PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Anamaria Dutceac Segesten and Michael Bossetta[1]

Lund University

Introduction

In this article our purpose is to investigate how Eurosceptic online public opinion differs in Sweden and Denmark and to provide an explanation for this phenomenon. We are also interested in the form of this difference: its tone (*how* the Eurosceptic messages are formulated/expressed) and its content (*what* the major critiques against the EU contain).

The theoretical contribution we want to make is to employ political culture as a way to explain variation in the way different European publics critically discuss the EU. Rephrasing the popular question about culture's applicability to politics, we ask: 'Can cultural variations among countries account for differences in political orientations towards European integration, as well as the public attitudes towards the resulting social and material outcomes of those orientations?' We operationalize this general question by looking concretely at instances of negative orientations of political parties, media and the national publics of Denmark and Sweden towards European integration. Our working hypothesis is that we are to expect a difference between the two cases, and that the difference is due to the contrast between the Swedish and Danish political cultures. Our empirical material comes from online political discussion forums dealing with EU questions. We expect that the tone of the Danish Eurosceptic voices will be more radical than that of the Swedish EU critics, a divergence we attribute to differences in normative codes of conduct brokered within the framework of the two national political cultures. We also expect that the content of the Swedish debate will be more inclined towards utilitarian reasons in comparison with the Danish case, where affective factors will be more predominant.

Our contribution to the study of Euroscepticism is twofold. Firstly, we want to emphasize the need to observe the variance in anti-EU voices and analyze this pan-European phenomenon in its various national contexts. Much research on Euroscepticism has focused on the analysis of statistical large-N studies producing generalizable results. We argue in favor of a re-contextualization of these results and posit that there is not ONE Euroscepticism but many. We want to emphasize that one of the most significant factors in producing differences in the tone and content of Eurosceptic orientations is political culture.

Secondly, we contribute to the scholarship on Euroscepticism by bringing into empirical focus an understudied arena for debating Europe, namely online debate forums. We find these virtual loci of interaction highly relevant to the study of public opinion towards the EU, as they do not bind political discussions to explicit political membership, ideologies, or specific media

---

[1] Correspondence address: Anamaria.Dutceac_Segesten@slav.lu.se; Michael.Bossetta@gmail.com

channels that may be biased on account of economic or other special interests. Due to the anonymity of the participants and the lack of a priori categorization into political cliques, online debate forums are easily accessible, promote a feeling of subjective empowerment, and can therefore be considered as examples of civic engagement.

The structure of our paper is as follows: we begin by discussing our theoretical framework and its relationship to the existing scholarship on Euroscepticism and its drivers at the national level. We then make an argument why the comparison between Sweden and Denmark is both interesting and legitimate, followed by a brief overview of the two countries' political communication cultures. In the methodology section we detail the steps to assess the tone and content of Swedish and Danish online posts according to a matrix of expectations we constructed along three categories: Tone, Type, and Reason. After a systematic comparison of 1785 posts, we present and interpret the results and thereafter, draw some more general conclusions that could guide further research in the field.

Theoretical framework

The main contention put forth in our theoretical framework is that variations in Euroscepticism can be explained by differences in political cultures. Political culture, as a way of conceptualizing the relationship between culture and politics, suggests that cultural norms affect domestic political decisions as well as the public's attitudes towards the social and material outcomes of those decisions. While acknowledging the pitfalls of cultural generalization, we argue that the Eurosceptic attitudes exhibited by national publics are influenced by normative codes of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour brokered over time by key societal actors (e.g. politicians, the media, and the public). In other words, the internal operations of political systems, media organizations, and public interactions intimately affect how these different actors perceive and discuss matters concerning European integration in their respective national spheres. After grounding our conceptualization of Swedish and Danish political cultures in relevant secondary literature, we compare how the publics of the respective countries discuss the EU in the medium of online debate forums. Our prediction is that variances in both the *tone* and *content* of Eurosceptic online posts can be explained in terms of differences in how the respective countries' main societal actors approach European integration in relation to one another.

Our focus on a comparative national approach stems from the idea that although Euroscepticism is a transnational European phenomenon, opposition to the EU is sensitive to, and situated within, national cultural contexts. Moravcsik recognizes that the socio-cultural background of states shapes their policies towards the EU (1993: 474), and the relationship between European states and the idea of integration is contingent upon historically developed ties (Bellier and Wilson: 2000). Furthermore, McMahon (2013) argues that transnational geographies built on cultural and historical interactions affect European integration and opposition to it, with northern Euroscepticism as a case-in-point demonstration. Recent research on Euroscepticism has advocated analyzing the role of national level actors in influencing public opinion about the EU, thereby conceptualizing the EU as a supranational extension of domestic politics (Hooghe and Marks 2005: 420). Previous work thus supports

the notion that social, cultural, and political components at the national level are integral to a thorough understanding of Euroscepticism. We propose framing this national dimension in terms of political culture since it holistically incorporates how key societal actors shape national level discourses and practices. In the next section we will provide a brief overview of 'political culture' before providing our own nuanced interpretation of the concept.

Political culture – a brief overview

As the name implies, the concept of 'political culture' stems from the idea that a "very obvious" and "fundamental relationship" between politics and culture exists (Welch 2013: 204). The seemingly intuitive nature of the concept has afforded political culture the status of general currency in the social sciences, but, rather paradoxically, the term has been taken to be something so intuitive and self-evident that its construal into multiple academic disciplines has relegated the term to a buzzword lacking a coherent and widely accepted definition (Formisano 2001: 394).

First appearing in Almond and Verba's seminal work *The Civic Cultures,* political culture was defined as "the specifically political orientations – attitudes, toward the political system and its various parts, and the attitudes toward the role of the self in the system" (Almond and Verba 1963: 13). Situated in a time when both history and the political sciences lauded culture's explanatory power, the idea of a causal link between culture and politics sparked a number of spin-off approaches to comparatively test if individual orientations are influenced by the political systems in which they are situated. Although the spin-off approaches were commendable in their strivings to further develop a theory of political culture that is empirically testable, ultimately political culture became a victim of disciplinary divisions. The "fissiparous multiplication" of sub-disciplines and schools of thought researching political culture "provides for decreasing incentive and opportunity for mutual communication" (Welch 2013: 211). The result is a widely construed concept that, while still considered to bear scientific weight, lacks cohesiveness and application across disciplines.

Lacking a unified theoretical and methodological front, the concept of 'political culture' has been open to criticism since its beginnings. In the 1970's the dominant method of political culture research was using survey data to quantitatively measure the 'attitudes, values, and orientations' proposed by Almond and Verba's original formulation. A number of criticisms, most notably by Pye (1972: 292), were launched against the ability to "subjectively quantify subjective dispositions" (Formisano 2001: 400). Furthermore, the rising popularity of rational choice theory criticized the idea that cultural norms can be influential in individual decision-making, and Marxist sympathizers pointed out political culture's lack of focus on class position and institutional coercion (ibid).

While during the latter half of the 20th century most scholars abandoned political culture studies to focus on rational choice theory or follow an interpretivist vein, the concept saw a renaissance in the 1980's and 1990's with the reconceptualization of culture as process – *not* a static explanatory variable. Still, political culture faces the same criticisms, which Riesinger summarizes succinctly when he writes:

"to define the term [!], to disentangle subcultures from a society's overall political culture . . . to theorize how political culture interacts with institutions and other attributes of a polity to produce political outcomes…[and to solve problems related to] individual-level orientations, their measurements, and connection to the collective." (Riesinger 1995: 347)

To summarize, the numerous disciplines and sub-disciplines in which political culture has been applied can explain the variances in the literature about conceptualizations of political culture. Nevertheless, the endurance of political culture as a concept despite continued criticism is a testament to its presumed validity in the social sciences. We consider the latter to be a reason, not an impediment, to continue exploring how political culture can be defined and tested. In the next section we offer an explanation for why political culture has been misconstrued, as well as present our own nuanced conceptualization of the term.

Our definition of political culture

We consider the ambiguity surrounding political culture to stem not from the assumption that politics and culture are related; rather, we hold that the multiplicity of approaches employing political culture have failed in thoroughly explaining how *culture* is understood in relation to politics. While most approaches to culture denote the same idea – i.e., a human interaction – the differing connotations and implications of what culture means lends itself to ambiguity (Ersson and Lane 2005: 24). In studies employing political culture, more often than not the author does not explicitly define his or her conceptualization of *culture*, leading the reader to deduce from context how the author relates culture to explaining political decisions and attitudes. As a result, approaches to political culture are often incongruous with one another, limiting progress in the advancement of the concept and formulation of methodologies to test it. In order to define political culture, we must first relay how we understand culture before relating its role to politics.

Following Weeden (2005: 714), we see culture as the result of ongoing processes of meaning-making, defined as the translation of individuals' interpretations of their material realities (political and socio-economic) into their actions. Embedded in the process of meaning-making is a normative system of cultural codes that define acceptable and unacceptable behavior, through which an individual uses as a frame of reference before acting. An individual's affirmation or denial of acting in accordance with these normative codes can be construed as attaching a certain degree of meaning or 'significance' to that code. In other words, if an individual acts in accordance with a given prevailing social norm, he grants meaning to its existence and promulgates its validity for the rest of society. If he acts against the code, he has granted meaning to another way of acting that can be affirmed or denied by other members of society. Rather paradoxically, through processes of meaning-making, cultural norms are both are a driver and product of this socially constructed process. That is to say, the affirmation or denial of certain cultural codes shapes the future norms through which an individual reflects in later deliberations. Certainly social norms change over time, but this requires the active denial

of the prevailing social codes, either through bottom-up popular movements or top-down political decisions.

With this conceptualization of culture in mind, we define political culture as a system of socially constructed codes, brokered over time between individuals and the institutions forming the fabric of their society, that govern acceptable and unacceptable social behavior. To further develop this definition, we wish to highlight the following main properties of how we understand political culture: as a system, as socially constructed, and as relational.

Conceptualizing political culture as a *system* necessitates taking into account both the cultural component of society (i.e. human interaction) as well as allowing for the preferences or 'orientations' of individuals. While preferences and 'orientations' are rather synonymous, we hold the latter to be an individual's construal of the cultural codes that govern appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Preferences, on the other hand, are strictly what an individual prefers in light of self-interest, which may or may not overlap with culturally embedded orientations. Orientations may conflict with an individual's preferences, and in choosing to act in accordance with or against the prevailing cultural codes of a normative system individuals generate a meaning-making process that either reaffirms or alters the normativity of those codes. However, it is important to note that although preferences and orientations may conflict, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive since "individual preferences continuously affect the normative order while the norms themselves are one of the influences that shape preferences" (Wilson 2000: 264).

To understand political culture in terms of a system as we have defined it implies that this system is the *socially constructed* product of the interactions between individuals in a political system and the institutions comprising that political system over time. We strongly contend that one cannot analyze the normative system of cultural codes in a political culture without looking at *how* the system was brokered between citizens and the institutions to which they have granted legitimacy through voting power (at least pertaining to democratic systems). In 1968, before the concept of political culture was spread thin by the fissions of disciplinarity, Pye wrote that "a political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members of that system, and thus is rooted equally in public events and private experiences" (Pye 1968: 218).

The socially constructed property of the nation-state links micro-level individual orientations and those of the macro-level political system, such that political culture is both "popularity's expression in the political arena" as well as the normative force that "gives *meaning* to politics by justifying material, cultural, social, and political institutions" (Fryklund 2013: 271, our emphasis). Macro-level institutions cannot be extrapolated as perfect representation of micro-level orientations, but this is a natural by-product of the social contract and development of the nation-state. Therefore, political culture can be perceived as a brokering between individuals and the institutions that construct the political system in which they live.

Political culture is therefore *relational* between individuals and the institutions that form their society – that is to say, political culture cannot be reduced to individuals or societies singly (Wilson 2000: 247). Rather, political culture is the product of a dialectical relationship

5

between individuals and institutions, a relationship guided by the notion that individuals form political systems that, in turn, influence individuals. Political culture is thus both a static and dynamic construct. Political culture is static in terms of the idea that there exists some 'stable' system of values, norms, and orientations that can be construed and disseminated as cultural codes; however, this system is constantly and dynamically being challenged, affirmed, and/or changed through individual and political decisions (i.e. processes of meaning-making) in responses to social and economic circumstances.

Most political culture studies, in our view, have placed too much emphasis on culture as coherent and stable, which has been criticized as indefensible empirically. Our approach focuses on the dynamism and inherently unstable relationship in processes of meaning-making. We seek to analyse not the stability of cultural systems but rather the contradictions and ambiguities in this dialectical system in order for us to explain changes in the political order. The comparative analysis of political cultures in this study is aimed at expounding differences, not similarities, between the Swedish and Danish publics.

Subcultures and Political Communication Culture

One of the criticisms lobbied against political culture is the idea that individual orientations cannot be extrapolated to the national-level, and 'national' political culture is too large a measure for study (Pappi:1986 cited in Pfetsch: 2004, 348). From an empirical standpoint, it is not ideal to try and aggregate these sets of relationships to a national-scale. The popularity in describing a 'national' political culture is not on account of the nation as the best level for analysis; rather, it is because the negotiations between citizens and the institutions they legitimize has historically been nationally-bound within the development of the modern nation. The norms structuring individual orientations and governing acceptable behavior have been brokered within national boundaries, and therefore the 'national' focus of political culture is a contextual, not intrinsic, property to the concept. Verba suggests that the units of analysis should be kept smaller than the national aggregate (Verba 1980: 406) in order to more carefully pinpoint the value systems of what has generally been referred to as 'subculture.' By studying the specific relationships between different sets of influential actors in a political system, certain inferences can be drawn about how the orientations of individuals situated within the same political system are structured.

Political culture cannot be treated as a monolithic, internally cohesive and stable entity. National political cultures can be more readily viewed as umbrellas for multiple and overlapping subcultures, which do not always fit harmoniously with each other (Wuthnow and Witten 1998: 62). These subcultures are often country-specific and need to be identified as relevant and influential in the construction and reproduction of the social codes governing political relations. While certain subcultures such as interest groups may be unique to a country on account of its historical development, many subcultures may overlap across countries and thus be ripe for cross-country comparison.

Each subculture has its own *modus operandi*, as well as certain method of interaction with other subcultures. For example, a media outlet of a given country has a certain normative constellation influencing how the journalists operate internally on a day-to-day basis, but the

way in which the same media outlet interacts with politicians (e.g. through the media's portrayal of political messages) also has its own normative constellation of behavior. The media can be considered as a stand-alone subculture, but its interaction with other influential actors forms another 'second-level' subculture between the media and the subculture with which it interacts. The overall political culture of a nation is a sort of meta-narrative drawn from the analysis of the norms and orientations evident in the interactions of how subcultures operate internally, as well as their relationship with other subcultures under the same political culture umbrella.

Since our interest in the present paper is to investigate the Eurosceptic positions expressed in Danish and Swedish online forums, we propose focusing on the political communication culture of the two countries. Political communication encompasses all exchanges of information that can affect politics in a given society, and can include a very wide range of actors, from political parties and politicians to media, interest groups and NGOs. The most prominent actor in the political communication is the public, defined as the citizens, the voters, and the audience depending on its role in a particular situation. Citizens may protest in a street demonstration, voters may affect politics on election days, and audiences can engage with each other on online platforms (Pfetsch and Esser 2012: 26). Besides the public, the two other principal actors involved in political communication are the politicians and the media, whose relationship comprises a country's political communication culture, i.e.:

> "[T]he empirically observable orientations of actors in the system of production of political messages toward specific objects of political communication, which determine the manner in which political actors and media actors communicate in relation to their common political public" (Pfetsch 2004: 348).

While the focal point of political communication culture is the normative interactions between politicians and the media, the public indirectly influences political communication culture through their consumption of media and their democratic voting power. Ultimately the public, with its own set (and sub-sets) of normative codes, forms the fulcrum sanctioning the actions of the politicians and the media. The norms governing the interactions of the three actors constitute a country's political communication culture, which for the purposes of this study serve as a proxy for the overall political culture since "political communication culture is an essential component of the political culture of a country" (Pfetsch 2004: 346).

Interestingly, advancements in Internet technology have opened up new computer mediated communicative spaces where citizens can interact with one another anonymously and with a decreased reliance upon politicians and the media for information. This opens up the existence of public-to-public interaction that is relatively unexplored, wherein individuals can shape the opinions of others and potentially affect the preferences and orientations of not only other citizens but also political communication in general. While individuals are certainly not cut off from political or media influences, online communicative spaces allow for an unfiltered public dialogue among citizens that was not previously possible. We contend that through coding of these cyber spaces, normative constellations within the public-public subculture can be expounded. Furthermore, when the online discussions of Swedes and Danes are viewed

comparatively against differences in their respective nations' political communication cultures, we expect that variations in the online dialogues on Europe can be explained by variations in the respective countries' political communication cultures, as well as the citizens' response to it.

Before proceeding to the data, though, the following subsections will discuss Euroscepticism in general and, more specifically, how we predict Denmark and Sweden's political communication culture will affect online discourses about Euroscepticism. We position our expectations for the Swedish and Danish tone and content online based on what we expect their normative codes to be.

What is Euroscepticism? Why does it exist?

We follow Hooghe and Mark's (2007:120) understanding of Euroscepticism as "encompassing a range of critical positions on European integration, as well as outright opposition" to "its policies, its institutions, or its principles." The EU is not a one-dimensional political institution at which criticism can be uniformly directed; rather, the EU is a multi-dimensional construct that simultaneously functions as an international regime facilitating economic exchange, a supranational polity exerting political authority over its citizens, and a key player in a system of multi-level governance interacting with national politics (Hooghe and Marks 2005: 436). The diversity of the EU, and the consequent diversity of criticisms directed towards either its mission or its structure, has led to a disparate field of academic literature attempting to grapple with the complexity of reasons stimulating Eurosceptic attitudes. Historically, the most consistent polarity explored in the literature has been whether pragmatic or affective reasons, sometimes referred to respectively as the 'hard' and 'soft' factors of Euroscepticism (Van Klingeren et al 2013).

Initially, researchers approached the analysis of EU public opinion within the context of trade theory, where the EU is viewed as an economic regime and theorized in terms of a "calculus of economic costs and benefits" (Hooghe and Marks 2007: 120). The general consensus of these early Euroscepticism studies was that poor economic performance (either at the national or the individual level) leads to higher dissatisfaction of the EU and the European integration project in general (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998). In addition to these 'hard', economic factors are 'soft' factors, those that deal with how social identities and the psychology of group membership (e.g. national identification and shared values) affect how one perceives the EU and European integration. The social identity theories examining 'soft' factors of Euroscepticism tend to contextualize the EU as a supranational *polity* overarching territorial boundaries, and instead of economic factors, less quantifiable issues such as political trust and affective ties.

'Soft' factors have been shown to be more influential in the construction of Eurosceptic attitudes than previously thought (McLaren 2002: 551, Klingeren et al 2013), but researchers still lack a consensus about the mechanisms that connect these 'softer' factors to negative attitudes about integration. For example, the literature supports the notion that public trust in national political institutions is relevant to how the public thinks about the EU; however, the precise role of *how* national political institutions relate to the construction of EU opinions is

unclear. Some researchers have found that high levels of trust in national institutions translates into high levels of trust for the EU (Anderson, 1998; Loveless and Rohrschneider, 2011), but other studies demonstrate the opposite: that levels of trust in national governments and parliaments lead, through a substitution mechanism, to high levels of trust in Brussels (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000; Sanders et al., 2012).

The 'hard'/'soft' dichotomy, while useful when approaching the EU as either as an economic regime or a supranational polity singly, becomes troublesome when discussing the EU as multi-dimensional. Traditionally in the literature, 'soft' factors have been pitted against 'hard' factors as pertaining to distinct, mutually exclusive conceptualizations of the EU (Hooghe and Marks 2005: 420), but increasingly researchers are acknowledging that a relationship between the two is one of interconnectedness rather than mutual exclusivity (Dahlgren 2009: 84). A case-in-point example is the Euroscepticism typically associated with the extreme left, whose Eurosceptic sentiments are steeped in pragmatism: i.e. the economic ramifications of the EU's neoliberal agenda, and its consequent undermining effects on national welfare systems (Hooghe et al., 2002; Marks and Wilson, 2000). On the surface, the extreme left seems to mobilize anti-EU sentiments based on 'hard' economic rationale; however, the left's propensity towards isolation from the EU as an encroaching international polity is in itself a sort of 'soft' paradoxical nationalism, albeit along civic rather than cultural lines (Halikiopoulou 2012: 509).

The economic crisis provided ample conditions to research the role of economic factors in rousing Eurosceptic attitudes: e.g. decayed living standards, high unemployment, and loss of welfare access. While some concluded that simply 'confusion' is the defining characteristic of the post-crisis attitudes toward the EU (Ross, 2008), others found that 'hard' factors – coupled with an increasing emphasis on 'soft' factors – were both crucial in understanding Euroscepticism:

> "The crisis has not brought economics back in as the most important source of Euroscepticism during the turbulent period of 2007–10. Rather, it has not only confirmed, but indeed exacerbated, the post-1992 trends, according to which national identity and political institutions play an increasingly important role in explaining public Euroscepticism" (Serricchio, Tsakatika and Quaglia 2012: 61).

To summarize, while 'soft' factors have not been deemed important than 'hard', utilitarian, ones in justifying a Eurosceptic stance, affective factors have remained constant as one of the most important causes of anti-EU attitudes (van Klingeren, Boomgaarden and De Vreese, 2013).

Cue theory

A crucial drawback to the analysis of Euroscepticism through a 'hard'/'soft' lens is the lack of emphasis placed on the agency of national level actors in influencing public opinion. The EU is not a stand-alone economic regime or federal supranational polity; the EU is a multi-level governance structure comprised of various actors in the national arena. 'Cue theory,' the most recent strand of Euroscepticism research, analyzes how national level actors – such as political parties, the media, or "intermediary institutions such as trade unions or churches" (Hooghe and

Marks 2009: 10) – construct the discourses that ultimately shape or 'cue' public opinion. As opposed to an economic regime or supranational polity, cue theory conceptualizes the EU as a supranational extension of national politics, where public attitudes are "guided by domestic [i.e. national] ideology and domestic political organizations" (Hooghe and Marks 2005: 420).

The valuable contribution of cue theory is its focus on localizing the scope of Euroscepticism research to the national arena, grounding its analysis in digestible domestic comparisons. Each European nation state has experienced its own unique development; the national level actors 'cueing' public opinion in their respective arenas operate in differing political structures and adhere to normative, country-specific cultural codes. Our study investigates the influence of normative cultural codes in structuring the orientations and preferences of both the national level actors 'cueing' public opinion, and conversely, the public's reception of those cues. Although Euroscepticism is a pan-European phenomenon, particular expressions of Euroscepticism are situated within national contexts depending on the political communication culture of a given country.

We find cue theory to be relevant for a discussion centered on political communication culture, since it specifically deals with the relationships between the national actors that we consider to be drivers and shapers of political communication. As aforementioned, in the context of Euroscepticism we consider political communication culture to be an appropriate proxy for political culture. While political culture governs the acceptable behavior of how members of a nation state operate in general, political communication culture specifically deals with politicans' and the medias' methods and ability to influence the public, as well as the public's range of alternatives when discussing or acting upon political or ideological preferences.

Euroscepticism: who is a driver?

The dynamic between 'cue-ers' and 'cue-ees' in EU public opinion research has been framed in termed of 'mass-elite linkages', asking whether national elites 'cue' public opinion from the top-down (De Vries and Edwards 2009) or the mass public influences party positions with their voting power from the bottom-up (Carubba 2001). Although both approaches have been found to be correct, the focus on elite cueing – especially by political parties – has been much more thoroughly examined and supported than the impact of the mass public cueing political actors (McLaren and Guerra 2013: 359). We find this imbalance in the research problematic, since previous research concerning 'mass-elite linkages' has identified a "reciprocal causation" and "conditional nature" between the cueing effects of national elites and the public (Steenbergen et al, 2007: 29). The main agents involved in political communication, (i.e. political parties, the media and the public) have each been found to play a role as drivers of anti-EU critiques.

Political parties, the focus of the bulk of 'cue theory' studies, have been demonstrated to be a "decisive force in swaying popular opinion against Europe" on both ends of the political spectrum (De Vries and Edwards 2009: 9, 22), although extreme parties on either the left or right tend to be more negative about European integration than mainstream, centrist parties (Steenbergen et al., 2007; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). A party's position on the political spectrum does not correlate to a Eurosceptic position, as critique from both left and right can be directed against the EU. However, there is one issue that very often appears in association with

Eurosceptic reactions, namely **immigration**. Negative attitudes towards immigration highly correlate with party Euroscepticism (De Vreese and Tobiasen, 2007: 101–3; De Vreese and Boomgarden, 2005).

The media has also been shown to "fuel public cynicism and scepticism" towards the EU (de Vreese, 2007: 271). Driving its own agenda with its own normativity and political profile, the media is able to take a stance on Europe through editorial texts and has the capacity to persuade elites and the public alike. However, the media does not operate in isolation from the political structure in which it is situated or its primary audience: the public. In their multinational study of editorials, Pfetsch, Adam and Eschner (2010) conclude that there is a large variation in the intensity and framing of news about Europe and that this variation depends on media type and, in particular, the national political context. Nevertheless, negative media coverage of the EU has been found to support increased Euroscepticism, although increased Euroscepticism does not necessarily affect the valence of media coverage) (van Klingeren 2014: 102). The latter finding seems to support the notion that while the media has the potential to 'cue' to public, the public has little effect on 'cueing' the media.

The European public is, either directly or indirectly, the essential focus of Euroscepticism studies, and we have identified two themes in the literature dealing with how public opinion against the EU is framed: *intensity,* and *object of opposition.* Hooghe and Marks' broad but accurate definition of Eurosceptic has the advantage of capturing these two themes, which are integral to the construction of our methodology.

The **intensity** of a Eurosceptic position refers to the degree of change desired vis-à-vis the status quo of the EU and has been developed to include a variety of nuances: critics vs. sceptics (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008); Europragmatists, Eurosceptics and Eurorejects (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002); critical Europeans, Euro-sceptics and adamant Eurosceptics (Wessels, 2007); compromising, conditional and rejecting (Vasilopoulou, 2009); and alter- and anti-European (de Wilde, Michalidou and Trenz, 2014). Ultimately, the vast nomenclature surrounding the nuances of Euroscepticism can be seen as attempts to refine Eurosceptic opinions into gradations of intensity. On the one hand, a Eurosceptic position can be completely against the European integration project and wish for its abolishment entirely. On the other hand, one might be critical only of certain aspects of the project and desire small changes to reform or improve the EU without abrogating it.

Whereas intensity focuses on the degree of change desired in the EU, the **object** of a Eurosceptic position points to what aspect of the EU is specifically being critiqued. Generally, the objects of critique can be divided into two main dimensions: principle and project. Having principle as the object of critique refers to being against the very idea of European integration, whereas focusing on the project shows dissatisfaction towards with specific manifestations of the EU: its institutional set-up, its policies in various domains, or its consequences at the national and sub-national levels. Others have referred to the dimension in terms of diffuse versus specific opposition (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002), and Wessels identifies three targets at which opposition is generally aimed: the authorities (EU bureaucrats and their corresponding partners at national and subnational levels of governance), the regime (EU's institutions, the

values that found them and their ways of operation) and the community (other European citizens) (Wessels 2007: 289). [2]

The Cases of Sweden and Denmark

In the following pages we will provide a brief overview of the literature delineating the main features of the Danish and Swedish political cultures, with a specific focus on political communication culture. Despite our initial expectation to find well-established pieces of academic work on the countries' political cultures (in part due to the popularity of the concept), the literature on the topic is scarce and we were forced to proceed piecemeal, sketching an outline of the two political cultures from indirectly relevant and oft-disparate sources. In building our conceptualizations, we paid particular attention to research relevant to Denmark and Sweden's relationship to Europe and the European integration project, as well as studies offering insight into each country's political communication culture.

Generally speaking, Sweden and Denmark are considered to belong together in the Nordic or Scandinavian family, and thereby share "a common political culture, characterized by proportional representation, stable parliamentary democracy and a social democratic welfare state" (Demker, 2012, p. 239). The two countries' historical development in the modern era has many similar features, from the economic and technological modernization of the late 19th century to the gradual democratization of the political system under the pressure of social movements. Strong social welfare systems, inspired by a social democratic ideological bent, have been an enduring feature of the political life in the two countries for over one hundred years now. Other contemporary features shared by Sweden and Denmark are: both are small states in terms of population; both are constitutional monarchies; both are members of the European Union; and, at least until very recently, both experienced influx of labor migration beginning in the 1960's. Perhaps most importantly, though, Sweden and Denmark, together with Norway, Finland and Iceland, share a perception of belonging together in something loosely defined as 'Norden', a primarily category between the nation and Europe[3].

Although Denmark and Sweden are grouped together as Nordic 'brothers' in European-wide comparative studies, if examined alongside one another a number of divergences between the countries becomes apparent. When viewed within the context of Euroscepticism, and cue theory in particular, inferences can be drawn as how Swedes and Danes will discuss the EU online. Based on our own interpretative analysis of the disjointed literature surrounding Danish and Swedish political culture, we have created a matrix that disseminates our forecasted expectations as to how the publics will express Euroscepticism online along three main categories: Tone, Type, and Reason. Each main category corresponds to our expected distinctions about how the political culture and, specifically, the political communication culture, afford variances in the intensity, object of opposition, and motive when expressing

---

[2] More recent work on the subject introduces the temporal arrow, saying that Euroscepticism can include opposition to the present state of affairs (either in principle or in practice) or the future of the EU (Vasilopoulou 2009; Boomgarden et al. 2011).
[3] For more on the history of Norden and its relationship to Europe see Stråth (2010).

Eurosceptic opinions. For the purpose of constructing a coherent argument we begin first with 'Reason' before moving to 'Tone' and 'Type' categories,

Reason

In our matrix, 'Reason' corresponds to the motivation given for why one is skeptical or negative about the EU or European integration. We distinguish whether one frames a Eurosceptic argument based primarily on 'hard' *utilitarian* grounds steeped in rational cost/benefit analysis or *affective* reasons where 'soft', identity factors take primacy. For our empirical case study, we hypothesize that the Swedish online posts will be more utilitarian than those of the Danes, who we predict will put forth affective reasons when supporting their Eurosceptic positions. We have drawn this conclusion based on a review of the academic literature on Danish and Swedish discourses of difference, which we consider to mark a critical divergence between the general political cultures of the two countries. In addition, the cueing effectiveness of the countries' respective Eurosceptic parties, as well as the media coverage of these parties within their corresponding national domains, points to a disparity between the political communication cultures of the two countries. Consequently, the variances in the two political communication cultures lead us to predict that the Swedish Eurosceptics will be 'cued' by politicians to be utilitarian, whereas the Danish Eurosceptics will be 'cued' along an affective vein.

We consider the most significant difference between Danish and Swedish political cultures is to be found in their conceptions of the self in relationship to the other – in other words, conceptions of 'national identity.' The two countries' differing approaches to national identity are perhaps best enumerated contextually through a look at their respective immigration policies. Denmark's immigration policy is characterized by a "closed exclusionary regime" underpinned by "discourses on national self-sufficiency", whereas Sweden's "open and inclusive" policies are "carried by international moralism and accountability" (Hedetoft 2010: 121). Simply put, Denmark's immigration policy is characteristic of assimilationism, whereas Sweden has been lauded as "the flagship of multiculturalism" (Borevi, 2012). The two countries' differing policy approaches towards migrants can be considered the political manifestation of contrasting cultural attitudes towards migration, with the Danes characteristically exclusive of migrants and the Swedes generally inclusive. Danes build measures to protect themselves from the perceived invasion of strangers (see for example the Danish opt-outs from the Asylum and Migration policy of the EU), and therefore we predict that their Eurosceptic arguments will be framed according to social identity-based factors – what we dub 'Affective' reasons. We expect Swedes, on the other hand, to hold Eurosceptic positions based on rational "Utilitarian' arguments on account of their inclusive multicultural policy connected to concept of *folkhemmet* ['the people's home'], a Swedish social-democratic ideal perpetuated in public consciousness that everyone in Sweden should be guaranteed basic economic security (Fryklund 2013: 271).

In Denmark, national sovereignty has been a constant explanation for the repeated 'No' votes by the Danes on EU referenda. Fears of weakened national control led to the first 'No' in 1992 on the Maastrich Treaty and were rekindled in the public consultation on joining the euro (also

ending in a 'No' vote). Discussing the Euro-referendum, Downs (2001: 223) argues that the government's strategy of proposing the deal only on the basis of economic arguments failed, in comparison with the opposition's portrayal of the euro as "sacrificing national identity." Thus it appears that utilitarian arguments are weaker in the Danish context and affective reasons are arguably more convincing.

Concerning the Swedish case, Tjernström notes that "in Swedish politics and media, the monetary costs and benefits of EU membership overrides ideas of any intrinsic values of cooperation" (Tjernström 2008: 183). Moreover, an earlier study concluded that in general, the discussion about the pros and cons of European integration has been dominated by economic considerations, underlining Swedes' utilitarian voting approach (Miles 2001: 305). In particular Swedes are concerned with the future of the welfare state and express scepticism in regards to the economic advantages of sharing and managing the common Euro currency. While initially the Eurosceptic economic arguments in Sweden came from the extreme left[4], their EU critique became less fervent with time. While initially critical of the EU, the left and in particular what Raunio referred to as "hard-line Eurosceptics", namely the Left and Green Parties (Raunio 2007), turned officially in favour of Sweden's continuous EU membership since the 2000s. Swedes are seemingly inclined to motivate their political choices based on utilitarian, rational, and factual arguments.

Another factor supporting our expectation that Denmark's political communication culture leans towards a more affective argumentation whereas the Swedish one tends to favour a rational approach is the varying degrees of success of their anti-immigration parties[5]. Since the anti-immigration parties of Sweden and Denmark are also the leading Eurosceptic parties of the two countries, we consider a cross-country comparison of their development within the context of national political communication culture a relevant point of analysis to support the building of our matrix.

The rise of the Swedish Democrats (SD), a Swedish political party campaigning on an immigration-critical platform and Sweden's self-proclaimed only anti-EU party[6], from a fringe party in the 1990's to member of the national parliament since 2010 and of the European parliament since 2014[7], demonstrates a switch from left-to-right in Swedish anti-EU tendencies. However, a closer look at SD's rise in popularity suggests that the affective arguments employed by SD are not as effective as those utilized by their Danish counterpart, Dansk Folkepartiet (DF) – even though the political strategies and discourses of SD have been roughly equivalent to DF. Beginning in 1995, SD underwent a modernization campaign to purge extremism (Hellström and Nilsson 2010: 55) and increasingly shifted their rhetoric away from criticizing ethno-cultural difference towards emphasizing the utilitarian costs of

---

[4] Supporting Halikiopoulou's (2012) study cited on page 9 here.
[5] Explanations for the divergence of electoral success as well as in immigration policy are not just societal but also systemic (i.e. the structure of the party system) according to Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008).
[6] SD is "*the* party for EU-critical politics", as per their party program (Sweden Democrats, 2014).
[7] In the 2010 Swedish national election, SD passed the 4% threshold needed to enter the Riksdag with 5.7%. After the 2014 European elections, SD stood as Sweden's fifth largest party with 9.67% of the vote (Val.se).

immigration. While SD maintains an affective dimension in their self-categorization as a 'socially conservative party with a nationalist outlook' and an open rejection of multiculturalism, their increased focus on the utilitarian dimension of immigration and decreased focus on classic xenophobic rhetoric can be interpreted as an attempt to 'cue' Swedish voters by appealing to their utilitarian leanings.

In contrast to the Sweden Democrats, the Danish anti-immigration party Dansk Folkpartiet was formed in 1995 and had already reached the Danish Parliament in 1998 with 7.4% of the popular vote. DF has seen its number of voters constantly increase, reaching the most successful result so far in the elections for the European Parliament of May 2014. With 26.7% of the votes (Danmarks Statistik, 2014), DF became the largest party in Denmark[8]. DF's communication approach has been characterized as being mostly carried by a "pathos" rhetoric, in contrast with the other Danish political parties and mainstream media, who employed "logos", as per Pederson and Anderson's 2011 study of Danish politicians' statements in three dailies in 2009 (an EU election year).

The fact that DF's rhetoric has been embraced by mainstream public[9] and that the party has become accepted as a 'normal' part of Danish politics suggests that their affective argumentation bore fruit. On the other hand, the fact that SD has been ostracized by the other Swedish political parties[10] until they changed strategy and formulated themselves in more pragmatic terms supports the idea of the utilitarian Swedish voter.

In Sweden, the media has historically portrayed SD in a negative manner, whereas the Danish media has discussed DF in a more neutral way; however, research suggests that over time this discrepancy seems to be narrowing. A study comparing five Swedish and five Danish newspapers for the years 2004 and 2009 (EP election years) examined the image of the main proponents Euroscepticism: SD and DF. The Swedish newspapers consistently portrayed SD in a very negative light in 2004 (over 70% of the articles), a proportion drastically reduced in 2009 (28%), when SD was presented in either a fairly negative (29% of the articles) or balanced (43%) fashion (Hellström and Hervik, 2014, p. 457-458). In comparison, the five Danish newspapers examined for the same times reveal that in 2004 a great majority (59%) of the articles were balanced in their portrayal of the DF. In 2009, only 42% of the articles had a balanced tone, with the proportion increasing for those using a fairly negative (19%) or very negative (28%) way of describing the activities and positions of DF (Hellström and Hervik, 2014, p. 457-458).

Vallaste (2013) finds that the main broadsheet newspaper in Sweden, Dagens Nyheter, like its counterparts in Finland and Estonia, has a bias against Euroscepticism, which is presented in a negative way. Eurosceptic persons are also viewed with disdain; they are considered less

---

[8] This leading position will most likely be challenged in the national elections, but chances are that DF will still get a very significant amount of votes.

[9] As seen for example in disappearance of humanistic nationalism in the Danish political debate about immigration, and instead a focus on orientalist nationalism, which polarizes an 'us' and 'other' category (Koefoed and Simonsen 2007: 316-17).

[10] A number of SD leaders have claimed that other Swedish politicians at the local – but especially national level – refuse to communicate with SD politicians at government meetings (Bossetta 2012: 26).

informed, less rational and more fearful than pro-EU individuals. Eurosceptic arguments were not seriously debated in the editorials of these newspapers, but rather summarily dismissed.

To summarize, on the basis of the above data we conclude that the political cultures of Sweden and Denmark vary, and are indeed contradictory, concerning conceptions of national identity. We consider the conflicting political communication cultures as proxies of an overall difference in Sweden and Denmark's political cultures. Since we expect that those individuals expressing Eurosceptic opinions online will have been 'cued' by their country's respective Eurosceptic parties, we expect Danes to give more affective reasons in their online posts than the Swedes. That is not to say that Swedes will not be affective in their reasoning, especially since SD incorporates national identity rhetoric alongside their utilitarian rejection of the costs associated with immigration. However, on account of the traditionally utilitarian voting patterns of Swedes, coupled with their membership of a political culture largely built upon multiculturalism and the protection of the welfare state, we hypothesize that Swedes will be more inclined to present utilitarian reasons for Eurosceptic opinions than the Danes, who we suspect will support their Eurosceptic positions based on affective reasons.

Tone

We have divided the category 'tone' into three sub-types: moderate, negative, and radical. Tone refers to the rhetorical intensity of communication and is not directly related to the content of opposition. We built the expectations for our Tone category based on the general manner of reporting about the EU in Danish and Swedish media, which cannot be divorced from the way in which politicians elaborate on the subject. We first overview the data on media habits of Danes and Swedes as it emerges from the latest opinion poll on media and the Europeans (European Commission 2013a). We will then describe the image that Swedes have in Denmark and Danes in Sweden as it is revealed in the popular literature in support of our final expectations for the Tone of Eurosceptic online posts.

In the Eurobarometer report "The Media Habits of Europeans" from 2013, Sweden and Denmark are placed very close to each other in terms of the size, intensity, and tone of European Union coverage. For example, both Danes and Swedes are unhappy with the size of the EU coverage by their respective national media systems, with roughly a third of Danes and Swedes stating the EU is talked about "too little" by the national media (European Commission, 2013a, p. 50), and the publics of both countries generally think that their national media portrays the EU in an objective, unbiased fashion (ibid: 55).[11]

Both Denmark and Sweden lack an intense national coverage of the EU activities (Lund Larsen, 2013; Pedersen and Andersen, 2011; Strömbäck and Nord, 2008; Vikalo, 2014). Previous comparative studies confirm that Danish media outlets, like their European counterparts, tend to talk about Europe only when something "big" happens (e.g. European

---

[11] The Danes were slightly more affirmative on this point. In response to whether the EU is presented objectively in national television, radio, press, and websites, the Danish result was: 62%, 62%, 58%, and 56% respectively, and the Swedish result was: 55%, 53%, 48%, 35%.

election or European Council meetings) (De Vreese, 2002; Lund, 2002; Peter and De Vreese, 2004; Boomagrden et al, 2010).

The weak presence of the EU in the national news is combined with a rather neutral and factual reporting about the events or decisions in Brussels from both countries' media. However, even if the language is overall objective, the way the news are framed is conflictual, with the nation pitched against the EU or with the EU most often as the cause of the conflict in Denmark (with the exception of those cases when national politicians "have won" in Brussels) (Tandrup and Sørensen 2008), and with the nation framed as weak in Sweden (Vikalo, 2014).

Therefore, the two countries are very similar in terms of the treatment that news about the EU gets in national media. The common denominator between the two countries is low priority is given to Europe in relation to national news, the relative objective manner of talking about the EU, and a conflict framing that undermines the impression of neutrality in tone. Denmark or Sweden, however, have not been typified as Eurosceptic (De Wilde, Michalidou and Trenz, 2013, p. 196), an idea suggesting that the media 'strategies' presented stem more from apathy than intentional 'cueing' strategies by journalists.

The similar media coverage and framing about the EU in Denmark and Sweden means that in order to explain differences in the tone of online debates, we need to find more pointed differences between the two countries where media is still relevant. We have chosen to base our assumptions about Tone on two discursive arguments relating to political communication culture. The first set of discourses regards how the political communication culture of one country is portrayed by the national media of the other. Secondly, we again focus on the Eurosceptic parties and argue that the discourse of the supporters 'cued' by those parties will fall in line with the rhetoric of the parties, who are situated within the context of their respective national political communication cultures.

The first argument is based on mutual perceptions of the other's national media. The Swedish media style is perceived in Denmark as overly 'politically correct', while the Danish media discourse is seen by the Swedes as 'too extreme' in its regard for freedom of expression that led to, most notoriously, the Mohammed Caricatures crisis at the expense of tolerance and respect for other cultures (Hedetoft, 2010, p. 121). The topic of Danish – Swedish differences has been taken up with fervour by journalists and writers on both sides of the Öresund Strait and marks a clear difference how the national media of one country views the political communication culture of the other. For example, Mikael Jalving, a Danish journalist, wrote a book entitled "Absolut Sverige: En rejse i tavshedens rige" [Absolut Sweden: A Voyage in the Kingdom of Silence] (2011) exploring the "silence" of the Swedes when it comes to country's most pressing problems – a book reviewed with little acclaim by Swedish press. Jalving's work was a reply to a Swedish journalist's critical excursion into Danish politics and society, "Världens lyckligaste folk" [The Happiest People in the World] (2009), in which the author, Lena Sundström, took up the topics of xenophobia and the success of Danish People's Party as reflective of worrying developments in the Danish society.

Such exchanges are rather common in the media landscape of the two countries. Jalving has recently started a daily radio program running every day for 50 minutes during the month of

July 2014 where he invites Swedish voices condemned to silence because of the pressure of conformism and political correctness. The guests on the daily 55-minutes long show "Danmarks röst" (Denmark's Voice, named after the famous Cold War radio station "The Voice of America", sending pro-democracy programs into the Soviet territory) discuss topics considered by the host as taboo in Sweden: anti-feminism, immigration, or the hunt for wolves. Even in newspapers this kind of dialog across the border takes place. For example, the chief editors for the culture sections of one Danish and one Swedish newspaper (Berlingske tidningen and Sydsvenska dagbladet, respectively) exchanged [six rounds of debate](#) about the Danish and the Swedish ways of dealing with diversity in February 2014. The articles were published in the two respective languages at the same time and generated some wider reverberations in other media channels.

Dahlerup (2013) sums up the major points of controversy between the two political communication cultures. The Danish journalists active in the debate accuse the Swedish media and public debates of being characterized by censorship and quieting down otherwise healthy debates on controversial topics such as immigration, diversity, and gender equality. The Swedish debaters accuse Danish journalists and politicians of racism, xenophobia and sexism and interpret Danish freedom of expression as a guise covering tendencies towards nationalism, exclusivism and inequality between immigrants and locals as well as men and women.

Our second discursive argument relating Tone to the context of political communication culture is the role of the DF and SD in cueing public opinion. Although both Danish and Swedish media use a moderate tone in the reporting of EU news, we expect a more acute mobilization of sentiment on account of the cueing strategies of the two Eurosceptic parties. Although we consider both DF and SD to relay their political messages in a radical tone, we expect the Danish public to be more radical than the Swedes online. We derive this assumption from the relationship between Danish politicians and the media, where the latter acts as a transparent conduit for the former. In Sweden, on the other hand, the political communication culture attempts to exclude SD from political discussions and media coverage, and thus we suggest that their initial radical rhetoric will not get through to the public effectively enough to translate into a high proportion of radical posts online.

Type

The last category of our matrix deals with the level of desired change of the EU and where this critique is directed. Are the Eurosceptics proposing to abolish the Union entirely (Anti-EU) or are they interested in its reform (Alter-EU)?

The latest Eurobarometer poll of November 2013 reports that although we both Sweden and Denmark are more positive than the EU-28 when it comes to the future of the Union, the Danes were reported much higher optimism than the Swedes (75% in DK versus 59% in Sweden and 51% the EU average). Moreover, both publics find that membership in the EU is a better option than to be outside the Union, again with Denmark polling higher than the Swedes (DK 74%, SE 58%). According to an "openness index" compiled from measurements of individual mobility and contacts across Europe, the Danes are strongly European (45%), in the same category as the Swedes (41%) and way over the EU-28 average (only 14%).

The Danes and Swedes are both clearly against the formation of a European federation of states, with 73% of Danes 71% of the Swedes against the federal idea (the average across the EU membership is 45% in favour). An indirect measure of pro-federalist attitudes, the support for a currency union is met also by strong resistance in both Nordic states: 74% of the Swedes are against, as well as 65% of the Danes.

The opinion data thus shows that both Danish and Swedish publics see the advantages of EU membership and are not interested in renouncing it, and have even developed affective connections with the idea of a European togetherness. On the other hand, neither of the two desires further tightening of ties with other EU member states nor the creation of a supranational federation. In comparison with the trust and the attachment to the national identity and institutions, commitment to Europe typically lower in both countries.

The Eurobarometer results are in agreement with the scholarly literature on the subject. De Wilde, Michalidou and Trenz (2013) note, for example, that Sweden's online media users evaluate positively the principle of European integration (p. 44) but are critical of the current institutional set-up of the Union (p. 47). The authors conclude that Sweden's reputation as an Eurosceptic country is not supported by the evidence from online debates, as it does not "display higher levels of negative evaluation of EU legitimacy… than less Eurosceptic countries" (p. 196).

Sørensen's study on variations in Euroscepticism in the UK and Denmark concludes that it is "difficult to sustain the general assumption that Denmark is a particularly Eurosceptic member state", with the exception of the critique brought to the EU integration on sovereignty arguments (2008, p. 91).

Eurobarometer data as well as scholarly research supports the idea that the mainstream public opinion in both Denmark and Sweden can be described, in our terms, as leaning towards an Alter-EU position, with Danes more willing to reform the EU than the Swedes, who would seem to prefer an exit from the Union. However, because of the influence exerted over the forum users by the Eurosceptic parties DF and SD, and because of the polarization that is often encountered in online media, we expect an exacerbation of positions online. Posts on the Danish forum Jubii would be, we hypothesize, more Alter-EU, whereas posts on the Swedish Flashback would lean towards a comprehensive critique of the integration principle and a desire to exit the Union.

Expectations

By systematizing the data derived from our political communication culture analysis as it relates specifically to **Euroscepticism**, we have created a matrix that communicates our expectations for the Tone, Type, Reason of Eurosceptic discourses online by the Danish and Swedish public. The Tone of the debates refers to how an online post is phrased, and we ascribed three sub-types to the Tone category corresponding to increasing gradations of *severity*: Moderate, Negative, and Radical.

The second category we take into consideration is the Type of Euroscepticism expressed; in other words, how *pointed* the critique against the EU is. We consolidate several of the categories used by other scholars and distinguish between the sub-types Alter-EU and Anti-EU. The two sub-types, although more general than some other typologies in the Euroscepticism literature, are intended measure variation in the scope of the critique brought to the EU. Alter-Europeans disagree with the a particular aspect of the EU, either in one of its principles or in structure, but are in favor of keeping some sort of European Union, albeit in a revised form. Anti-Europeans are staunchly opposed to the basic premise of the European project, namely integration, and are for the abolishment of the EU entirely.

Reason, our third matrix category, posits that the reasons given in critique of the EU are either Utilitarian or Affective, approximately correlating to the 'hard' and 'soft' factors of Euroscepticism often discussed in the literature. Utilitarian reasons highlight pragmatically derived Eurosceptic critiques inspired by cost/benefit logic typical of 'hard' factors. Affective reasons are value-driven critiques aligning with the 'soft' factors of Euroscepticism, namely concerns over issues such as identity and culture (Van Klingeren et al 2013: 689).

We have structured our matrix, presented below, by sifting through literature that does not specifically align to support the objectives set out in our study. However, by piecing together fragments we consider relevant from the academic literature, Eurobarometer surveys, and discourses of media and political parties in Sweden and Denmark, we consider our expectations grounded enough to formulate a viable coding scheme for our methodology. Still, we emphasize that the three categories of our matrix are meant to be approximations, rather than honed projections, of empirical reality.

	Denmark	Sweden
Tone	Radical	Negative
Type	Alter-EU	Anti-EU
Reason	Affective	Utilitarian

Method and sources

The method used to explore the variation of Tone, Type and Reason between Danish and Swedish online discussions on Euroscepticism is a computer-assisted systematic qualitative text analysis. The comparative research design takes two similar cases of political culture and aims to identify areas of inconsistency, which we expect to be explained concretely by differences in the two countries' political communication cultures.

Despite the growing popularity of the Internet as a place to pursue social science research (Herring 2010), online political discussion forums are among the less explored loci of virtual interaction. Most research dealing with such communication spaces focused on aspects pertaining to democracy and to the type of deliberation and dialogue that takes places among the users of online forums (see for example Albrecht 2006; about online deliberation on European issues see Simon 2010; Monnoyer-Smith and Talpin: 2010) Little work has been done on the expressions of Euroscepticism on these debate forums, and virtually no studies

have been conducted connecting political culture, Euroscepticism, and online debate forums in a Scandinavian context.

While acknowledging the "messiness" of our source (Karpf 2012: 642), we find value precisely in the less structured, less moderated and largely anonymous components of online forums. Since political discussion online is influenced by the qualities of the medium within which it takes place, such discussions are defined by:

"interactivity, which permits genuine dialogue between Internet users; the possibility of bridging physical distances between people, which in turn allows people to find both homogenous and heterogeneous groups; the potential for anonymity, which permits expressions without fear of recrimination; and reduced feelings of social presence in online discussions, which both increases the willingness to speak on political subjects, but also increases the chances for anti-social behavior, such as flaming" (Stromer-Galley and Wichowski 2011: 170).

We selected two online platforms for discussion, one Danish (Jubii, formerly known as Din Debat) and one Swedish (Flashback). We are aware that the forum participants are not representative of the general composition of the population. Online discussion users tend to be male, middle-class, more educated than average (Albrecht 2006; Dahlgren 2012: 15). Moreover, the population of forum users is leaning more towards the SD and DF in comparison with the Swedish and Danish voters at large – for example, in a pre-election poll conducted among Flashback users in August 2010, the Swedish Democrats came as the most powerful party, with 46% of the registered users. Also in Denmark the online users cannot be considered too similar to the general population. Online polls conducted on Jubii's web site reveal for example that 82% of its users were against a possible Danish adoption of the euro in 2011, and that 65% wanted to leave the EU in favor of a Nordic Union. However, one should not generalize without ground: in a 2007 poll about the desirability of EU membership for Denmark, a majority of Jubii's users were in favor (72.8%). It can be thus concluded that the users of these online forums in both countries tend to be politically more to the right than the average voters in the two countries. This has a direct effect on the balance of power between the cueing actors: the political parties and politicians, as well as the media channels that position themselves to the right of the political spectrum have the ear of more Jubii and Flashback users than of the average Dane or Swede.

From the outset we were made aware of the difference in output between the Swedish and the Danish internet forum participation. Whereas in Sweden Flashback is a well-established and well-known virtual meeting place where discussions from gardening and fashion to politics are taking place among 888 197 registered users (% of population), Jubii is a far less visited space with 173 120 registered users (as of date of writing, August 14, 2014). This variance can be speculatively attributed to the difference in political communication culture between the two cases. As it emerges from the literature on the subject, the main feature of the Swedish mainstream political communication is its tolerance bordering on conflict avoidance – what outsiders often perceive as an excessive care for political correctness. The Danish political communication is usually described as more open and direct, with freedom of expression as its defining trait. It is therefore to be expected that Danish mainstream media would offer room to

express even the more deviant views whereas the Swedish mainstream media would prohibit or censure the opinions not fitting with the dominant political culture.

In order to identify those topics that dealt specifically with political subjects and with the EU in particular we followed largely the same procedure for both forums. We identified the thread specialized for political discussions and then looked within it for a sub-topic dealing with European politics. In the case of Jubii, the political aspects were to be found under the thread Culture & Society. All the 16 758 subjects are displayed without further categorization, so in order to locate those topics of EU relevance we performed a search for Europa/ Europeiske Unionen in the entire thread and then manually selected those subjects that were directly relevant. When this method yielded too few results, we performed yet another search for the entire thread and looked beyond the title of the subject at the content of the 769 575 answers. We included thus those threads whose answers counted most search results. In the end, the total number of examined posts was 1324, spread over seven conversations.

The structure of Flashback is slightly different. There political discussions are grouped under the label Politics, thread that is subsequently divided in subcategories, including one called EU, with 916 subjects and a total of 32 223 posts. In the selection of the most relevant subjects we looked for the total number of posts per thread, the total number of users who contributed, and the year of last posting (with the ambition to select the more recent discussions). The total number of examined posts was 461, divided among five different conversations. Because of the different ways of organizing the threads and subjects and because of the higher number of users, the relevant discussions on Flashback were more easily identified, giving us a smaller sample but more germane to the subject of interest than in the case of Jubii, where the organization was looser and the need for combing for relevant information more acute.

Our aim was to perform a text analysis that paid attention to both content and form, to both political orientations and political sentiment. The political opinions were measured along two coordinated, Reason and Type, while political sentiment was captured by our Tone variable. We anticipated that online forums, as the terrain of informal politics, will be full of informal language, intentional and non-intentional misspellings, the use of slang, and even of terms of abuse. Moreover, we were aware that online political discussions tended to deliver "highly polarized discourses" (Malouf and Mullen, 2008), and that also in this respect we were not dealing with a representative reflection of the society at large.

We filtered the resulting material so that only posts that could be categorized as Eurosceptic were coded. Pro-EU posts and posts that did not explicitly talk about the EU were not coded. On these Eurosceptic posts we applied a set of codes determined deductively, following the matrix of our expectations. After checking for coder reliability, we coded for Type, Tone and Reason, our three dimensions of comparison, each of these with its own variation parameters. Thus for Type we included three options: Anti-EU (if the post was in favor of a complete dismantling of the Union), Alter-EU (if the post criticized the current state of affairs but still identified benefits with the EU, possibly in a modified form) and Type inconclusive (when the post did not contain information about the target of EU criticism). For Tone we followed the standard dimensions of media analysis and divided into three styles: Moderate, Negative and

Radical, depending on the type words used (swear words, hyperboles), the punctuation (exclamation signs) and the editing (writing in all caps, bold, or italics). Reason was coded either Utilitarian or Affective, depending if the basis of EU criticism was factual and pragmatic or if it was based on values and/or identities. We included also a code for those posts where no reason was given. The unit of analysis for the coding was the phrase, except for tone, which was coded as defining an entire post. The same post could host both an affective and a utilitarian reason, for example a user on the Danish forum writes in the same post from May 2014, in the context of the rejection of the idea of a Union: "I feel that more of a shared belonging with the Germans than with the Swedes" (affective reason), and just a couple of lines below "I am in favor of concrete partnerships and agreements among sovereign states" (utilitarian reason).

A particular difficulty in coding for Type and Tone was dealing with humor, irony and sarcasm. In order to code as accurately as possible, we took into account the context of the post as well as the possible connections/replies with earlier contributions under the same subject. We did not code for visual elements such as emojis.

A final note on the language: all posts on Flashback were in Swedish and all posts on Jubii were in Danish. The translations are ours.

Results

In total, we analyzed 1785 online forum posts: 1324 from the Danish forum Jubii and 461 from the Swedish forum Flashback. The posts came from twelve forum threads, where seven were Danish and five were Swedish. Three of the Danish threads were from 2014, and the other threads were from 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2007. Out of the five Swedish threads, one came from 2014, two from 2012, and one each from 2013 and 2010. The final number of coded posts was 134 from Jubii and 111 from Flashback.

Our typology matrix, built from the secondary literature surrounding Euroscepticism and media studies in Denmark and Sweden, relates how we expect the political communication cultures of the two countries to influence the behavior of Danes and Swedes online. We forecasted that the Danes would be predominantly Alter-EU in Type, Affective in Reasoning, and Radical in Tone, while we expected the Swedish discourse to be Anti-EU in Type, Utilitarian in Reasoning, and Negative in Tone. The results of our analysis are reproduced in the table below, given as percentages of sub-types within each of the three larger typologies: Type, Reason, and Tone.

	Sub-type	Denmark (Jubii)	Sweden (Flashback)
Type	Anti-EU	34%	53%
	Alter-EU	28%	13%
	Diffuse	38%	34%
Reason	Utilitarian	26%	32%
	Affective	47%	39%
	Not Given	27%	29%
Tone	Moderate	42%	28%
	Negative	45%	48%
	Radical	13%	24%

Tone: The Dominant tone for Denmark is Negative (45%), closely followed by Moderate (42%). In Sweden, Negative tone also the largest sub-type (48%), with the Moderate significantly lower (28%). In both Denmark and Sweden, Radical was the least dominant sub-type, but Swedes (24%) tended to be more Radical than the Danes overall (13%).

Type: Our findings show that for Type, the Swedes were proportionately more Anti-EU (53%) than the Danes (34%). Only 13% of the Swedish posts suggested an Alter-EU stance, compared to 28% in the Danish case. The Indeterminate category, where neither an Anti-EU nor Alter-EU position could be inferred from the post, was roughly equal in both cases although Indeterminate was the largest sub-type in Type only in Denmark.

Reason: Concerning the Reason given for a Eurosceptic position, Affective arguments were the most prominent on both Jubii (47%) and Flashback (39%). The Swedes were slightly more Utilitarian than the Danes by 6%, and the number of posts that did not contain sufficient information to firmly code for an identity-based or pragmatic justification were roughly equal.

To further explore the dynamics of our matrix, we cross-examined the relationship between coded segments at the intersection of the three categories. We compared the number of coded instances where Tone overlapped with Type and Reason respectively, resulting in the two covariance tables below. We did not include a table for the correlation between Reason and Type, however, since the two categories vary independently of one another.

Table 2 breaks down the number of instances where Tone and Type converged in order to see if any stable relationship could be inferred from the covariance between the two categories.

		Tone					
		Danish			Swedish		
		Moderate	Negative	Radical	Moderate	Negative	Radical
Type	Anti-EU	11	23	11	13	23	21
	Alter-EU	22	14	22	5	8	1

		Moderate	Negative	Radical	Moderate	Negative	Radical
	Indeterminate	24	23	24	12	22	5

Comparing the Tone and Type categories, we found that Anti-EU Danes were mostly Negative (23), whereas the Anti-EU Swedes were nearly equally Negative (23) and Radical (21) in their Tone. For the Type Alter-EU, Danes were evenly divided at the two extremes of the Tone spectrum, and Alter-EU Swedes were mostly Negative, although overall there were few coded segments for the Swedish Alter-EU sub-type.The Danish posts were Indeterminate by a slight majority, whereas the in the Swedish case the Indeterminate category did not point to a clear Anti-EU bias.

We wanted to verify these relationships against the Pearson correlation coefficient across the data series of individual forum threads. While in some cases the Pearson coefficient supported our qualitatively systematized data, at times we found inconsistencies between the coefficient's result and what our data suggested, especially in the Swedish case. We attribute these discrepancies to the limited number of threads analyzed (i.e. there were not sufficient data sets to produce a statistically significant coefficient), as well as to the wide range of content discussed in the individual forum threads themselves.

While in the Swedish case the Pearson coefficient did not find a significant correlation between Tone and Type, in the Danish case the coefficient reinforced our findings: Anti-EU Danes were likely to not have moderate forms of expression (-0.74); Anti-Eu Danes were rather likely (0.42) to use negative tones in their posts; and Alter-EU Danes were most likely (0.70) to adopt a moderate tone.

		Tone					
		Danish			Swedish		
		Moderate	Negative	Radical	Moderate	Negative	Radical
Reason	Utilitarian	18	18	3	13	22	1
	Affective	29	29	11	8	17	19
	Not Given	15	19	6	10	16	7

The second covariance table, Table 3, displays the instances of intersection between the sub-types of Tone and Reason. The most significant finding from the Tone/Reason correlation was a clear tendency for the Swedes to be more slanted towards negativity than the Danes. When an Affective argument was given, the Danes tended to be less Radical than the Swedes. When a Utilitarian reason was given, Danes were most often Moderate or Negative, whereas Swedes tended to be mostly negative. Finally, when a Reason was Not Given, Negative was the dominant tone in both the Danish and Swedish cases, although the Danes still maintained a higher number of moderate posts (15) to the Swedes (10).

The Pearson coefficient in this case seems to only partially support our findings in Table 3. The Pearson coefficient suggested that Danish Affectives are most likely to be moderate in tone (0.72), even though we coded an equal number of Moderate and Negative Affective posts. The Pearson coefficient also predicted that Danish Utilitarians would be most likely radical in tone (0.79), a prediction that contradicts the findings of the table above.

Analysis:

In our analysis, we will analyze each of the three categories individually, as well as look at the instances of covariance between Tone and both Type and Reason respectively.

Reason:
We expected that the Danish Eurosceptics would present Affective arguments. The scholarly literature highlights the importance of national identity to the Danish political culture, with the Danish policies of immigration and integration characterized by assimilationism (Hedetoft 2010). More specifically, the political communication culture of Denmark is characterized by freedom of expression, which allows for a wide range of opinions to be discussed openly. The media, although generally presenting news about the EU in a pragmatic manner, acts as a transparent conduit relaying the affective rhetoric almost exclusively associated with DF in a largely unfiltered manner. Moreover, the DF's normalization into the Danish political system affords the party a generous pulpit for advocating their political agenda to the public. The normative acceptability of national identity as the basis for making political arguments in Denmark, coupled with the significant presence of DF's rhetoric in the media and political arena, suggests that the Danish public would be effectively cued along affective tropes.

The empirical material we examined confirms this expectation. We found that on Jubii, Danish Eurosceptics echoed the affective rhetoric associated with DF, arguably demonstrating DF's effectiveness as a 'cue-er' of Eurosceptic opinions. National sovereignty, immigration, and democratic deficit were recurring themes in the content of the Danish Eurosceptic posts.

Our expectation that the Swedes would offer more utilitarian arguments in support of their Euroscepetic opinions was only partially supported. Although Affective reasons were the highest percentage (39%) given among Swedish Eurosceptics, the the frequency of utilitarian arguments is almost as high (32%). One explanation to support this finding is connected to political culture. As opposed to Denmark's focus on assimilation, the political culture in Sweden leans towards multiculturalism, inclusion, and a concern for the future of the welfare state. Whereas multiculturalism and inclusion are typically supported by affective justifications, the Swedes' strong concern for the welfare state - enshrined in the concept of folkhemmet - suggests that utilitarian arguments would also be influential in their critique of the EU.

Another possible explanation deals specifically with Swedish political communication culture, characterized in terms of a political correctness, where opinions deviating from the mainstream normative codes are stifled by the actions of the media and politicians. The ability for the Sweden Democrats to 'cue' is hindered since their affective national identity rhetoric is not often reproduced by mainstream media outlets or addressed by the Swedish mainstream political parties, a notion that affords a self-perception among SD politicians as marginalized in Swedish society (Bossetta 2012: 26). Recent research has shown that those who feel marginalized, excluded, or consider the current established political parties as "insufficiently responsive" have been shown to express their frustrations in alternative exercises of democracy (Dahlgren 2012: 3). New media, such as online forums, have the potential to circumvent traditional political and media channels (Nilsson and Carlsson 2014: 2), translating to the Flashback forum as an outlet for the voices of those who feel their opinions are marginalized or excluded in mainstream avenues of expression, e.g. print and televised media. The Swedish Eurosceptics expressing affective reasoning are more likely to be encountered in online forums than traditional media channels. We consider the prominence of utilitarian arguments coded, in light of the fact that the Swedish left has shifted towards a pro-EU position (Raunio 2007), to be a reflection of SD's modernization campaign, which focuses on the costs of immigration alongside traditional affective, nationalist rhetoric. Additionally, Dahlgren has pointed out that frustrated citizens who turn to online mediums "are driven by both rational and affective

elements, with the latter seemingly on the ascent" (Dahlgren 2012: 9, our emphasis).

We attribute the differences found in the reason given for Eurosceptic positions by Swedish and Danish online forum users to stem from variations in their respective countries' political cultures' conception of national identity, which is actualized in how the political communication cultures of the two countries address their respective anti-EU parties, namely SD and DF. However, the finding that affective reasons were the largest category in both cases supports the general trend in the literature on Euroscepticism that 'soft,' identity-based factors are influential in the formulation of critiques against the EU. Another common trend found in Jubii and Flashback is the tendency for users of new media to generate content opposite from what would be expected in traditional media channels - i.e. what one would expect by analyzing the prevailing political communication culture. New media, then, provides a space for the public to express opinions not sanctioned by the norms of political communication culture through a process of differentiation. Our assumption is supported by Groshek and Engelbert's study (2012), which demonstrated that the leaders of populist parties in the Netherlands and the US acted in ways contrary to their prevailing political culture in their use of new media.

Type:

For the Danish case, our expectations were not met as the largest category was Indeterminate and not Alter-EU. We consider the findings relevant for two reasons. First, the large Indeterminate category (38%) supports other findings in the literature of Euroscepticism that identify a large 'diffuse' category, defined as a "ambiguous and incomplete, under-specified, unclear" critique of the EU (De Wilde, Michalidou and Trenz, 2014 p. 9). De Wilde et al's 'diffuse' category roughly correlates to our Indeterminate category, whose size is significant because it may point to a lack of effective cueing by national media and politicians. The Danes' lack of satisfaction in the national media coverage of the EU, the weak coverage of EU related news by traditional Danish media sources, and the Danish politicians' low prioritization of European issues, altogether may account for the large Indeterminate category.

The second relevant finding in Type is that the coded posts reflected a higher proportion of Anti-EU posts to Alter-EU posts, a finding that can be partially explained historically. The opinions of some online forum users may be inspired by previous political communication strategies, even if the party has since then adjusted its political message over time. DF's political rhetoric has shifted from demands of exiting the EU to a calls for reforming it, a party strategy demonstrated by, for example, DF's declining in 2013 to enter a European Parliament alliance with the staunchly anti-EU French National Front and Dutch Party for Freedom. Instead, in 2014 DF joined the European Conservatives and Reformists, a party group in the European Parliament with a moderately Eurosceptic agenda that seeks to alter the direction of the EU without "destroy[ing] the organisation or undermine[ing] cooperation" (ECR website). DF's recent change in party position rhetoric towards the EU does not exclude the potential that the 'cueing' effects of its previous anti-EU rhetoric are still in place.

Although in Sweden the Indeterminate category was also large, accounting for a third of the Type posts, the Anti-EU Type far outnumbered Alter-EU, confirming the expectations of our matrix. As in the Danish case, we partially explain this finding historically. Since their inception SD has consistently remained against European integration and the EU, a party position solidified by their joining of the European Parliament party group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, whose charter outright "reject[s] the bureaucratisation of Europe and

the creation of a single centralised European superstate" (EFDD website). SD's consistent rejection of the EU would seem to reinforce their cueing effectiveness, translating to a high proportion of Anti-EU positions on Flashback if indeed SD followers are the predominant online forum participants. Additionally, the high number of Anti-EU posts in Sweden supports the Eurobarometer survey data, where 59% of Swedes were shown to be positive about the future of the EU (compared to 75% in Denmark).

In regards to both cases, another possible explanation for the higher proportion of Anti-EU to Alter-EU Types has to do with how individuals characteristically express themselves in online discussions. Online political discussions tend to generally be more polarized (Malouf and Mullen, 2008). One study found when participating in group debates online anonymously, individuals tended to exhibit "enhanced group cohesiveness" and "polarize their positions in the direction of group norms" in order to clearly identify with one side of the debate and distance themselves from the other (Lee: 2007, 399). In the context of our study, Lee's finding suggests that online forums like Jubii and Flashback may "amplify the divisions between social groups holding different views", driving users to 'pick a side' in discussions about Europe. We noticed a clear polarization between pro- and Anti-EU positions, and though we only coded for the latter, the number of Anti-EU posts may have been driven up by this online phenomenon. Although the Indeterminate sub-type was large in both cases, this does not contradict a polarization effect, as this sub-type refers to positions we defined as Eurosceptic.

Tone:

Our expectation that the Danish posts would be mostly Radical in tone was not confirmed as Radical was by far the lowest Tone category in the Danish case. We expected DF to cue Radical tones among online users, and although the total proportion of Radical tones was low, the covariance tables identify a much higher number of instances of Radical tones when they intersected with the Type and Reason that we associated with DF: Alter-EU (22) to Anti-EU (11), and Affective (11) to Utilitarian (3). Therefore although the Radical posts were proportionately low, DF can still be attributed as having a 'cueing' effect on the online public. However, we speculate that the small difference between Moderate and Negative types (3%) can be explained by the Danish media's influence as a strong 'cue-er' through its reporting and framing of EU issues. In Denmark, the media has a tendency to "nationalize" EU news by, for example, citing national sources like politicians when events take place at the European level (Ørsten, 2004), and by-and-large the Danish politicians keep a distant, polite, and factual attitude towards EU matters by using rational, logical arguments (Pedersen and Andersen, 2011, p. 100-101, 122). Although DF politicians are the exception on account of their emotional rhetoric, in general the political communication towards to the EU is moderate in tone, and the media's transparent relay of the Danish politicians' rhetoric may account for both the high number of Moderate posts as well as the low number of Radical posts. The covariance table analyzing the relationship between Tone and Reason (Table 3) shows that regardless of the Reason given, Moderate tones far outnumbered Radical ones.

Although we considered the Danish media's portrayal of EU news to be factual in tone, the Danish media has been demonstrated to exhibit conflict framing of the EU, where the EU is portrayed as the cause of a conflict between Brussels and Denmark (Tandrup and Sørensen 2008). Conflict framing decreases support for the EU regardless of how often EU news is presented (Vliegenthart et al, 2008: 415, 431), and in the Danish case we consider the media's conflict framing to contribute to the high number of Negative posts. To summarize, while

conflict framing may inspire negativity among the Danish public about the EU, the moderate tone in which the conflicts are relayed may also cue moderate critiques of the EU.

Conflict framing of the EU, however, is not unique to Denmark; in Sweden the EU can be framed as a "political giant" posing a threat to the welfare state (Raunio, 2007: 205) before whom Sweden is portrayed as powerless (Vikalo 2014: 48-49). Moreover, a review of the existing literature and Eurobarometer suggests that the Swedish national coverage of EU issues is approximately equivalent to that of Denmark in size, tone, and intensity. According to this logic, the Danes and Swedes should exhibit similar patterns in the tone of their online posts. However, our findings show that although the tone of both Danish and Swedish posts is nearly equally negative, the Swedes are generally less Moderate and more Radical than the Danes. As in the Danish case, we attribute media conflict framing to partially explain the high number of Negative posts. In order to explain the high proportion of Radical posts in relation to the Danes, we propose that differences in the two countries' political communication cultures drive Swedes frustrated with traditional media outlets to seek out alternative ways to express opinions deviant from the mainstream political communication norms.

If we are correct in understanding the Swedish political communication culture as characterized by a hegemonic discourse of multiculturalism discussed in a politically correct way (Carlbom 2003: 42, 54), in light of cue theory the Swedish discourse online should mimic the political communication culture and be Moderate in tone with a Utilitarian leaning, since the Swedish discussion about the pros and cons of European integration has been dominated by economic considerations (Miles 2001: 305). Contrary to following the norms of the Swedish political communication culture, Swedes predominantly cited Affective Reasons that Covariance table 2 shows were more likely to be Radical (19) in Tone than Moderate (8).

We expected that the Swedish posts would be largely Negative, since SD's rhetoric is radical but is stifled by the moderate Swedish political communication culture. While our expectation is confirmed, the high proportion of Radical posts in relation to the Danes suggests SD's cues are prevalent among the users of Flashback, a notion strongly supported by the Covariation tables. The Radical, Anti-EU rhetoric deployed by SD is seemingly mimicked by Flashback users, since we found 21 instances of Radical/Anti-EU intersection compared to only 1 Radical/Alter-EU instance. Moreover, the other Covariance table shows 19 instances where Radical Tone and Affective Reasons intersect, versus only 1 intersection of Radical Tone and Utilitarian Reason, suggesting that SD's Affective rhetoric is also taken home by Swedish online posters. The Negative/Utilitarian intersection jumps to 22 instances, suggesting that SD's modernization campaign towards less Affective, Radical arguments and more Utilitarian, politically mainstream (i.e. Moderate) arguments cues the online posters to be likewise Negative in Tone and Utilitarian in Reason. If the Flashback users followed the cues of traditional media sources in Sweden, we could expect a large Moderate/Utilitarian intersection, which was only just above half (13) of the 22 Negative/Utilitarian intersections.

Concluding remarks

The above findings motivate the question: Why is it that the Danish online users are largely in line with the Danish political communication culture, while the Swedish online users seemingly rebel against theirs? The answer, we posit, lies in the variation of the countries' political communication cultures' handling of their respective Eurosceptic parties. The Danish political system and media system transparently incorporated DF into the public debate, likely since DF's affectively-derived political message played to the heartstrings of the Danish public, who

have been a crucial actor in constructing a general political culture steeped in nationalism and assimilationism. DF and their message, undoubtedly a shock to the Danish society at first, was over time normalized through processes of meaning-making by the Danish society at large. The political system, media, and public each granted legitimacy to DF through political cooperation, adequate and transparent media coverage, and not least voting power by the Danish people. Danish society was confronted with a new phenomenon and sanctioned DF's message as acceptable by renegotiating the prevailing normative constellation through processes of meaning-making.

In Sweden, on the other hand, SD's affective rhetoric, a near carbon copy from their successful DF neighbors across the Øresund, bucked the prevailing political culture centered upon a multiculturalist ideology and was (and is) deemed unacceptable by politicians and the media, who together worked to demonize and marginalize SD members and their message (Bossetta 2012: 15-17). While the party is still marginilized in Swedish society, currently some members of the Swedish public are attempting to change the prevailing normative constellation through granting significance to SD's message through voting.

The findings of our data suggest that Swedes, through a process of differentiation from the prevailing political culture, are consciously turning to alternative, 'new' media outlets to debate issues unsanctioned by the political culture and not sufficiently portrayed by the political communication culture. Computer mediated communication like online forums allows for the anonymity to sidestep cultural stigmatization, promoting a lower sense of social risk (Curtis 1997) and, furthermore, enhancing a subjective sense of civic empowerment (Dahglren 2012: 5) through the bypassing traditional media on account of online media's low barriers for participation (Ignatow and Schuett 2011).

New media "enable marginalized groups to make their voices heard in public contexts in a more profound way than before" (Nilsson and Carlsson 2014: 2), and we have argued that the Swedish political communication culture, as a proxy manifestation of the overall national political culture, stifles the opinions of its dissenters, who in turn seek out alternative modes of expression. Political communication culture has different effects in Denmark and Sweden, since the contrast between online and traditional media discourses is more acutely measured in the case of Sweden on account of its censorship-oriented political communication culture. The number of users, amount of traffic, and active participation on Flashback far outnumber that of Jubii or any Danish discussion forum, precisely since Danes do not feel the need to seek out alternative media sources to the same degree as Swedes do. Whereas Swedes feel the need to differentiate themselves from the mainstream media and political discussion via the cloak of online anonymity, Danes do not exhibit the necessity since what Swedes would consider 'extremist rhetoric' is already firmly incorporated and established in the Danish public discourse.

The process of differentiation between traditional media outlets and new media (i.e. online forums) enacted by Swedish online users was integral to our explanation of the differences in the political communication culture of our two cases. The supporting secondary literature used in the construction of our expectation matrix, aside from being scarce, was not tailored to test for differentiation. Therefore, we suggest as an avenue for further research the need to develop a more articulated understanding of how the process of differentiation works, what the social and structural conditions under which it occurs are, as well as exploring the potential effects. We consider these avenues relevant to further developing the research surrounding, new media studies, political communication culture, and European public opinion.

Furthermore, while our study offers explanations based on cue theory, we have not tested the exact cueing mechanisms between politicians and the media, as well as between traditional media versus new media discourses. We wish to also emphasize there was lack of pre-existing literature that hindered our ability to make more sophisticated judgments about the link between politicians, media, and the public in relation to the specific context of our study.

Contributing to the lack of pre-existing literature specifically geared to a new media, Eurosceptic, and Nordic context, we confirmed our initial expectation hypothesizing that varieties in the form and content of public opinion can be explained by differences in political cultures. While some researchers have stated that "public opinion on integration does not follow national, cultural, or geographic patterns," we contend that through cross-country comparisons of the relationship among actors in political communication cultures, certain normative constellations can be identified indicative of the overall political culture (Vasiliopoulou 2013: 154). Uncovering these normative constellations through the discourse and practices of influential actors within a political system should serve valuable a more nuanced understanding of Euroscepticism in contemporary EU politics.

Bibliography

Albrecht, S., 2006, "Whose Voice Is Heard in Online Deliberation?: A Study of Participation and Representation in Political Debates on the Internet". *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 9**,** 62-82.

Almond, G. A. (1989). The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations, Sage.

Bellier, I. & Wilson, T. M., 2000, *An Anthropology of the European Union: Building, Imagining and Experiencing the New Europe.* Berg, Oxford.

Boomgaarden, H. G., De Vreese, C. H., Schuck, A. R. T., Azrout, R., Elenbaas, M., Van Spanje, J. H. P. & Vliegenthart, R., 2013, "Across Time and Space: Explaining Variation in News Coverage of the European Union". *European Journal of Political Research,* vol. 52**,** 608-29.

Boomgaarden, H. G., Vliegenthart, R., De Vreese, C. H. & Schuck, A. R. T., 2010, "News on the Move: Exogenous Events and News Coverage of the European Union". *Journal of European Public Policy,* vol. 17**,** 506-26.

Borevi, K., 2012, "Sweden: The Flagship of Multiculturalism". *In:* Hagelund, G. B. a. A. (ed.) *Immigration Policy and the Scandinavian Welfare State, 1945–2010.* Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Bossetta, M., 2012, *Cultural Racism without Race: An Exploratory Insight into the Discrimination and Self-perception of the Sweden Democrats.* Master, Lund University.

Carlbom, A. (2003). *The imagined versus the real other: multiculturalism and the representation of muslims in Sweden*, Lund University.

Carrubba, C. J. (2001). "The electoral connection in European Union politics." *The Journal of Politics* 63(01): 141-158.

Cini, M. and N. P.-S. Borragán (2013). *European Union Politics*, Oxford University Press.

Dahlerup, D. 2013. Otyglade Grannar. *Dagens Nyheter; Politiken*, October 16.

Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and political engagement*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge.

Dahlgren, P. (2012). Social Media and Counter-Democracy: The Contingences of Participation. Electronic Participation, Springer: 1-12.

De Vreese, C. H., et al. (2007). "The media and European Parliament elections: Second-rate coverage of a second-order event?" *European elections and domestic politics: Lessons from the past and scenarios for the future*: 116-130.

De Wilde, P., Michailidou, A. & Trenz, H.-J., 2013, *Contesting Europe: Exploring Euroscepticism in Online Media Coverage.* ECPR Press, Colchester.

Demker, M., 2012, "Scandinavian Right-Wing Parties. Diversity More Than Convergence?". *In:* Andrea Mammone, E. G. a. B. J. (ed.) *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe from Local to Transnational.* Routledge, London.

Downs, W. M., 2001, "Denmark's Referendum on the Euro: The Mouse That Roared ... Again". *West European Politics,* vol. 24**,** 222-26.

Esser, F. and B. Pfetsch (2004). Comparing political communication: Theories, cases, and challenges, Cambridge University Press.

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy - http://www.efdgroup.eu/

European Commission, 2013a, *Les Habitudes Médiatiques Dans L'union Européenne.* Brussels.

European Commission, 2013b, *Standard Eurobarometer 80* - Public Opinion in the Eu.

Formisano, R. P. (2001). "The concept of political culture." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31(3): 393-426.

Fryklund, B., 2013, "Populism - Changes over Time and Space: A Comparative and Retrospective Analysis of Populist Parties in the Nordic Countries from 1965 to 2012". *In:* Ruth Wodak, M. K., Brigitte Mral (ed.) *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse.* Bloomsbury, London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney.

Green-Pedersen, C. & Krogstrup, J., 2008, "Immigration as a Political Issue in Denmark and Sweden". *European Journal of Political Research,* vol. 47**,** 610-34.

Groshek, J. and J. Engelbert (2012). "Double differentiation in a cross-national comparison of populist political movements and online media uses in the United States and the Netherlands." *New Media & Society*: 1461444812450685.

Halikiopoulou, D., et al. (2012). "The paradox of nationalism: The common denominator of radical right and radical left euroscepticism." *European journal of political research* 51(4): 504-539.

Hedetoft, U., 2010, "Denmark Versus Multiculturalism". *In:* Vertovec, S. & Wessendorf, S. (eds.) *The Multiculturalism Backlash : European Discourses, Policies and Practices.* Routledge, London ; New York.

Hellström, A. & Hervik, P., 2014, "Feeding the Beast: Nourishing Nativist Appeals in Sweden and in Denmark". *International Migration and Integration,* vol.**,** 449-67

Hellström, A. and T. Nilsson (2010). "'We Are the Good Guys' Ideological positioning of the nationalist party Sverigedemokraterna in contemporary Swedish politics." *Ethnicities* 10(1): 55-76.

Herring, S. C., 2010, "Web Content Analysis: Expanding the Paradigm". *In:* Hunsinger, J., Klastrup, L. & Allen, M. (eds.) *International Handbook of Internet Research.* Springer Netherlands.

Hooghe, L. and G. Marks (2005). "Calculation, community and cues public opinion on European integration." *European Union Politics* 6(4): 419-443.

Hooghe, L. and G. Marks (2007). "Sources of euroscepticism." *Acta Politica* 42(2): 119-127.

Hooghe, L. and G. Marks (2009). "A postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus." *British Journal of Political Science* 39(01): 1-23.

Hughes, H. S. (1988). *Sophisticated rebels: the political culture of European dissent, 1968-1987*, Harvard University Press.

Ignatow, G. and J. L. Schuett (2011). "Inter-organizational digital divide: Civic groups' media strategies in the Trinity River Corridor Project." *First Monday* 16(11).

Jalving, M., 2011, *Absolut Sverige, En Rejse I Tavshedens Rige.* Jyllandspostens Forlag, Copenhagen.

Justitsministeriet. 2014. *Regeringen Indgår Bred Aftale Om Dobbelt Statsborgerskab* [Online]. Available: http://www.justitsministeriet.dk/nyt-og-presse/pressemeddelelser/2014/regeringen-indg%C3%A5r-bred-aftale-om-dobbelt-statsborgerskab [Accessed 21 July 2014].

Karpf, D., 2012, "Social Science Research Methods in Internet Time". *Information, Communication & Society,* vol. 15**,** 639-61.

Koefoed, L. & Simonsen, K., 2007, "The Price of Goodness: Everyday Nationalist Narratives in Denmark". *Antipode,* vol. 39**,** 310-30.

Lane, J.-E. and S. Ersson (2005). "Culture and politics: a comparative approach."

Lee, E. J. (2007). "Deindividuation Effects on Group Polarization in Computer-Mediated Communication: The Role of Group Identification, Public-Self-Awareness, and Perceived Argument Quality." *Journal of Communication* 57(2): 385-403.

Lund Larsen, B. 2013. *En Analyse Af Danske Avisers Dækning Af Magtstrukturerne I Eu's Transnationale Politiske System* Master, University of Copenhagen.

McLaren, L. M. (2002). "Public support for the European Union: cost/benefit analysis or perceived cultural threat?" *The Journal of Politics* 64(02): 551-566.

McMahon, R., 2013, "How Culture and History Explain Europe's Differentiated Integration: The Cases of Liberal International Relations and Northern Euroscepticism". *In:* Mcmahon, R. (ed.) *Post-Identity? Culture and European Integration.* Routledge, London.

Miles, L., 2001, "Sweden in the European Union: Changing Expectations?". *Journal of European Integration,* vol. 23**,** 303-33.

Nilsson, B. and E. Carlsson (2014). "Swedish politicians and new media: Democracy, identity and populism in a digital discourse." New Media & Society 16(4): 655-671.

Ørsten, M., 2004, *Transnational Politisk Journalistik. Dansk Eu-Journalistik Fra 1991-2001.* Roskilde Universitetscenter, Roskilde.

Pedersen, M. H. & Andersen, M. G. 2011. *Debat I Gråtoner Eu I Danske Medier –Med Politikernes Ord* Master, University of Southern Denmark.

perceived cultural threat?" *The Journal of Politics* 64(02): 551-566.

Pye, L. W. (1968). "Political culture." International encyclopedia of the social sciences 12: 218-

Pye, L. W. (1972). "Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evaluation of the Concept of Political Culture." *Social Science Quarterly* 53(2): 285-296.

Raunio, T., 2007, "Softening but Persistent: Euroscepticism in the Nordic Eu Countries". *Acta Politica,* vol. 42**,** 191-210.

Reisinger, W. M. (1995). "The renaissance of a rubric: Political culture as concept and theory." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 7(4): 328-352.

Smith, S. Mobilising Civic Resources through Eparticipation in the European Public Sphere: Problem-Solving, Relegitimisation or Decoupling? *In:* De Cindio, F., Macintosh Ann & Cristian, P., eds. *From e-Participation to Online Deliberation*, 2010 Leeds. 126-41.

Sørensen, C., 2008, "Danish Euroscepticism: Unique or Part of Broader Patterns? ". *In:* Mouritzen, N. H. a. H. (ed.) *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2008.* Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS, Copenhagen.

Steenbergen, M. R., et al. (2007). "Who's cueing whom? Mass-elite linkages and the future of European integration." *European Union Politics* 8(1): 13-35.

Stråth, B., 2010, "'Norden' as a European Region". *In:* Arnason, J. P. & Doyle, N. (eds.) *Domains and Divisions of European History.* Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.

Strömbäck, J. & Nord, L. W., 2008, "Still a Second Order Election: Comparing Swedish Media Coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary Election and the 2002 National Election". *In:* Kaid, L. L. (ed.) *The Eu Expansion: Communicating Shared Sovereignty in the Parliamentary Elections.* Peter Lang, New York.

Stromer-Galley, J. & Wichowski, A., 2011, "Political Discussion Online". *In:* Consalvo, M. & Ess, C. (eds.) *The Handbook of Internet Studies.* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Sundström, L., 2009, *Världens Lyckligaste Folk : En Bok Om Danmark.* Leopardförlag, Stockholm.

Sweden Democrats., 2014, "Partiet för en   EU-kritisk politk - Sverigedemokraterna." http://sverigedemokraterna.se/var-politik/sverigedemokraterna-och-eu/

Tandrup, T. N. & Sørensen, T. A. 2008. *Eu I Tva: En Kritisk Diskursanalyse Af, Hvordan Dr's Tv-Avisen Dækker Eu* Master, University of Copenhagen.

Tjernström, V., 2008, "Rare Birds: The 'Why' in Comparative Media Studies. Nordic Ideal Types of Good European Journalism". *In:* Bondebjerg, I. & Madsen, P. (eds.) *Media, Democracy and European Culture.* Intellect, Bristol.

Vallaste, K. 2013. *Euroscepticism: Problem or Solution? : Framing Euroscepticism in Mainstream Media and Writings by Eurosceptics in Sweden, Finland and Estonia 2000-2006.* PhD, University of Helsinki.

Van Klingeren, M. (2014). ""Welcome" to Europe: How media and immigration affect increasing Euroscepticism."

Van Klingeren, M., et al. (2013). "Going Soft or Staying Soft: Have Identity Factors Become More Important Than Economic Rationale when Explaining Euroscepticism?" *Journal of European Integration* 35(6): 689-704.

Verba, S. (1980). "On revisiting the Civic Culture: a personal postscript." *The civic culture revisited*: 394-410.

Vikalo, I. 2014. *The Eu in Swedish News: Assessment of Svt's Broadcasted EU News Coverage.* Master, Lund University.

Vliegenthart, R., Schuck, A. R. T., Boomgaarden, H. G. & De Vreese, C. H., 2008, "News Coverage and Support for European Integration, 1990–2006". *International Journal of Public Opinion Research,* vol. 20**,** 415-39.

Welch, S. (2013). *The Theory of Political Culture*, Oxford University Press.

Wilson, R. W. (2000). "The many voices of political culture: Assessing different approaches." *World Politics* 52(02): 246-273.