The “European Narrative“ in Light of the Practice Turn

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Abstract: This paper argues that the study of international politics has not sufficiently developed hermeneutic analysis despite calls for taking seriously the role of culture. Accordingly, the paper first introduces the concept of ‘horizon’ as unfolded in the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer and subsequently provides a way to operationalize it by drawing on insights from so-termed memory research. Lastly, the paper demonstrates how analyzes work in practice by analyzing the ‘European Narrative’ as told by the European Commission and Heads of State, respectively.

The “European Narrative” in light of the Practice Turn

Introduction

The study of international politics, and security studies in particular, turned its focus towards the study of culture during the mid 1990s (Katzenstein 1996). It paved the way for different strands of constructivism (Fierke 2006) that attempted to develop the modernist and positivist critique of the third and forth debate in IR (Waever 1996; Wiener 2006) into an alternative research programme. This alternative programme was to focus *inter alia* on interaction processes and develop sensitivity towards the relation between actors and context (Doty 1993). In this regard culture takes a prominent role as the reservoir of symbols and signs which are drawn upon as so-termed structures of meaning-in-use (Weldes and Saco 1996; Milliken 1999) which shapes the context of interaction while also specifying the room for manoeuvring that actors have. In this vein it has been shown that culture indeed matters for the study of international politics, e.g. in the formation of security communities in which research has drawn heavily on the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (Neumann 2002; Adler 2008; Pouliot 2008). Yet, this turn towards culture is not without its problems: the approach remains too eclectic in its application[1]. Further problems arise from the presupposition of a community expressed in a collectivized notion of habitus which omits investigating how a shared habitus emerged out of distinct habitus (plural) in the first place.

From this observation it seems strange that an alternative strand of the cultural turn has received little attention to date, i.e. the strand of critical hermeneutics. Only occasionally did authors explicitly point towards hermeneutics as a potential inroad into analyzing the entwined constellation of actor and context and focus on the relationship between meaning, interpretation and understanding (Shapcott 1994; Neufeld 1995; Shapcott 2001). And if they did, most referencing occurred in the footnotes of their articles. In general, hermeneutic analyses of politics focus on meaningful practices which are culturally embedded and which arise against a background of contingent historical traditions and dilemmas (Bevir and Rhodes 2010: 1).

While this insight is not too dissimilar to what the turn has brought about, the advantage over Bourdieuian analyses lies in its conceptual take on interaction: the power to explain how distinct habitus (plural) potentially fuse into one. Accordingly, this paper makes a conceptual contribution to the study of international politics by exploring the concept of ‘horizon’ as developed in the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The paper demonstrates how the concept can be operationalized for research purposes and sketches its practical use by analyzing the so-called European Narrative.

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[1] Consider, for instance, Hopf’s critique of Pouliot (Hopf 2010).

The paper holds that such conceptual addition and its ensuing operationalisation for research is necessary if one is concerned with the role of culture in international politics, particularly because the political and the cultural are closely entangled. Culture does not exist per se or in the minds of people but is instantiated in social relations and through social practices (Bachmann-Medick 2006: 66). Culture forms a “web of meaning” (Neufeld 1995: 80), in which making sense of the social world “involves a process of ‘testing’ the adequacy of a proffered ‘reading’, that is (i) of the ‘web of meaning’ in terms of the concrete social practices in which it is embedded, and (ii) of the ‘coherence’ of observed social practices in terms of the ‘web of meaning’ which constitutes those practices.” (ibid.: 81) Hermeneutics offers an inroad into inquiring interaction processes that take place between actors with distinct cultural backgrounds. While Bourdieuian approaches set off from the assumption of an existent (if only latent) community, such an assumption is contested in the approach presented in this paper.

As such, culture consists of text-like features which lend themselves to interpretative analyses akin to a narrative: From a Heideggerian perspective agency is marked by narrative-like features because life itself is marked by a beginning (birth) and an end (death) which results in a narrative-like trajectory of agency (Being-towards-death). A narrative can be defined as “a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions.” (Fludernik 2009: 6) is a communicative practice in which someone (a narrator) tells something (a story) to someone (a narratee) about something (a real or imaginary world). (Kearney 2002: 5 and 150) Bringing insights from narratology to the study of politics may be surprising to some, particularly if one assumes a rigid distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’. Yet narrating is an intrinsic element of politics – domestic and international – as it is of life in general. As Richard Kearney insists, “It is, in short, only when haphazard happenings are transformed into story, and thus made memorable over time, that we become full agents of our history. This becoming historical involves a transition from the flux of events into a meaningful social or political community.” (ibid.: 3) As the narrative process contains four different elements, Kearney suggests that only critical hermeneutics offers an inroad into a balanced analysis. According to Kearney, the role of the ‘teller’ is overemphasized by romantic idealists and existentialists while structuralists overly focus on the linguistic workings of the ‘story’. Post-structuralists, in his account, are mainly preoccupied with the role of the ‘reader’ while the ‘world’ is in the centre of attention of materialists and realists. (Kearney 2002: 151)

Arguably, this avenue of inquiry has not been fully pursued and the question remains how it can be brought to the study of international politics. This is the issue from which the paper sets off. Accordingly, in the second section the paper introduces key concepts of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, particularly its notion of 'horizon' which captures the historicity of actors by the narratives they attempt to tell and the ones they are a part of. The concept of horizon thus provides inroads to analyzing the issue of interaction and understanding. It forms part of a praxeological methodology which is further specified in section three. It is argued that memory research can help operationalize different levels at which so-termed structures of meaning-in-use (Weldes & Saco 1996; Milliken 1999) can be discerned and analyzed. Section four briefly sketches current developments in the European Narrative by delineating the horizon of EU institutions as well as that of member states.

2) Horizons

If culture consists of text-like features that lend themselves to interpretive analyses, one has to inquire into the four elements of narrative outlined above. Unlike the analyses of text written on paper, 'real life' narratives contain narrator and narratee in roles that are occupied interchangeably. In other words, the distinction between the two sides is not clear cut. But while their interaction process contributes to a meta-narrative, each actor attempts to shape the outcome in a distinct manner. Thus they attempt to develop their own narrative from a particular vantage point. Hermeneutics needs to delineate these vantage points in order to find out how they developed and how they might facilitate or impede interaction processes.

These vantage points might be better conceptualized as "horizons". They alert analysts to the historicity of the interlocutors and the limits of their respective perception, i.e. what can be narrated and also what can be understood. Unlike the concept of habitus, however, horizons are not historically fixed. As Gadamer states, "The horizon is (...) something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving." (Gadamer 1989: 304) With a view to methodological issues, analysing horizons might provide insights into a possible shared understanding between different parties – or outline reasons for the impossibility of such undertaking. As Charles Taylor puts it, "Horizons are thus often initially distinct. They divide us, but they are not unmovable; they can be changed, extended" (Taylor 2002: 288). For analytical purposes, two aspects are important: "On the one hand, horizons can be identified and distinguished; it is through such distinction that we can come to grasp what is distorting understanding and impeding communication. But on the other hand, horizons evolve, change. There is no such thing as a fixed horizon." (ibid.: 290)

Certainly, the importance of history and background knowledge has been emphasized by others, for instance in Wittgenstein's language games. Yet, issues remain unresolved concerning the process of understanding. As Richard Shapcott asserts, "Understanding does not occur in a vacuum. It occurs within a 'tradition' or a 'horizon' of consciousness." (Shapcott 1994: 72) Horizons are not limitations of subject positions but rather contain the possibility of opening and extending. Although horizons contain "prejudice" – a structural concept without the negative connotation of contemporary use but rather something akin to a conceptual scanner one inherits through culture (Arnswald 2002: 37) – prejudice are subject to change. As Georgina Warnke writes, "for hermeneutic understanding it follows that we are not limited to the premises of our tradition but rather continually revise them in the encounters with and discussions we have about them. In confronting other cultures, other prejudices and, indeed, the implications that others draw from our own traditions, we learn to reflect on both our assumptions and our ideas of reason and to amend them in the direction of a *better* account." (Warnke 1987: 170, quoted in Arnswald 2002: 38-39) Thus, as horizons are not fixed entities but subject to change and revision, Gadamer's concept offers a way to shift the emphasis of the analysis from the individual actor towards the intersubjective. Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to this as the 'fusion of horizons' [Horizontverschmelzung] in which distinct horizons and points of view fuse (Cf. Gadamer 1993: 351). In this vein Gadamer writes that "a successful dialogue is one that does not allow one to fall back into the dissent from which it originated. Commonality which is shared so profoundly that it comprises no longer my meaning and your meaning but rather a shared interpretation of the world is the key to moral and social solidarity. What is considered acceptable and the norm requires the kind of commonality which originates from people understanding each other." (Ibid.: 188)

How do we recognize a fused horizon when we see one? Fused horizons result in a shared order in the form of "congruence [Identität] between the individual consciousness and convictions represented in the consciousness of others, and thus in accordance with order of life [Lebensordnungen] that one creates" (Gadamer 1993: 326) Gadamer's approach to tradition is a flexible one in the sense that "traditions are not wholly incommensurable because they are susceptible to change and learning." (Shapcott 1994: 74) The congruence of traditions (or parts thereof) is visibly represented, for instance, in written text albeit not exclusively so. Gadamer states that text and interpretation are intimately related: a text does not always consist of a substance which has to be subjected to interpretation, rather "often it is a process interpretation which critically constructs the text." (Gadamer 1993: 341) As a hermeneutic concept, text contains more than the rules of language which is what is relevant for linguistics. Accordingly, he states that, “from a hermeneutic perspective – which is the perspective of a reader – text is merely a temporary product [Zwischenprodukt], a phase in the process of understanding” (Ibid.). In his view, knowledge about the underlying rules of language is merely a precondition for investigating how the process of understanding (and a possible agreement about) a subject takes place. Hermeneutics can be used critically by making “explicit the normative implications which reside in something mediated by language” (Gadamer 1993: 327).

Methodologically, these insights bear a two-fold challenge which requires bridging the micro-macro divide of the social sciences. On the one hand, one needs to account for the actors’ respective horizons and the prejudices they contain. Where do these prejudices come from historically and how do they resonate in the present? On the other hand, this problem of resonance points towards the (im)possibility of fusing horizons. Accordingly, an approach that emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction “appropriates in transfigured form a variety of individualist explanatia, while grounding these in a supraindividual phenomenon that differs significantly from those of conventional social thought (e.g., societies and systems).” (Coulter 2001; Schatzki 2001: 5)

As a praxeological methodology posits that practices and meaning are necessarily inseparable, what does this imply for the constitution of normative order in the triangle of EU institutions, member states and citizens? The suggestion of this constellation is that international politics is marked by interaction processes in which actors with distinct horizons engage. While each horizon skews the narrative in a particular manner, the development of a shared script – in which horizons fuse – represents a learning process. In order to understand how this process unfolds and why it may take particular turns, research needs to engage with participants’ horizon. Thus, for instance, in contrast to the concept of habitus, horizon remains open for change through interaction and only temporarily determines the range of action available to actors.

3) Towards a Hermeneutic Methodology of Narratives

Investigating horizons and their potential fusion requires a hermeneutic methodology. This insight is not exactly novel, given that it has been demanded by scholars of international relations in several of the previous “great debates” (George 1989; Lapid 1989). But such calls have typically engaged with the study of “discourse”, for which exists an eclectic range of definitions (cf. Wodak et. al. 2010: 7). While these definitions point towards the importance of the use of symbols and language as part of a broad understanding of “practice”, I would like to refine the concept of discourse by introducing the concept of “memory”. Memory, not quite unlike discourse, alludes to a rejection of autonomous actors often present in positivist methodology. Yet the concept of memory that this paper introduces helps refine analyses and distinguish between different levels of engagement of actors. This refined procedure would be lost if it was subsumed under the heading of discourse. The paper holds that it offers more refined analytical access to interaction processes and the role of culture therein.

In its most basic form, devised in the 1920s by Maurice Halbwachs, memory can describe both individual as well as collective forms. This distinction allows for establishing a methodological link between individuals and their surroundings, usually referred to as society. The basic premise of the concept yields that memory is created through communication with other members of society and reflects the dominant discourse by providing meaningful categories and create bonds of solidarity with other people (Lebow 2006: 8). Following a Durkheimian approach, though, Halbwachs's approach has been accused of overstating the influence of society and thereby leaving insufficient space for individual change and resistance. (Wulf and Kansteiner 2006) Further, the concept of collective memory may be useful but remains broad – and thus "difficult to apply with precision" (Lebow 2006: 9). It has, however, paved the way for refining the continuum between "individual" and "collective" as well as distinguishing different forms of "memory".

In the remainder of this section, I would like to introduce a three-part distinction of memory proposed by Aleida Assmann (Assmann 2006) which holds two great methodological advances. First, the typology I would like to present does not separate the individual from his or her surroundings but rather emphasises their inseparability. For the study of international relations, this means that the typology side-steps the pitfalls of the structuration debate (Doty 1993; Wendt 1999) Second, the typology enables operationalising research along three dimensions which are individual, intersubjective and intertextual. A hermeneutic analysis of horizons based on this three-tier distinction (see Table 1 below) can help advance studies of international relations as it looks at individually held connotations of structures of meaning-in-use (Weldes and Saco 1996, Milliken 1999) which matter, for instance, during ad-hoc contestations over the meaning of a given norm (Wiener 2008).

Dimension	**Neural memory**	**Social memory**	**Cultural memory**
Based on:	Individual brain	Social communication	Symbolic media
Milieu:	Social communication	Individual brain	Social communication
Supported by:	Symbolic media	Symbolic media	Individual memory

Table 1 - Memory (assmann 2006: 33) 1

While it is easily understandable that the *individual's memory* is contained in the neural structure of one's brain, it requires external stimulation, which takes shape in terms of social interaction and communication (Assmann 2006: 32-33, 2008: 212). As she explains, this memory is predominantly episodic, as opposed to a procedural memory of habitualised body skills and movement, on the one hand, and semantic memory consisting of consciously acquired knowledge (“learning”), on the other. Episodic memory is perspectival and idiosyncratic and thus inseparable from the individual’s personal perspective and position in social relations. It consists of fragments which can be brought into order and sequence, particularly when retrospectively incorporated into a narrative. Further cohesion is established as it also possesses the trait of a network which helps readapt, substantiate or challenge the fragments.

This latter trait of individual memory points towards an important feature of *social memory*. Through interaction and in its practical instantiation memory is not built (passive) but rather takes place (active) (François and Schulze 1998: 13). It thus marks a first step towards a fused horizon and the development of a (fragile) community. From Assmann’s account of social memory (2008: 213-215) we can distinguish two types of community: a diachronic community spanning several generations of a family, and a synchronic community which is usually referred to as “generation”. Both communities are marked by shared symbolic media in which memories are anecdotalized, rehearsed or even stylized. The effect, particularly within the synchronic form of social memory, is an “ongoing discourse of self-thematization.” (ibid.: 214). Yet, once social memories have been transferred into symbolic forms of commemoration, material (in forms of monuments or museums) or procedural (in forms of rites of commemoration), they become available to transcend the personal experience and instantiation through the group. The degree of longevity that memories thus assume transforms them into cultural memory.

Cultural memory, of which political memory forms a sub-type, is not only marked by processes of remembering or forgetting as are individual and social memory. It is rather defined by a combination of the two (Assmann 2008: 220-221). It is not exclusively an active memory but also an archive. On the one hand, active memory contains that which society selects as salient and vital for orientation and shared remembering. Its content is brought to life in practices and institutions. On the other hand, the archive stores material which can be accessed and retrieved by specialists. This means that there is a semi-permeable boundary between archival and active memory: “Things may recede into the background and fade out of common interest and attention; others may be recovered from the periphery and move into the center of social interest and esteem. Thanks to this interaction between the active and the archival dimension, i.e. between remembering and forgetting, cultural memory has an inbuilt capacity for ongoing changes, innovations, transformations, and reconfigurations." (Assmann 2008: 221) The collective horizon which cultural memory delineates is thus open to change.

Yet, the related concept of *political memory* is what is most interesting for our purposes, i.e. the study of strategic narratives. While cultural memory includes ambivalence, political memory is marked by "homogeneity". Further, it is "charged with emotional intensity" and seeks to address "individuals first and foremost as members of a group", seeking to create a "tight collective community centered around one seminal experience" (Ibid.: 221). Although, like cultural memory, political memory is open to contestation, it is also marked by practices of selection and exclusion which feature "the emplotment of events in an affectively charged and mobilizing narrative; sites and monuments that present palpable relics; visual and verbal signs as aides of memory; commemoration rites that periodically reactivate the memory and enhance collective participation" (Ibid.: 217). As far as national memories are concerned, Assmann contends, these practices add up to heroic or martyriological narratives that leave no room for self-doubts, guilt or anything that threatens a positive self image. (Ibid.: 218)

In sum, this typology captures layers of horizons: the internal dynamics of horizons – their ongoing re-constitution – as well as processes of fusion between horizons. Each layer is constituted in a specific manner, its components unfold in a certain milieu and each is supported in a distinct manner. The methodology of memory research analytically bridges the gap between the individual and the collective without repeating the same dichotomist concept of the 1920s. While it sidesteps pitfalls of methodological or phenomenological individualism (Goodin and Tilly 2006: 13) by emphasizing the hermeneutic situatedness of an individual within a pre-existing social context, it neither loses the importance of agency for the existence of the intertextual cultural and political memory.

4) Exploratory Case Study: The European Narrative

When the first Barroso Commission took office in 2004 it was the declared aim of Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström to develop a "European Narrative" (Wallström 2005; Wallström 2007), particularly after the referenda on the constitutional treaty failed in plebiscites in France and the Netherlands in May 2005. With a view to analyzing interaction processes between diverse actors this section reconstructs the basic features of the Commission's horizon in order to delineate its position within the institutional arrangement of the European Union. As this horizon reconstructs the narrative vantage point of the Commission within various interaction processes with other narrators (member states as well as citizens), this will allow assessing the state of international relations in contemporary Europe and serve as a first step towards policy recommendations. The reconstruction of the Commission's horizon – expressed by a *core theme* – will be undertaken by means of an integrated text analysis of documents published between 2004-2009.[2] In a second step, this section will present an analysis of the horizon of European heads of state and government. This will enable an assessment of the interaction processes out of which the European Narrative (broadly conceived) emerges.

Once upon a time, there was a diligent housekeeper…

The analysis reveals that the "European Narrative" as developed by DG COM describes the European Union as a "common project" shared by all: governments, organizations and people "from all walks of life".[3] Yet, this project is in danger, requiring cooperation between the actors in order to make it successful. Particularly, these actors need to connect with each other and engage by means of increased communication.

Focusing on the role of the Commission within this scenario, the *core theme* that emerges from the documents is that of a "janitor" or "housekeeper", albeit one who possesses qualifications that would allow it to do the work of a carpenter if only its services were requested. One can detect this theme from the way the constellation between Commission, citizens, the Council and other institutions is framed.

Regarding the relation towards citizens, who would take on the role of tenants or flat-owner in an apartment building, the Commission-as-janitor's role is to improve people's quality of life. It is of *utility* to them, aiming at aiding their *empowerment*.[4] In this course, the janitor is *providing the necessary tools*[5] that consist of information and, more generally, channels of deliberation with policy-makers. Empowering citizens means that they will be in a position of assuming *ownership*[6] in their own *house*[7] which they currently lack. This suggests that citizens are not in charge of their possessions, receiving little *added value*[8] of what their occupancy potentially holds: *prosperity, security, growth and jobs, competitiveness, energy efficiency, mobility, low cost flights, reduced international roaming charges, environmental protection* and *the fight against climate change*[9] to name but a few.

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[2] The documents' *core theme* summarizes their content and expresses the limits of the discourse, i.e. alluding to what can be represented legitimately and what cannot, draws on an integrated approach to text analysis (Kruse 2008). This sample, although small, can be regarded as representative of DG COM's and indeed the Commission's position on what the European Narrative entails. They are the outcome of interaction processes between members of staff of DG COM at various levels and between DGs. As with all documents that have passed through various meetings and that have been amended multiple times in such meetings and by different staff, they have undergone various transformations from oral representation, to writing and from dialogue to monologue. They thus represent an interactional structure that can be made explicit by means of a linguistic analysis (Weiss, G. & Wodak 2000: 89). In the following passages, the *core theme* will be narratively reconstructed, representing the metanarrative of the European Narrative, so to speak.

[3] COM(2006) 35 final, p.13. (NB: Instead of putting quotations from documents in inverted commas, this section uses italics so as to improve the flow of reading)

4 COM(2007) 568 final, p.5 and p.6; COM(2006) 35 final, p.6; COM(2008) 158, p.4.

5 SEC(2006) 1553, p.6; COM(2006) 35 final, p.9 and p.10; COM(2005) 494 final, p.3.

Unfortunately, argues the janitor, he[10] is in a two-fold dilemma. He has not been in his job for too long, firstly, and, secondly, his role has been filled by someone else in the past. Let us look at each of these in turn. Being new to the position of a caretaker, people simply do not now or recognize him. The utility aspect ("added value") that has already been mentioned thus passes unnoticed. The implication is that citizens do not know, for instance, what jobs the janitor does and how he goes about doing them in his day-to-day affairs.[11] This dilemma cannot simply be remedied, however, by providing more information. Although this is what the janitor does, for instance, by employing more staff, the provision of information remains a task of his predecessor, i.e. a matter of national curricula of Member States.[12] What is more, though, is the sense of remoteness between janitor and occupants. Accordingly, a *gap* has to be *bridged*[13], more precisely, by establishing a *human bridge and a "Europe of faces"*[14]. This undertaking supposedly eases the lack of *proximity*[15] with citizens, and was practiced in the "Go Local" initiative. Lacking a human face puts the janitor in an awkward position, hindering him from *doing the job effectively*[16]. Since he is aware of people's needs and wants (see above) as well as service-oriented, underperforming would mean a waste of resources as well as underachieving in terms of quality of life.

One way out of this is to improve cooperation with others who likewise serve the well-being of people. The documents reveal a repeated call for cooperation, for instance by *ending the blame game*[17] and by means of increased cooperation, expressed as *doing the job together*, between

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[6] COM(2005) 494 final, p.3; COM(2006) 35 final, p.6; SEC(2006) 1553, p.2.

[7] COM(2006) 35 final, p.7. The reference in the document, though, refers to the Commission's house. But it suggests that there are several ones to take care of.

[8] COM(2005) 494 final, p.3; COM(2006) 211 final, p.5; COM(2006) 35 final, pp.2-4.

[9] Sampled from: COM(2007) 568 final, p.7; COM(2007) 568 final, p.5; COM(2006) 211 final, p. 3 and p.5; COM(2008) 158, p.6

[10] I take the janitor to be male as until now all Commission presidents have been male.

[11] COM(2005) 494 final, p.3; COM(2006) 35 final, p. 2 and p.4.

[12] COM(2006) 35 final.

[13] Ibid. p.2; COM(2005) 494 final, p.7.

[14] SEC(2006) 1553, p.5. Similarly: COM(2006) 35 final, p.9 and p.11; COM(2008) 158, p.4.

[15] COM(2007) 568 final, p.6.

[16] This theme is repeated frequently in the documents: COM(2006) 211 final, p.2; COM(2008) 158, p.7; COM(2007) 568 final, p.4;

[17] COM(2005) 494 final, p.3;

European and national parties, parliaments and civil society[18]. This call includes Member States to whom support is offered[19] - but from whom also emanates the second dilemma. As noted, the Commission-as-janitor diagnoses an underdeveloped national debate and national curricula. More importantly, though, it positions Member States as ill-equipped to do the job properly, i.e. optimizing people's standard of living *in a changed world*.[20] As Member States are no longer able to fully serve people's interests, the Commission insists, it has become the task of the new caretaker to do just that.

This constellation might one day develop into a more profound conflict as the Commission appears to shift the blame around towards the Council and Member States more generally, e.g. as they prevent the *EU to function effectively, now*[21], as citizens would like. In the same instance, though, the Commission repeatedly acknowledges that it is only doing the job it has been asked to do by the Council. The intergovernmental round is thus portrayed as dependent on the help of the Commission, particularly with a view *to becoming more democratic, transparent and effective*.[22]

The outcome of such positioning is a triangular constellation in which both the Commission-as-janitor and Member States as the previous concierge are engaged in a competition as citizens' primary service-provider. As with such rivalry situations in general, it seems reasonable to believe that the conflict might worsen over time as the Commission and other EU institutions mature further and do not refrain from confrontational steps against Member States. In its current form, there is no overt dissatisfaction with one's role, yet the occasional hint can be retrieved from the documents. The discourse of the Commission as janitor is considerably calm but it might take a different turn should the janitor claim to be a carpenter in disguise, i.e. being capable of more than mending and willing to actively construct the house.

…and a forming memory community of Heads of State

The question is, however, how this theme of the Commission-as-housekeeper resonates with others. Analyses hint that it might not receive overly positive feedback from EU member states and heads of government. These actors have been involved in constructing their own memory, the result of which is a narrative which runs contrary to the intentions of the Commission.

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[18] COM(2006) 35 final, p.10-11; COM(2007) 568 final, p.3; COM(2008) 158, p.11.

[19] COM(2007) 568 final, p.7.

[20] COM(2006) 211 final, p.2; COM(2007) 568 final, p.3, p.4, p.13 and p.15; COM(2006) 35 final, p.5; SEC(2006) 1553, p.2.

[21] COM(2006) 211 final, p.2.

[22] COM(2008) 158, p.3. Similar: SEC(2006) 1553, p.1; COM(2007) 568 final, p.3; COM(2005) 494 final, p.2.

An analysis of The Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine, and Le Monde,[23] reveals that – from the outset in 1957 – the Treaties of Rome have been the subject of significant commemorative activities. While there have been changes to anniversary celebrations over the years, especially in 2007, there are nonetheless important continuities that suggest that a ritual or tradition of remembrance has indeed been developed that has the potential to be part of a common European memory culture – one that brings together member states and their citizens but which limits the influence of the Commission.

The main components of this tradition as it unfolded since 1957 are: 1) the orchestration of festivities in Rome including a series of solemn speeches and fine dining. These celebrations are exclusive elite affairs and the public remains confined to the passive roles of observer and cheering crowd (though this changes in 2007). 2) There is an emphasis on the significance of the location (be it Rome or Berlin), which suggests efforts to ground European memory in a spatial manner. 3) Closely linked to the importance of location, there are routine references to ancient civilization, key European cultural legacies, and historical precursors to the Treaties. In this way, a sense of historical purpose and longevity for the European project is conjured up. 4) Similarly retrospective is the repeated mentioning of the "founding fathers" of the Europe Union/Community who figure prominently in the commemorations, establishing a kind of "hero cult" of the "visionaries" who made integration possible. "Founding fathers" is a term intimately linked to the myths of American nation-building, suggesting an intent to devise a similar "foundational story" for Europe. 5) Over time, the representation of the TOR increasingly contains statements of a forward looking nature.

The celebrations of 1957 set the tone for anniversary festivities of the years to come. In a commemorative article twenty years later, Roberto Ducci (a member of the Italian delegation) recalls that when the Brussels negotiations over the text of the Treaties were complete, diplomats erupted in spontaneous applause, many with tears in their eyes. No doubt, they had a hunch as to the historical significance of their achievement. According to Ducci, it was Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak who proposed "that we choose Rome (for the ceremony), the most august of our capitals, whence three times in history civilization came to Europe."[24] Despite this lofty rhetoric, Ducci also argues that the main reason for the Belgian to suggest Rome as the place for the ceremony, was as part of a bargain whereby the Italians would agree to Brussels as the location for the main European institutions.[25] This instance of power brokering has not made it into the mythology surrounding March 25, 1957. That day, the foreign ministers of the six signatory states –

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[23] This section draws on collaborative research with Jenny Wustenberg. An extended version of this section was presented at the International Studies Association convention in New Orleans 2010.

[24] 'Twenty years ago, a front seat at the great design that became the Treaty of Rome,' March 25, 1977, *The Times of London* (henceforth TOL).

[25] Ibid.

only Germany was represented by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer – came together in Rome. Before the main ceremony, Adenauer and some other officials attended the inauguration of a memorial to "one of the great Italian sponsors of a united Europe: Signor De Gasperi."[26] The celebration was held on the Capitoline Hill in Rome – the name sake for Washington DC's seat of parliament – overlooking a square by Renaissance artist Michelangelo and the statue of Marcus Aurelius. Spotlights illuminated surrounding buildings and crowds braved the rain to applaud the historic event. Children had gotten the day off school.[27] The signing took place in the illustrious sixteenth century Hall of Orazi and Curiazi, decorated with frescos of Roman history.[28] At six p.m., the dignitaries began signing 94 copies of the treaties while seated in golden chairs at a table covered in red damast fabric.[29] While all the heads of delegations alike drew attention to the potential significance for Europe of the day's event, almost all reminded their respective countrymen and the people of Europe – the ceremony was televised to an international audience – that even though from it a really united Europe could arise, the treaties to abolish internal tariff barriers and set up a common atomic organization must, in Dr. Adenauer's phrase, still be given life. And M. Spaak […] declared that if 'we succeed in completing the work we are now beginning, March 25, 1957, will be a historic date in European affairs.'[30]

Despite repeated signs of "Eurosclerosis" over the next decades, expressed, for instance, in the difficulties to agree on a date in 1967, basic components of a memory community of heads of state and government were laid out in the initial meeting. From 1977 newspaper coverage of the events intensifies but still the TOR had not acquired the status of an integrative common memory beyond a few dozen policy-makers. Ten years later, though, things looked different. Heads of state met on the Capitoline Hill and praised the historical vision and achievements of the integration project thus far.31 One of the original signatories, Maurice Faure, was present for the occasion (and would be again in 2007), representing the generation of the "founding fathers."[32] Surrounding this main event were a whole host of commemorations, attracting figures such as former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, former British Prime Minister Edward Heath, President of the French national assembly

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[26] 'Further Step in Uniting Europe. Treaties Signed at Rome Ceremony,' March 26, 1957, TOL.

[27] 'Feierliche Unterzeichnung der Verträge in Rom – Abschluß auf dem Kapitol nach fast zweijährigen Verhandlungen / Unter dem Vorsitz Adenauers,' March 26, 1957, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (henceforth FAZ).

[28] 'Further Step in Uniting Europe. Treaties Signed at Rome Ceremony,' March 26, 1957, TOL.

[29] 'Feierliche Unterzeichnung der Verträge in Rom – Abschluß auf dem Kapitol nach fast zweijährigen Verhandlungen / Unter dem Vorsitz Adenauers,' March 26, 1957, FAZ.

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[31] 'Feierstunden zum 30. Jahrestag der Römischen Verträge. Zufriedenheit und Kritik / Kohl: Vorbild für eine Friedensordung in ganz Europa / SPD fordert Europa-Ausschuß,' March 26, 1987, FAZ.

[32] Cork popping fails to drown rumblings on EEC surpluses,' March 26, 1987, TOL; 'L'Europe fête son jubilee dans la marosité,' March 25, 2007, LM.

Jacques Chaban-Delmas who took part in a series of debates on European issues.[33] The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung noted that "for weeks now Rome has been the destination for various pilgrimages of politicians from all over Europe."[34] In Paris, meanwhile, European flags were flying on the Champs-Elysées and President Mitterand, Prime Minister Chirac and others laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe to memorialize Europe rise from war. The same day in a television address, Mitterand described the anniversary of the Treaties as "one of the most important in our history."[35] At the same time, the retrospective memorialization began being coupled with a firm mandate towards the future: German Foreign Secretary Genscher, Minister for Economics Bangemann as well as the Conservative Party's Secretary General Geißler all demanded to strengthen the EC's competences.[36] One such area would be a common defense policy, as Commission President Jacques Delors announced during official celebrations in Rome[37]. In sum, the celebrations of 1987 not only repeated the ritualistic gathering in Rome, complete with references to ancient cultures, historical legacies, and the heroes of integration, they were also expanded temporally and geographically.

To cut the point, over the next two decades, celebrations were accompanied by increased publicity with articles by high ranking ministers appearing simultaneously in newspapers of different member states and by very elaborate festivities such as during 2007. In line with the Commission's attempt to enable an affective relation between citizens and the EU-polity, these celebrations can be regarded as an attempt to provide the "European Narrative" with an integrative twist. Against the Commission, though, heads of state do so with a different horizon. Decades of joint celebration in intimate circles has arguably formed a social memory that is kept alive by generations of heads of state. Younger members of this group got to listen to the original signatories' stories about the great achievement and were initiated into the circle over the years. Most importantly, the celebrations, through its expanded scope and quality, take on a new material form in which structures of meaning-in-use appropriate the form of a cultural memory. Contrary to the narrative of the Commission, this memory tells a tale of states' achievement for peace and prosperity as well as its determination to continue this work in the future. As it is emotionally charged in a manner that exceeds previous attempts to foster a sense of belonging the horizon formed by heads of state and government during five decades of integration contains a potential source of conflict between states and the Commission in the triangular relation to citizens. The respective horizons analyzed show that conflicting narratives are spun as part of a grander European meta-narrative. Potentially this might lead to increased institutional conflicts[38] as well as continue the issue of the indeterminate nature of citizenship in the EU to date. (Shaw 1997; Wiener 1998; Kostakopoulou 2005)

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[33] 'Fêtes et commemorations,' March 25, 1987, LM.

[34] 'Feierstunden zum 30. Jahrestag der Römischen Verträge. Zufriedenheit und Kritik / Kohl: Vorbild für eine Friedensordung in ganz Europa / SPD fordert Europa-Ausschuß,' March 26, 1987, FAZ (our translation).

[35] 'Cork popping fails to drown rumblings on EEC surpluses,' March 26, 1987, TOL; 'Fêtes et commemorations,' March 25, 1987, LM.

[36] 'Politiker würdigen 30. Jahrestag der EG,' March 25, 1987, FAZ.

[37] 'Cork popping fails to drown rumblings on EEC surpluses,' March 26, 1987, TOL. Security and defense cooperation were also prominent topics during public debates with Helmut Schmidt, Edward Heath and Jacques Chaban-Delmas, cf. 'Fêtes et commemorations,' March 25, 1987, LM.

5) CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper was to make a conceptual contribution to the cultural turn in international relations research. As such, the paper argued that hermeneutic analyses have to date been underrepresented and not sufficiently operationalized – a particular negligence given that one cannot assume *ex ante* the existence of a shared lifeworld in international politics which is the basic premise of most of the recent Bourdieuian *practice* research. To this end, the paper introduced Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of horizon that had been picked up by select scholars during the third and forth debate but had yet to be operationalized for research purposes. Dealing with different levels at which symbolic resources play out in practices that add up to culture – understood as a web of meaning –, memory research provides an appropriate praxeological methodology to fill this gap.

Actors, individual or taken as a collective, do not exist in a contextless vacuum. Rather, they interactively obtain a horizon which sets the limits of perception. In turn, though, actors interactively reshape its content. The benefit of the memory-approach for analyses of international politics lies in providing an intersubjectively constituted and historicized account of interaction. As the illustrative case study of the European Narrative revealed, it can be used to delineate distinct themes typical of actors' horizon and provide a tentative inroad for analyses of conflict: the analysis of core EU documents revealed how the European Commission attempts to build a social memory with citizens which is marked by a narrative theme of the diligent housekeeper. Meanwhile, in a process that has been lasting for five decades, heads of state have been active forming their own social memory and have recently begun to include citizens. The hermeneutic analysis of these respective horizons reveals that an interaction between them is not without conflict – culture is not a homogenous entity but its 'web of meaning' is actively spun from different directions. These directions are marked by distinct horizons which make the development of a shared script, resulting in something of a cultural memory, difficult.

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[38] They include the recent judgment by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in the case of *Kücükdeveci* on the principle of non-discrimination (European Court of Justice 2010, *Kücükdeveci, C-555/07).* It marks another step in the appropriation of legislative competences by the ECJ and neatly ties in with the theme of the analysis since the judgment overruled German employment legislation that dated from the 1920s. Likewise, the on-going quarrels between the European Parliament and the incoming Commission can be understood as more than 'merely' an inter-institutional conflict. The rejection of the Bulgarian candidate as well as doubts over the suitability of others can be read as signaling that Member States have not taken due consideration as to how the tasks of the next five years can be dealt with best.

In this light, the shared script of the Lisbon Treaty to which heads of state signed up (and to which citizens of Ireland eventually agreed) only marks a preliminary agreement. In terms of the European Narrative this means that before a (more) permanent fusion of horizons of the protagonists involved can take place alterations to institutional design might be necessary to somehow resolve the relation of either party – EU institutions as well as member states – towards citizens. What this institutional composition could look like, though, will be left for a later discussion.

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