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THE EU AS A PROMOTER OF 'GOOD GOVERNANCE'

Explaining the EU's policy towards its southern neighbourhood through the articulation of discourse theory

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Abstract

This paper argues that the academic literature on the relations of the EU with the Mediterranean region should focus more on the examination of the 'politics' of the EU: what social order does the EU promote in its southern neighbourhood and how does it promote this social order? The poststructuralist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe provides the necessary theoretical concepts to answer these research questions. Following this broad definition of politics, the paper first identifies struggling discourses on the organization of the global social order within the European member states. Once each discourse is delimitated, the results of this analysis are used to identify the discourse of the European Commission in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The paper finds that the discourse of the European Commission presents a specific social order through the construction of the nodal point 'good governance' in which the market is presented as more important than the individual and the state. The discourse delimitates the public sphere to the management of the market and the freedom of individuals instead of the place where fundamental political decisions on the organization of society are taken, and thus applies a very narrow definition of the concept 'democracy'. Moreover, it links the different identities of the member states in one common project and opposes this identity to another identity, those of the neighbours, which are presented as 'not well governed'.

Introduction

The relations between the European Union (EU) and its southern neighbours, i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, Syria and Tunisia are longstanding. After a primarily economic cooperation between the 1950s and the 1990s, the EU launched in 1995 the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP). The EMP, also known as 'the Barcelona Process' consists of three baskets: a political and security partnership which wants to establish a common area of peace and security, an economic and financial partnership with as main goal the creation of an area of shared prosperity through the establishment of an Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA) and a partnership in social, cultural and human affairs which wants to promote mutual understanding between cultures and exchange between civil society (Euro-Mediterranean Conference, 1995). The EMP is in 2008 transformed into the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). In 2003, the southern Mediterranean countries were also included into the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which wants to go one step further than the EMFTA, and grants the neighbouring countries 'a stake in the internal market' (European Commission, 2003a).

The relations of the EU with its southern neighbours have been a popular topic in the academic literature. Broadly speaking, a distinction can be made between four research areas. The first research area focuses on studying the development of a common external policy towards the Mediterranean region. These scholars examine how the European member states, and then especially Spain and France convinced the other member states to develop a policy framework to deal with the southern neighbours

and how these countries defend their national interests through these frameworks (see for example Bicchi, 2007). In addition, Kelley (2006) studied how the European Commission expanded its power through its conceptualization of the ENP. The scholars of the second research area examine the trade relations between the EU and the Mediterranean countries. They look at the impact of the Cooperation Agreements (concluded in the 1970s) and the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements (concluded in the 1990s) on the political economies of the Mediterranean countries and on the international trade system (see for example, Martin, 2004). While scholars of the second research area focus on trade as an interest of the EU in the region, the academics of the third research areas concentrate on security as an increasing threat for the EU's interests (see for example Bicchi & Martin, 2006). By contrast, the fourth research area did not focus on the interests of the EU, but on the norms and values the EU is promoting in the region, such as democracy and human rights. Indeed, several scholars examined if the EU is a normative or a civilian power in the Mediterranean region (see for example Bicchi, 2006).

However, it has to be noticed that these studies apply a very narrow conception of politics: they mainly focused on the 'doings' of the EU and its member states in the Mediterranean region: what are they doing, and is it successful? Indeed, the first, second and third research area deal with what one could call 'the empirical field of politics'. The fourth research area is 'post-political' because it expects that the EU promotes a cosmopolitan world which will bring peace and prosperity worldwide. This cosmopolitan world is based on a rationalist, universal consensus. However, as Chantal Mouffe (2005: 1-2; 8; 11) states: these studies 'all take a common anti-political vision which refuses to acknowledge the antagonistic dimension constitutive of the political'. Indeed, Jenny Edkins (1999: 2) adds: 'what get to be accounted as politics in this narrow form is not in any sense given. It is the result of contestation. It is ideological, contingent on a particular organization of the social order, not natural'. Mouffe and Edkins (1999: 2) therefore argue that political scientists should also examine 'politics' in a broad sense: we should look at 'the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically account of what counts as politics and defines other social areas of life not politics'. In other words, we should analyze the constitution of the demarcation line between the public and the private in society.

This leads us to formulate two research questions: What social order tries the EU to promote in the Mediterranean region, and how does it promote this social order? This article will show that this broad definition of politics can bring us new insights in the EU's policy towards its southern neighbours. Edkins (1999) argues that a poststructuralist approach is a suited tool to 'repoliticize' studies of international relations. Deeply rooted in the post-positivist tradition, poststructuralist studies are influenced by constructivism and critical theory. They focus on how ideas and beliefs as social phenomena structure reality, in other words: how ideas impose meaning to the world. These meanings can be discovered by studying discourses, because through the articulation of discourse, meaning is created (see infra). Discourse theory is therefore an often applied theory, and discourse analysis an often used method to identify these ideas and beliefs.

It has to be noticed that there are already some poststructuralist studies on the relations of the EU with the Mediterranean region. These studies mainly focus on the security discourse of the EU. Most of these authors apply a Foucauldian discourse analysis. The discourse theory of Foucault is based on an important assumption: discourses are shaped by non-discursive relations. One of the major problems that Foucault was dealing with, however, was how to make a distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive and how to explain the relation between the two. His solution therefore focused on the examination of the articulation of different sorts of relations and practices. He made a distinction between 'intra-discursive, inter-discursive and extra-discursive dependencies among elements: the first refers to structured relationships within discourses between objects, operations and concepts, the second to correlations between different discourses and the last to the connects between discourses and processes that occur outside discourse' (Howarth, 2000: 65). While his early writings dealt with the former two discursive dependencies, Foucault developed the latter in his 'genealogical writings'. Here he states that history accounts for the constitution of knowledge and discourse, and that this leads to the exercise of power (Howarth, 2000:72). Consequently, the studies on the relations between the EU and the Mediterranean region applying a Foucauldian discourse analysis have a strong focus on the historical emergence of discourse, and thus the extra-discursive dependencies among elements. The dialectic relationship between discourse and non-discursive practices is the main focus of all these studies. These scholars accept that there is a dichotomy between 'an objective field constituted outside of any discursive intervention, and a discourse consisting of the pure expression of thought' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 108). Pace (2006) for instance, focuses on explaining the different discourses of the member states of the EU and Morocco on the Mediterranean region based on their history (colonial legacy), identity and economic power and how this leads to the creation of 'otherness'. Bicchi & Martin (2006) examine how the attacks of 9/11, 3/11 & 7/7 changed security discourses regarding the Islam in the UK, the EU and on the level of the EMP. Malmvig (2006) might be an exception here, because she studies discursive articulations of the EU on security at their own manifest level. She concludes that the EU has double-discursive approach, which undermines the implementation of its policy in the region, and that it therefore should choose one coherent security strategy over the other. However, applying a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis, she also assumes that these discursive articulations are surface expressions of something else. Nevertheless, because discourse is seen as shaped by non-discursive relations, and because the focus of these studies is to explain the relation between the two, there is almost no attention for which social order is established by the policy of the EU, i.e. how the demarcation line between the public and the private is constituted.

This paper therefore argues that the poststructuralist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe is a better suited tool to examine what social order the EU tries to establish in the Mediterranean region. Laclau and Mouffe take position in between an objectivist and subjectivist ontological position: they 'do not deny the existence of a reality external thought, but they contest that these real objects have a meaning independently of the discourses in which they are constituted as objects'

(Howarth, 2000: 112). In contrast with Foucault, who argues that the discursive rules of formation are conditioned by non-discursive relations, Laclau and Mouffe 'argue that the seemingly non-discursive phenomena like technology, institutions, and economic processes are ultimately constructed in and through *discursive systems of difference* and from that they draw the conclusion that discourse is co-extensive with the social' (Torfing, 2005: 9). This ontological position leads the researcher to examine the inter-discursive (the field of discursivity, i.e. the relationship between a discourse and all meaning which is not included in that discourse) and intra-discursive dependencies (the relationship between concepts within a discourse), and how this lead to the creation of meaning. This will reveal how a social order is constituted. In this paper, the EU's ideas on the construction of the social order in the Mediterranean within the context of globalization (which is defined as a set of material processes and practices that lead to free flows of goods, services, capital, labour and persons (Hay & Rosamond, 2001: 147)) will thus be examined.

The poststructuralist discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe

The poststructuralist discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is built around four central concepts: discourse, hegemony, social antagonism and dislocation. As mentioned above, Laclau & Mouffe depart from the supposition that 'all social phenomena, objects and subjects obtain their meaning(s) through discourse, which is defined as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007: 267). Discourse plays an important role in the construction of the identity of subjects/agents (in our case the EU) because identities are 'accepted, refused and negotiated in discursive processes'. Identity is thus not determined by economic or material factors, but in relation to other identities (see supra). Similarly, words or concepts (in discourse language: signs) do not derive their meaning in relation through reality, but through relation with other signs. Structuralists assume that the meaning of signs is fixed: they are locked in their relationship with other signs. However, poststructuralists like Laclau and Mouffe disagree with this: 'signs still acquire their meaning by being different of other signs, but those signs from which they differ can change according to the context in which they are used' (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2010: 11). Discourse, and thus identity is not completely fixed, but changeable. People constantly strive to partially fix discourse, then it will have meaning. The meaning of a discourse is created through the articulation of that discourse, which is defined as the establishment of 'a relation among discursive elements that invokes a mutual modification of their identity' (Torfing, 2005: 15). During the articulation, the so-called 'nodal points' are constructed. Nodal points are privileged, previously empty signs that give meaning to other signs. These signs are empty because they are open to different meanings during discursive struggles (therefore they are also called 'floating signifiers'). When they are partially fixed, they become privileged signifiers, which give meaning to other signs. All the other meanings that signs can have (which is called 'the field of discursivity, see supra) are excluded. When the nodal points within a discourse start to obtain social dominance, it becomes a hegemonic discourse. A hegemonic discourse links different identities together into one common project (this practice is called

'logic of equivalence') and opposes itself to another identity, which is presented as negative (this practice is called 'logic of difference'). The hegemonic and the 'other' discourse are social antagonisms. The 'other' identity is presented as a constitutive outside which has no commonalities with the self and is often presented as threatening. At the same time, the other identity is needed because it stabilizes the own identity. Therefore, a hegemonic discourse can never be total or closed: 'the struggle over what and who are included and excluded from the hegemonic discourse is a central part of politics'. Torfing (2005: 16) adds that 'most discourses are flexible and capable of integrating a lot of new events into their symbolic order, but that all discourses are finite' and 'that they will be confronted with events that they cannot integrate'. If this happens, a dislocation will take place which will lead to a new struggle between discourses.

Methodological framework

These ontological assumptions have implications for the methodology of a discourse analysis. The poststructuralist theory of Laclau and Mouffe takes an anti-epistemological stance, following the supposition that all social phenomena, objects and subjects obtain their meaning through discourse : 'it claims that there are no extra-discursive facts, rules of method, or criteria for establishing that can guarantee the production of true knowledge' (Torfing, 2005:27). Therefore, discourse theory should be seen as a problem-driven research: it 'carefully problematizes objects of study be seeking their description, understanding and interpretation' rather than finding an explanation (Howarth, 2005: 319). How this can be done is often not entirely clear, as the theory of Laclau and Mouffe remained at the level of abstraction. However, more recently, there are discourse analysts who have explained how the theoretical concepts of this discourse theory are related to discourse analysis, and how these concepts can be used in a more concrete way. Howarth (2005: 336) defines a discourse analysis as a 'particular set of techniques that can help us to understand and explain empirical phenomena which have already been constituted as meaningful objects of analysis'. Discourse theory then 'provides the underlying assumptions for the appropriate employment' of these techniques and will be used to interpret the discourse that is studied. Jorgensen & Phillips (2010: 29-30; 49-50; 138-141) suggest a dual research strategy, which will be applied in this paper. First, we should look at the specific expressions in a discourse: what meanings does the discourse establish by positioning signs in relations with other signs, and what meanings do they exclude? Therefore, they suggest that researchers identify the nodal points in a specific discourse:

'What signs have a privileged status, and how are they defined in relation to the other signs in the discourses? When we have identified the signs that are nodal points, we can then investigate how other discourses define the same signs (floating signifiers) in alternative ways. And by examining the competing ascriptions of content to the floating signifiers, we can begin to identify the struggles taking place over meaning'.

Here, a combination of two research methods is thus suggested: a research should start with a textual analysis of official documents, speeches and public statements in order to identify the intra-discursive

dependencies among elements (or signs). In addition, a comparative research is recommended in order to identify inter-discursive dependencies among elements. By comparing discourses, the researcher can shed light on how they are working and identify struggles between discourses. Comparison is an often used technique in discourse analysis. Sterckx (2006) for example compared the discourse of the different EU institutions, UNHCR and NGO's on migration in the external policy of the EU. Alternatively, Rogers (2009) compared discourses on the EU's global role in the world from the past with the present discourses.

Second, we should not only look at expressions, and thus meaning, but also how this leads to the exercise of power. More specifically, a researcher must examine how articulations link different identities together in one common project, how the 'Other' is pictured and how hegemonic discourses 'are striving to override the conflicts – in which ways and with which consequences'. This analysis can be based on the concepts identity, antagonism and representation (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2010: 50). Rumelili (2004) shows in her article on identity, difference and the EU how this can be done. She examines if the discursive dependence of identity on difference entails a behavioral relationship of Othering between the self and the other and under which conditions this occurs. As Laclau and Mouffe state in their theory that real objects (or relationships) have no meaning independently of the discourses in which they are constituted as objects (Howarth, 2000:112), these conditions can also be useful in our research. Self/Other discursive interactions can vary according to the nature of identity and difference that the self claims in relation to the other, the discourses that the other adopts in performing its identity (does it recognize or resist the identity of the self?) and the social distance the self is maintaining from the other. Regarding the latter, Rumelili (2004: 38-39) makes a distinction between the possibilities for the self to associate (define as 'engage in acts that symbolize their co-belonging within the same identity community') or dissociate itself with the other. Regarding the former, she refers to inclusive identities, which are defined based on acquired characteristics (placing the other in a position of temporary difference) and exclusive identities, which are defined based on inherent characteristics (placing the other in a position of permanent difference). Moreover, there are different possibilities to represent the other: representation of the other as a threat (mainly in security studies), as inferior or as different (Diez, 2005: 628; Rumelili, 2004: 37; Jeandesboz, 2009).

'Managing globalization' discourses in EU member states

Following our broad definition of politics (see supra), we first have to identify different discourses on the organization of the global social order within the context of globalization, and more specifically the delimitation of each discourse and the struggles that take place between different discourses. In other words: we have to map out the field of discursivity. Therefore, we will analyze expressions in discourse on how to deal with globalization. We have chosen to analyze the discourses of political leaders of member states, and more specifically, to compare the speeches of the leaders of the European member states who are/were having the biggest influence on the EU and on the world stage: Germany (Angela Merkel),

France (Nicolas Sarkozy), the UK (Gordon Brown), and Spain (José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero). Those speeches which are dealing with globalization and ideas on how to organize the global social order were selected, and the selected time period is 2007-2010.[1] From each of these speeches, we selected the quotes which identify the feelings of the political leaders on globalization (which receive the label 'feeling') and the quotes with suggestions how to deal with globalization and the establishment of the global social order (which receive the label 'dealing'). Then, each quote is interpreted in its context in order to identify its meaning. This way of doing qualitative document analysis is derived from the work of Steven Sterckx (2006). Then, the theoretical concepts of Laclau and Mouffe are used to interpret the discourse. Because of reasons of space, we will only present our conclusions here.

Our analysis of the speeches shows that, despite the shared feeling among the political leaders of the European member states that globalization should be managed, there is disagreement between Merkel and Brown on the one hand and Sarkozy and Zapatero on the other on how the negative consequences of globalization should be dealt with. In both discourses, concepts such as 'social market economy', 'third way' and 'European social model' as references to models on how to organize the global social order, function as nodal points. It are floating signifiers which are open to different meanings, and therefore, a discursive struggle is taking place. Within the discourse of Merkel and Brown on the one hand, and Sarkozy and Zapatero on the other, they have become partially fixed and thus privileged signifiers, which give meanings to other signs. More specifically, they give meaning to the signs market, state and individual (and by extension: the civil society).

The role of the state is especially by Merkel presented as supporting the functioning of the market. She uses the word 'guardian' in one of her speeches, but rather in the sense of 'defending'. This becomes clear from the fact that liberty (freedom) is strongly emphasized and understood as maximizing individual rights, while 'avoiding that people's personal freedom is being trampled upon by other people's personal freedom' (Volpi, 2004:1066) or by the state. Brown on the other hand emphasizes the power of the individual, who brings values to the market and therefore contributes to a managed globalization. In their discourses, we find a clear structured relationship in which the market is presented as more important than the individual and the state. Moreover, the individual and the state should contribute to the market.

Zapatero and Sarkozy also refer to the role of the state to protect the market, but in the sense of controlling and supervising the markets rather than as supporting it. Also for Sarkozy (2010) freedom is important, but he defines it in a rather different way: individuals should autonomously and deliberately organize their life, and the civil society should contribute to the legitimization of the state by providing a sphere of interest-articulation. This becomes clear when he states: 'Citizen is not a separate category, it is each one of us. The company head, the shareholder, the employee, the trade unionist, the non-profit activist, the policy maker – they are all citizens who have responsibilities towards others, towards their

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[1] An overview of these speeches can be obtained from the author of this paper.

country, towards future generations, towards the planet'. In their discourse, there is also a clear structured relationship in which the state is presented as more important than the individual and the market.

The analysis of the inter-discursive dependencies among elements shows that there are clearly two struggling discourses on how to organize the global social order. The analysis of the intra-discursive dependencies reveals the delimitation of each discourse and shows that there are structured relationships within these discourses between the signs state, market, individual (and by extension, the civil society) which are articulated together in a discursive formation through privileged signifiers (social market economy, third way) and which each present a certain social order (Table 1). This structured relationship influences the definition of a concept like 'liberty', which is also a floating signifier. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. If a discourse becomes hegemonic, it will have an influence on all other levels of discourse, and thus on all other social areas of life.

Discourses	Brown and Merkel	Sarkozy and Zapatero
Interdiscursive dependency	Social Market Economy/Third Way	Social Market Economy/Third Way
Intradiscursive dependency	Market-Individual-State	State-Individual-Market

Table 1: A comparison of the discourses of the political leaders of the European member states

The EU's discourse on the organization of the social order in the Mediterranean within the context of globalization

Now that we have identified and delimited each discourse, we can use this information to identify the EU's discourse on the organization on the social order in the Mediterranean. In this paper, the ENP is analyzed. The idea for a neighbourhood policy was first mentioned in a joint letter of Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana to the foreign minister of Denmark, which held the presidency of the EU at that time. Subsequently, the Council of the EU asked the European Commission to present a proposal on how to organize the relations with the immediate neighbours of the EU. Eventually the ENP was largely designed by the Directorate General (DG) External Relations and DG Enlargement of the European Commission after the example of the Enlargement Policy. After the consent of the council, the policy was officially launched in 2003. Also the European Parliament has written several reports on the ENP, but it is clear that the European Commission has had the most influence on the content of the policy. In this paper, we therefore decided to analyze the discourse of the European Commission. We have selected the four concept papers of the European Commission on the ENP, the commission proposals for the ENP Action Plans for all the Mediterranean countries (6 documents), and the country strategy papers (CSP) 2002-2006 & 2007-2010 which set out the strategy for financial assistance for all the Mediterranean countries (15 documents) for analysis.

From these 25 documents, we have again selected quotes for analysis. These quotes each received a label. The results of the research above showed that the organization of the social order is built around

the articulated relation between the signs state, market, individual, and by extension the civil society. These signs are the new labels for analysis (Table 2). As mentioned above, we will not only look at the meanings of discourse, but also how power is exercised through this discourse. Therefore, we will look in the discourse how the EU represents itself and its southern Mediterranean neighbours, and how its hegemonic discourse strives to override conflicts with the identity of the other, how it opens its discourse to incorporate other identities. Therefore, the labels 'SELF', 'OTHER' and 'OPEN' will be used. All these quotes are interpreted in the context in which they were written down. Subsequently, the theoretical concepts of Laclau & Mouffe and Rumelili are used to interpret the discourse.

Label	Quote focuses on
"GLOB"	Perception on globalization
"MARKET"	The function of the market in society
"STATE"	The function of the state in society
"INDIVIDUAL"	The function of the individual in society
"CIVIL SOCIETY"	The function of the civil society in society
"SELF"	Representation of the Self
"OTHER"	Representation of the Other
"OPEN"	Opening in the discourse to incorporate other identities

Table 2: Labels for the analysis of the discourse of the European Commission

In 2003, the European Commission presented a communication to the European Council and the Parliament in which it outlined a proposal for a new neighbourhood policy (European Commission, 2003a). This communication, written by a small group of officials from the Directorate-General (DG) responsible for External Relations (Relex), set out the broad lines of the new policy within the context of changes that took place within the EU after the enlargement towards the East. This communication refers to globalization (although the word 'interdependence' is used instead of globalization) as something that one cannot escape, but describes it as a rather positive process and as a means to reach stability both within the EU and its neighbours. It offers opportunities, but in a later document it is recognized that it also provokes challenges. The EU sees itself as having a 'duty' towards its new neighbours, because it considers itself as having a specific nature as a polity. Jeandesboz (2009:39) refers to this as the 'duty' narrative of the EU. The neighbours of the EU are presented as 'friends': The communication proposes that 'the EU should aim to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood – a ring of friends – with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and co-operative relations'. There is thus a rather positive identification of the partners, albeit the identity of the self is also defined in terms of difference with these 'friends': 'in return for concrete progress demonstrating shared values and effective implementation of political, economic and institutional reforms, including in aligning legislation with the acquis, the EU's neighbourhood should benefit from the prospect of closer integration of the EU'. The EU sees itself as an

economic model, and this model is based on the acquis which refers to the common market. The neighbours are presented as not have reached this level of development yet, and therefore, as inferior.

After the publication of the communication, a 'Wider Europe' taskforce was created, because the officials who drafted the Wider Europe communication did not have enough expertise on the policy domains that were to be included in this new neighbourhood policy. A group of officials from DG Enlargement joined the officials of DG Relex in the set-up of the new policy. In addition, this group had contacts with officials from other DGs which had sectoral responsibilities, either informal or formal through an inter-service group managed by the General Secretariat of the European Commission. Later on, also the Council became involved of the drafting of the new policy (Jeandesboz, 2009: 52-54). Jeandesboz (2009) reveals in his study that the second communication from the commission on the ENP, the Strategy paper' focuses more on security. This is a consequence of the involvement of DG Justice, Liberty and Security (JLS) and the Council in the drafting of the paper: they perceived the neighbourhood as a threat for the EU. This had indeed an influence on the discourses regarding the neighbours: the Strategy paper does not refer any longer to the neighbours as 'friends' and stresses more the fact that the neighbours are 'not well governed'. Jeandesboz (2009: 44) indeed mentioned that DG JLS linked the security concerns of the EU with good governance.

However, the focus on good governance was not something specific for DG JLS, as also the other DGs were familiar with it. The concept was introduced by the World Bank at the end of the 1980s and became a major issue in international organizations working on international development cooperation like the OECD and the UNDP, although Börzel et.al (2008: 14) indicate that these organizations have arrived at different understandings of the concept. Through the international organizations, the concept was also introduced into the EU. More and more, third countries were perceived as not well governed, and for the Mediterranean this was especially the case after the publication of Arab Human Development Report of 2002. The Commission communication of 2003 on 'Reinvigorating EU actions on human rights and democratization with the Mediterranean partners: strategic guidelines' refers to the report and its conclusion that 'further economic and social development is strongly hampered by deeply rooted shortcomings in the structures of governance in the Arab world'. Also in 2003, the European Commission published its first communication on governance in external relations, and the emphasis on good governance in its discourse on the relations with third countries became stronger, and thus also in the relations with the Mediterranean countries under the ENP (European Commission, 2003b). In 2006, both DG Development (DEV) and DG Relex were working on their own communication on governance. DG DEV, which held consultations with the other DGs within the Commission, decided that the communication should not be limited to the relations with the ACP. After an intra-institutional conflict between the DG DEV & DG Relex, the communication of both DGs eventually merged into one communication (Bué, 2010: 245). This communication has a special chapter on the relations with the neighbourhood, and based on this text, good governance was

emphasized in the documents of the European Commission on the neighbourhood policy (European Commission, 2006a).

A closer look at the communications of 2006 and 2007 on the ENP reveals that there is still an emphasis on security, and in this context, the other is presented as a 'potential' threat (words as 'risks' or 'can threaten the Union's own security' are used) and the main causes of this threat are mixed economic performance, corruption, poverty and unemployment, conflicts and, eventually, weak governance (European Commission, 2006b; 2007). The emphasis on good governance is even stronger in the documents that refer to the financial assistance of the EU. In 2006, the EU designed a new instrument to provide financial assistance to its neighbours, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) in which the promotion of good governance is mentioned as one of the main objectives of the financial assistance: 'it (Community assistance, red.) shall encourage partner countries' efforts aimed at promoting good governance' (Council of the European Union and European Parliament, 2006). In 2007, the EU created a 'Governance Facility', an additional budget line, aimed at giving the neighbouring countries additional support if they make strong progress in implementing the governance aspects of the Action Plans (European Commission, s.d.). Besides the characterization of the other as 'not well governed' in comparison with the self, the identity of the self is further clarified in the Strategy paper: 'The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a society of pluralism, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination' (European Commission, 2004).

This hegemonic discourse links the different identities of the member states in one common project (logic of equivalence), which is thus represented by the nodal point 'good governance', and opposes this identity to another identity, those of the neighbours, which are presented as 'not well governed' (logic of difference) and therefore, as a potential threat. However, the hegemonic discourse is not totally closed: the neighbours can be integrated in the own project, the own identity (a 'stake' in the internal market) when they fulfill the conditions. The identity of the EU thus to a certain extent inclusive: it is based on characteristics, which the neighbours also can acquire. As the discourse is open, a discursive struggle is taking place over the notion 'good governance'. Algeria, for instance, refuses to conclude an Action Plan with the EU and Syria is reluctant to conclude a Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement: there is 'resistance' by the other. Moreover, for the Mediterranean, the situation is double. On the one hand, it is stated that 'accession has been ruled out for the non-European Mediterranean countries', while this is clearly not the case for the eastern neighbours of the EU, which are more politically reformed. On the other hand, it is mentioned that 'in reality, however, any decision on further EU expansion awaits a debate on the ultimate geographic limits of the Union' (European Commission, 2003a: 5). The identity of the self is thus also defined both around inherent characteristics, like geographic location and acquired characteristics. The EU associates itself with its southern neighbours, but at the same time also dissociates

itself from them. This leads to confusion in the southern Mediterranean countries, especially in Morocco, which still believes that it can become member of the EU one day.

The concept of 'good governance' in the discourse of the European Commission thus functions as a nodal point. It is a floating signifier which is open to different meanings, but within the discourse of the EU in the ENP, it has become a partially fixed and thus privileged signifier, which give meaning to other signs. More specifically, it gives meaning to the concepts market, state and individual/civil society. A well functioning market in the Mediterranean is seen by the EU as the way to economic development, and the state should support the functioning of the market. Therefore, the state need to be reformed. The CSP of Egypt and Lebanon for example mention that 'modernization and development of public services delivery, including improvement of good governance and measures to combat corruption and encourage transparency, especially of public finance are major priorities for Egypt [Lebanon] (European Commission, 2006c). In the discourse of the EU, the sign 'state' is almost never used, rather is referred to as 'public institutions, civil service or administration'. These are often presented as obstacles for the functioning of the market, as needed to become 'effective', 'upgraded', 'simplified' and 'rationalized'. In a similar, but less pronounced way, the state should also protect the rights of individuals. From the CSP of Egypt: 'To promote and protect human rights, EU assistance will be targeted at strengthening the culture of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the capacity and effectiveness of all competent institutions, including the security apparatus and the police, and at supporting formulation of a national human rights strategy by the authorities (European Commission, 2006c). In other words: these countries need 'good governance'. The role of the civil society is double. On the one hand, it should prevent that 'people's personal freedom is being trampled upon by other people's personal freedom', but on the other hand, it should also provide a sphere of interest articulation: it should pick up societal problems and pass them on to the state. However, these societal problems are formulated in terms of the functioning of the market: 'the strengthening of the capacity of the civil society organizations will be based on concrete, result oriented activities in one of or more of the following fields: freedom of expression and association, the rights of specific groups, but also good governance and the fight against corruption' (European Commission, 2003). The discourse of the EU thus presents a clear social order, in which the market is seen as more important than the state and the individual. This social order was already promoted under the EMP, but the introduction of the concept 'good governance', especially emphasized in the ENP, has strengthened its discourse.

The concept 'good governance' is an appealing and strong concept, because it is presented as a rational way of doing politics: if every person pursues its self-interest, this will contribute to the public interest as a whole. In order to reach this public interest, it is the task of the public sphere to provide a neutral framework for individuals to pursue their interests and it has to support the functioning of the market. This means that there is no room for conflict in the public sphere. This also means the redefinition of the concept 'democracy' in very narrow terms (presented as 'good governance'): the

management of the market and the freedom of individuals instead of the place where fundamental political decisions on the organization of society are taken, and thus where conflict will take place. This clearly delimitates the public sphere. The model of democracy as promoted by the EU, which tries to 'solve' conflict in politics, has until now not been in opposition with the policy of authoritarians regimes, which do not want any conflict. Today, almost all countries in the Mediterranean region are confronted with a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and conflicts. In May 2011, the European Commission (2011: 3) published a communication 'A new response to a changing Neighbourhood' in which it states that it wants to support the establishment of 'deep democracy' in the Mediterranean region. However, further research will have to find out if the 'Arab Spring' provoked a 'dislocation' and a true change in the discourse of the EU.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the relations between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbours. In contrast with the current studies on the relations between the EU and the Mediterranean, we argued first of all that political scientists should not only look at the policy of the EU, but certainly examine the 'politics' of the EU: what social order (defined as the demarcation between the public and the private) the EU promotes and how it tries to spread this social order. The poststructuralist discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is a suitable tool to answer these research questions. In the second part of the paper, the theoretical foundations and concepts of this discourse theory were discussed. Subsequently, we went deeper into the methodology, which provided the guidelines on how these theoretical concepts can be applied in an empirical analysis. Document analysis and comparative research were suggested as methods to identify struggling discourses on the organization of the global social order. The results of the analysis should be interpreted using the theoretical concepts of the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe. In a third part, we compared the different discourses of the EU member states on the organization of the global social order in order to identify struggling discourses and thus to map out the field of discursivity. This analysis revealed a structured relationship between the signs market, state and individual/civil society, which is different in the discourses of Merkel and Brown on the one hand, and the discourses of Sarkozy and Zapatero on the other.

The results of this analysis is then used to conduct an analysis on the documents of the EU on the ENP in order to identify the EU's ideas on the social order in the Mediterranean. The articulation of the discourse of the European Commission in the ENP establishes a clear, structured relationship among the signs market, state and individual/civil society through the construction of the nodal point 'good governance'. Good governance is the privileged signifier which gives meaning to the other signs. The market is presented as more important than the individual and the state, and both the individual and the state are presented as elements that should support the market. This rules out the other meanings of the concepts state and individual (as controlling the market, for example). This discourse also redefined the concept 'democracy' in a rather limited way (namely as 'good governance'): the management of the market

and the freedom of individuals instead of the place where fundamental political decisions on the organization of society are taken, and thus where conflict will take place. This is a clear delimitation of the public sphere.

This discourse has obtained social dominance through the years. It has become the hegemonic discourse of the EU: it links the different identities of the member states together in one common project (good governance: the internal market and values like liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights) as opposed to another identity: those countries which are not well-governed. However, the hegemonic discourse is open, as the EU itself struggles with what and who are included and excluded into the discourse. At the same time, there is also resistance against its identity. Moreover, its identity is not only based on acquired, but also on inherent characteristics. Concluding, this discourse analysis showed us that the EU promotes a specific social order in the Mediterranean, which it tries to spread in its neighbourhood through its discourse. The choice for this social order is a political decision. This does not only tell us something about the EU's policy towards the Mediterranean region, but also about its own identity. Further research will have to show if the Arab Spring provoked a dislocation and a change in the discourse of the EU.

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