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“Exercising advisory functions”

Interpretations of democracy in the European Committee of the Regions and the
European Economic and Social Committee

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Abstract

Our thesis investigates the comparative interpretations of democracy in the opinions of the European Committee of the Region (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Using the mixed methods of a qualitative content analysis and a discourse analysis, we assess the extent to which, how and why democracy is unevenly interpreted at the CoR and EESC; relative to their joint remits as independent bodies, representing EU regions and EU civil society, and as EU Institutions, beholden to EU Treaties. Here, we compare democracy as a discursive element in civil society and the local and regional level with democracy as a discursive element in European values.

Our research is understood and interpreted through Discourse Theory and we conclude that the institutions balance their independent and institutional remits to comparable levels and at even rates. Despite this, we find that the discursive interpretations of democracy are produced unevenly between the two institutions. The EESC positions members as experts, which weakens discourses; the CoR does not do this. The EESC gains much of its discursive objectivity for democracy through specific social events, whereas the CoR relies on the objectivity of pre-existing terms. Both institutions change their discursive interpretations towards democracy as they change which audience they are addressing.

Keywords: The European Committee of the Regions; The European Economic and Social Committee; democracy; civil society; local and regional level; European values.

Word count: 18, 609

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
BCSDN	Balkan Civil Society Development Network
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CIVEX	The Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs
CoE	The Council of Europe
CoR	The European Committee of the Regions
CORLEAP	Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EA	European Alliance
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EEAS	European External Action Service
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EPC	European Policy Centre
EPP	European People's Party
EU	The European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GR I	Working Group I: Employers (EESC)
GR II	Working Group II: Workers (EESC)
GR III	Working Group III: Various Interests (EESC)
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PES	Party of European Socialists (S&D)
REX	The External Relations Section
TEU	Treaty of the European Union (<i>The Maastricht Treaty</i> , 1992)
TFEU	Treaty of the Functioning European Union (<i>The Lisbon Treaty</i> , 2007)
UN	The United Nations

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1.	Background.....	1
1.2.	Democracy	1
1.3.	Normative power Europe	2
1.4.	Discourse Theory	3
1.5.	Our research	4
2.	Theoretical Framework	6
2.1.	Discourse Theory	6
3.	Literature Review	10
3.1.	Democracy	10
3.2.	Otherhood.....	11
3.3.	Europeanisation.....	12
3.4.	Democratisation	12
3.5.	The CoR and EESC in literature	13
4.	Methods, Sources and Case Selection	15
4.1.	Case selection.....	15
4.2.	Gathering of sources.....	16
4.3.	Content analysis	20
4.4.	Discourse analysis.....	21
5.	Content Analysis	23
5.1.	Overview	23
5.2.	Term frequencies.....	23

5.3.	Democracy terms.....	26
5.4.	European values	28
5.5.	Democracy and the rule of law.....	28
5.6.	Local and regional democracy and civil society	31
5.7.	European values, civil society and the local and regional dimension	37
5.8.	Uncategorised European values, local and regional democracy and civil society	44
6.	Discourse Analysis	47
6.1.	Lifecycle of an opinion	47
6.2.	Textual and processing analyses	48
6.3.	Draft opinion analysis	56
6.4.	Social analysis	61
6.5.	Discourse analysis discussion	67
7.	Discussion and Findings.....	70
7.1.	Discourse Theory	70
7.2.	Literature	73
8.	Conclusion.....	77
9.	Bibliography	80
9.1.	Primary sources	80
9.2.	Secondary sources	81

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In the context of geo-politics, both a re-emergence of a tense East-West dichotomy between the EU and Russia and the increasing role of China as an actor in global development, the perception of the need for the EU to reaffirm itself as a global power has institutionally grown, particularly as a normative power in its own neighbourhood. As recently as 6 February 2018, the EU issued a communication, entitled *A credible enlargement perspective for the enhanced EU engagement of the Western Balkans*.¹ This reaffirmed the EU's desire to see the Western Balkans in the EU and EU's commitment to see the desired reforms implemented as "a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values".² These 'common' or European values in the EU's own neighbourhood and globally are more relevant now than at any time in recent memory, within all EU Institutions.

Institutionally, the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) lists the European values neatly as "... [the] respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities".³ These are operationalised as the criteria for pre-accession countries' entry into the EU (specifically through the Copenhagen criteria) and for third countries to cooperate with the EU in the areas of trade, aid and development.⁴

1.2. Democracy

Perhaps the most uncontested and closely held European value is 'democracy'. On 22 October 2009, the European Parliament (EP) issued an own-initiative resolution on *Democracy building in the EU's external relations*; here the EP urged "the EU, with a view to strengthening concerted worldwide action to promote democracy, to publicly

¹ European Commission, *A credible enlargement perspective for the enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans* (Brussels: European Union, 2018).

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ European Council, *Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (Brussels: European Union, 2008) 21.

⁴ The Copenhagen criteria is the specified criteria that a prospective new EU member must meet, set out in the conditions (Article 49) and principles (Article 6(1)) of the TEU (European Council, 2008. 43, 19).

endorse the UN General Assembly's 2005 definition of democracy as the reference point for its own democratisation work".⁵ This a notable point in the articulation of European values because, as Anne Wetzel, co-editor of *The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion: Cases and Concepts*, highlights, it called for the EU to adopt a "thin conceptual basis" to define 'democracy'.⁶ This fell on deaf ears and the EU does not have an interinstitutionally accepted definition of 'democracy'.

Additionally, on 25 June 2012, the EU adopted the communication, *A strategic framework on human rights and democracy*, which was ultimately a document that outlined the EU's priorities for advancing democracy, under its Treaty obligations but never took up the EP's recommendation and did not define democracy, beyond discursively tying it closer to human rights.⁷ However, this was a clear development from the statement of European values through the TEU and the Copenhagen criteria. Here the EU accepted a narrower understanding of democracy as a core discursive component and chose to more explicitly articulate it in relation to human rights and the EU's more well-defined understanding of human rights.

Evidence from the Copenhagen criteria, specifically the tailored nature of the fulfilment of the *acquis* shows that fulfilment of European values is discursively evolving with the specificities of each pre-accession country as well as in the context of different enlargement periods.⁸ The Copenhagen criteria therefore does not define democracy but helps shape our understanding of the discourses that operationalise democracy and all other European values.

1.3. Normative power Europe

Ian Manners, political scientist, in his influential journal article *Normative Power Europe: a contradiction in terms*, outlined and gave evidence of the five 'core' and four contested 'minor' European values. The 'core' values are: (I) peace, (II) liberty, (III) democracy,

⁵ European Parliament, *Democracy building in the EU's external relations* (Brussels: European Union, 2009), 5. The UN (2005) definition of democracy is based on normative and conceptual foundations and is "a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives". Additionally, "democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing".

⁶ Anne Wetzel, "The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion: Introduction and Conceptual Framework" in *The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion: Cases and Concepts*, eds. Anne Wetzel and Jan Orbie (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 1.

⁷ European Commission, *Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy* (Brussels: European Union, 2012).

⁸ Pre-accession states must ensure the "ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the '*acquis communautaire et acquis politique*'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union". The *acquis* constantly changes and primarily relies on bilateral agreements between the European Council and each pre-accession state.

(IV) the rule of law and (V) the respect for human rights. The ‘minor’ values are: (I) social solidarity, (II) anti-discrimination, (III) sustainable development and (IV) good governance.⁹ His study and assertions have opened the field of discussion on EU power normativity.

‘Core’ values and ‘minor’ values are a discursive production of what Manners claims to be historical context, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution.¹⁰

Manners’ explanation for the origins of ‘democracy’, ‘rule of law’ and ‘human rights’ as European values are, discursively, the production of the Cold War East-West dichotomy; elevating the antitheses of Communism. These, for Manners, became defining features of the Copenhagen criteria, given the EU’s predominately post-1990 era eastward expansion.¹¹

1.4. Discourse Theory

Looking at Manners’ claims through Discourse Theory, because democracy is not interinstitutionally defined, all institutions will attempt to shape discourses of ‘democracy’, based on their specific internal and external conditions and processes, grounded in their institutional identities.¹²

In this, it is suggested that an institution such as the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), which is defined as an “advisory body representing Europe's regional and local authorities” and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which is defined as an “advisory body representing workers' and employers' organisations and other interest groups” (wider civil society) will both discursively interpret democracy based on their Treaty-defined positions in the EU’s interinstitutional framework.¹³ This is an overdetermined position because their expected roles under the EU treaties are not always harmonious to their discursive goals and objectives. This can be generalised as the CoR likely tying democracy to specific dimensions of regionalisation or the EESC likely tying civil society to their discourses on democracy. They will also attempt to rectify these

⁹ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: a contradiction in terms” *JCMS* 40, no. 2 (2002): 242.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹² Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 2001).

¹³ “The Committee of the Regions,” European Union, Last modified May 14, 2018, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-committee-regions_en . “The European Economic and Social Committee,” European Union, Last modified May 14 2018 https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-economic-social-committee_en . See TEU Articles 300-307 (European Council, 2008. 177-179).

independent specificities with other internal or external discursive articulations that come with still being defined as ‘EU Institutions’ and ‘advisory bodies’ that is deemed necessary for them to incorporate; this being in the context of the European institutional discourse on democracy.

1.5. Our research

Given both this and Manners’ stance of European values additionally being the production of hybrid polity and political-legal constitution, can we therefore, through Discourse Theory, explore the extent to which and in what ways democracy is unevenly interpreted in an interinstitutional context? Why and how is the interpretation different? Is there evidence of something quintessentially European about institutional interpretations of democracy? Will interpretations of democracy be reflective of perceived decision-making power at EU Institutions?

To answer our research questions, firstly the method of quantitative content analysis will be used to analyse the opinions of the CoR’s CIVEX Commission (The Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs) and the EESC’s REX Section (External Relations Section) pertaining to the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) between 2013 and 2018.¹⁴ Secondly, the method of discourse analysis will be used to analyse two specific, non-mandatory opinions from the CoR and EESC, pertaining to the EC’s communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*.¹⁵ Analysing our results and the opinions through Ernesto Laclau’s and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse Theory allows us to reveal the patterns of normatively perceived understandings of concepts; the comparative concepts of democracy as a European value and as a manifestation of the CoR’s and EESC’s independent remits.¹⁶

¹⁴ The European Commission (2018) defines an opinion as “a formalised legal act and is defined as “an instrument that allows the [EU] institutions to make a statement in a non-binding fashion”. “Regulations, Directives and other acts” European Commission, Last Modified May 20, 2018, https://europa.eu/european-union/eu-law/legal-acts_en . Klaus Krippendorf, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology* (London: Sage Publications, 2004).

¹⁵ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989). European Commission, *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* (Brussels: European Union, 2015).

¹⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, political theorists and co-authors of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002). 24-59.

This thesis has validity because CoR and EESC opinions have not been subject to such an analysis, with a focus on deriving understandings and conclusions through Discourse Theory.

Our thesis follows accordingly: we outline our theoretical framework of Discourse Theory (Chapter 2). Next carry out a literature review (Chapter 3) and outline our methodology (Chapter 4). We then outline, analyse and discuss our content analysis (Chapter 5) and discourse analysis (Chapter 6). Next, we discuss the complementarity of our analyses for answering our research questions and how they relate to literature and wider academia (Chapter 7). Finally, we conclude the thesis (Chapter 8).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Discourse Theory

Discourse Theory attempts to understand social practises as a discursive construction; meaning all social phenomena can be analysed through discourse analysis tools.¹⁷¹⁸ In this, Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, co-authors of *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, call it “a theory about the creation of meaning”.¹⁹ Discourses give meaning to social realities, which can consequently reshape discourses. Social practises, for Laclau and Mouffe, are fully discursive and language can thus be analysed using the same conceptual basis as any social practises.²⁰

For Laclau and Mouffe, social phenomena are never complete, this causes constant social struggle over the dominant meanings of discourses and the resulting social effects.²¹ Different groups at different times produce discourses differently. For our understanding of the discourse of democracy, there is a constant struggle to imagine the meaning because of internal or external pressures, as well as contextual changes that reshape society and identity.²² For Laclau and Mouffe, discourses can only be analysed in limited time frames, with different groups or with different time frames in a limited group.

2.1.1. *Articulation, elements and moments*

In theoretical terms of understanding, Laclau and Mouffe outline the foundational principles of creation of a discourse:

...we will call **articulation** any practice establishing a relation among **elements** such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse,

¹⁷ Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 24.

¹⁸ Amir Dabirimehr and Malihe Tabatabai Fatmi, “Laclau and Mouffe’s Theory of Discourse” *JNAS* 3, no. 11 (2014): 1283.

¹⁹ Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 33.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

²¹ Dabirimehr and Fatmi, 2014. 1285.

²² Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 24.

we will call **moments**. By contrast, we will call element any difference that is not discursively articulated.²³

In a discourse, moments are elements that have acquired meaning through articulation. Certain elements can only acquire meaning in the discourse by their articulation to other elements. These webs of discourse can be infinite.²⁴

As Jørgensen and Phillips note, nodal points are ‘privileged’ moments around which all other elements are ordered.²⁵²⁶ In our thesis, this is often democracy. It is the central node around which we are attempting to derive a heightened understanding from the two European institutional discourses. Here, all other moments must acquire meaning around democracy.

Laclau and Mouffe consider discourses as closed circuits of articulated moments.²⁷ All other ways that moments can be articulated to each other are excluded. In the exclusions, Laclau and Mouffe create the ‘field of discursivity’.²⁸ Here, moments have alternate meanings and are articulated differently in one discourse but are not included in another.²⁹ A temporary closure of a moment’s meaning occurs. This is only temporary because, as previously mentioned, contexts can unpredictably change and come to challenge discourses internally and externally.³⁰

As mentioned, nodal points are central points that discourses articulate meaning around and that elements need to be articulated with meaning to become moments. Nodal points can also be what Laclau and Mouffe call ‘floating signifiers’. This is an element that different discourses struggle to fix meaning to.³¹ In our case, democracy is both our nodal point and one of potentially numerous floating signifiers that the EESC and the CoR will fill with meaning in their own ways.

2.1.2. The group and the individual

Important to our study of the CoR and EESC, Laclau and Mouffe make no distinction between the formation of an individual’s identity and the formation of a collective or

²³ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001. 105.

²⁴ Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 26.

²⁵ Ibid., 26.

²⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001. 112.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 111.

²⁹ Ibid., 27.

³⁰ Ibid., 28.

³¹ Ibid., 27.

group identity.³² For our analysis, our subjects are the groups; the CoR members and the EESC members but the multiple layers of potential overdetermination must be considered and therefore our discourse analysis considers the role of the individual in the context of the group-created discourse.

2.1.3. Subject position

Subjects always occupy a position in a discourse.³³ For Laclau and Mouffe, subjects are expected to occupy multiple identity-driven positions. This is always, to varying degrees, conflictual. This is what Laclau and Mouffe call a subject being ‘overdetermined’.³⁴ The subject constantly attempts to find itself by investing in discourses that its identity will espouse.³⁵ In the case of the CoR and the EESC, the identity of both institutions is shaped in the wider external European institutional discourse and from different internal and external factors. We must consider that the TEU plays a role in shaping this identity. Here, both institutions are completely independent advisory bodies, that are to assist the work of the EC and EP, for the general interest of the EU.³⁶ The CoR represents the interests of EU regions and the EESC represents the interests of civil society.³⁷ Both institutions will shape their discourses on democracy based on potentially conflictual identities of: ‘independent bodies’, ‘advisory bodies’, ‘assistants to the EP and EC, exercising advisory functions’, ‘bodies for the greater good of the EU’, as well as either ‘representatives of EU regions’ or ‘representatives of EU civil society’. If this is the case, we will expect to see their discourses reflected by interests. By the comparative differences or equivalences of articulation in interests, we will be able to note the comparative chains of equivalence or chains of difference in the discourses.

2.1.4. Political and objective

Rearticulations and the creation of new chains of equivalence are what Laclau and Mouffe call ‘political’. These new chains are contestable until the field of discursivity narrows their meaning down to become elements and articulations that are taken for granted and

³² Ibid., 43.

³³ Ibid., 41.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ernesto Laclau and Lilian Zac, “Minding the Gap: The Subject of Politics,” in *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Ernesto Laclau, (London: Verso, 1994) 31-32.

³⁶ See TEU Art. 300 (European Council, 2008. 177).

³⁷ See TEU Art. 300 ((European Council, 2008. 177).

are grounded in the most well-established indicators of identity. This is what Laclau and Mouffe define as 'objective'. 'Objective' is those discourses seen to be so firmly established as to be regarded as 'a given'.³⁸

2.1.5. *Hegemony*

For Laclau and Mouffe, power is the production of the social. We live in a social order and carry out things in socially expected ways, producing what we consider are our identities. While we prefer to think of society as unchanging and objective, politics strives to reproduce power and our perceptions of social order. This reproduces perceptions of objectivity and power. This is called 'hegemony' to Laclau and Mouffe. Internal and external factors can destabilise our understanding of what is objective (or 'given') and what is political, as we attempt to use the field of discursivity to narrow down our discursive understanding before circumstances reimagine and redefine discourses again.³⁹

It stands to reason that, for the CoR and EESC, there are discursive chains that are to be considered 'objective'. These are either from an internal production of discourse or from a wider external European institutional discourse on democracy. There are also those chains that are 'political', as derived from the function of both institutions being independent and thus able to challenge what is 'objective'. Our research questions attempt to address this, firstly by measuring the extent of interpretation and secondly analysing why the discourses of democracy are arranged the way they are.

³⁸ Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 36.

³⁹ The process of narrowing down meaning is termed 'deconstruction'.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Democracy

Political economist, Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”.⁴⁰ There are two components to this definition that we wish to explore further. Firstly ‘institutional’; an institutional democracy embodies the process and structures in place, through the establishment of vertical and horizontal accountability, as noted by Leonardo Morlino, political scientist; ensuring there are those democratic structures in place to allow accountability of the institutions to the people.⁴¹ Institutional democracy can be understood as closer to the concept of the rule of law. The second point of note is the ‘competitive struggle for the people’s vote’. Accountability to the people is one of the fundamental checks and balances of democracy.⁴² We term this ‘cultural democracy’. While the legal structures are in place, it is to ‘practise democracy’ that then becomes cultural democracy. Voting in democratic elections, protesting, access to and engaging in social media and the press are a small example of such.

The EU’s failure to define a conceptual basis for democracy always means that any attempt to discursively come to a greater understanding of democracy in the EU will always marry the ‘institutional’ and ‘cultural’ aspects of democracy. This is because all minimal definitions do likewise.

Robert Dahl, political theorist, advanced Schumpeter’s minimal definition of democracy and used the concept ‘polarchy’ to claim that power of governance resides in multiple people, by effect of ‘majority rules’. Democracies are “incomplete democracies”, because of the ability for citizens to express their preferences and the subsequent governmental response that is required in this.⁴³ Erik Oddvar Eriksen, professor of European Studies at the University of Oslo, takes up this specific point relating to the EU, calling it an “unfinished democracy” because it continues to struggle to tackle those issues of

⁴⁰ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 269.

⁴¹ Leonard Morlino, *Qualities of democracy: how to analyse them* (Florence: Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane, 2009), 5.

⁴² Andrew Moravcsik, “In Defence of the Democratic Deficit: Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union,” *JCMS* 40, no. 4 (2002): 609. Morlino, 2009. 5.

⁴³ Robert Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 84. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 2-3.

transparency, accountability and checks and balances.⁴⁴ Both Eriksen and Dahl define democracy as a set of institutional structures that are reflective of the will of the people. Jürgen Neyer, political scientist, is critical of the applicability of democracy as an adequate standard for assessing the legitimacy of the supranational layer.⁴⁵ This is due to the democracy being “burdened by empirical and normative assumptions that are inapplicable to the EU”.⁴⁶ This normative assumption of what constitutes democracy in the EU is better understood from an historical context and in the context of the EU’s political hybridity.⁴⁷ The specificities of the Cold War and the East-West dichotomy means the EU adopted and maintained the antitheses of authoritarianism. Therefore, the EU is to be seen to be anti-corruption, pro-pluralism, electorally free and with people free to express ideas. This was clear in terms of pre-accession for former eastern bloc countries.⁴⁸ History also shaped the specificities of each negotiating pre-accession; ‘anti-corruption’ etcetera are generalities of the overall accession requirements of the 2004 eastern enlargement. The interinstitutional makeup in where power lies in the EU and the negotiated state of consensus means that each institution must act to shape these concepts, where no consensus or definition exists, based on their understanding of concepts, rooted in their treaty-defined status.

3.2. Otherhood

Political scientist, John Meyer advances this with claims that the EU acts as a democratising force, by using ‘otherhood’, which is a process of constantly outlining the normative expectations that a state has in the accession process.⁴⁹ As Lizette Howard, who wrote a PhD thesis on *European Institutions, democratic discourses and the Color Revolutions*, notes, this “is an example of constructivist emphasis on the affective influences that shape interstate change and the construction of norms”.⁵⁰ For our understanding of the discourses of democracy, what the EU Institutions regard as

⁴⁴ Erik Oddvar Eriksen, *The Unfinished Democratization of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Jürgen Neyer, *The Justification of Europe: A Political Theory of Supranational Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁷ Manners, 2002. 240.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁹ John Meyer, “The European Union and the Globalization of Culture.” In *World Society: The Writings of John Meyer*, eds. Georg Krücken and Gili Drori (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 348-350.

⁵⁰ Lizette Howard, “European Union Institutions, Democratic Discourse, and the Color Revolutions” (PhD Thesis, University of South Florida, USA, 2013), 43. Wesley Widmaier and Susan Park, “Differences Beyond Theory: Structural, Strategic, and Sentimental Approaches to Normative Change,” *International Studies Perspectives* 13, (2012): 129.

components of democracy are therefore always going to be components that pre-accession countries should be working on.

3.3. Europeanisation

To frame the discourse on democracy, scholars predominately focus on the concept of Europeanisation as a political process, under the conditionality tied to European values.⁵¹ As Rachel Epstein and Ulrich Sedelmeier, professors of European Politics and International Relations, respectively, note “international institutions use conditionality... to direct policy in target states”.⁵² The EU has externally used conditionality of democracy in a coherent and formalised political strategy since the 1990s.⁵³ There is an extensive body of literature on how the role the EU has leveraged European values, primarily driven by case study analyses of certain policies in certain spatial contexts.

3.4. Democratisation

In practical terms, democratisation, as an extension of Europeanisation, Rosa Balfour and Corina Stratulat, policy analysts at the European Policy Centre (EPC), note the struggle to enforce the rule of law, the challenges of a free press, of civil society and the EU’s growing focus on the formalised structures of the judiciary and administration, all while the EU neglects the democratic process and the role that political parties and parliaments play in politics and society, to create democracy.⁵⁴ In our understanding, from Meyer’s ‘otherhood’, the above listed are areas that are lacking but we can gain a deeper understanding as to the justification for these by considering the antitheses of democracy to which Balfour and Stratulat mention. Here, concepts such as war, violence, cross-border disputes, the lack of constitutional freedom and an extensive list which continues, all are tailored, like the *acquis*, to the specificities and unique challenges of the states.⁵⁵ Balfour and Stratulat’s definition of democracy is clearly based on their interpretation of

⁵¹ Ibid., 245–252.

⁵² Rachel Epstein and Ulrich Sedelmeier, "Beyond conditionality: international institutions in postcommunist Europe after Enlargement." *Journal for European Public Policy* 15, no. 6 (2008): 795.

⁵³ Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier "Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 4 (2004). Labinot Greiçevci and Bekim Çollaku, "Promoting Democracy in Post-Conflict Societies: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo" in *The Substance of EU Democracy Promotion: Cases and Concepts*, eds. Anne Wetzel and Jan Orbie New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015) 104.

⁵⁴ Rosa Balfour and Corina Stratulat, "The democratic transformation of the Balkans", *European Policy Centre* 66 (2011): ii.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1-3.

democracy and their experience of an institutionalised form of democracy. Positionally, for Balfour and Stratulat, this discursive interpretation came from a series of Balkans Forum meetings and workshops, the EPC organised between 2010-2011.⁵⁶ Subject position of the discourse is key for our own study because all attempts at analysing democratisation through Europeanisation problematises differently, all falling back on European normative conceptions of democracy, as evidenced by Balfour and Stratulat and previously criticised by Neyer.⁵⁷

3.5. The CoR and EESC in literature

The CoR and the EESC are underrepresented in academic literature when compared to the other EU Institutions.⁵⁸ Of the academic literature dedicated to the CoR and EESC, most attention has been paid to the decision-making influence that both institutions have on EU legislation.⁵⁹ While questioning the formal and informal decision-making influence of both institutions, authors are not in agreement about the true level of power, given different methods of assessing such.

Ian Bache *et al*, co-authors of *Politics in the European Union*, as well as Stijn Smismans, professor of European Law, maintain that the EESC has become weakened by the growing influence of the EP, which saw its own powers and legitimacy expanded, particularly since in the TFEU (Treaty of the Functioning EU).⁶⁰ Comparatively, the EESC's functions and powers have remained consultative.⁶¹ Smismans claims the added value of the EESC lies in its ability to be a forum for deliberative democracy and functional representation of civil society.⁶²

Political scientist Rosarie McCarthy concluded that the CoR's formal influence was minimal but it had real added value in the informal instruments it opened for local politicians to gain access to lobby the EC.⁶³ Bache *et al* states, consistent with McCarthy, that the real power of the CoR lies in its influence within the EC. Bache *et al* claims that,

⁵⁶ Ibid., V.

⁵⁷ Neyer, 2012. 73.

⁵⁸ Christoph Hönninge and Diana Panke, "The Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee: How Influential are Consultative Committees in the European Union?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 51, no. 3 (2013): 452.

⁵⁹ Rosarie E. McCarthy, "The Committee of the Regions: an advisory body's tortuous path to influence," *Journal for European Public Policy* 4, no. 3 (1997).

⁶⁰ Stijn Smismans, "The European Economic and Social Committee: Towards Deliberative Democracy via a Functional Assembly," *European Integration online Papers* 4, no. 12 (2002): 1. Ian Bache *et al.*, *Politics in the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 209.

⁶¹ Bache *et al*, 2011. 209.

⁶² Smismans, 2002. 1.

⁶³ McCarthy, 1997. 451.

because the CoR has political weight and resources, while being in line with the EC's regional focus, the EC is incentivised to work with the CoR to express the political power that the EC cannot do.⁶⁴ In the literature, this is what Christoph Hönninge and Diana Panke, political scientists, claim to be “resonance with the addressee”. Although, they contend that there is not much difference between the comparative levels of formal power between the two institutions. In Bache's *et al* case, the distinction between formal or informal power is not noted so it is not clear which form of power they referred to. For Hönninge and Panke, what is most significant is that opinions are delivered early in legislative process, if their opinions match the stances of certain bodies and if institutions can establish themselves as the “expert” on a topic.⁶⁵ This is a mix of formal and informal practises that can maximise the influence of the institutions.

The views of the literature relating to decision-making influence can help us to academically situate the discourses on democracy of the CoR and EESC, if we also consider the hypothesis of Lizette Howard. This is the lower the “stakes in outcomes” allow institutions “to pursue their own interests within the EU itself”.⁶⁶ This hypothesis was formulated in regards to the discourse on democracy in the EP but because the formal power of the CoR and EESC is consistently regarded as minimal, their democratic discourses should follow the set agendas of the respective institutions.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Bache *et al.*, 2011. 210.

⁶⁵ Hönninge and Panke, 2013. 467.

⁶⁶ Howard, 2013. 55-56.

⁶⁷ Because our analysis only considers the formal acts, informal power has not been noted.

4. Methods, Sources and Case Selection

Given the research questions posed at the start of our thesis, our aim is to establish the amount discursive similarities and differences regarding ‘democracy’ between the EESC and CoR, as well as how similarities and differences are manifested. This is done through conducting a content analysis and a discourse analysis. These analyses are complementary to answering our research questions. They provide a platform to reflect on similarities and differences, through Discourse Theory.

4.1. Case selection

The CoR and the EESC were chosen because, in the EU’s interinstitutional framework, both bodies are the most comparable. The institutions carry out the same functions and have the same legal bases in the TEU and TFEU.⁶⁸ For our purposes of understanding, they are both the “[European] Union’s advisory bodies, exercising advisory functions”.⁶⁹ This is primarily done through opinions. Despite their similarities, they are two distinct EU Institutions and their institutional representations are their own. As Article 300 (4) of the TEU states, CoR and EESC members “shall be completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the [European] Union’s general interest.”⁷⁰

The opinions have the benefit of being representative of the institutions in the CoR and EESC and they are not considered the voice of any individual.⁷¹ This is a point we took up in our discourse analysis and here we analysed rapporteur’s draft and committee versions of specific opinions.

For how we have addressed the topic and research questions, particularly through the methods we have employed, the CoR and EESC opinions are the most scientifically appropriate sources to draw from.

Linked to the appropriateness of sources, we delimited our gathering of sources to the CoR’s CIVEX Commission and the EESC’s REX Section. Both bodies deal most closely with the field of external relations and their selection was based on their logical relevancy.

⁶⁸ See TEU Articles 300-307 (European Council, 2008. 177-179).

⁶⁹ European Council, 2008. 177.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ This is because opinions are institutionally agreed upon by a majority of members, despite all opinions having one chosen rapporteur (in rare cases there are two rapporteurs to an opinion).

As will be outlined, we carried out supplementary targeted searches of opinions from other bodies of the CoR and EESC and these yielded no additional primary sources. This justified our delimitation.

All primary sources used are publicly available online; in all official EU languages.⁷² We located our sources through the official opinion gateway webpages on the CoR and EESC official websites.⁷³ The Official Journal of the EU's website could have been used too. We chose not to search via the Official Journal of the EU because the opinion search fields of the CoR and EESC websites allowed for more objectively delimited searches than the search fields of the Official Journal of the EU.

Our analyses were only carried out on the English-language versions of opinions. We felt this was most appropriate because this thesis is written in English. It is not clear with opinions what language they were originally in and this is a flaw for our analyses. All linguistic versions of opinions are officially approved; the French and English versions are most scrutinised by members.

Opinions specifically relating to the Western Balkans and the EaP were chosen because these regions have the greatest requirement to commitment to European values. The Western Balkans are considered the next wave of enlargement and some EaP countries, notably Armenia and Ukraine harbour EU ambitions. The CoR and EESC will likely have a great deal to say on democracy in these regions, and on the individual countries.

4.2. Gathering of sources

The chosen period that we delimited our search and analyses to was because, in Discourse Theory, it is stressed that discourses are never fully established. Contexts change, and factors work to change discourses over time.⁷⁴ For example, at one time, internal and external conditions and processes may set the discourse on democracy in an EU Institution in a certain direction and in another time, perhaps due to treaty changes, the discourse will be framed differently. The dates 2013 and 2018 have been considered for very simple reasons: they signify the bookends of an époque for enlargement. In January

⁷² Except Irish.

⁷³ "Opinions and Resolutions," European Committee of the Regions, Last modified March 18, 2018 <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/pages/Opinions-Search.aspx>. "Opinions," European Economic and Social Committee, Last modified March 18, 2018 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions>

⁷⁴ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001. 47.

2013, Croatia joined the EU, the last Member State to do so. February 2018 marked arguably the most significant statement from the EU regarding future EU enlargement since Croatian accession, with the communication, entitled *A credible enlargement perspective for the enhanced EU engagement of the Western Balkans*. Notably too, members of both the CoR and EESC have five-year mandates.⁷⁵ All CoR and EESC members in this époque have therefore either been replaced or approved by The Council to continue in the roles.

The process of how we gathered our sources was based on using the search engines of the document portals on the CoR and EESC websites. We used key word searches, with all searches delimited by CIVEX Commission (for CoR searches) or REX Section (for EESC searches) and the date parameters 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017. Figure 4.1 elaborates our process.

Search terms and results frequencies, CoR and EESC				
Keyword(s)	CoR		EESC	
	Results	Unique results	Results	Unique results
Western Balkans	4	4	3	3
Balkan	4	0	3	0
Accession	5	1	9	6
Enlargement	8	3	2	0
Serbia	2	0	3	1
BiH	0	0	0	0
Bosnia	2	0	2	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	0	1	0
Albania	2	0	3	0
Montenegro	2	0	4	1
Kosovo	2	0	2	0
Macedonia	2	0	2	0
FYROM	0	0	1	0
EaP	2	1	1	1
Eastern Partnership	6	2	3	1
Belarus	0	0	1	0
Armenia	0	0	1	0
Azerbaijan	0	0	1	0
Georgia	0	0	1	0
Ukraine	3	0	3	1
CORLEAP	1	0	0	0
Caucasus	0	0	1	0
Turkey	6	0	4	0
Total	53	11	51	14

FIGURE 4-1 SEARCH TERMS AND RESULTS FREQUENCIES, COR AND EESC

Each key word was searched for, the number of total unique results were counted, as well as the number of total results from each key word search. The documents in our results became our sources and we categorised them into ‘CoR’ and ‘EESC’. Keywords were the basis of delimitation and not categorisation.

⁷⁵ European Council, 2008. 177.

The key word searches are justified as follows:

‘Western Balkans’ and ‘Eastern Partnership’ are our two delimiting spatial scales. ‘Albania’, ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’, ‘FYROM’, ‘Montenegro’, ‘Serbia’ and ‘Kosovo’ are the six states that the EU defines as the Western Balkan states.⁷⁶ ‘Armenia’, ‘Azerbaijan’, ‘Belarus’, ‘Georgia’, ‘Moldova’ and ‘Ukraine’ are the states that are members, alongside the EU of the EaP.⁷⁷ Terms such as ‘BiH’ (Bosnia and Herzegovina), ‘Balkan’ (Western Balkans), ‘Macedonia’ (FYROM), ‘EaP’ (Eastern Partnership), ‘Caucasus’ (EaP) and ‘CORLEAP’ (EaP) are used as extensions of pre-existing terms, as justified above.

All other terms are discursively linked to the Western Balkans and the EaP. In the EC communication *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*, ‘accession’ is mentioned forty-three times (excluding ‘pre-accession’, which is mentioned ten times). ‘Enlargement’ is mentioned seventeen times (Excluding once in the document title). Such repetition shows the inseparability of these terms from our considerations. ‘Turkey’ is not mentioned in the document but Turkey remains a state officially in the process of EU accession. No unique results were generated relating to Turkey and contesting its justification for inclusion will therefore not influence the results.

When our primary sources were provisionally gathered, they were cross-referenced against an open search of all CIVEX Commission and Rex Section opinions between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2013, as well as broader keyword searches of all other committees of the CoR and EESC to ensure validity.⁷⁸ No other valid primary sources were found. We validated that the documents fitted our criteria of an opinion, which resulted in us excluding two EESC documents. The first, entitled *How media is used to influence social and political processes in the EU and Eastern neighbouring countries*, was excluded because it was defined as an ‘implementation report’ and did not meet the criteria of an opinion. The opinion *Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Montenegro, of the other part (codification)*, while being an opinion, was excluded because it only stated that the EESC “feels that it requires no comment on its part [in

⁷⁶ European External Action Service, *EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans: Factsheet* (Brussels: European Union, 2018), 1-2.

⁷⁷ “Eastern Partnership,” European External Action Service, Last modified May 3 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eastern-partnership_en?page=1

⁷⁸ In this period, the CIVEX Commission produced forty-four opinions in total and the REX Section produced eighty opinions in total.

relation to the ongoing EU legislative process]”.⁷⁹ There is nothing to be analytically gained from this document.

After this process, we had eleven CoR opinions and twelve EESC opinions. These are seen in figures 4.2 and 4.3.

Opinions search results, CoR			
Date	Title	Reference	Rapporteur (Nationality/Political Group)
11/04/2013	Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013	CIVEX-V-038	Van den Brande, Luc (BE/EPP)
11/04/2013	EU Support for Sustainable Change in Transition Societies	CIVEX-V-039	Kobyliński, Maciej (PL/PES)
12/04/2013	Devolution in the European Union and the Place for Local and Regional Self-government in EU Policy Making and Delivery	CIVEX-V-034	Schausberger, Franz (AT/EPP)
2/04/2014	Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2013-2014	CIVEX-V-046	Abramavičius, Arnoldas (LT/EPP)
3/12/2014	Neighbourhood at the Crossroads: Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2013	CIVEX-V-048	Gblewicz, Olgierd (PL/EPP)
16/04/2015	Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-2015	CIVEX-VI/002	Schausberger, Franz (AT/EPP)
9/07/2015	New European Neighbourhood Policy	CIVEX-VI/004	Chiotakis, Nikolaos (EL/EPP)
16/06/2016	EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016	CIVEX-VI/008	Magyar, Anna (HU/EPP)
11/10/2016	Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy	CIVEX-VI/011	Quart, Anne (DE/PES)
12/05/2017	EU Enlargement Strategy 2016-2017-	CIVEX-VI/018	Pihelgas, Rait (EE/ALDE)
10/10/2017	Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action	CIVEX-VI/027	Ociepa, Marcin (PL/ECR)

FIGURE 4-2 OPINION SEARCH RESULTS, COR

For the purposes of our discourse analysis, we identified the relevant additional primary sources by identifying the opinions we would discursively analyse. We then worked back through the publicly available documents from committee meetings and plenary sessions. This allowed us to gather draft versions and committee versions, as well as those documents outlining proposed opinion amendments from committee meetings and plenary sessions.

⁷⁹ European Economic and Social Committee, *How media is used to influence social and political processes in the EU and Eastern neighbouring countries* (Brussels: European Union, 2015d). European Economic and Social Committee, *Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Montenegro, of the other part (codification)*, (Brussels: European Union, 2014c).

Opinion search results, EESC			
Date	Title	Reference	Rapporteur (Nationality/Working Group)
10/07/2013	The role of civil society in EU-Serbia relations	REX/381	Sibian, Ionuț (RO/GR III) (Co-rapporteur: Lechner, Christoph (AT/GR III))
10/07/2014	Enhancing the transparency and inclusiveness of the EU accession process	REX/401	Škrabalo, Marina (HR/GR III)
16/10/2014	Situation of Ukrainian civil society in the context of European aspirations of Ukraine	REX/403	Adamczyk, Andrzej (PL/GR II)
21/01/2015	Situation and operating conditions of civil society organisations in Turkey	REX/397	Metzler, Arno (DE/GR III)
22/04/2015	The role of civil society in EU-Albania relations	REX/420	Sibian, Ionuț (RO/GR III)
16/09/2015	Agriculture, Rural Areas and Sustainable Development in the Eastern Partnership Countries	REX/439	Slavova, Dilyana (BG/GR III)
08/10/2015	Energy – a factor for development and a deeper accession process in the Western Balkans	REX/440	Coulon, Pierre-Jean (FR/GR II)
10/12/2015	Establishing an EU common list of safe countries of origin	REX/457	Moreno Díaz, José Antonio (ES/GR II)
18/02/2016	EU Enlargement Strategy	REX/453	Sibian, Ionuț (RO/GR III)
27/04/2016	International Procurement Instrument	REX/465	Soares, Mário (PT/GR II)
28/04/2016	External dimension of the EU's energy policy	REX/459	Mačiulis, Vitas (LT/GR III)
28/04/2016	The new EU strategy on foreign and security policy	REX/463	Zufiaur Narvaiza, José María (ES/ GR II)

FIGURE 4-3 OPINION SEARCH RESULTS, EESC

4.3. Content analysis

Our content analysis was based on Klaus Krippendorff's quantitative model for content analysis.⁸⁰ Here we unitised, sampled, recorded, reduced and analysed. The data we gathered is made qualitative through our interpretation of results through Discourse Theory, when relevant.

With our primary sources, we first established units of meaning, based on points that contained the stem 'democr'.⁸¹ This allowed us to delimit and analyse units based on 'democracy', 'democratic' and 'democratically'. Units were then codified based on which institution and opinions they derive from. From our codified units, how we gathered data

⁸⁰ Krippendorff, 2004. 84-88. Klaus Krippendorff is a professor of cybernetics, language and culture at the University of Pennsylvania and author of *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*.

⁸¹ A "point" as defined by a self-contained sentence that is a specific recommendation or suggestion on its own.

around ‘democr’ was grounded in Discourse Theory. We gathered those instances directly relating to ‘democr’, paying attention to terms.⁸² Instances were preliminarily categorised as far as possible but if we had any ambiguity, terms did not have a preliminary categorisation.⁸³ Our analysis contained a deeper process of categorisation, where categories varied based on what components and themes of content we looked at.⁸⁴ Terms therefore could be recategorised as our analysis evolved.

It should be noted at this stage, there are two separate content analyses taking place; one for CoR opinions and one for EESC opinions. Our discussion brings these together and compares results.

4.4. Discourse analysis

Our discourse analysis was carried out on two opinions, one from both the CoR and EESC. The texts we chose were those two opinions in our content analysis which were best comparable as a production of institutional subject positions. The CoR’s *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* and the EESC’s *EU Enlargement Strategy* were the opinions we chose. These were chosen because (i) both deal with the EC communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*;⁸⁵ (ii) both have five units we analysed in our content analysis and a similar number of instances of ‘democr’; (iii) both were non-mandatory opinions.

We chose to analyse the rapporteur’s drafts and committee versions of these texts alongside the final versions, looking at the amendments that were made.⁸⁶ Carrying out this stage of analysis allowed us to better assess the influence that the subject position of individual members, political groups/workings groups, the collected committees and all members have on shaping the opinion and subsequently the discourse.

Our discourse analysis is based on an attempt to operationalise Laclau and Mouffe’s Discourse Theory, as highlighted by Jørgensen and Phillips’ suggested use of key

⁸² Here, terms could be ‘human rights’ or ‘local and regional autonomy’ etc.

⁸³ Here, an example of preliminary categorisation are the terms “simplify funds” and “simplification of funding”. Both will be categorised as “simplification of funding.” However, if we had “simplify funds” and “simplification”, these terms would not be categorised together.

⁸⁴ If we were looking at European values, for example, we would categorise and sub-categorise based on interpreted and articulated terms here.

⁸⁵ European Commission, 2015.

⁸⁶ The process of how amendments are tabled differs between the CoR and EESC. At the CoR, any member can propose an amendment as an individual or as a collective group. At the EESC, amendments are made by representatives of the three working groups.

concepts.⁸⁷ We chose to apply a modified version of Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model, analysing the textual, discursive and social dimensions of discourses.⁸⁸ We loosely combined Fairclough's textual analysis and processing analysis dimensions, focusing on the creation of fields of discursivity and chains of equivalence, as outlined by Laclau and Mouffe. We looked at the manifestations of the concepts: instances, moments, articulation and audience, as discussed extensively in Chapter 2. Our focus on the use of linguistic dimensions of discourse is limited.

We carried out the third dimension, social analysis, to explain the production of discourses. We focused on the subject position of individuals and groups and their role in discourses. Genre for the individual or group was important for identifying the subject position of actors in the discourse and we identified all our primary sources as being of a political genre. We also analysed the use of social events in shaping discourses.

⁸⁷ Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002. 49-51.

⁸⁸ Fairclough, 1989.

5. Content Analysis

5.1. Overview

Despite delimiting our primary sources to a number roughly equivalent, when carrying out our content analysis, we discovered that the CoR made more frequent references to ‘democracy’ and words with the ‘democr’ prefix. For the CoR, we found seventy-eight categorised units fitting our criteria for analysis and, for the EESC, we found thirty-six categorised units fitting our criteria for analysis. Not only did the EESC generally make fewer references to democracy, we found that an additional two primary sources, that fitted our criteria in our delimitation process, made zero references to ‘democr’.⁸⁹ This uneven number of references to democracy means that we cannot directly compare interpretations of democracy between the CoR and EESC based on real numbers. Instead, when we directly compare both institutions in our content analysis, we compare using percentages.

5.2. Term frequencies

In real numbers, figure 5.1 shows the frequency of terms that the CoR use in association with democracy. The most frequent terms are ‘local and regional democracy’ (17), ‘local and regional autonomy’ (11), ‘civil society’ (10), ‘rule of law’ (9) and ‘human rights’ (8). This graph shows that the CoR attaches their understanding of democracy to local and regional decision-making power, the importance of a strong civil society and the complementary role of other European values to democracy.⁹⁰

In real numbers, figure 5.2 shows the frequency of terms that the EESC use in association with democracy. The most frequent terms are ‘civil society’ (11), ‘rule of law’ (10), ‘participatory democracy’ (6), ‘social partners’ (4) and ‘the democratic decision-making process’ (4). This graph shows that the EESC attach their understanding of democracy closely to the role that civil society and an inclusive democratic process that will involve citizens and civil society organisations in the decision-making process.

⁸⁹ European Economic and Social Committee, *Agriculture, Rural Areas and Sustainable Development in the Eastern Partnership Countries* (Brussels: European Union, 2015a). European Economic and Social Committee, *Energy – a factor for development and a deeper accession process in the Western Balkans* (Brussels: European Union, 2015b).

⁹⁰ The importance of European values is also emphasised by the term ‘fundamental European values’ being referenced six times.

Frequency of terms, CoR

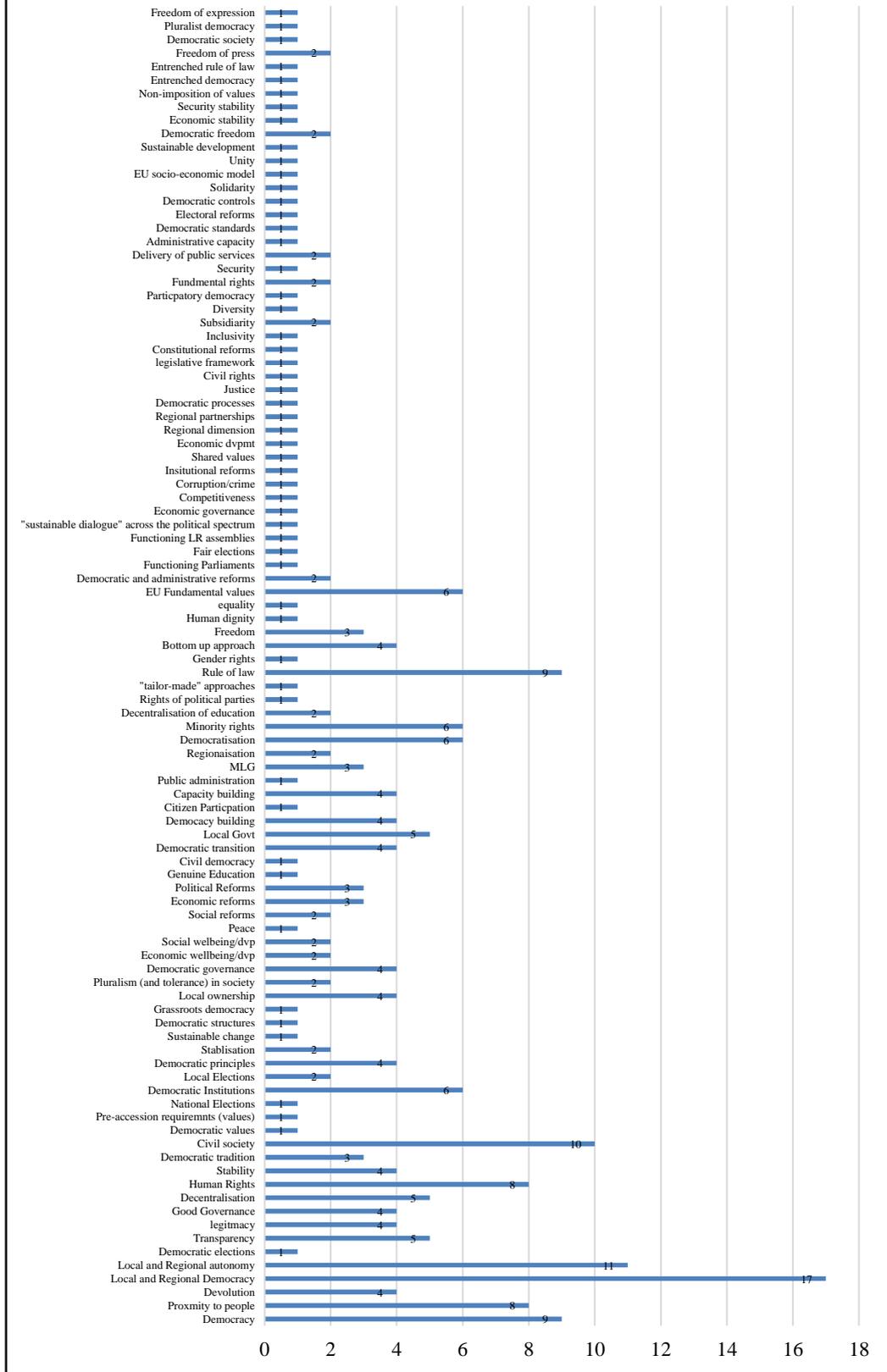


FIGURE 5-1 FREQUENCY OF TERMS, CoR

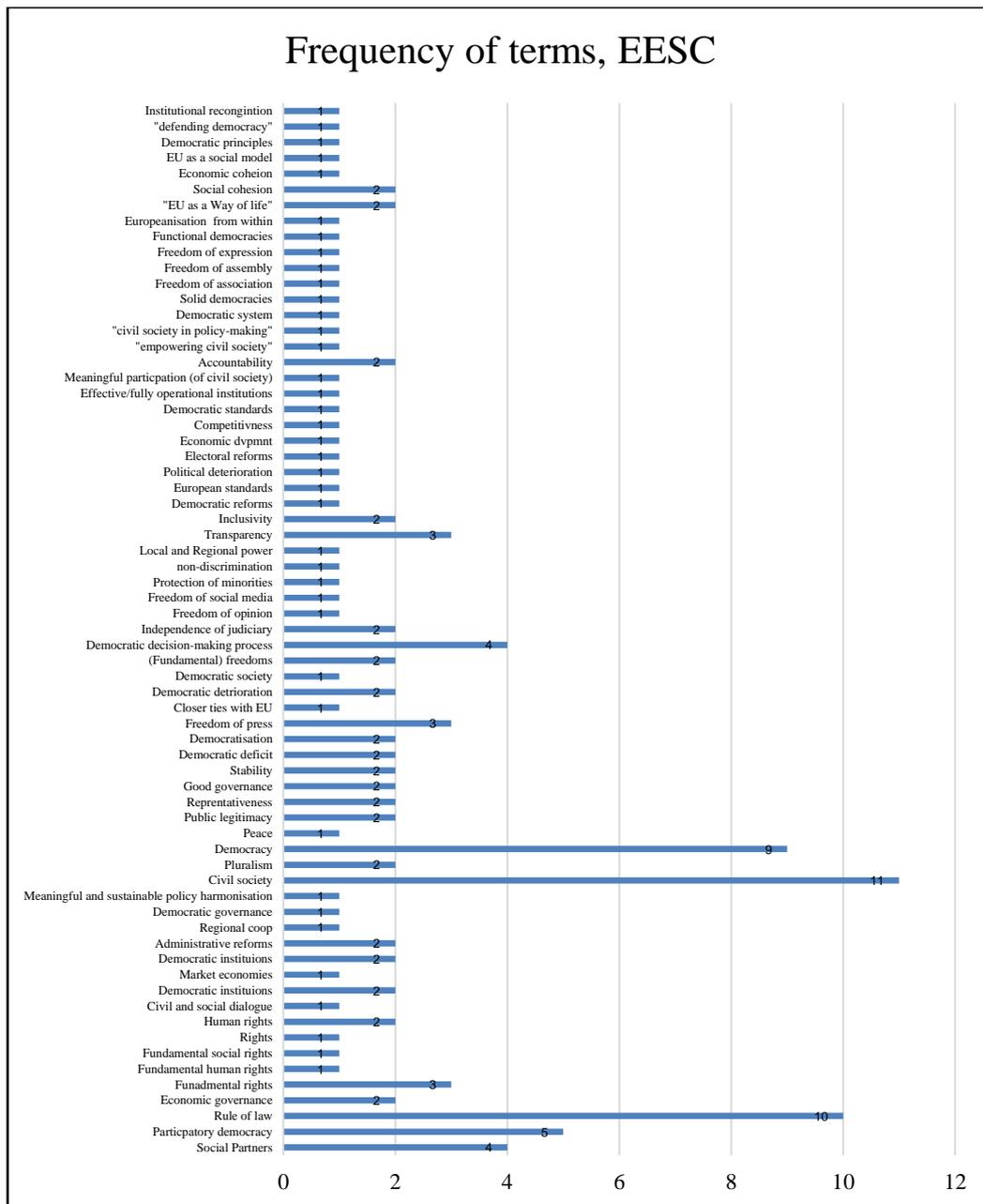


FIGURE 5-2 FREQUENCY OF TERMS, EESC

When comparing both institutions, it is important to note the frequency of single-use terms to understand democracy. 54.63% of all unique CoR terms were single-use terms. Of the total instances, this represented 21.81%. 60.00% of all unique EESC terms were single use terms. Of total instances, this represented 32.50%. We can factor double-use terms into this too. 14.43% of CoR terms were double-use. This is 11.52% of total instances. 27.69% of EESC terms were double-use. This is 30.00% of total instances. Combining both single and double-use terms to be considered terms of infrequency, we can see that 69.07% of CoR terms and 87.69% of EESC terms were either single or

double-use only. This accounted for 33.33% of total instances of CoR terms and 62.50% of total instances of EESC terms. Such a difference in low frequency or unique terms shows that the EESC have a higher discursive challenge than that of the CoR, which has a higher rate of coherence in their interpretation of democracy.⁹¹

5.3. Democracy terms

We can gain a deeper understanding about the discursive challenge by looking at terms directly using the ‘democr’ prefix. As figure 5.3 shows, including the term ‘democracy’, the CoR use twenty-three unique terms. While ‘democracy’ (12.50%) is still significant, ‘local and regional democracy’ (23.61%) is dominant.

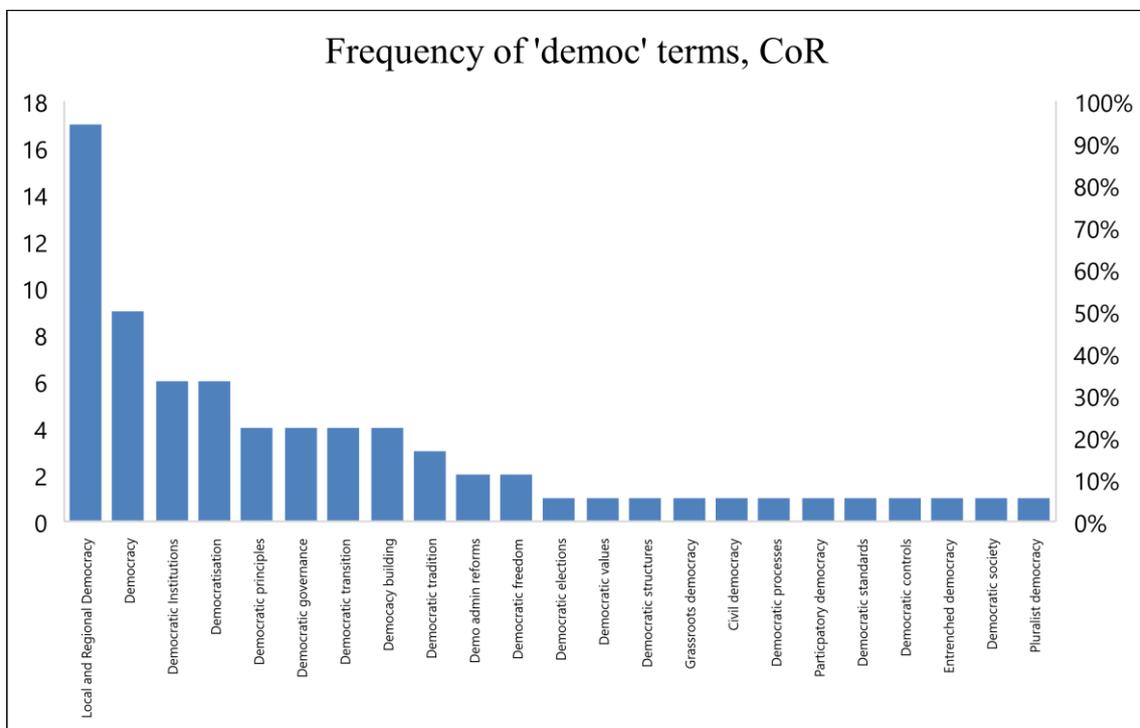


FIGURE 5-3 FREQUENCY OF 'DEMOCR' TERMS, COR

As figure 5.4 shows, including the term ‘democracy’, the EESC used sixteen unique terms. ‘Democracy’ (25.00%) was the most used and ‘participatory democracy’ (16.66%) follows.

⁹¹ This suggestion is predicated on the flaws of categorisation of terms taken in our analysis, as well as the level of variance that the opinions of the both the CoR and the EESC are about, whereby understandings of democracy will grow out of relevant circumstances, as much as the competition to discursively interpret democracy. We can also attribute the higher rate of variation at the EESC to the lower instances of democracy and considerably lower level of units of measurements overall.

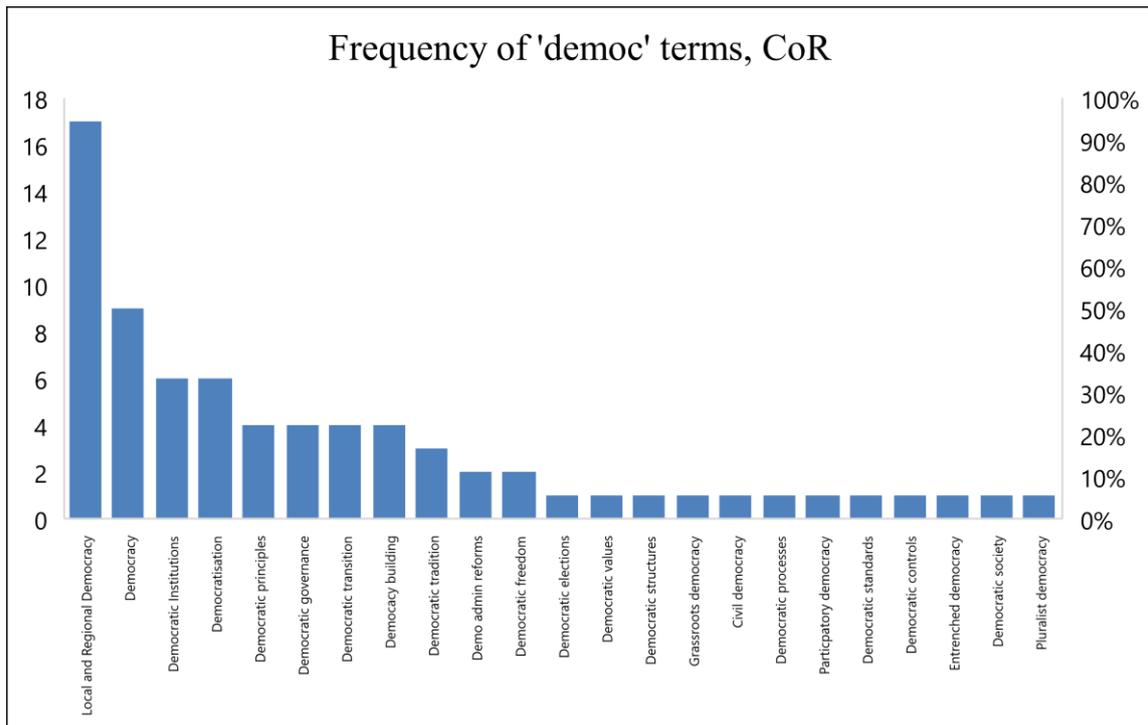


FIGURE 5-4 FREQUENCY OF 'DEMOCR' TERMS, EESC

The general discursive challenge is therefore seen as limited because the EESC, while attaching more weight to ‘democracy’, still chose to heavily focus on ‘participatory democracy’ as a defining position in their institutional remit. The CoR do likewise with ‘local and regional democracy’ and ‘democracy’. The usage of ‘local and regional democracy’, for the CoR, compared to the lower usage of ‘participatory democracy’ for the EESC is more indicative of the explicitness of both terms, rather than any discursive challenge. ‘Local and regional democracy’, within the CoR and in the greater European institutional discourse, has little ambiguity. ‘Participatory democracy’ has more ambiguity because it can mean multiple things to different discursive actors. In Discourse Theory, the narrowed down articulated meaning of ‘local and regional’ compared to the more contested ‘participatory’ makes actors either more or less likely to use one or the other.

5.4. European values

Both the CoR and EESC link ‘democracy’ to other European values, either directly or under terms which can be directly attributed to European values.⁹² The CoR makes explicit references to broad European values. This does not happen in the EESC.⁹³ For the CoR, what we categorised as general reference to ‘general values’ makes up 13.56% of total references to values.⁹⁴ For the purposes of comparison, we will not include the broad category of ‘European values’. Figures 5.5 and 5.7 show five categories of European values for the CoR and the EESC, respectively.⁹⁵ Figures 5.6 and 5.8 show the real and percentage breakdown for each category and instance. For the CoR, ‘human rights’ makes up 33.33% of value articulations to democracy; ‘the rule of law’ makes up 31.37%. For the EESC, ‘the rule of law’ makes up 35.71% of value articulations to democracy; ‘freedom’ makes up 23.81%. We can see that the CoR consider ‘human rights’ and its association with democracy more than freedom and democracy (15.69%). The EESC consider ‘freedom’ and its association with democracy more than human rights and democracy (21.43%).

The choice bias for which European values are more favoured between the CoR and EESC grows out of their discursive objectivity in the wider European institutional discourse and their applicability to the independent discourses in either the CoR or EESC. The rule of law, as we will show, is highly used by both institutions because it is heavily tied to democracy in the wider European Institutional discourse and the combined articulation is objective. The CoR favour human rights and the EESC favour freedom because they are mutually applicable to ‘democracy as local and regional’ and ‘democracy as civil society’, respectively.

5.5. Democracy and the rule of law

In the case of the rule of law, the frequency to which ‘rule of law’ is mentioned in instances directly related to ‘democracy’ is high.⁹⁶ Of the instances (and not as a category)

⁹² ‘European values’ as defined by TEU (art. 2) ((European Council, 2008. 17)

⁹³ For the analysis seen in figures 5.5 and 5.7, we excluded democracy because we were looking in this case at relativity to democracy, not democracy itself.

⁹⁴ European values in these instances go unexplained, except for tying the CoR’s general understanding of democracy closer to the generalities of European values, not clearly articulated as being those values which are outlined in the TEU. We categorised the following here: ‘EU fundamental values’, democratic values’ and ‘shared values’.

⁹⁵ There are six European values if you are to follow TEU (art. 2) and we have not included ‘democracy’ as a category, which is previously explain in “footnote 128” (European Council, 2008. 17).

⁹⁶ ‘Direct relation’ here means that democracy and the rule of law are coupled together.

of ‘rule of law’ in the CoR, 33.33% were in direct relation to ‘democracy’, two others were in direct relation to other terms.⁹⁷ Of the instances of ‘rule of law’ in the EESC, 30.00% were in direct relation to ‘democracy’. As shown in figures 5.5 to 5.8, ‘rule of law’ as an instance (and not just as categorisation) has a particularly privileged position in relation to democracy.

This can be understood in Discourse Theory as both institutions attempting articulate meaning into democracy, through the more deeply preestablished chains of equivalence that relate the two terms together. This does not better define either term but allows discursive articulations and normative assumptions to be made about either democracy or the rule of law, either individually or collectively.

We can see that, in many instances where democracy and the rule of law are linked in this manner, both institutions also link other European values. This, as mentioned, shows both institutions prescribing in a roughly equivalent manner to an understanding of democracy, the rule of law and European values that is more explicitly seen in the wider European institutional discourse. This discourse is that of normativity and normative power Europe, whereby discursive chains of equivalence in the EU’s foreign policy reinforce all European values by their mutually required association.⁹⁸ In Discourse Theory, the links between all values is objective because it is so deeply established in the European institutional discourse.

Democracy and the rule of law occupy a much closer association because attaching both together creates a much greater discursive understanding than tying democracy to other European values. In Discourse Theory, it stands to reason that those European values which are easier to fill with associated meaning are those most likely to be more frequently used. This is evidenced by the comparative dominance of ‘rule of law’ as a category and the reduced use of ‘human dignity’ or ‘equality’ by both institutions. The latter terms are harder to discursively fix meaning to.

⁹⁷ ‘Democratic process’ and ‘democratisation’ respectively.

⁹⁸ Manners, 2002. 245-253.

Expression of 'EU Values', relative to 'Democr', CoR (excluding general values)

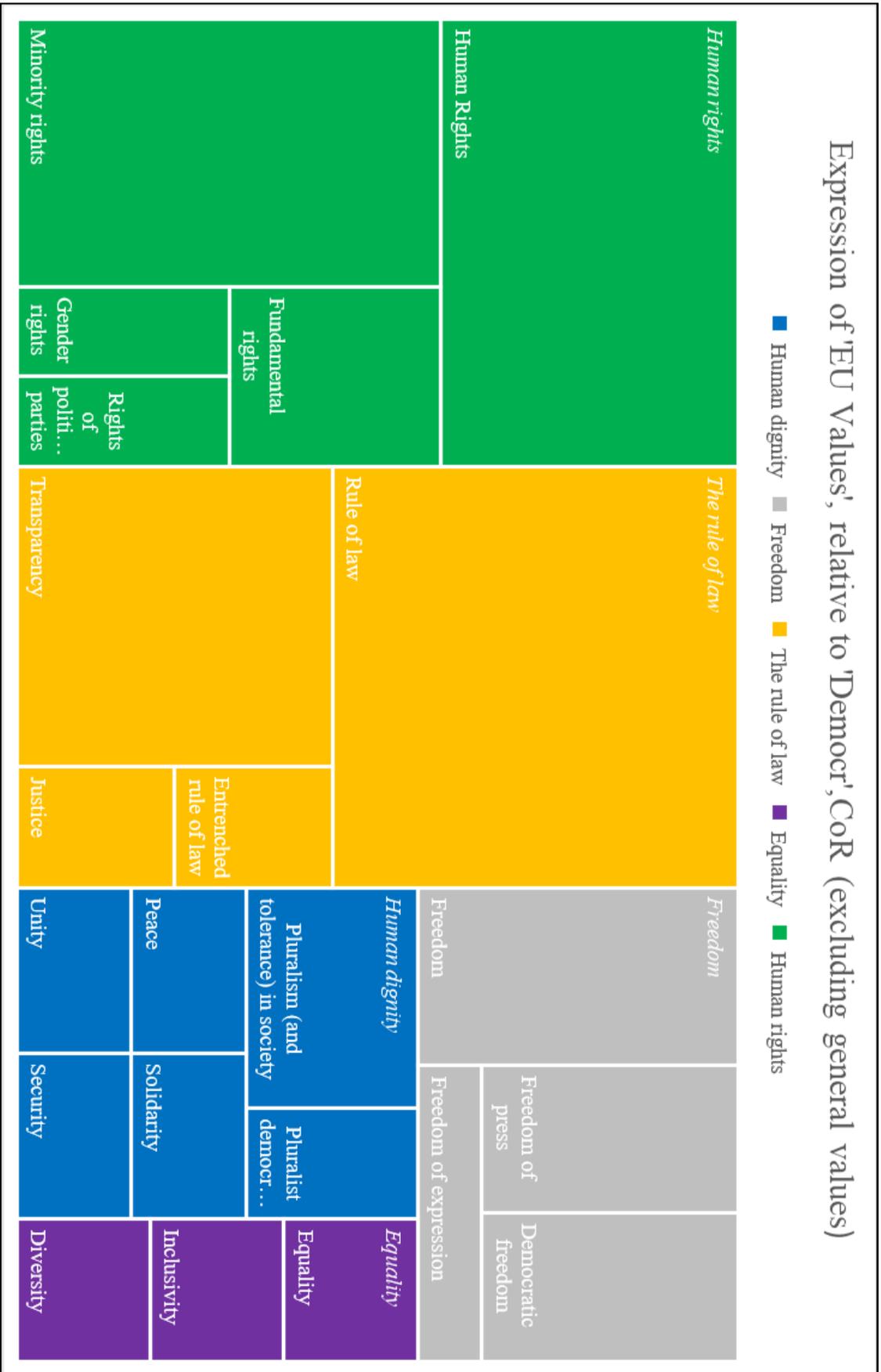


FIGURE 5-5 EXPRESSION OF EU VALUES, RELATIVE TO 'DEMOCR', CoR

Real and percentage frequency of 'EU values', CoR			
Categories	Instances	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Human dignity	Pluralist democracy	1	1.96%
	Pluralism	2	3.92%
	Peace	1	1.96%
	Unity	1	1.96%
	Solidarity	1	1.96%
	Security	1	1.96%
	Total (human dignity)	7	13.73%
Freedom	Freedom	3	5.88%
	Freedom of expression	1	1.96%
	Freedom of press	2	3.92%
	Democratic freedom	2	3.92%
	Total (freedom)	8	15.69%
The rule of law	Rule of law	9	17.65%
	Entrenched rule of law	1	1.96%
	Transparency	5	5.49%
	Justice	1	1.96%
	Total (the rule of law)	16	31.37%
Equality	Equality	1	1.96%
	Inclusivity	1	1.96%
	Diversity	1	1.96%
	Total (equality)	3	5.88%
Human rights	Human rights	7	13.73%
	Minority rights	6	11.76%
	Gender rights	1	1.96%
	Rights of political parties	1	1.96%
	Fundamental rights	2	3.92%
	Total (human rights)	17	33.33%
Total (overall)		51	100.00%

FIGURE 5-6 REAL AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF 'EU VALUES', CoR

5.6. Local and regional democracy and civil society

As previously highlighted, as independent institutions which represent the interests to EU regions and EU civil society, respectively, the CoR and EESC shape their discourses through the local and regional dimension and civil society. There is however a certain degree of discursive spillover between both institutions with the CoR attributing their understanding of democracy to civil society and the EESC attributing their understanding to the local and regional dimension.

Expression of "EU Values", relative to "Democr-", EFESC (excluding general values)

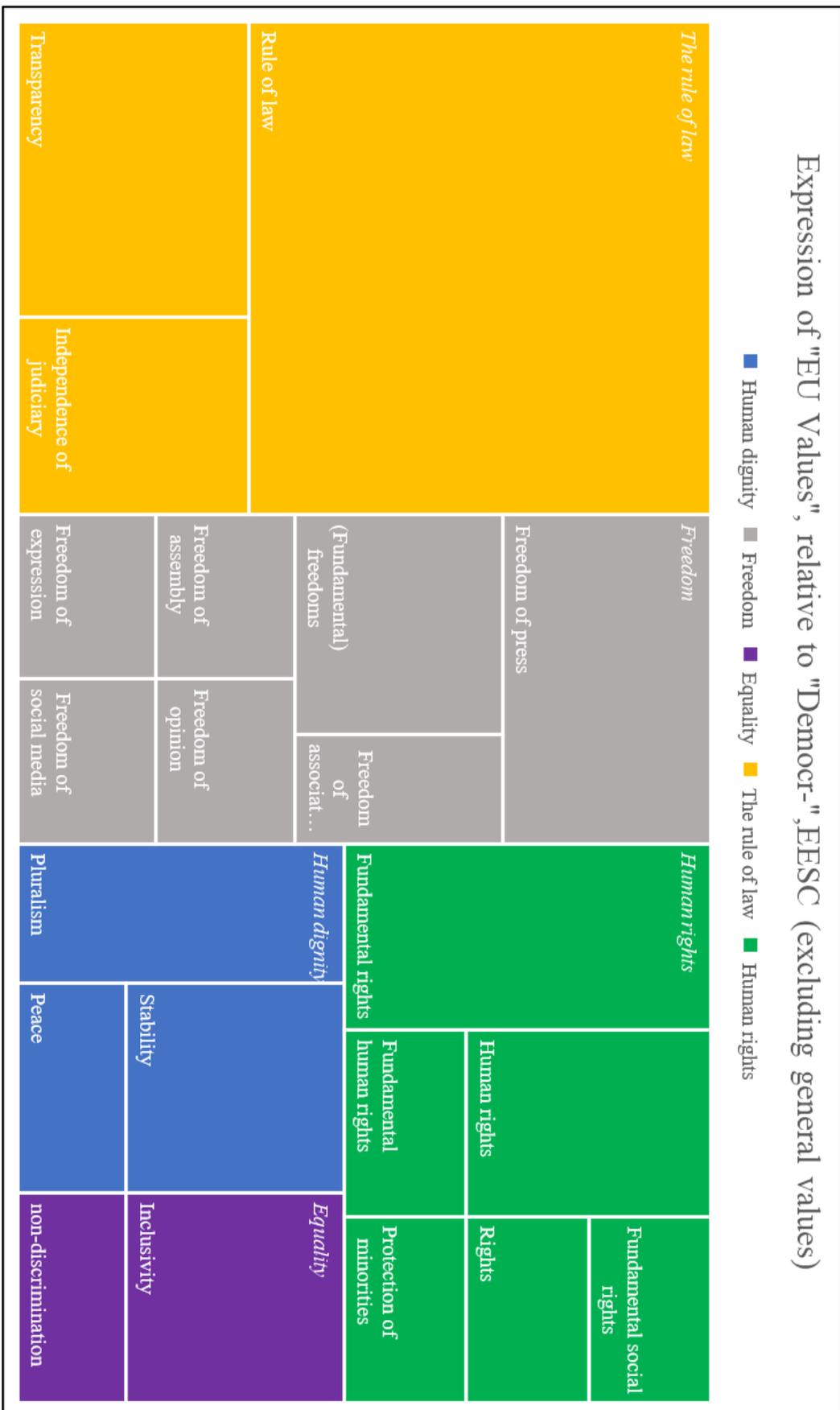


FIGURE 5-7 EXPRESSION OF EU VALUES, RELATIVE TO 'DEMOC', EFESC

Real and percentage frequency of 'EU values', EESC			
Categories	Instances	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Human dignity	Pluralism	2	4.76%
	Peace	1	2.38%
	Stability	2	4.76%
	Total (human dignity)	5	11.90%
Freedom	Freedom of press	3	7.14%
	(Fundamental) freedoms	2	4.76%
	Freedom of association	1	2.38%
	Freedom of assembly	1	2.38%
	Freedom of expression	1	2.38%
	Freedom of opinion	1	2.38%
	Freedom of social media	1	2.38%
	Total (freedom)	10	23.81%
	The rule of law	Rule of law	10
Independence of judiciary		2	4.76%
Transparency		3	7.14%
Total (the rule of law)		15	35.71%
Equality	non-discrimination	1	2.38%
	Inclusivity	2	4.76%
	Total (equality)	3	7.13%
Human rights	Fundamental rights	3	7.13%
	Fundamental human rights	1	2.83%
	Fundamental social rights	1	2.83%
	Rights	1	2.38%
	Human rights	2	4.76%
	Protection of minorities	1	2.83%
	Total (human rights)	9	21.43%
	Total (overall)	42	100.00%

FIGURE 5-8 REAL AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF 'EU VALUES', EESC

Figure 5.9 shows the relative use of the terms 'civil society' and 'local and regional democracy' to interpret democracy at the CoR. We can see that the CoR uses 'local and regional democracy' and 'civil society' by a ratio of 17:10. This is a relative percentage use of 'civil society' of 37.04%.

Figure 5.10 shows the relative use of the terms 'civil society' and 'local and regional power' to interpret democracy.⁹⁹ We can see that the EESC uses 'civil society' and 'local

⁹⁹ This comparative analysis of terms is problematic because the CoR use a wider array of terms to stress the local and regional dimension relative to democracy and the EESC only use 'local and regional power', a term which the CoR never uses. Comparatively, both institutions use relatively few terms to interpret civil society. We would argue that the discursive understanding of instances related to civil society and the local and regional dimension are not equal. In this, we attempted to reduce errors by making as narrow a comparison as possible between two instances, rather than comparing categories.

and regional power' by a ratio of 11:1. This is a relative percentage use of 'local and regional power' of 8.33%.

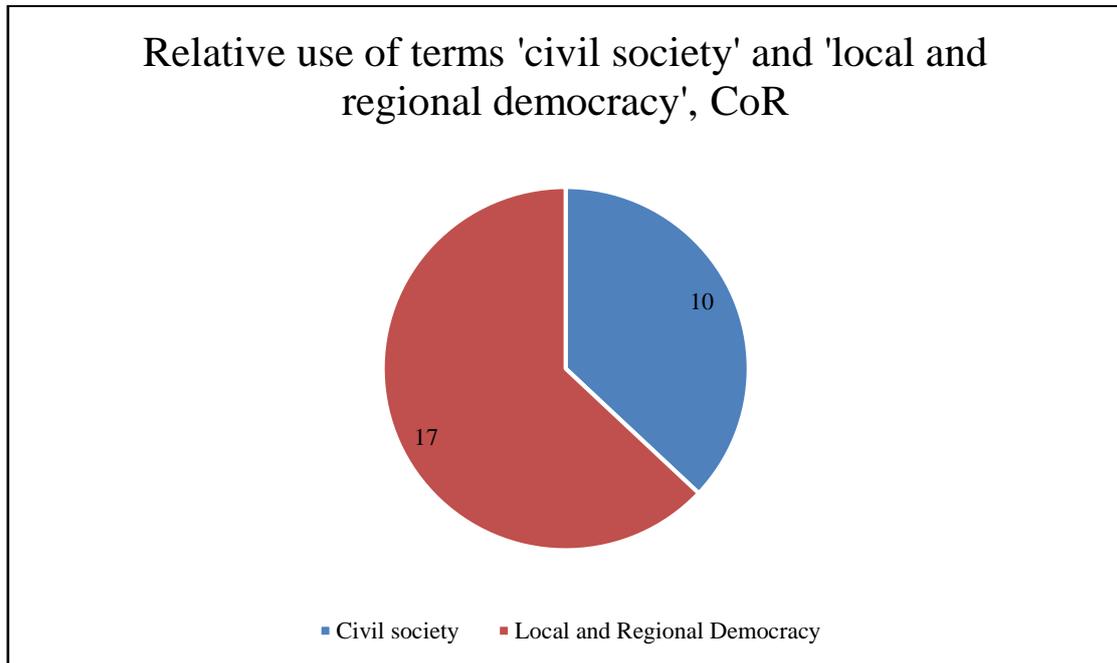


FIGURE 5-9 USE OF TERMS 'CIVIL SOCIETY' AND 'LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY', CoR

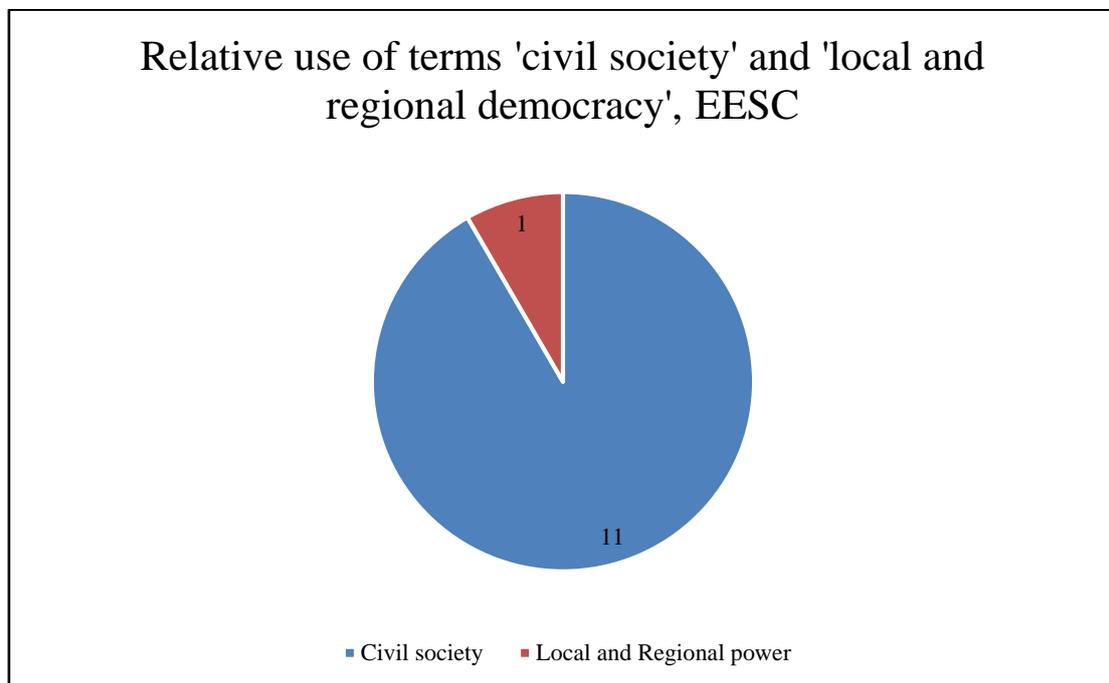


FIGURE 5-10 USE OF TERMS 'CIVIL SOCIETY' AND 'LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY', EESC

The comparative inequality in terms of spillover can be understood if we consider the previously mentioned hypothesis of Howard, whereby that the lower the “stakes in

outcomes” allow institutions “to pursue their own interests within the EU itself” and the literature debate around power of the CoR and the EESC.¹⁰⁰ The data suggests that the EESC are more focused on their own discursive interpretation, which is in line with the suggestions that of the two institutions, the EESC is less ‘powerful’.¹⁰¹ The CoR, because it has more ‘power’, is less driven by its own institutional remit and therefore more considers that of the EESC and other discursive elements.¹⁰²

To reflect further on this point, we have opened our scope of analysis beyond ‘civil society’ and ‘local and regional democracy/power’ to ‘citizen-driven democracy’ and ‘local government-driven democracy’. This allows us to categorise and increase our range of instances, without running into the challenge of categorising by predefine concepts. As such, our own categories are less ambiguous, and instances are easier to locate. We believe this is justified because, to categorise using the terms in the discourses, would mean to categorise with unevenly interpreted discursive entities.

Figure 5.11 shows the comparative categories of ‘local government-driven democracy’ and ‘citizen-driven democracy’ at the CoR.

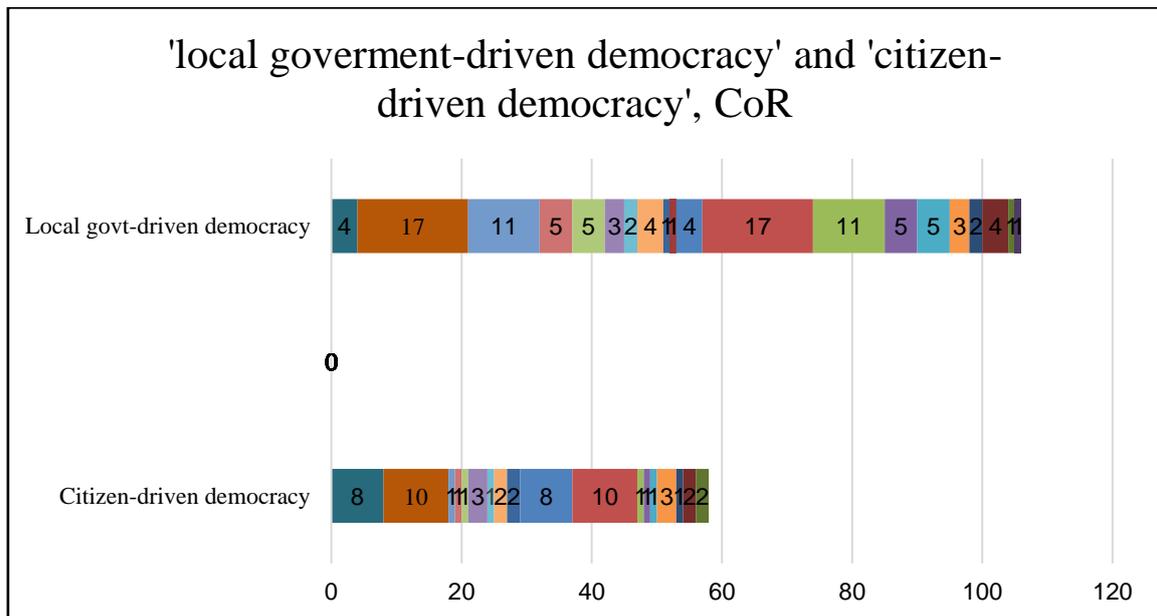


FIGURE 5-11 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY' AND 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', CoR

¹⁰⁰ Howard, 2013. 55-56. Bache *et al* 2011. 209-210. Smismans, 2002. 1. McCarthy, 1997. 451. Hönninge and Panke, 2013. 467.

¹⁰¹ Bache *et al* 2011. 209-210.

¹⁰² 'Power' as influence in the decision-making process.

Figure 5.12 shows the real number of terms and the breakdown of numbers, relative to total instances. ‘Citizen-driven democracy’ accounts for 35.37% of comparative total instance, while ‘local government-driven democracy’ accounts for 64.63%.

Comparative real and percentage instances of 'citizen-driven democracy' and 'local government-driven democracy', CoR		
Citizen-driven democracy	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Proximity to people	8	9.76%
Civil society	10	18.87%
Civil democracy	1	1.22%
Citizen participation	1	1.22%
Participatory democracy	1	1.22%
Freedom	3	3.66%
Freedom of expression	1	1.22%
Freedom of press	2	2.44%
Democratic freedom	2	2.44%
Total (Citizen-driven democracy)	29	35.37%
Local government-driven democracy	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Devolution	4	4.88%
Local and regional Democracy	17	20.73%
Local and regional autonomy	11	13.41%
Decentralisation	5	6.10%
Local Government	5	6.10%
MLG	3	3.66%
Regionalisation	2	2.44%
Bottom up approach	4	4.88%
Regional dimension	1	1.22%
Regional partnerships	1	1.22%
Total (Local government-driven democracy)	53	64.63%
Total (overall)	82	100.00%

FIGURE 5-12 COMPARATIVE REAL AND PERCENTAGE INSTANCES OF 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', CoR

Figure 5.13 shows the comparative categories of ‘local government-driven democracy’ and ‘citizen-driven democracy’ at the EESC. Figure 5.14 shows the number of terms and the breakdown of real numbers, relative to total instances. ‘Citizen-driven democracy’ accounts for 92.11% of comparative total instance, while ‘local government-driven democracy’ accounts for 7.89%.

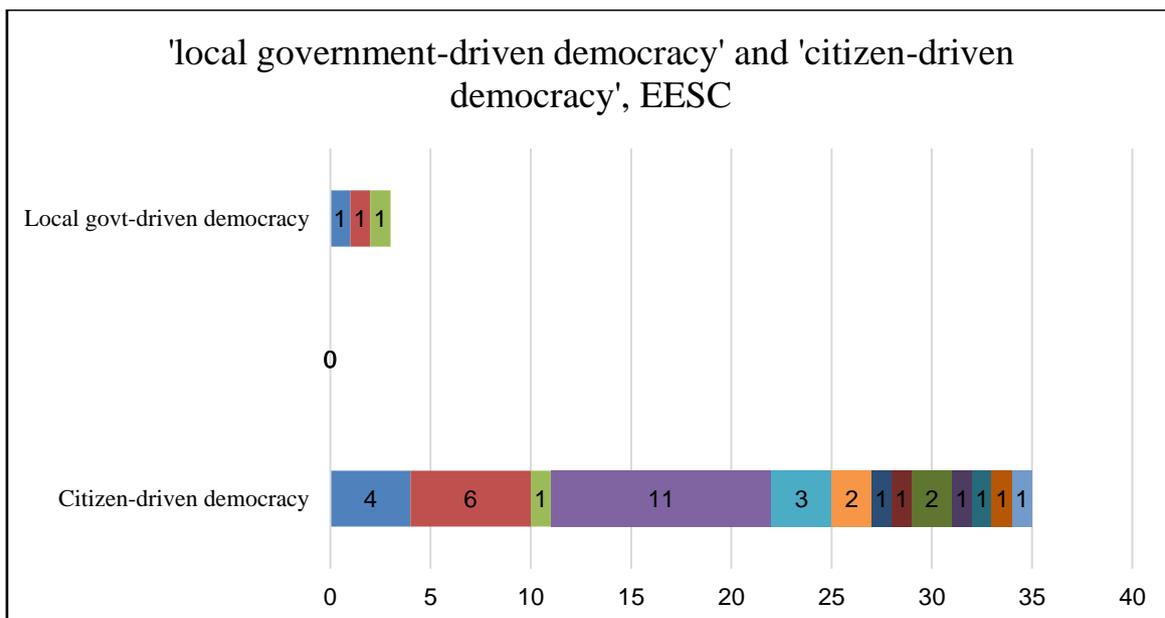


FIGURE 5-13 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY' AND 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', EESC

Firstly, this suggests the rate of error, compared to our previous analysis of the terms 'civil society' and 'local and regional democracy'/'local and regional power' at the CoR and EESC is minimal and that the analysis is valid.¹⁰³

Secondly, this analysis shows the CoR focuses on interpreting democracy for citizens more than the EESC focus on interpreting democracy for local government, which sticks closer to its own independent remit. The data adds to the suggestion that the CoR perceives it has more decision-making power than the EESC. This being the case if Howard's hypothesis, regarding power in EU Institutions, is accepted.

5.7. European values, civil society and the local and regional dimension

An important part of our thesis is to consider the extent to which both the CoR and EESC comparatively interpret their own institutional positions and how this is discursively reflected in the output of opinions. The data regarding categorised 'local government-

¹⁰³ To put this into perspective, in our previous analysis, 'civil society' at the CoR was 37.34%, relative to 'local and regional democracy'. In this current analysis, 'citizen-driven democracy' is 35.37%, relative to "'local government-driven democracy' at the CoR. 'Local and regional power' at the EESC was 8.33%, relative to 'civil society'. In this current analysis, 'local government-driven democracy' is 7.89%, relative to 'citizen-driven democracy' at the EESC. In the cases of both the CoR and EESC, both error rates fall within the standard deviation.

driven democracy’ and ‘citizen-driven democracy’, uncategorised ‘civil society’ and ‘local and regional democracy’, as well as our analysis of European values are all important in assessing this.

Comparative real and percentage instances of 'citizen-driven democracy' and 'local government-driven democracy', EESC		
Citizen-driven democracy	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Social Partners	4	10.53%
Participatory democracy	6	15.79%
Civil and social dialogue	1	2.63%
Civil society	11	28.95%
Freedom of press	3	7.89%
(Fundamental) freedoms	2	5.26%
Freedom of opinion	1	2.63%
Freedom of social media	1	2.63%
Inclusivity	2	5.26%
"empowering civil society"	1	2.63%
"civil society in policy-making"	1	2.63%
Freedom of association	1	2.63%
Freedom of expression	1	2.63%
Total (Citizen-driven democracy)	35	92.11%
Local government-driven democracy	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
Regional cooperation	1	2.63%
Local and Regional power	1	2.63%
Freedom of assembly	1	2.63%
Total (Local government-driven democracy)	3	7.89%
Total (Overall)	38	100.00%

FIGURE 5-14 COMPARATIVE REAL AND PERCENTAGE INSTANCES OF 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', EESC

Firstly, figure 5.15 shows the comparison in the CoR between instances relating to what we categorised as ‘local government-driven democracy’ and the previously analysed data regarding categorised ‘European values’, including the additional general category of ‘European values’. Figure 5.16 shows the real and percentage instances and categorises relating to ‘local government-driven democracy’ and ‘European values’. The data shows that, as a ratio, ‘European values’ outweighs ‘local government-driven democracy’ by a ratio of 59:53. This is a percentage ratio of 52.68% to 47.32%. This suggests that the CoR interprets democracy as power both in the local and regional dimension and through other European values in a roughly equal way, with a slight bias towards European values.

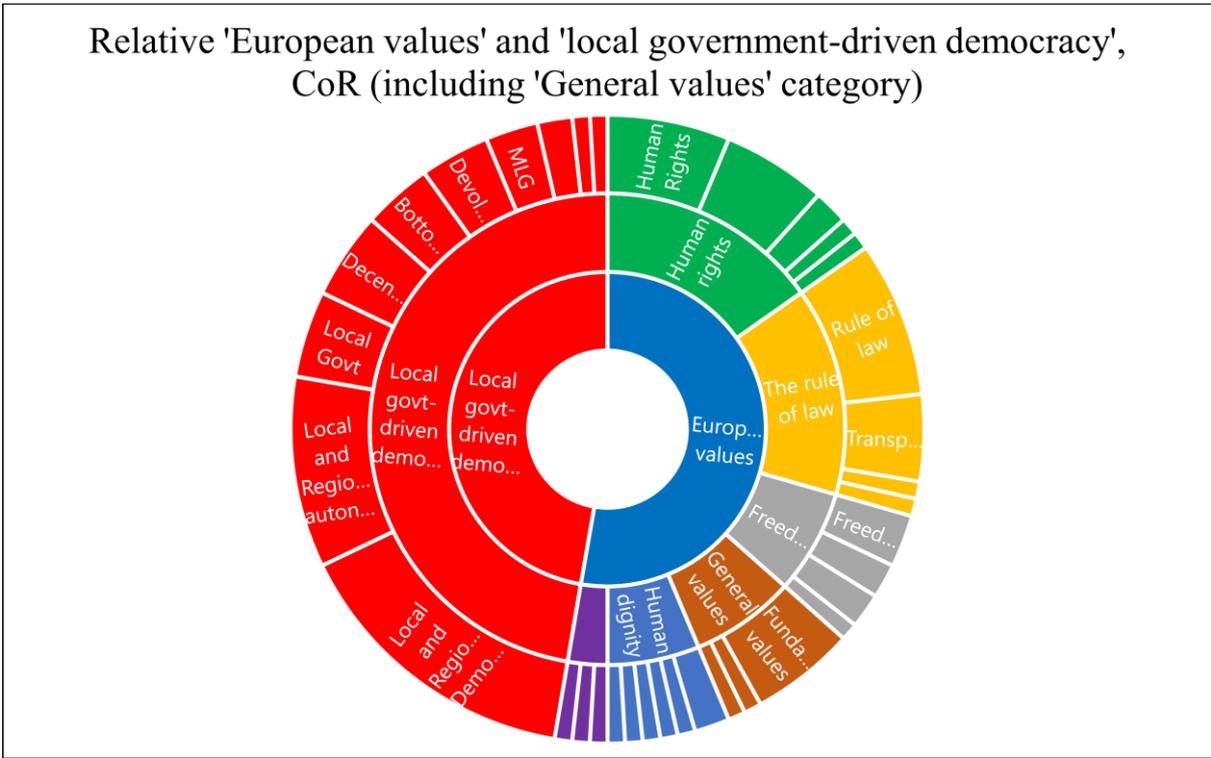


FIGURE 5-15 RELATIVE 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', COR. INC.

EU VALUES CATEGORY

Figure 5.17 shows the comparison in the EESC between instances relating to what we categorised as ‘citizen-driven democracy’ and the previously analysed data regarding categorised ‘European values’. Figure 5.18 shows the real and percentage instances and categorises relating to ‘citizen-driven democracy’ and ‘European values’. The data shows that, as a ratio, ‘European values’ outweighs ‘citizen-driven democracy’ by a ratio of 42:35. This a percentage ratio of 54.55% to 45.45%. This suggests that the EESC interpret democracy as power in the local and regional and through other European values in a roughly equal way, with a slight bias towards European values.

To compare the results of the two institutions, it is striking to see a percentage variation of just 1.87%. The percentage variation between the two institutions is within a feasible error rate to be considered comparable. Through this data, neither institution weights their own independent institutional remit notably higher than their remit that comes with being an EU Institution.

Real and percentage frequencies of 'European values' and 'local government-driven democracy', CoR. Inc. EU values category				
	Categories	Instances	Number of instances	Percentage of instances
European values	General values	Democratic values	1	0.89%
		Fundamental values	6	5.36%
		Shared values	1	0.89%
		Total (General values)	8	7.14%
	Human dignity	Pluralist democracy	1	0.89%
		Pluralism (and tolerance) in society	2	1.79%
		Peace	1	0.89%
		Unity	1	0.89%
		Solidarity	1	0.89%
		Security	1	0.89%
		Total (human dignity)	7	6.25%
	Freedom	Freedom	3	2.68%
		Freedom of expression	1	0.89%
		Freedom of press	2	1.79%
		Democratic freedom	2	1.79%
		Total (freedom)	8	7.14%
	The rule of law	Rule of law	9	8.04%
		Entrenched rule of law	1	0.89%
		Transparency	5	4.46%
		Justice	1	0.89%
Total (the rule of law)		16	14.29%	
Equality	Equality	1	0.89%	
	Inclusivity	1	0.89%	
	Diversity	1	0.89%	
	Total (equality)	3	2.68%	
Human rights	Human rights	7	6.25%	
	Minority rights	6	5.36%	
	Gender rights	1	0.89%	
	Rights of political parties	1	0.89%	
	Fundamental rights	2	1.79%	
	Total (human rights)	17	15.18%	
	Total (European values)	59	52.68%	
Local government-driven democracy	Local government-driven democracy	Devolution	4	3.57%
		Local and Regional democracy	17	15.18%
		Local and Regional autonomy	11	9.82%
		Decentralisation	5	4.46%
		Local Government	5	4.46%
		MLG	3	2.68%
		Regionalisation	2	1.79%
		Bottom up approach	4	3.57%
		Regional dimension	1	0.89%
		Regional partnerships	1	0.89%
		Total (Local government-driven democracy)	53	47.32%
		Total (overall)	112	100.00%

FIGURE 5-16 REAL AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCIES OF 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', COR. INC. EU VALUES CATEGORY

In our previous analysis (see figures 5.1 and 5.2) we chose to consider European values within the CoR both with and without the general category of 'European values'. Figure 5.19 shows European values, at the CoR, relative to local government-driven democracy, without the additional category of 'European values'.¹⁰⁴ Figure 5.20 shows the real and percentage instances and categorises relating to 'local government-driven democracy' and 'European values'.

¹⁰⁴ This is likely a better comparison than our comparison that gave a percentage variation of 1.87%.

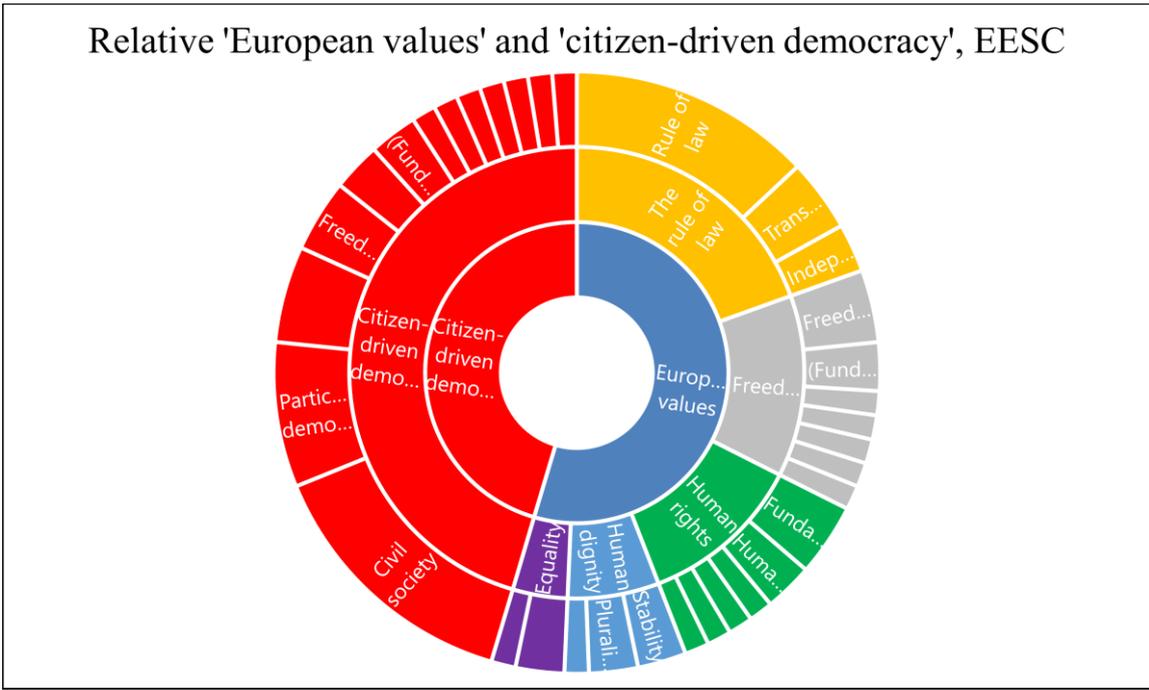


FIGURE 5-17 RELATIVE 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', EESC

We see that 'local government-driven democracy' outweighs 'European values' by a ratio of 53:51. This is a percentage ratio of 50.96% to 49.04%. This percentage variation suggests the CoR values other European values and the local and regional dimension on an equal discursive footing. When compared to the data from the EESC, there is a percentage variation of 5.51%.

This higher percentage variation and the CoR's higher focus on its own independent remit goes against the hypothesis of Howard because, as arguably the more influential institution, theoretically the CoR should be less self-interested. Looking at how the CoR focuses on civil society when framing democracy, compared to how the EESC focuses less on the local and regional dimension to frame democracy.

This can also be interpreted as, because the CoR is influential, it focuses on matters beyond what it sees as its own independent remit, in the local and regional dimension and European values, as evidenced in relation to its framing of civil society in democracy and the data from figures 5.3 and 5.4 which shows the CoR uses a higher rate of multiple frequency terms to understand democracy, when compared to the EESC.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ In our analysis, duplicate instances that are articulated as moments overlap between 'local government-driven democracy' and 'European values'. For our analysis, this does not influence the overall relativity of 'local government-driven democracy' and 'European values' because we could have chosen to disregard these duplicates from both categories and the percentages would have

Real and percentage frequencies of 'European values' and 'citizen-driven democracy', EESC				
	Categories	Instances	Number of instances	Percentage of instances
European values	Human dignity	Pluralism	2	2.60%
		Peace	1	1.30%
		Stability	2	2.60%
		Total (human dignity)	5	6.49%
	Freedom	Freedom of press	3	3.90%
		(Fundamental) freedoms	2	2.60%
		Freedom of association	1	1.30%
		Freedom of assembly	1	1.30%
		Freedom of expression	1	1.30%
		Freedom of opinion	1	1.30%
		Freedom of social media	1	1.30%
		Total (freedom)	10	12.99%
	Equality	non-discrimination	1	1.30%
		Inclusivity	2	2.60%
		Total (equality)	3	3.90%
	The rule of law	Rule of law	10	12.99%
		Independence of judiciary	2	260.00%
		Transparency	3	3.90%
		Total (the rule of law)	15	19.48%
		Human rights	Fundamental rights	3
	Fundamental human rights		1	1.30%
Fundamental social rights	1		1.30%	
Rights	1		1.30%	
Human rights	2		2.60%	
Protection of minorities	1		1.30%	
Total (human rights)	9		11.69%	
Total (European values)	42		54.55%	
Citizen-driven democracy	Citizen-driven democracy	Social Partners	4	5.19%
		Participatory democracy	6	7.79%
		Civil and social dialogue	1	1.30%
		Civil society	11	14.29%
		Freedom of press	3	3.90%
		(Fundamental) freedoms	2	2.60%
		Freedom of opinion	1	1.30%
		Freedom of social media	1	1.30%
		Inclusivity	2	2.60%
		"empowering civil society"	1	1.30%
		"civil society in policy-making"	1	1.30%
		Freedom of association	1	1.30%
		Freedom of expression	1	1.30%
		Total (citizen-driven democracy)	35	45.45%
		Total (overall)	77	100.00%

FIGURE 5-18 REAL AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCIES OF 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'CITIZEN-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', EESC

remained the same. It would have been a mistake and would have falsified our data to put the duplicates in one category but not the other. This choice would also not have been academically justifiable.

Relative 'European values' and 'local government-driven democracy',
CoR (exluding European values category)



FIGURE 5-19 RELATIVE 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', COR. EXC.

EU VALUES CATEGORY

Real and percentage frequencies of 'European values' and 'local government-driven democracy', cor. Exc. Eu values category						
	Categories	Instances	Number of instances	Percentage of instances		
European values	Human dignity	Pluralist democracy	1	0.96%		
		Pluralism (and tolerance) in society	2	1.92%		
		Peace	1	0.96%		
		Unity	1	0.96%		
		Solidarity	1	0.96%		
		Security	1	0.96%		
		Total (human dignity)	7	6.25%		
	Freedom	Freedom	3	2.88%		
		Freedom of expression	1	0.96%		
		Freedom of press	2	1.92%		
		Democratic freedom	2	1.92%		
	Total (freedom)	8	7.69%			
	The rule of law	Rule of law	9	8.65%		
		Entrenched rule of law	1	0.96%		
		Transparency	5	4.81%		
		Justice	1	0.96%		
		Total (the rule of law)	16	15.38%		
Equality	Equality	1	0.96%			
	Inclusivity	1	0.96%			
	Diversity	1	0.96%			
	Total (equality)	3	2.88%			
Human rights	Human rights	7	6.73%			
	Minority rights	6	5.77%			
	Gender rights	1	0.96%			
	Rights of political parties	1	0.96%			
	Fundamental rights	2	1.92%			
	Total (human rights)	17	16.35%			
Total (European values)			51	49.04%		
Local government-driven democracy	Local government-driven democracy	Devolution	4	3.85%		
		Local and Regional democracy	17	16.35%		
		Local and Regional autonomy	11	10.58%		
		Decentralisation	5	4.81%		
		Local Government	5	4.81%		
		MLG	3	2.88%		
		Regionalisation	2	1.92%		
		Bottom up approach	4	3.85%		
		Regional dimension	1	0.96%		
		Regional partnerships	1	0.96%		
		Total (Local government-driven democracy)	53	50.96%		
		Total (overall)			104	100.00%

FIGURE 5-20 REAL AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCIES OF 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT-DRIVEN DEMOCRACY', COR. EXC. EU VALUES CATEGORY

5.8. Uncategorized European values, local and regional democracy and civil society

We wish to acknowledge the challenges of conducting analysis through categorisation and take a purer look at the uncategorised data to better understand the comparative interpretations of democracy in the CoR and EESC, when considering both institutions remits as independent institutions and EU Institutions. We have chosen to uncategorise European values and both the local and regional dimension and civil society, as seen in figures 5.21 and 5.23. For this, we took only direct instances of specific European values and the term ‘local and regional democracy’ into consideration.¹⁰⁶

Figure 5.21 shows the uncategorised comparison between ‘local and regional democracy’ and ‘European values’. Figure 5.22 shows the real and percentage instances of ‘European values’ and ‘local and regional democracy’. The data shows that ‘European values’ outweighs ‘local and regional democracy’ by a ratio of 30:17. This is a percentage ratio of 63.83% to 36.17%. This data suggests that the CoR significantly values European values above local and regional democracy.

Figure 5.23 shows the uncategorised comparison between ‘civil society’ and ‘European values’. The data shows that ‘European values’ outweighs ‘civil society’ by a ratio of 24:11. Figure 5.24 shows the real and percentage instances of ‘European values’ and ‘civil society’. This is a percentage ratio of 63.57% to 31.43%. This data suggests that the EESC significantly values European values above civil society.

Comparing this data, we can see that there is a percentage variation of 5.19%. This variation is within the error rate. The trend here shows that, like the previous categorised data, comparing European values with local government-driven democracy/citizen-driven democracy, with a percentage variation of 5.51%, while ratios were not the same, comparative variation between the CoR and EESC suggests a trend that makes the interpretation of democracy between the CoR and EESC parable.

¹⁰⁶ European values are defined by TEU (art. 2) (European Council, 2008. 17). Direct instances meaning the terms ‘human right(s)’, ‘freedom’, ‘(the) rule of law’, ‘human dignity’ and ‘equality’. For ‘human rights’ we were obliged to categorise to include ‘minority rights’ and ‘protection of minorities’ because TEU (art. 2) states “...respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (European Council, 2008. 17).

Uncategorised comparison of 'local and regional democracy' and 'European values', CoR



FIGURE 5-21 UNCATEGORISED COMPARISON OF 'LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY' AND 'EUROPEAN VALUES', CoR

Uncategorised real and percentage instances of 'European values' and 'local and regional democracy', CoR			
Categories	Instances	Number of Instances	Percentage of total
European values	Human dignity	0	0.00%
	Freedom	6	12.77%
	Equality	1	2.13%
	Rule of law	10	21.28%
	Human (and minority) rights	13	27.66%
	Total (European values)	30	63.83%
Local and regional democracy	Local and regional democracy	17	36.17%
	Total (overall)	47	100.00%

FIGURE 5-22 UNCATEGORISED REAL AND PERCENTAGE INSTANCES OF 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY', CoR

Uncategorised comparison of 'civil society' and 'European values', EESC



FIGURE 5-23 UNCATEGORISED COMPARISON OF 'CIVIL SOCIETY' AND 'EUROPEAN VALUES', EESC

Uncategorised real and percentage instances of 'European values' and 'civil society', EESC			
Categories	Instances	Number of Instances	Percentage of Instances
European values	Human dignity	0	0.00%
	Freedom	10	28.57%
	Equality	0	0.00%
	Rule of law	10	28.57%
	Human (and minority) rights	4	11.43%
	Total (European values)	24	68.57%
Civil society	Civil society	11	31.43%
	Total (overall)	35	100.00%

FIGURE 5-24 UNCATEGORISED REAL AND PERCENTAGE INSTANCES OF 'EUROPEAN VALUES' AND 'CIVIL SOCIETY', EESC

6. Discourse Analysis

6.1. Lifecycle of an opinion

Figure 6.1 shows the lifecycle of the two opinions we have analysed. This helps locate the final opinions, their rapporteurs' drafts and their committee versions in time and better understand the processes both institutions have for drafting opinions.

Lifecycle of CoR and EESC opinions			
The CoR		The EESC	
Date	Event	Date	Event
14/10/2015	Decision taken by CoR bureau to draft an opinion.	06/10/2015	Decision taken by EESC bureau to draft an opinion.
10/11/2015	<i>EU enlargement strategy 2015-2016</i> is adopted by the EC.	10/11/2015	<i>EU enlargement strategy 2015-2016</i> is adopted by the EC.
16/11/2015	Rapporteur appointed.	12/11/2015	Rapporteur appointed.
05/02/2016	Exchange of views held on draft opinion.	15/12/2015	Exchange of views held on draft opinion.
19/04/2016	Rapporteur's draft is presented at CIVEX Commission meeting. Amendments are put forth by CIVEX members, either to be accepted or rejected by the majority. Committee version is adopted by the CIVEX Commission and will go to CoR plenary.	29/01/2016	Rapporteur's draft is presented at REX Section meeting. Amendments are put forth by REX members, either to be accepted or rejected by the majority. Committee version is adopted by the REX Section and will go to EESC plenary.
16/06/2016	Amendments are put forth by CoR members, either to be accepted or rejected by the majority. Final version is adopted by CoR and enters into force.	18/02/2016	Amendments are put forth by EESC members, either to be accepted or rejected by the majority. Final version is adopted by EESC and enters into force

FIGURE 6-1 LIFECYCLE OF COR AND EESC OPINIONS

6.2. Textual and processing analyses

6.2.1. *The European Committee of the Regions*

In the CoR opinion *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*, the first textual instance of ‘democr’ occurs in CIVEX-VI/008-06 (figure 6.2):¹⁰⁷

[The CoR] stresses that the enlargement process should be an inclusive exercise involving all of society; [the CoR] underlines that the role of the local and regional level is essential, as it is closest to the citizens in terms of subsidiarity, communication, participatory democracy, diversity and identity; it is also key for economic development, cross-border cooperation, absorption of EU funds and implementation of EU legislation;

FIGURE 6-2 CIVEX-VI/008-06

The nodal point of this unit and text is ‘enlargement’. Democracy acquires meaning in relation to this and we can see democracy articulated as ‘participatory democracy’, with the articulation being ‘the enlargement process... [is] an exercise involving all of society’. ‘The role of the local and regional level’ being ‘essential’ means that all discursive moments must travel through ‘the local and regional level’, making it a nodal point along with ‘enlargement’. The difference between ‘enlargement’ and ‘the local and regional level’ is a matter of hegemony. The discourse in this document is unambiguous about the meaning enlargement. By using ‘level’, the discourse becomes political and is opened to interpretations and the CoR fills this with meaning according to their own objectives. Therefore, we see the CoR call for ‘subsidiarity’, ‘diversity’, ‘identity’ alongside ‘participatory democracy’. All these terms are equally hard to define and can therefore be further operationalised as floating signifiers. They have become defined as something ‘essential’ to the ‘inclusive exercise’ that should involve ‘the local and regional level’.

¹⁰⁷ European Committee of the Regions, 2016a. 3.

The second instance of ‘democr’ is in CIVEX-VI/008-07 (figure 6.3):¹⁰⁸

[The CoR] welcomes the reference by the Commission [in the communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*] to the key role of local and regional authorities (LRAs); [the CoR] stresses, however, as it has done on numerous previous occasions, that better and more detailed focus is needed in future communications and reports on local and regional governance, even when there is no separate *acquis* chapter or established EU model on the issue of decentralisation and multi-level governance; but [the CoR] considers that ensuring strong, democratic and effective local and regional governance is an essential element of pre-accession preparation as implementation of reforms and a consistent, credible track record of them [reforms] is often achieved at local level, and [the CoR] points to the importance of subsidiarity as a key EU principle enshrined in the treaties;

FIGURE 6-3 CIVEX-VI/008-07

Here again, democracy acquires meaning via the importance of the local and regional level to achieving a more sustainable enlargement process. Content-wise, entirely different words are used to articulate the same message as seen in CIVEX-VI/008-06. We can see democracy articulated alongside ‘strength’ and ‘effectiveness’; all floating signifiers that combine to reinforce ‘local and regional governance’. All instances here, in isolation, are political and therefore contestable but the process of articulating moments together to fill them with meaning continues. To be democratic is to be, in part, inclusive of the local and regional dimension. Discursively, the CoR have continued to narrow down the perceived meaning of democracy to be associated with the local and regional dimension.

The importance of the moment ‘subsidiarity’, which the CoR chooses to emphasise as an objectively accepted concept in the EU treaties is an important element for reaffirming the goals of the CoR. ‘Subsidiarity’ in the context of the EU treaties is defined and seen as objective but, in practise, it is open to contestation. The CoR plays on this hybridity of interpretation of the term to use it, in this instance, as objective, but, in the previous unit of analysis, it has a more political interpretation.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 3.

The third instance of ‘democr’ is in CIVEX-VI/008-13 (figure 6.4):¹⁰⁹

[The CoR] agrees that further progress regarding the rule of law and fundamental rights including the protection of minorities, is indeed of paramount importance, and presents a challenge for every candidate and potential candidate for enlargement; this assessment also confirms the validity of the “new approach” to the enlargement, which is based on an increased focus on the judiciary and fundamental rights and on justice, freedom and security; flags up the importance of cooperation in and with the Council of Europe (CoE), and its Congress of local and regional authorities regarding fundamental rights,

FIGURE 6-4 CIVEX-VI/008-13

In this unit, the CoR are advancing their discourses on human rights and the rule of law, continuing to tie the adherence to European values as essential to accession. Democracy is again articulated to the local and regional level, as ‘local and regional democracy’. Here it is used for the CoR to argue for the ‘new approach’, calling for democracy to be just as much about the local level as it is about adherence to the rule of law and fundamental rights. While calling for local and regional democracy to have an increased focus in the framework of enlargement, the CoR’s association agreement with the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities becomes a discursive nodal point. The agreement here and the Council of Europe’s own values (human rights, rule of law and democracy) makes (local and regional) democracy an objectively natural instance to directly include alongside the rule of law and fundamental rights (human rights) in this section of the EC’s communication.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4.

The fourth and fifth instances of ‘democr’ are in CIVEX-VI/008-24 (figure 6.5):¹¹⁰

[The CoR] emphasises the fundamental role played by regional and local democracy in strengthening democratic institutions and their administrative capacity; [the CoR] highlights the role of elected local and regional assemblies as spaces for civil society dialogue and growth and for discussion between decision-makers and stakeholders; [the CoR] points out that local and regional authorities play an important part in engaging with public opinion on European policies and integration; [the CoR] also emphasises that strengthening local and regional governance bolsters administrative reform and improves the delivery of public services;

FIGURE 6-5 CIVEX-VI/008-24

Cultural democracy, as ‘local democracy’, is a nodal point which reinforces institutional democracy, as ‘democratic institutions’.¹¹¹ The juxtaposition of local democracy as cultural democracy is expanded on and it is linked to ‘elected local and regional assemblies’ as ‘spaces for civil society’ and their part in reinforcing ‘European policies and integration’. This is an allusion to how reinforcing cultural democracy is important for achieving institutional democracy. There is the attempt to make this point objective by articulating both the more abstract and institutional ‘administrative reform’ and the practical ‘delivery of public services’ between the nodal point of ‘local and regional governance’, which derives its meaning from the previously mentioned articulation. This is a field of discursivity in which the CoR attempts to articulate equivalent and objective meaning.

The sixth instance of ‘democr’ is in CIVEX-VI/008-46 (figure 6.6):¹¹²

[The CoR] calls for all parties [in Montenegro] to strengthen cross-party political dialogue; and for all levels of government to ensure that the next elections are held according to the highest democratic standards based on the new electoral legislation;

FIGURE 6-6 CIVEX-VI/008-46

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹¹ Discursively, local democracy is equivalent to regional and local democracy and alternating terms does not influence the discourse.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

This unit is in specific relation to elections and democracy in Montenegro. The audience of this unit is in contrast with that of previous units analysed. In all units before this, it was the EU Institutions. Here it is firmly Montenegrin politicians at all levels. This changes the discursive approach of the CoR from previously using the discourse to advance its remit as an independent body to one that is more in line with the European institutional discourse on democracy and the CoR's EU institutional remit. We see democracy articulated as 'democratic standards' in the context of agreed upon new 'electoral legislation'. While the local and regional level have a role to play as one of 'all levels of government'.

6.2.2. *European Economic and Social Committee*

The first two instances of 'democr' is in REX/453-1.1 (figure 6.7):¹¹³

The EESC supports the particular emphasis placed by the Commission [in the communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*] on the fundamentals in the accession process, with the need for enlargement countries to prioritise reforms in the rule of law, fundamental rights, functioning of democratic institutions (including election system reform and public administration reform), economic development and strengthening competitiveness. In monitoring progress, special attention should be paid to civil society's warnings against political actions and developments that negatively affect rule of law and democratic standards.

FIGURE 6-7 REX/453-1.1

In this unit, we see democracy first articulated through the nodal point of what the EESC terms 'the fundamentals in the accession process'. This is a discursive choice to not just use the objectively narrowed down 'European values' but include broader indicators of development. Democracy here is institutional, with democracy being predicated on having objectively 'functioning democratic institutions'. Discursively, the EESC chooses to adapt 'democratic institutions' into the more political 'democratic standards'. The greater contestability of this term is connected to the objective 'rule of law'. This articulation makes 'democratic standards' appear less political. This articulation also

¹¹³ European Economic and Social Committee, 2016a. 2.

allows the EESC to advocate for the role of ‘civil society’ as a part of ‘democratic standards’ in the wider European institutional discourse.

The third instance of ‘democr’ is in REX/453-1.2 (figure 6.8):¹¹⁴

The EESC strongly encourages the EC to retain the quality of participatory democracy as one of the core political criteria to be assessed. Decisive action should be further undertaken to ensure systemic work to build effective, fully operational institutions with meaningful participation by civil society organisations (CSOs). This will help to combat the risk of state capture by political interests, heighten awareness of the accountability of all stakeholders involved and ensure inclusiveness and transparency in all reform and

FIGURE 6-8 REX/453-1.2

This unit is transparent in its attempts to shape the wider European institutional discourse because of the use of ‘encourage’. Using the cultural ‘participatory democracy’, there is an attempt to make an objective link to ‘civil society’, through the formalised (and therefore objective) CSOs and building ‘effective, fully operational institutions’, which is discursively similar to the previously mentioned ‘democratic institutions’ and it is associated with institutional democracy.¹¹⁵ This is, like the discursive practises of the CoR, spilling cultural democracy over into institutional democracy, which better marries the institutions’ independent and EU institutional remits.

The fourth instance of ‘democr’ is in REX/453-1.4 (figure 6.9):¹¹⁶

The EESC welcomes the Commission's clear message that an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and acknowledges its political support for creating a much more supportive and enabling environment for civil society, including a meaningful consultation process with civil society in policy-making. This is a key component for satisfactorily fulfilling the political criteria, and could also represent a possible benchmark in the accession negotiations.

FIGURE 6-9 REX/453-1.4

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁵ CSOs in the EU, are civil society organisations that are non-state actors and local authorities that are privileged partners of the EU. They are involved in the policy formation process and service delivery, operating in European Neighbourhood countries.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

This unit is the reaffirmation of an objective discursive chain of equivalence, as highlighted by the EC. Here ‘civil society’ is articulated as a ‘crucial component’ of ‘any democratic system’. For the EESC, it is seen as important to reaffirm this objective component because it would increase any possible hegemony or contestation from other EU Institutions if it were not acknowledged.

The fifth instance of ‘democr’ is in REX/453-2.8 (figure 6.10):¹¹⁷

The EESC raises serious concerns in view of the considerable backsliding in several countries in respect of freedom of association, of assembly and expression and independence of the media (Montenegro, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey in particular but also Serbia in terms of a legislative framework for freedom of assembly). These are prerequisites for establishing solid democracies and allowing a vibrant civil society to develop. In this respect, the full implementation of the DG Enlargement Guidelines for Civil Society Development in Enlargement Countries 2014-2020 and the DG Enlargement Guidelines for EU Support to Media Freedom and Media Integrity 2014-2020 is strongly supported. One challenge that remains, however, is how to ensure media outreach to European-based audiences, who also need to be aptly informed about the meaning and dynamics of enlargement policy.

FIGURE 6-10 REX/453-2.8

Here, as seen with the CoR previously, there is a change in audience and this changes the discursive approach. The EESC’s focus shifts from the EU Institutions to a dual focus of the EU Institutions and pre-accession countries. This is evidenced in the openness in which the EESC criticises several countries on general freedom-based terms, which centre around the nodal points, ‘solid democracies’ and ‘vibrant civil society’, which are political moments. There is also the use of ‘European-based audience’, which discursively opens the responsibility of implementation of the DG Enlargement Guidelines for *Civil Society Development in Enlargement Countries 2014-2020* and the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

DG Enlargement Guidelines for *EU Support to Media Freedom and Media Integrity 2014-2020* to both pre-accession countries and EU Institutions.¹¹⁸

Here ‘solid democracies’ and a ‘vibrant civil society’ are two complementary nodal points around which various freedoms gain an articulated meaning. The discursive approach is to appeal to as many in the audience as possible through articulating these various freedoms, which, for the EU are institutionally objective and unambiguous around the political and ambiguous ‘solid democracies’ and ‘vibrant civil society’.

The sixth instance of ‘democr’ is REX/453-2.9 (figure 6.11):¹¹⁹

The CSOs' role in policy formulation and monitoring and, in general, in ensuring a functional democracy is crucial. The 2015 attacks on legitimacy and accountability of CSOs (in particular watchdog organisations and independent journalist organisations closely monitoring critical political processes and denouncing election frauds and political corruption) registered in some of the enlargement countries raise serious concerns. The EESC therefore acknowledges the need to boost communication and dialogue in all processes and in particular to reach out to citizens from both EU and enlargement countries.

FIGURE 6-11 REX/453-2.9

This unit, as the point directly following REX/543-2.8, maintains its audience focus on both EU Institutions and pre-accession countries because of the role that the EU and pre-accession countries should play in boosting communication. Here, the institutionally-defined and therefore objective entities in the CSOs are articulated around the contestable and political nodal point of ‘functional democracy’.

The use of objective moments articulated around political nodal point, as seen in REX/543-2.8 (figure 6.10) and REX/543-2.9 (figure 6.11), suggests that, with a dual audience, the EESC becomes overdetermined because it struggles to establish a coherent thread and subject position between its remit as an EU Institution and its independent remit. Evidence of this is the increasingly political and vague nodal points used, which are an attempt to convince both audiences but serve to weaken the clarity of discursive

¹¹⁸ Albeit, the actual influence of the EU Institutions to implement these guidelines in reality is almost null. Only member states/pre-accession states can do so and the discussion this point being raised would only have value in The Council.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

interpretations. This would likely be the case with the CoR too but, because the CoR more clearly shifts its audience from one group to another, the discourse consequently shifts more clearly.

6.3. Draft opinion analysis

6.3.1. The European Committee of the Regions

Comparing the CIVEX Commission version with the final version of the CoR opinion *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*, we can see that there were no amendments, either tabled or approved, to go into the final opinion that related to the five units we have analysed.¹²⁰ This despite there being thirty-three amendments tabled at CoR plenary on this opinion.

[The CoR] welcomes Serbia's commitment to EU accession which has already delivered results regarding the timely completion of the screening procedure and the opening of the first negotiation chapters, and encourages Serbia to continue these positive steps (e.g. the completion of various strategic documents) by delivering on its commitments; ***however calls on authorities to put their anti-corruption drive and actions onto more durable and sustainable track; expresses concern that the positive post-2000 democratic developments could be jeopardized if authorities allow the democratic momentum to stagnate;***

FIGURE 6-12 CIVEX-VI/008-50 (AMENDED)

There was an amendment tabled by ten ALDE members, as seen in figure 6.12, that would have seen two further instances of democracy in this document.¹²¹ This amendment was rejected. This was an addition to CIVEX-VI/008-50, which warned Serbia about

¹²⁰ In the following analysis, amendments to text are noted as follows: additions are italicised and in bold. Deletions are italicised and crossed out.

¹²¹ European Committee of the Regions, *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016: plenary amendments*, (Brussels, European Union, 2016c). 34. Bart Somers (BE/ALDE), François Decoster (FR/ALDE), Agnès Durdu (LU/ALDE), Kate Feeney (IE/ALDE), Adriana Krnáčová (CZ/ALDE), Jerry Lundy (IE/ALDE), Andreja Potočnik (SV/ALDE), Jill Shortland (UK/ALDE), Satu Tietari (FI/ALDE) and Dainis Turlais (LV/ALDE).

jeopardising ‘democratic momentum’ and ‘positive post-2000 democratic developments’ if anti-corruption action is not more sustainable.¹²²

Comparing the rapporteur’s draft with the final version, we can see that there were three amendments tabled to the five units we analysed. All amendments were adopted. Firstly, it should be noted that these amendments brought an increase in the number of units from three to five between the drafts.

The first amendment is to CIVEX-VI/008-07 (figure 6.13). The changes here effect the discursive approach because local and regional governance becomes tied to democracy as a concept, making the links to local and regional governance, European values and the accession process more explicit.¹²³ These amendments were tabled by Barbara Duden (DE/PES).

welcomes the reference by the Commission to the key role of local and regional authorities (LRAs); stresses however, *as it has done on numerous previous occasions*, that better and more detailed focus is needed in future communications and reports on local and regional governance, even when there is no separate *acquis* chapter or established EU model on the issue of decentralisation and multi-level governance; considers that *ensuring strong, democratic and effective* local and regional governance is an essential element of pre-accession preparation as implementation of reforms and a consistent, credible track record *of them* is often achieved at local level, and points to the importance of subsidiarity as a key EU principle enshrined in the treaties;

FIGURE 6-13 CIVEX-VI/008-13 (AMENDED)

The second amendment is to CIVEX-VI/008-13 (figure 6.14) and the changes made reduce the exclusivity of adhering to the *acquis* to also implementing desired reforms.¹²⁴ The amendments do not alter the discursive articulation of democracy. These amendments were tabled by four EPP members.¹²⁵

¹²² European Committee of the Regions, 2016c. 34.

¹²³ European Committee of the Regions, *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016: CIVEX Commission meeting amendments*, (Brussels: European Union, 2016b) 13.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹²⁵ Dimitrios Kalogeropoulos (EL/EPP), Nikolaos Chiotakis (EL/EPP), Spyros Spyridon (EL/EPP) and Anostolos Tzitzikostas (EL/EPP).

agrees that further ~~developments~~ **progress** regarding the rule of law and fundamental rights ~~are~~ **including protection of minorities**, is indeed of paramount importance, and present a challenge for every enlargement ~~country~~ **partner**; this assessment also confirms the validity of the “new approach” to the enlargement, which is based on an increased focus on ~~chapter 23~~ the judiciary and fundamental rights and ~~chapter 24~~ on justice, freedom and security; flags up the importance of cooperation in and with the Council of Europe (CoE), and its Congress of local and regional authorities regarding

FIGURE 6-14 CIVEX-VI/008-07 (AMENDED)

The third amendment as seen in figure 6.15 was to entirely add CIVEX-VI/008-24. To not include this point would have been to not articulate the role of local and regional authorities in the development of democratic institutions.¹²⁶ This amendment was tabled by Franco Iocap (IT/PES).

emphasises the fundamental role played by regional and local democracy in strengthening democratic institutions and their administrative capacity; highlights the role of elected local and regional assemblies as spaces for civil society dialogue and growth and for discussion between decision-makers and stakeholders; points out that local and regional authorities play an important part in engaging with public opinion on European policies and integration; also emphasises that strengthening local and regional governance bolsters administrative reform and improves the delivery of public services;

FIGURE 6-15 CIVEX-VI/008-24 (AMENDED)

On the rapporteur’s draft, there were no additional tabled amendments that referenced democracy. In total, sixty-six amendments were tabled.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 28.

6.3.2. *European Economic and Social Committee*

Comparing the REX Section version and the final version of the EESC opinion *EU Enlargement Strategy*, we can see that there were no amendments either tabled or approved to go into the final version that related to the five units we have analysed. There was a total of four amendments tabled for the opinion and none of these related to democracy.

Comparing the rapporteur's draft to the REX Section opinion, we can see that, in the amendments tabled by Marina Škrabalo (HR/GRIII) on behalf of Working Group III, four amendments to the five units we analysed were tabled. In these, three were approved and one had an oral compromise.¹²⁷¹²⁸ Working Groups I and II did not table amendments to the units we analysed. The amendments increased the instances of democracy from five to six.

Figure 6.16 shows the amendments to REX/453-1.1.¹²⁹ Here we can see that the role of civil society in democracy in ensuring 'democratic standards' has been added.

The EESC supports the particular emphasis placed by the Commission on the fundamentals in the accession process, with the need for enlargement countries to prioritise reforms in the rule of law, fundamental rights, functioning of democratic institutions (including *election system reform and* public administration reform), economic development and strengthening competitiveness. ***In monitoring progress, special attention should be paid to civil society's warnings against political actions and developments that negatively affect rule of law and democratic standards.***

FIGURE 6-16 REX/453-1.1 (AMENDED)

Figure 6.17 shows the amendments to REX/453-1.2.¹³⁰ Here we can see, again, an increased focus being put on the role of civil society, although this does not discursively change this unit's articulation of civil society being an important dimension of democratic systems and the reaffirmation of the EC's expression of this point.

¹²⁷ European Economic and Social Committee, *EU Enlargement Strategy: REX Section amendments 1*, (Brussels: European Union, 2016b). 1-4.

¹²⁸ An oral compromise being that the amendment was partially accepted by the rapporteur and a compromise between the original text and the amended text is found.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

The EESC welcomes the Commission's clear message that an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and acknowledges its political support for creating a much more supportive and enabling environment for civil society; ***including meaningful consultation process with civil society in policy-making.*** This is a key component for satisfactorily fulfilling the political criteria, and could also represent a possible benchmark in the accession negotiations.

FIGURE 6-17 REX/453-1.2 (AMENDED)

Figure 6.18 shows the amendment to REX/453-2.8, with the elements that were rejected in the oral compromise.¹³¹ The only rejected element that could influence discourse is that 'freedom of assembly' was chosen in favour of 'freedom of peaceful assembly'.

~~*The few positive developments that have taken place in enlargement countries in terms of basic freedoms (of association, of peaceful assembly and expression) are acknowledged, but the*~~ ***The*** EESC raises serious concerns in view of the considerable backsliding in several countries in respect of freedom of ***peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and independence of media (Montenegro, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey in particular but also Serbia in term of legislative framework for freedom of assembly).*** These are prerequisites for establishing solid democracies and allowing a vibrant civil society to develop. In this respect, the full implementation of the DG Enlargement Guidelines for ***Civil Society Development in Enlargement Countries 2014-2020 and the DG Enlargement Guidelines for EU Support to Media Freedom and Media Integrity 2014-2020*** is strongly supported. One challenge that remains, however, is how to ensure media outreach to European-based audiences, who also need to be aptly informed about the meaning and dynamics of enlargement policy.

FIGURE 6-18 REX/453-2.8 (AMENDED)

¹³¹ Ibid., 3.

The amendment does not see the discursive understanding (of freedom being vital to ensuring democracy) does not change. The amendments attempt to add greater objectivity by including more specific examples to support those points around the political nodal points of ‘solid democracies’ and ‘vibrant civil society’.

Figure 6.19 shows the amendments to REX/453-2.9.¹³² Here we can see, again, the overall message does not change but further objectivity is sought through further references to specific instances, adding references to specific attacks to both watchdog organisations and independent journalist organisations, monitoring ‘critical political process’.

The CSOs' role in policy formulation and monitoring and, in general, in ensuring a functional democracy is crucial. The 2015 attacks on *the legitimacy and* accountability of CSOs (in particular watchdog organisations *and independent journalist organisations closely monitoring critical political processes and denouncing election frauds and political corruption*) registered in some of the enlargement countries raise serious concerns. The EESC therefore acknowledges the need to boost communication and dialogue in all processes and in particular to reach out to citizens from both EU and enlargement countries.

FIGURE 6-19 REX/453-2.9 (AMENDED)

6.4. Social analysis

Looking at figure 6.1, we can generally delimit the timeframe of social analysis between 10 November 2015 and 18 February 2016 for the EESC and between 10 November 2015 and 16 June 2016 for the CoR.

For us, all social practises that have shaped the discursive understanding of these texts are discursive events and practises of discourses. We focus particularly on the concept of subject position and how this shapes discourses. As previously discussed, the actors (the CoR, EESC and the rapporteurs as well as those members who contributed amendments) occupy multiple positions simultaneously and these can be either conflicting or

¹³² Ibid., 4.

harmonious. Given the discursive genre, specific subject positions become more or less relevant. In the cases of the CoR and EESC, the discursive genre remains political.

Specific social events, namely events in the Western Balkans and the publication of the EC communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* shaped discursive practises that are evident in our analysis. Here we outline the subject positions of key actors and situate their discursive interpretations of democracy in social events, for the CoR and EESC actors. Next, we will then outline the comparative social events for the CoR and EESC, namely events in the Western Balkans and the publication of the EC communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016*, analysing how these comparatively influence discursive productions, based on the institutions' independent and institutional remits.

6.4.1. Subject positions: The CoR

6.4.1.1. Anna Magyar

- Local politician, vice-president of Csongrád County Assembly, opinion rapporteur, member of Fidesz, Hungarian, member of EPP, member of the CIVEX Commission, member of the CoR.

Anna Magyar's individual subject position as the rapporteur and as a member of Fidesz are what most significantly shape the discourse on democracy. To be rapporteur is a dominant subject position comparative to other members. There is an expectation that the opinion will be in the greater interests of fulfilling the CoR's treaty-defined remits. However, our textual analysis shows that her position as a member of Fidesz has played a role in attempting to shape the discourse.

Socially, much was made of Viktor Orbán's and Fidesz's 'illiberal democracy', in Hungary, during our delimited timeframe. Here the understanding of democracy is characterised by top-down government, gerrymandering, low citizen engagement and weak civil society.¹³³ In the Hungarian government, the EU is vilified and, at the European-level, the degradation of European values and backsliding in democracy and the rule of law are decried. This form of democracy runs counter to European values and the wider European institutional interpretation of democracy.

¹³³ Patrick Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics* (New York: W. W Norton & Company, 2010). 162–163.

Attempts of non-usage of ‘democracy’, related to the local and regional dimension, can be seen in CIVEX-IV/008-07 (figure 6.13), the amended addition of point CIVEX-IV/008-24 (figure 6.15) and the unsuccessful amendment to CIVEX-IV/008-50 (figure 6.12), shows Magyar’s subject position and domestic social practises of Fidesz influence the interpretation of democracy in the CoR. Non-usage shows an overdetermination for Magyar. To maintain a coherent discourse, unless one discursive element is perceived as objective in one or more subject positions, she avoids the conflict by not discursively using democracy.

6.4.1.2. Barbara Duden

- Local politician, member of Hamburg city council, sole text amender, member of Social Democrats (DE), German, member of PES, member of the CIVEX Commission, member of the CoR.

6.4.1.3. Franco Iocap

- Local politician, regional councillor and president of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Council, member of the Italian Socialist Party, Italian, member of PES, member of the CIVEX Commission, member of the CoR.

The nature of Barbara Duden’s and Franco Iocap’s amendments in CIVEX-IV/008-07 (figure 6.13) and CIVEX-IV/008-24 (figure 6.15), respectively, (the emphasis on the role of local and regional authorities as a component of a multi-level administration that is also democratic) is indicative of the influence of the PES in shaping their subject positions. In June 2015, the PES Congress was held in Budapest, where they adopted the stance on democracy outlined in *For a tolerant, inclusive and democratic Europe*. This particularly criticised the perceived backsliding in the rule of law and democratic standards in Hungary and called for inclusive democracy, at all levels.¹³⁴ Duden’s and Iocap’s amendments in CIVEX-IV/008-07 and CIVEX-IV/008-24, respectively, are in line with this document, as are the other amendments both tabled.¹³⁵ For instance, Duden also amended the contentious ‘protection of cultural and religious heritage’ to ‘respect of cultural and religious diversity’ and both put the refugee crisis more on the opinion’s agenda.¹³⁶ For Duden, Iocap and the PES, the amendments served as an opportunity to shape the discourse because the PES perceive their interpretation of democracy as more

¹³⁴ The Party of European Socialists, “For a Tolerant, Inclusive and Democratic Europe,” adopted at *PES 10th Congress 12th and 13th June 2015, Budapest* (Budapest: PES, 2015).

¹³⁵ Duden tabled nine amendments in total, while Iocap tabled three amendments in total.

¹³⁶ European Committee of the Regions, 2016b 23.

harmonious with the wider objective European institutional discourse, unlike the discourse espoused by Fidesz.

6.4.2. Social events: The CoR

6.4.2.1. Pre-accession countries

Analysing the opinion, there is little evidence of specific social events in the pre-accession countries that influence the discourse on democracy. The rejected amendment on CIVEX-IV/008-50 (figure 6.12), regarding corruption in Serbia, shows a conscious attempt to make specific discursive moments regarding democracy non-emergent. Despite this, elsewhere, the refugee crisis shaped discourse on other matters. Comparing the non-emergence of specific events in relation to democracy and the keenness to reference the refugee crisis elsewhere (which amendments spun in a constructive way) can be seen as the rapporteur's previously discussed subject position playing a role.

6.4.2.2. European Commission communication

For the CoR, the EC communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* became a discursive element through its emphasis of democratic standards in pre-accession countries. Through democratic institutions, democracy is seen as an achievable (but undefined) standard. This shaped the discourse for the CoR because democracy had to be rooted particularly in this. How 'democratic standards' aligned to the local and regional dimension was through the CoR arguing for what it perceived as the objective necessities that it articulated in relation to this more institutional form of democracy.

6.4.3. Subject positions: EESC

At the EESC, we lack the clarity about which members submitted amendments at specific times. We cannot consider the subject position of those who submitted amendments because we do not know who submitted them. Of the data available, the actors and their subject positions are as follows:

6.4.3.1. Ionuț Sibian

- Executive Director at Civil Society Development Foundation, Chair of the Federation of International Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (FOND),

Team Europe Member, opinion rapporteur, Romanian, member of Working Group III, member of the REX Section, member of EESC.

The subject position of Ionuț Sibian is one that is not in conflict with the remit of EESC as an independent body. His professional experience is that of enabling civil society and NGOs. This shapes the discourse on democracy by particularly emphasising the importance of civil society as a form of democracy. The amendments made to the units that we analysed suggest that, in relativity to the remit of the EESC as an EU Institution, his subject position is weaker. Specificities that attempt to make the discourse more objective, such as in REX/453-2.8 (figure 6.18) through using incontestable examples of democratic challenges.

6.4.3.2. Working Group III:

- Civil society representatives from various interests of civil society.¹³⁷

As a group, the subject position of Working Group III is influenced by events related to civil society in pre-accession countries. This is evidenced in the reasons given for proposed amendments.¹³⁸ REX/453-1.1 (figure 6.16) is amended in specific consideration to the ‘acute political crisis’ in FYROM and the need for free and fair elections to occur before April 2016, with ‘democratic standards’ discursively flowing from this justification.

Amendments to REX/453-2.8 (figure 6.18) refer to specific countries who the EESC perceive to have breached ‘fundamental freedoms’ (which are elaborated on in the opinion as ‘freedom of expression’ ‘freedom of assembly’, ‘independence of the media’). Working Group III makes specific references to reports by NGOs, the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), Human Rights Watchdog and Reporters Without Borders.¹³⁹ These organisations have no direct role in the EESC. Working Group III’s subject position is such that these reports are directly informing Working Group III’s interpretations. This is seen in the orally compromised amendment that proposed the use of ‘freedom of peaceful assembly’, in REX/453-2.8, which is taken directly from the

¹³⁷ As the EESC states: farmers' organisations, small businesses, the crafts sector, the professions, social economy actors (mutualities, cooperatives, foundations and non-profit associations), consumer organisations, environmental organisations, and associations representing the family, women's and gender equality issues, youth, minority and underprivileged groups, persons with disabilities, the voluntary sector and the medical, legal, scientific and academic communities.

¹³⁸ European Economic and Social Committee, 2016b. 1.

¹³⁹ Balkan Civil Society Development Network. *Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development & Progress Reports and Enlargement Strategy 2015: Background Analysis* (2015). Human Rights Watchdog. *A Difficult Profession: Media Freedom Under Attack in the Western Balkans* (2015). Reporters without Borders. “Mounting concern about EU and neighbouring countries.” *Reporters without Borders*, October 12, 2015.

BCSDN's report *Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development & Progress Reports and Enlargement Strategy*, alongside the examples of countries, that are found in this report and the two other reports referenced, which are also given as the justifications for amendments to REX/453-2.9 (figure 6.19).¹⁴⁰

Working Group III is more invested in a subject position that lends itself to focusing on democracy than either Working Group I or II. This is seen in the dominance of units, that we analysed in our content analysis, coming from opinions drafted by Working Group III members. This subject position is such that they are more deeply invested in events which threaten democracy and have a deeper engagement with organisations that attempt to ensure democracy. This is evidenced in amendments made by Working Group II to other points in the opinion.¹⁴¹ There is a discursive practise of referring to sources at a macro-level. The discursive understanding of specific social events is defined by the BBC, ARD and Amnesty International.¹⁴² The greater investment by Working Group III has the effect of making the views of Working Group III on democracy seem more objective because they are positioned in the discourse as an expert by the other working groups and therefore by the REX Section and the EESC. There is no hegemony between the interests of Working Group I, II or III shaping of discourse on democracy and this is why there are so few amendments, compared to the CoR opinion. Of those amendments, none served to challenge discursive understandings but to make more objective for the purposes of the wider European institutional discourse.

6.4.4. Social events: EESC

6.4.4.1. Pre-accession countries

The discursive elements that influence the EESC most significantly, regarding interpreting democracy, are those social events outlined in amendments.¹⁴³

These events were as follows:

¹⁴⁰ Balkan Civil Society Development Network, 2015. 3.

¹⁴¹ European Economic and Social Committee, *EU Enlargement Strategy: REX Section amendments 2*, (Brussels: European Union, 2016c).

¹⁴² Mark Lowen, "Turkey 'acting illegally' over Syria refugees deportations." *BBC*, January 15, 2016, accessed May 15, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35135810>. WDR Pressedesk, "Türkische Regierung schiebt syrische Flüchtlinge ins Kriegsgebiet ab EU-Kommission will Hinweisen nachgehen." *ARD*, January 14, 2016, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://www.presseportal.de/pm/6694/3224451>. Amnesty International, *Europe's Gatekeeper: Unlawful detention and deportation of refugees from Turkey* (Amnesty International, 2015).

¹⁴³ European Economic and Social Committee, 2016b. 1-3.

- Attacks against journalists throughout the Western Balkans and Turkey, as highlighted extensively by Human Rights Watchdog and the perceived ineffective state responses. Detainment without trial of journalists, censorship and media biases, cyber-attacks;¹⁴⁴
- Lack of legitimacy in FYROM and attacks on CSOs;
- Crime and corruption;

Throughout the examples given, there is a steady discursive shaping of opinion through the sheer weight of numerous events. ‘The Balkans’ already shapes a negative discursive image. In this sense, there is not one discursive event needed to articulate the need for change and prescribe the fulfilment of a specific interpretation of democracy. All small events continually reaffirm the discursively objective interpretation of the region.

6.4.4.2. European Commission communication

For the EESC, the EC communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* became a discursive element through its emphasis of civil society as one of the four pillars to development. The EC gave civil society an elevated platform in its conception of pre-accession and this meant the EESC’s independent remit was already reinforced. As part of the EESC’s EU institutional remit, democracy and European values are only required to be a component. It is for this reason that we see discursively opening up to using ‘European fundamentals’ which is a term that the EC chose to use too. Making exceptions for democracy or European values would not play any role because, by referencing both European fundamentals and civil society, both remits are being fulfilled, regardless of coherence.

6.5. Discourse analysis discussion

Considering the multiple dimensions of our analysis, we can see the emergence of several trends. Firstly, both institutions funnel their interpretations through the tools of other EU Institutions. Because the EC’s communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* simultaneously elevated civil society as a pillar of democracy and did not reference the local and regional dimension, the CoR and EESC attempted to fill democracy with meaning that occupied the two comparative subject positions. The CoR was compelled

¹⁴⁴ Human Rights Watchdog, 2015.

to discursively emphasise the local and regional dimension, relative to civil society and participatory democracy. The EESC was compelled to discursively reaffirm its understanding through a European institutional discourse. Both institutions base discursive elements on other bodies too, with the CoR referencing the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the EESC referencing BCSDN, Human Rights Watchdog and Reporters Without Borders in specific units. Given the content and subject matter of other opinions, these positions would change but both institutions will be required to discursively stress either one or both subject positions.

Both institutions' discursive approaches and subject positions change when they change their audiences. For the CoR, there was a change from the audience being other EU Institutions to pre-accession countries and, for the EESC, there was a change from other EU Institutions to a dual focus of EU Institutions and pre-accession countries. This change can be better understood in Discourse Theory in terms of subject position. The CoR addresses a singular audience and creates stronger fields of discursivity, compared to the EESC, which is occupying two subject positions and addresses two audiences. The EESC has a weaker discourse in these instances, as a result. The EESC resorts to using vague and political nodal points, around which it articulates very objective and incontestable moments.¹⁴⁵ The additional dimension of multiple audiences overdetermines the subject position of the EESC and would do so for both institutions and contests discursive interpretations if the CoR were to also address two audiences simultaneously.

The amendments tell us of the role of the individual and the group in shaping discourse. Both opinions had amendments that altered the discursive interpretation of democracy in these opinions. For the CoR, these served to heighten the emphasis of democracy and the local and regional dimension. For the EESC, these served to further emphasise the European dimension and the interpretation of democracy, tied to the EESC's institutional remit. The rapporteurs attempted to shape the discourses in a way that was more reflective of their subject position. The amendments attempted to counter this, and they instead positioned the discourses on more objective ground.

The perceived position of an individual or group as an expert is important in shaping a discourse. This was seen with Working Group III in the EESC. For the position of expert

¹⁴⁵ Note the example of 'vibrant civil society', 'solid democracies' and EU guidelines articulated around these.

to be given, the content to which one is shaping must be deeply ingrain as an element in the authors subject position, with no others to be seen to have such an element in their subject positions. For the EESC this has the effect of allowing Working Group III to discursively dominate because their views are perceived as best informed. This is where we see a discursive weakness of the EESC because Working Group III is permitted to use vague discursive articulations that, externally, would appear political, but, internally, they are seen as objective. For the CoR, this does not happen, and we see more objectively articulated moments. The internal contestation over the discourse does not permit vague articulations in the CoR.

7. Discussion and Findings

7.1. Discourse Theory

7.1.1. Content analysis

The following is the summarised discussion of our content analysis, related to Discourse Theory, as elaborated on in Chapter 5:

- A difference in the perceived objectiveness of the terms ‘participatory democracy’ and ‘local and regional democracy’ is shown through the higher comparative usage of terms to interpret democracy at the EESC, compared to the CoR. The higher the rate of different terms, the more contested and less objective the term is;
- The choice bias for which general values are more favoured between the CoR and EESC grows out of their discursive objectivity in the wider European institutional discourse and their applicability to the independent discourses in either the CoR or EESC. ‘The rule of law’ is highly used by both institutions because it is heavily tied to democracy in the wider European institutional discourse and the combined articulation is objective. The CoR favours human rights and the EESC favours freedom because they are mutually applicable to ‘democracy as local and regional’ and ‘democracy as civil society’, respectively;
- The CoR’s high usage of the uncategorised ‘civil society’ and the categorised ‘citizen-driven democracy’ compared to the EESC’s low usage of the uncategorised ‘local and regional power’ and the categorised ‘local government-driven democracy’ suggests a spillover because of the CoR’s self-perceived greater ‘power’ (decision-making influence), based on Howard’s hypothesis;¹⁴⁶
- The parity of European values to either ‘local government-driven democracy’ or ‘citizen-driven democracy’ shows that there is a consistent trend in the extent to which the institutions interpret democracy, relative to their treaty-defined remits. The consistency of the data also suggests that the power of both institutions remains comparable.

¹⁴⁶ Howard, 2013. 55-56.

7.1.2. Discourse analysis

The following is the summarised discussion of our discourse analysis, related to Discourse Theory, as elaborated on in Chapter 6:

- Both institutions channel their discursive interpretations through other EU Institutions and through other actors (that occupy the same subject positions). Here, the position of the EC compels the EESC to occupy its position as an EU Institution, while the CoR emphasises the local and regional dimension and its independent remit;
- Changes in audience changes the discursive approach and subject position of both institutions. The additional dimension of multiple audiences overdetermines the subject positions of institutions and contests discursive interpretations, compared to a singular audience;
- Both the individual's and the group's subject positions have roles in shaping the discourse, while the amendments serve to make the discourse more objective and representational of the institutions;
- The EESC relate their discursive interpretation of democracy to a higher rate of social events, compared to the CoR, which uses comparatively few;
- The position of expert can be created when content and subject position overlap. This serves to make discursive articulations vaguer. This occurs in the EESC and not the CoR.

7.1.3. Discussion

The intention of our two research methods were to be complimentary and to use both to answer the research questions. Our content analysis was used to answer the extent to which interpretations vary, while our discourse analysis was used to explore the nature of any possible variance; how and why variations occurred. There was limited scope to focus on overlapping results, however, we did find results which could help us better explain or critique other results.

For the concept of democracy, our content analysis showed that both institutions only show moderate variations when comparing their dual roles as EU Institutions and as

independent bodies. Relative to European values, the local and regional dimension, for the CoR, and citizen-dimension, for the EESC, were comparable. This trend appeared in multiple versions of this analysis, including in the uncategorised analysis of European values and civil society/local and regional democracy. Statistics were in favour of European values and the institutions' roles as EU Institutions. There were variations in which European values were most highly considered. With the rule of law, both considered significantly by both institutions, human rights were more significant for the CoR, while the EESC highly considered both human rights and freedom.

Our data showed that both institutions occupy two subject positions but any suggestion that, as institutions, these positions would be at conflict or create an overdetermined position is rejected. Both institutions attached meaning to democracy through the complementarity of terms to their institutional and their independent remits. As seen in our discourse analysis, overdetermination is only evident when addressing multiple audiences.

A notable difference between the two institutions was the CoR's greater focus on the citizen dimension alongside the local and regional dimension, compared to the underrepresentation of the local and regional dimension by the EESC.

This difference is something we can hypothesise about with the results of our discourse analysis. As previously mentioned, because the EC's communication *EU Enlargement Strategy 2015-2016* simultaneously elevated civil society as a pillar of democracy and did not reference the local and regional dimension, both institutions were forced to attempt to fill democracy with meaning that occupied the two comparative subject positions. The CoR was compelled to discursively emphasise the local and regional dimension, relative to civil society and participatory democracy. The EESC was compelled to discursively reaffirm its understanding through a European institutional discourse. If we were to discursively analyse all opinions, we would be able to prove if this was a consistent trend that influenced the CoR's more dominant consideration for civil society, compared to the EESC's low consideration for the local and regional dimension.

Furthermore, through our discourse analysis, we found that the CoR and EESC comparatively approach the creation of discursive chains of equivalence differently. For the CoR, discourse tends to be built using objective nodal points (for example, democratic

institutions), in the context of the European institutional discourse, articulated in a way to make the local and regional dimension a key element of these objective moments. The EESC, however, articulates democracy through a chain that has discursively political moments as nodal points. These nodal points (for example, ‘vibrant civil society’ and ‘solid democracies’) are articulated in relation to objective moments, in the context of the European institutional discourse. These objective moments reinforce the place of civil society. Social events also played an uneven role in shaping chains. The CoR less frequently alluded to specifics but the EESC relied heavily on these to inform their discourses.

Elsewhere, subject positions shape the discourses differently. The role of the individual and the role of the group can be seen to shape the discourses in specific ways. As our analysis showed, Magyar occupied multiple subject positions as an individual that conflicted with the subject positions of other members and the treaty-defined subject positions of the CoR. For the EESC, Sibian also occupied a subject position more weighted to the EESC’s independent remit, which amendments adapted to also fit the EESC’s institutional remit. In this, we can reject the homogeneity of the group subject position being harmonious with individual subject positions, as suggested by Mouffe and Laclau.¹⁴⁷

At the EESC, Working Group III could occupy the position of expert, which is a trend we hypothesise is more habitual at the EESC, given the vocational nature of members and groups. The CoR, which is based firmly on political groups and members who predominately occupy the subject positions of politicians, is less likely to position members or groups as experts.

7.2. Literature

7.2.1. Cultural democracy and institutional democracy

To consider our literature review, and our discussion of democracy as a simplified concept (incorporating both elements of cultural democracy and institutional democracy), can we see a comparative trend in the EESC and the CoR? As highlighted in our content

¹⁴⁷ Laclau and Mouffe, 2001. 43.

analysis, both institutions extensively use terms which we categorised as either institutional democracy or cultural democracy (see figures 5.3 and 5.4). Figure 5.4 shows the EESC uses a higher rate of democratic terms associated with cultural democracy compared to the CoR. For the EESC, ‘participatory democracy’ has a more natural link to civil society. For the CoR, there is higher rate of institutional democracy terms, as seen in figure 5.3, ‘democratic institutions’ and ‘democratic governance’ are frequent terms.¹⁴⁸ ‘Local and regional democracy’ does not lend itself to a clear categorisation as being either institutional or cultural democracy, unlike ‘participatory democracy’.

Looking at our discourse analysis we can see that both institutions discursively allow spillover between cultural and institutional democracy to occur and our analysis shows the relativity of terms that argue for either cultural or institutional democracy being complementary to the other. For example, between CIVEX-VI/008-24 (figure 6.5) and REX/453-1.2 (figure 6.8). The CoR and EESC make the links between cultural and institutional democracy in discursively similar ways. The components used to articulate cultural and institutional democracy are guided by the subject matter of the opinions. Overwhelmingly ‘institutional’ is explicitly ‘democratic institutions’. Overwhelmingly, ‘cultural’ is ‘participatory democracy’. The articulations for both make the spillover and understanding seem natural for both institutions. This is because the simplified understanding of democracy is objective and unpolitical.

7.2.2. Otherhood

The suggestion of Neyer that the EU Institutions use ‘otherhood’ in conceptualising pre-accession countries is evident in how the CoR and EESC frame democracy.¹⁴⁹ As seen in our discourse analysis, the CoR does this through non-specific suggestions it makes regarding pre-accession countries. For the CoR, reforms are a general process of a greater conformity to European values and the process of greater regional autonomy. In specifically addressing Montenegro in CIVEX-VI/008-46 (figure 6.6), the CoR stresses the need for elections, again at all levels. For the EESC, reforms are more linked to the perceived backsliding in European values and the specific attacks on civil society and on journalism, as highlighted in REX/453-2.8 (figure 6.10). Generalities for the EESC of the role of civil society in fighting corruption and allowing for inclusiveness, legitimacy and

¹⁴⁸ 6 for ‘democratic institutions’ and 4 for ‘democratic governance’.

¹⁴⁹ Neyer, 2012. 73.

transparency, as highlighted in REX/453-1.2 (figure 6.8) and REX/453-2.9 (figure 6.11). There is a clear normative assumption from both the CoR and EESC, based on European values but these normative assumptions also extend to their independent remits.

7.2.3. Normative power Europe

To critique the concept of normative power Europe, as understood by Manners, we can firstly see references to terms that can be categorised as what Manners claims are ‘minor’ values.¹⁵⁰ As seen in our content analysis (in figures 5.1 and 5.2), both institutions reference ‘good governance’, ‘anti-discrimination’ (as a category, incorporating terms such as ‘tolerance’) and ‘social solidarity’ (as a category, incorporating terms such as ‘pluralism’ and ‘unity’) when defining democracy. ‘Sustainable development’ only had one instance, which was at the CoR. Our discourse analysis was at a more micro scope than our content analysis, but it showed the CoR particularly utilised the concept of ‘good governance’ as an articulation between democratic institutions and the local and regional dimension. The EESC, through its institutional remit and addressing pre-accession countries, advocated for anti-discrimination against CSOs and journalists. Our analyses suggest that Manners’ claim about there being minor values is valid.

We can see little correlation between what makes democracy or other European values quintessentially ‘European’. There is no exclusivity between the interpretations of democracy in either the CoR or EESC and Europe or Europeanness. Our content analysis highlights the sporadic and highly contestable instances of democracy being tied to a ‘EU way of life’ and that ‘democratic standards’ mean ‘closer ties to the EU’, as articulated by the EESC. Our discourse analysis suggests that what makes these values ‘European’ is their fundamentality for becoming an EU member.

7.2.4. Decision-making influence

Our analyses provide a greater insight into the perceived decision-making influence of the CoR and EESC, if we are to uncritically accept Howard’s hypothesis.¹⁵¹ It must be noted that, as evidenced in our content analysis, when comparing European values to the institutions’ independent remits, there is comparatively little difference in the relative

¹⁵⁰ Manners, 2002.

¹⁵¹ Howard, 2013. 55-56.

perceived decision-making influence that both institutions have. We determine, however, that the CoR regards itself as the more powerful institution in the interinstitutional framework because of the tendency to interpret democracy as what we categorised as ‘citizen-driven democracy’ and in the context of civil society. This is something that the EESC did not do relative to what we categorised as ‘local government-driven democracy’ and the local and regional dimension.

To consider our discourse analysis, we see the CoR take up participatory democracy as part of its EU Institutional remit, rather than out of greater independence to do so. This could be a trend that extends to other opinions, which we did not discursively analyse. We do not have the data to confirm if this is the case and if this is a possible conflict between our analyses. To arrive at a conclusion on this point, in our discourse analysis, the trend of the EESC to not discursively consider the local and regional dimension (as evident in our content analysis) is continued. This would still indicate, therefore, a wider trend of the EESC interpreting the local and regional dimension of democracy.

Our analyses cannot critically assess the validity of Howard’s hypothesis on the decision-making influence of the EU Institutions and such would need to be done with greater consideration of the EC, the EP and The Council. This is a further analysis we would strongly advocate for.

8. Conclusion

Our research shows that both the CoR and EESC interpret democracy as part of their institutional and independent remits in roughly equivalent ways. Both remits and interpretations of democracy occupy near 50-50 frequency rates. An important difference is the CoR's increased focus on civil society as a component of democracy, which the EESC did not equate with the local and regional dimension in the same way. We therefore conclude that perceived decision-making influence is stronger at the CoR than at the EESC. However, our discourse analysis may have indicated that the nature of this and all discursive interpretation was due to the social practises of other bodies, particularly the EU Institutions. This is not something we could definitively prove in our analyses, given the limited scope of our discourse analysis. To better understand or prove this would be to carry out a more extensive and wide-ranging discourse analysis, particularly at the level of social analysis, of the opinions of the CoR and/or EESC.

The ways in which discursive interpretations varying at the CoR and EESC are seen in the use of audience, specificity of social events and the position of expert.

Both institutions change their discursive approaches as they change audience, increasingly using otherhood and their institutional positions to critique pre-accession countries, whom they are addressing. The CoR maintains a singular focus when changing audiences but the EESC takes on a dual focus. This is an action that we conclude overdetrmines discourse of the EESC in the specific instance in which it occurs.

The EESC, and specifically Working Group III use more specific social events to make their discursive interpretations of democracy more objective, compared to the CoR, which uses a more grounded understanding of terms to creative objectivity. This is a general difference in discursive approach between the institutions.

At the EESC, we see Working Group III occupy the position of expert and we hypothesise that this is more prevalent at the EESC, compared to the CoR, because of the vocational nature of the EESC. This means that Working Group III, can shape the discourse with less hegemonic contestation over what is perceived to be objective. This, we see, weakens overall discursive objectivity because Working Group III have monopolised certain terms; being closer to their remit, as a subgroup of the EESC.

One area this thesis did not touch upon was the wider social and political implications of such interpretations of democracy. This kind of analysis could take place at multiple levels, depending on the level of comparisons one would wish to explore; internally (within the institutions and the influence on members, political groups, the administrative staff etc.), within the context of local and regional politicians or civil society actors in the Western Balkans, EaP or beyond, interinstitutionally (in other EU Institutions), or any range of actors with which the CoR and EESC have the potential to influence. This kind of research would be complimentary to our own research because it would build upon interpretations of democracy and link our suggestions regarding perceived decision-making influence with a deeper practical and real-world decision-making influence of the CoR and EESC.

The academic value of our research comes in two forms. Firstly, this type of research, specific to the CoR and EESC has not happened before. Through our content and discourse analyses, we provide a new avenue into how the under-considered CoR and EESC can be academically approached. Secondly, our use of Discourse Theory, combined with our mixed methods can provide both a template and platform in how normative power Europe and the EU Institutions are studied in the future.

Our results have academic implications because we have highlighted a deeper internal perception of decision-making influence at the CoR and EESC. We can say that, in the époque that we analysed, we have achieved a conclusive understanding into the interpretations of democracy at the CoR and EESC; of which can be considered by other academics exploring the concept of democracy in other EU Institutions.

The practical implications of our research are primarily to show that both institutions walk a consistent line when it comes to interpreting democracy as either independent or institutional actors. This is appreciable for other EU Institutions and actors in the EU sphere.

The limitations for this thesis come from what it can tell us outside of our delimited timeframe. For Laclau and Mouffe, internal and external factors can destabilise our understanding of what is objective (or ‘given’) and what is political, as we attempt to narrow down our discursive understanding before circumstances reimagine and redefine discourses again. In this view, we can only ever take a snapshot of comparative discursive interpretations. Both institutions’ or other institutions’ comparative roles may change in

the future, relative to treaty changes, the nature of understanding of European values may be readdressed, as is being discussed regarding attempts to stop EU internal backsliding in democracy and the rule of law. Circumstances regarding democracy and accession may internally or externally change and all or one of these changes will change how the CoR and EESC discursively interpret democracy. Therefore, we delimited our topic to such an extent to gain as solid a base for analysis through Discourse Theory as possible. In this, provided any future changes do not comparatively change the functioning and capacity of either the CoR or EESC unequally, we are confident in our thesis' merits beyond being merely a comparative snapshot of interpretations of democracy.

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