'Collaborative Competition'

Stance-taking and Positioning in the European Parliament

Nazlı Avdan

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To Tayfun

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List of Abbreviations

ALDE	Group of Alliance of Liberals & Democrats for Europe
CA	Conversation Analysis
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CRE	Compte Rendu in Extenso (in French) for Verbatim Report of Proceedings
DA	Discourse Analysis
ECR	European Conservatives & Reformists
EFD	Europe of Freedom & Direct democracy Group
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left–Nordic Green Left
MEP	Members of the Parliament
NI	Non-attached Members of the European Parliament
PI	Parliamentary Interaction
PPE	Group of European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
Q&A	Question and Answer
S&D	Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the EP
Verts/ALE	Group of Greens/ European Free Alliance

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ABSTRACT

‘Collaborative Competition’:

Stance-taking and Positioning in the European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) is the scene where certain issues concerning over 500 million ‘Europeans’ are publicly debated and where politically relevant groupings are discursively co-constructed. While the Members of the Parliament (MEPs) pursue their political agendas, intergroup boundaries are drawn, reinforced, and/or transgressed. Speakers constantly take stances on behalf of groupings in relation to some presupposed other groupings and argue what differentiates ‘Self’ from ‘Others’. This study examines patterns of language use by the MEPs as they engage in the contextually and historically situated dialogical processes of intergroup positioning and stance-taking. It further focuses on the strategic and competitive activities of *grouping*, *grounding*, and *alignment* in order to reveal the dynamic construction of intergroup boundaries.

The study is based on a collection of Blue-card question-answer sequences from the plenary debates held at the EP in 2011, when the Sovereign Debt Crisis had been stabilized to some degree but still evoked plenty of controversy.

Theoretically the study builds on Stance Theory (Du Bois, 2007), Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), and several broadly social constructivist approaches to discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995).

The analysis shows that intergroup positioning in the EP emerges as what I call a ‘collaborative competition’ between contradictory ideologies and political agendas. The MEPs strategically manipulate their opponents’ prior or projected utterances in order to set up positions for self, a grouping he or she stands for, and thereby its adversaries. All participants engage in the maintenance and negotiation of intergroup boundaries, even though the boundaries hardly ever coincide between the different speakers. They discursively fence off some imaginary territories, leaving their adversaries with vague positions.

When asking Blue-card questions, the MEPs use a particular turn organization, which involves routine forms of interactional units, namely addressing, question framing and question forms, each of which is shown to contribute to stance-taking. A dynamic model of stance-taking is suggested, allowing for a fluid transformation of the stance object as well as the discursively constructed stance-takers.

While Blue-card questions are meant to serve as a structured procedure for eliciting information from a speaker, the analysis demonstrates that the MEPs accomplish various divergent actions that serve intergroup positioning. The dissertation thus contributes to the understanding of the discursive games played in the EP as the MEPs strive to construct social realities that fit their political ends.

Keywords: Parliamentary Interaction, Questions and Questioning, the European Parliament, Stance-taking, Intergroup Positioning.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Is Europe a geographical entity? A historical phenomenon? Or a religious, cultural or political idea? Where are its boundaries located? These questions are sources of controversy between those who debate what Europe was, is, and should be. Indeed, those who would like to influence its future have been utilizing the concept of ‘Europe’ in order to legitimize their ideologies and proposals for the future of the European Union (henceforth EU). Disputations over definitions of ‘Europe’ provide the politicians with a conceptual repertoire, where they may find standpoints for their arguments.

The ideal of a ‘United Europe’ has not only been causing controversies among those who are committed to one definition of Europe but has also been triggering resistance from nationalists to the efforts to unite the governance of the Member States. The European Parliament (henceforth EP) is one of the scenes where tensions between diverse groupings become apparent as the Members of the European Parliament (henceforth MEPs) endeavour to influence the Union's governance. This uncompromisable ‘unity’ is debated in the EP over and over again under various agenda topics as the MEPs take stances on behalf of groupings in relation to some presupposed other groupings and argue what differentiates the ‘Self’ and its grouping from the ‘Others’.

It may well be asserted that the concept of ‘Europe’ constitutes one of the most disputed concepts in the EP, which has been regarded as one of the determiners of the boundaries of the Union. Hence, attempts are made to define and redefine ‘European’ and ‘Europeanness’ in relation to inconsistent definitions of ‘Europe’. The concept is, in Anward’s (2005; 2014) terms *recycled with différance* as the MEPs manipulate Other's prior or projected future utterances, based on a presupposition that the meaning of ‘Europe’ is obvious to all.

Language is one tool that members of parliament use in their efforts to make the maximum influence on the meaning making processes. The linguistic and interactional mechanisms that speakers use in designing their speeches in parliamentary settings has generated a tremendous amount of research that has employed a number of different analytical methods.

There is a significant body of literature focusing on the MEPs’ behaviour as they carry out their everyday institutional practices (see Abélès, 1992; 1993; Abélès et al., 1993; Busby, 2013; Meserve, et al., 2007; Wodak, 2009; 2015)¹. French anthropologist Marc Abélès (1992)

¹ For an elaborative collection of references see Amy Busby, 2013.

conducted one of the earliest ethnographic studies on the EP. He provided insights into the everyday life of MEPs and the ever-incomplete project of European integration. In another prominent work on the MEPs everyday practice of politics, Ruth Wodak (2009; 2015) tackled the interplay between backstage and frontstage politics in the EP context. Amy Busby's (2013) inter-disciplinary dissertation moved in the same direction with Abélès (1992, 1993, and Abélès et al., 1993) and Wodak (2009; 2015) and explored the role of the national party delegations and EP groups in MEPs' everyday practice of politics in the corridors of the EP.

Research from a pragmatic perspective to parliamentary discourse mostly focused on *politeness* in political talk (Bevitori, 2004; Christie, 2002; David et al. 2009; Harris, 2001; Ilie; 2000; 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2004a; 2005; 2010a; 2010b, Perez de Ayala, 2001), the use of *advocacy vocabulary* (Bara et al. 2007), *adversariality* (see Sealey and Bates, 2016), and *epistemic modality* (Vukovic, 2014). However, research on parliamentary interaction (henceforth PI) has mostly focused on national parliaments (Antaki and Leudar 2001; Bayley 1998; 1999; 2004; Carbó 1992; Chilton, 2004; Fetzer and Lauerbach eds. 2007, Ilie, 2000; 2001; 2004a; 2006; 2007; 2010a; 2010b; Miller 1997, 1999; Rojo and van Dijk, 1997; Wodak 2009; Wodak & van Dijk 2000; van Dijk; 2003, Vukovic, 2014), leaving the EP almost untouched.

The Parliament, as a site of social interaction, is influential in shaping social organization through its power to legislate and hold government. The Parliament constructs, maintains, and deconstructs the narratives of social realities through its normative and discursive functions. It does not only legislate the present and the future but also influences the telling of history. A great variety of issues that directly or indirectly interest the citizens of the EU are debated in the EP as part of the MEPs' institutional everyday practices.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Considering the influential role of the EP in the construction of social realities, it is crucial to understand how social interaction is linguistically organized in the EP. This thesis aims to respond to this need through a pragmatic analysis of the MEPs' actions that convey their stances, focusing on a type of institutionalized social interaction, Blue-card question and answer (Q&A) exchange. Particular attention is paid to the question turns. The analysis is guided by the following five research questions:

- (1) What patterns of linguistic and discourse behaviour emerge from the MEPs' real time interaction during Blue-card Q&A exchanges?

With this question, I intend to uncover the institutionalized linguistic means and discourse patterns through which the MEPs organise intergroup relations as they discursively co-construct fluid concepts indexing ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ distinctions. Processes of discursive co-construction often involve diverse imaginations of in-group and out-group.

- (2) How are the recurrent pragmatic patterns tied to the MEPs’ *stance-taking*?

The MEPs’ strategic use of linguistic devices of parliamentary discourse is influenced by and simultaneously constructed through ways in which the MEPs organize intergroup relations in the interactional setting of parliamentary debate. An analysis of the actions that convey stance provides empirical resources to trace this discursive organization.

- (3) What types of questions are recurrently used in the Blue-card procedure?

Here I search for recurrent question formats that the MEPs use for taking stance.

- (4) What are questions used for in the Blue-card procedure? (i.e. What kinds of answers do they make relevant?)

Exploring what questions are used for in the EP will enable a broad understanding of the MEPs’ pragmatic choices in their engagement in intergroup relations.

- (5) How does *stance-taking* take place in consecutive turns in the Blue-card procedure?

Parliamentary discourse constitutes a unique genre in political discourse due to strict rules and conventions enforcing a code-of-conduct. It is, therefore, interesting to study the MEPs’ strategic use of their linguistic and discursive repertoire as they manoeuvre within such a restricting genre in pursuit of their political ends. As politicians, the MEPs must display certain types of political attitude towards the issues concerning their constituencies. At a discursive level, they do so through taking stance in their turns in the Blue-card procedure.

The overall aim of this study is to show how form relates to function and how multiple discursive projects come to surface in the MEPs’ statements. Pragmatic analysis of the discursive processes that are employed in the Blue-card procedure will provide insights, above all, to PI. Furthermore, examination of linguistic patterns that are identified in the Blue-card procedure can be used for further study of routine features of the activity type of ‘talk in parliamentary settings’.

1.2 Target Audiences

This thesis aims at a wide spectrum of audiences with respect to the theoretical and methodological foundations. This thesis is also aimed at audiences interested in various topics that are evoked in the workings of the EP.

Above all the thesis contributes to the research field of political discourse analysis by providing insights into the discursive patterns that the MEPs co-construct in their engagement in the practice of debating in a parliamentary setting. In other words, the study shows the MEPs discursive and linguistic behaviour in their debating performances.

Moreover, the thesis shows the recurrent interactional formats that are found in PI. In that respect, the thesis will hopefully attract the attention of interaction analysts.

With respect to the contextual trajectories of the EU and particularly the EP that the thesis evokes, I believe the results of the study present insights into European Union Studies about the parliamentary behaviour of the MEPs and the functioning of the EP.

The study also aims to appeal to social scientists that are interested in social organization of intergroup interaction since it offers an analysis of the EP as a community of practice in interaction.

Last but not least, I hope that the findings will prove useful to ordinary people, the EU citizens in particular, in figuring out how their representatives in the EP carry out their representative roles.

1.3 Outline of the Study

This study consists of 11 chapters in total, the first of which is this introductory chapter. The introduction chapter states the aims of the study as well as describes the motivation that has prepared for those aims. Chapter 2 first describes the data and the corpus where the data come from. Next, the chapter elaborates the methodological frameworks that guide the analysis in this thesis.

Chapter 3, entitled ‘Setting the Scene’, situates the interactional event of the Blue-card question procedure within its historical and institutional setting.

Chapter 4 elaborates the formal interactional organisation in the EP with references to the Directorate General of the EP. The chapter continues by providing a comprehensive and critical examination of Parliamentary Interaction (henceforth PI), in general, and in particular, Blue-card Q&A sequences in terms of their genre-specific features.

Chapter 5, offers an overview of the constructivist approach to social reality and social psychological approaches to intergroup relations as two theoretical bases for the understanding of human behaviour in social interaction. Specific to this thesis, these approaches to social interaction provide the lens through which I examine the MEPs discursive behaviour as they interact in the institutional setting of the EP.

Chapter 6 presents the conceptual basis of the study by defining the ways in which certain central concepts, *grouping*, *grounding*, *stance-taking*, *positioning* and *alignment*, are used in this study. This chapter offers conceptualizations for the purposes of this thesis, based on the rather broad theoretical approaches from which they have emerged.

Having laid the grounds for the study, the following four chapters present and analyse the empirical data collected from Blue-card procedure in search of answers to the initial questions. In that, these four chapters constitute the focal parts of this study. The analytical chapters examine the recurrent discursive and linguistic patterns in question turns in the EP. Chapter 7 focuses on parliamentary forms of address, where I examine both patterns of addressing and their functions in intergroup positioning. Chapter 8 focuses on prefacing statements, where the MEPs express their intention in their impending utterances. In other words, this section explores the prefacing systems specific to PI. Chapter 9 maintains the same analytical approach, while it focuses on the types of questions that the MEPs employ in the Blue-card procedure. In contrast, Chapter 10 takes a rather interactional approach and shows the shifts in stance throughout particular Blue-card Q&A sequences. This last analytical chapter explores the dynamic and temporal transitions in stance across longer sequences of PI.

Finally, Chapter 11 presents a summary and discussion of the results drawn from the four empirical chapters, along with the contextual frameworks described in Chapter 3. This chapter is both descriptive, summarizing the results of the analysis, and critical, discussing the convenience of the analytical approach adopted in this thesis.

Chapter 2 Data and Methodological Frameworks

2.1 The Data

The empirical data of this study includes both spoken and written sources. The spoken sources consist of audiovisual recordings of the plenary debates, extracted from the EP website. The written sources are comprised of verbatim reports of plenary debates issued in English and published on the Parliament's website.

2.1.1 The Corpus

The corpus of this study consists of 273 Blue-card question and answer sequences applied by the MEPs in the plenary debates held in 2011, during the transition from the shocking first three years of the European Debt Crisis to a period when the crisis had been relatively stabilized.

The study focuses primarily on Blue-card question turns, which are addressed to a particular Member of Parliament during an on-going plenary debate. The study also looks at patterns in response design in order to discover the discursive and interactional functions of Blue-card questions. Although not being the focal research question of the study, the analysis of the response turns is necessary for interpreting contradictory ideologies and political agendas that are debated through the medium of the Blue-card procedure. Besides the question and answer pairings, initial scheduled speeches that trigger Blue-card questions provide the framing of the Blue-card sequences. In total, the data corpus consists of approximately 18 h of broadcasted interaction.

Blue-card procedure is chosen as the source of data for this study with respect to its distinct features and functions in the parliamentary debates. The Blue-card procedure enables the MEPs to interrupt the plenary in order to initiate an interaction with the current speaker. Blue-card questions are triggered by scheduled speeches and they are usually asked immediately after the speeches that they are responsive to.² They are meant to be spontaneous, reacting upon the immediately prior speech. The Blue-card procedure, therefore, adds an interactive dimension to the plenaries which otherwise stage monologue performances by the MEPs from scripted texts.

² There are cases where the Blue-card holder is given the floor later in the same debate. This is usually due to the President's failure to notice a request to use Blue-card under Rule 149(8).

Recordings of plenaries are accessible both online through a live streaming of parliamentary sessions on the EuroparlTV, as well as via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu> as downloadable or view-online audio-visuals.

On the EuroparlTV telecasts, subtitles are available in 23 of the EU's official languages³. During plenary sessions, all speeches are translated simultaneously into all 24 official languages of the EU. These translations are provided to the MEPs through their headsets. The same translations are available on the EP website together with the speeches in their original languages.

The Parliament also publishes (under the Rule 194 of the Rules of Procedure) the verbatim report of proceedings of each sitting⁴ (often referred to by its French abbreviation, CRE⁵) that contains the speeches made in plenaries, in their original languages. English translations of the verbatim reports of the plenaries held until December 2012 is also accessible via the Parliament's webpage.

I collected my data from three sources: First, the English translations of the verbatim reports were the source I started from.⁶ Second, the simultaneous English interpretations of the speeches in real time provided a source of comparison for the diagnosis of any ambiguities, and discrepancies between the written and oral versions of translations. I adjusted the verbatims to these interpretations in order to accommodate to what the MEPs hear. The corrected verbatims constitute my data for analysis. The simultaneous interpretations of the speeches are audible on the video recordings of the plenaries and they are accessible in all the official languages of the EP via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/home.html>. The third source, speeches in their original languages, provided a further source of reference in case I found any discrepancies or ambiguities in address or reference forms, syntactic variations or lexicon. Occasionally, I further adjusted the verbatims using speeches in their original languages as the reference source.

The verbatim reports of plenary proceedings are not perfectly accurate renditions of the speeches since the verbatim reports are edited versions of the transcriptions, in which repetitions and redundancies are omitted and obvious mistakes are corrected (Cortelazzo, 1985; Costanza, 2013). In a corpus-based analysis of EU parliamentary speeches delivered by non-

³ Gaelic (Ireland) being the exception due to logistic reasons.

⁴ A plenary sitting is the name given to a full session of the European Parliament. A sitting consists of diverse parliamentary activities such as legislative debates, general debates, voting sessions, Blue-card questions, and personal statements.

⁵ Compte Rendu in Extenso (CRE)

⁶ The verbatim reports are available online on the European Parliament's official website, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu>.

native speakers of English in 2006 and the corresponding verbatim reports, Costanza (2013) found that in the verbatim reports, involvement devices (Chafe, 1982), i.e. expressions such as 'I think', discourse markers such as 'well', 'you know', 'I mean', emphasisers such as 'of course', 'indeed', 'really', 'actually', 'definitely', vague language such as 'thing', 'stuff' and hedges such as 'a little bit' are reduced. Thus, a strictly written data restricted approach would have given different results than the present study. Nevertheless, the verbatim reports eased my transcription work by providing a draft version that I could work on and adjust to the spoken interpretations.

I have chosen English for the language of the data with respect to the communicative functions of English as the lingua franca in the EP (see Table 1). Above all, the European Parliament is a multilingual setting where the official languages of the 24 Member States are spoken, besides the languages of the visitors from non-European countries. Despite this linguistic diversity, English is preferred by the MEPs whose first language by national affiliation is not English. A study carried out by Nyroos et al. (2013) on the language preferences of the Swedish Members of the EP reveals that the MEPs prefer English to their first language when they speak on the matters that are for the interest of a wider public and not specifically of concern to the Swedish constituency.

In order to do justice to participants' perspective in analysis, I have developed a data collection system which is particularly necessary for the complex multilingual interactional situation in the EP.

- (1) When the turn at talk was in English, then I used verbatim reports adjusted to the spoken sources.
- (2) When both question and answer turns were in a language other than English, I used the English verbatim adjusted to the interpretations extracted from the EP website. In order to assure the reliability of the analysis, I have compared the interpretations provided by the EP with the speeches in their original languages.
- (3) When both the Q&A turns are given in the same language, which is other than English I got independent translations of the turn and corrected the verbatim reports using these interpretations.

Such situations were, however, rare in my corpus, in total 4 out of 273 Q&A sequences, consisting 1,46% of the whole corpus. Two of those interactions are carried out in German, one in Dutch, and one in Hungarian.

In most cases MEPs rely on the simultaneous interpretation that they hear through their headsets. These interpretations are either in English or in one of the official languages of the EU. Statistics retrieved from the EP display that in 2011, comprising the focus period in my research; English had the far most airtime⁷ with 159.05 hours⁸. The following table shows time distribution among the five most used languages in plenary sittings in the EP.

Table 1: Airtime per language in the EP

Year	English	French	German	Italian	Spanish
2008	122.58	79.3	85.09	31.28	33.48
2009	119.32	42.02	55.48	27.49	23.03
2010	136.09	51.27	60.19	41.26	42.48
2011	159.05	44.46	60.27	48.17	24.56
2012	129.29	38.14	76.31	36.49	22.07

Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu>

When the speech is in a lesser used language (languages other than English, German, or French), the interpretation is made first to one of the three reference languages, English, German or French, and then to the target language. This type of interpretation is called ‘indirect interpretation’, which causes longer waiting time to get the interpretation from a language a Member speaks to a language a Member hears. During the Blue-card procedure, questioners and respondents are allocated turns immediately after the prior turn and they are limited to 30 seconds of speaking time. Such a time limit does not enable MEPs to wait for the whole process of indirect interpretation. It is, therefore, likely that they choose to listen to the interpretation in one of the three reference languages.

In their plenary talks, MEPs prefer English over their mother tongues on certain occasions. The MEPs’ language choice depends on their target audience whom they want their talk to influence. The following quotation from an interview that Nyroos et al. (2013, p. 232)

⁷ Language used for spoken interaction during plenaries at the EP.

⁸ Interpretation framework in the European Parliament notes that ‘of all the languages spoken in plenary in Strasbourg and Brussels from September 2009 to February 2013, English was used for 26 979 minutes (29.1 %), German for 12 556 minutes (13.6 %), French for 8 841 minutes (9.5 %), Estonian for 109 minutes (0.1 %) and Maltese for 195 minutes (0.2 %)’ (Retrieved from the EP Motion for a European Parliament Resolution on 25 June 2013 via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2013-0233+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN#title1>).

conducted with a Swedish Member of the EP. She/he explains the mechanisms behind the MEPs' language choice in the debates.

A – Det här är roligt, jag pratar ju svenska i plenum. Jag hade faktiskt en kort diskussion med [svensk ledamot X] om det igår kväll, för han pratar ju alltid engelska. Men jag alltså jag pratar ju svenska för jag pratar ju för väljarna och för protokollet. Sen är det sällan jag adresserar någon och dom gånger jag gör det, då pratar jag engelska. Alltså när jag gör det i plenum. Det är hemskt uppenbart till exempel på dom diskussionerna jag har haft om ACTA, där jag var the centre of attention liksom, det var hundrafyrtio pers där inne. som bara liksom hackade på mig. Klart jag gör det på engelska för då kommunicerar jag ju med dom, men normalt när jag står där då talar jag till protokollet och till mina väljare, och så att jag ska kunna använda det på Youtube eller nåt sånt där.

In English translation:

A - This is funny, as you well know I speak Swedish in the plenary. I actually had a brief discussion with [Swedish member X] about it last night, because he always speaks English, you know. But I then, you know, I speak Swedish because I speak to the voters and for the record. And it's rare I address someone and those times I do it, I speak English. When I do it in the plenary, that is. It is terribly obvious, for example those discussions I have had about ACTA, where I was, like, the centre of attention, there were one hundred forty people in there who were just like pecking at me. Of course, I do it in English because then I communicate with them, but normally when I stand there I am talking to the Protocol and to my constituents, and so that I can use it on Youtube or something like that.

The Member quoted above draws attention to the decisive role of the audience in her/his choice of language as the medium of her/his communication. Although this particular Member prioritizes her/his native language, Swedish ('jag pratar *ju* svenska i plenum' [As you well know, I speak Swedish]), when she/he talks in the plenaries, she/he obviously does not have a native-language-only principle. On certain occasions, when she/he addresses an issue concerning a wider public but not only her/his voters, she/he chooses to speak English.

Moreover, the MEPs occasionally declare that they choose to speak English for other reasons. One reason the MEPs bring up is the fact that the documents that they would refer to in their talk might have been issued in English. In other instances, the MEPs openly express that they would like to prevent any misunderstanding that might be caused by the simultaneous interpretations and address their recipients in English.

As a result, it is not only English translations of the speeches in real time that are the versions of the speeches that reach the majority of the Parliament, English is also the most used language in the plenaries. In this study, using English interpretations of the speeches enabled analysis from the participants' perspective.

2.1.2 Why Questions?

From a functionalist perspective, questions accomplish two things: First, they initiate a relation between questioner and respondent (Heritage, 2002b, p. 314). Second, they accomplish various speech acts (Searle, 1969).

Questions rest on a set of assumptions that motivate speakers to ask a particular question, in a particular format, to a particular person, in a particular interactional situation. Given that a question makes relevant a response (Thompson, 1998), questioning is an initiation of a social relation that is projected to involve the Self and the recipient. Such positioning is an on-going activity that is carried out by the two interacting parties. That is, questioner takes a position and requires the recipient to take a position in the next turn. Exploring how the MEPs take positions vis-à-vis each other in their use of the Blue-card procedure requires an interactional approach which takes into consideration discursive trajectories of intergroup relations in this particular interactional setting.

In their engagement in constructing and maintaining intergroup relations, questions provide the MEPs with effective linguistic tools, which can both be used to genuinely seek information or to accomplish a variety of other functions. By exploring what questions are used for in the EP, the study reveals behavioural patterns in the MEPs pragmatic choices in their linguistic activities and discursive practices.

The study focuses on Blue-card Q&A sequences which constitute the only ‘naturally occurring’ interactional situations in the EP. The Blue-card procedure allows the MEPs to provide ‘spontaneous’ responses. Thus, questions and their answers are essential resources for examining patterns in the ways in which speakers position themselves in regard to each other in their daily practices.

2.1.3 Narrowing down the Scope of the Research

Four main considerations are in play in narrowing down the scope of my research: the language, the time, the modality, and the methods.

Based on the reasons discussed earlier (§2.1.1) I have compiled my corpus primarily from data in English, comprised of both the speeches that were given in English and English translations of the speeches that were given in the other 23 official languages of the EU. The exceptions consist of four Q&A sequences, where participants used the same language that was not English. In these rare cases, I had to check the original speeches and even asked for them to be translated directly into English (§ 2.1.1).

2011 was chosen as a random time limit for the corpus of the study. In fact, before the selection of 2011, I had collected data covering a four-year (from 2008 until 2011) time period and conducted preliminary analyses in the form of three distinct pilot studies. Thus, my earlier analyses involved more data than what is presented in the dissertation. The insights gained from these pilot studies served as an analytic lens for identifying the phenomenon of *intergroup positioning through intersubjective stance-taking activities in parliamentary settings*.

Although I incorporate both spoken and written data, my study sets out to examine linguistic features, which occur in speakers' stance-taking and positioning activities. Prosodic features of speech, non-verbal elements of speech, and other models of interaction remain as interesting aspects for future studies. This is basically because the audiovisual recordings of the plenary debates are not reliable sources for the examination of multimodal features of interaction. To clarify, video recording in the plenaries is only done by the Audiovisual Unit of the Parliament, which provides audiovisual service for media. Thus, the videos are produced for purposes other than research. The camera does not necessarily focus on the speaker throughout a speech. Consequently, the shifting focus prevents the analysis of the multimodal aspects of the discourse. Therefore, I have limited my study to the verbal communication that was recorded reliably both in written and audio format.

The pauses, hesitations, repairs, and other disfluencies that occur in interpretation do not necessarily reflect the disfluencies that occur in the original talk. Therefore, the transcription does not include pauses, repetitions, repairs which might have been rendered in interpretation.

It is necessary to note that, in this study, I am concerned with the MEPs' language use, and I am not interested in studying political phenomena. This is not to say that my study does not offer political scientists insight about the ways the EP works. Indeed, the study sets out to show how the MEPs strive to accomplish their political ends through their speeches in the EP, with particular focus on the questioning procedure of the Blue-card.

Finally, the present study is based on qualitative research, although illustrative tables are sometimes included in order to show the ratio of certain patterns of language use in the entire corpus.

2.1.4 Ethical Considerations

The speeches comprising the data to this study can be accessed via the EP website. Consequently, ethical considerations in this thesis are the same with those that apply to public speeches. Crucially, my aim is by no means to evoke connotations between specific names or groups and particular ways of conducting discourses. To show respect to individuals and

institutions, in the selection of my examples, I have tried to include speeches from a variety of speakers from demographically diverse groups representing different nations, ethnic groups, gender, etc.

2.2 Research Design

This thesis takes an inter-disciplinary approach to interaction in the European Parliament (EP) in order to explore linguistic and discursive patterns through which the MEPs pursue their political ends. The study makes use of Positioning Theory, which has been developed in social psychology and Stance Theory that has emerged in linguistics. The thesis rests in pragmalinguistics, applying insights from Conversation Analytic research, and works towards a novel analytical framework for Parliamentary Discourse Analysis.

The research design that I used in this study included the following steps.

1. As a first step, I compiled my corpora consisting of verbatim, simultaneous interpretations, and authentic speeches. (For the criteria for data selection see sections 2.1.1 & 2.1.3).
2. From the three sets of sources – verbatim, simultaneous interpretations, authentic speeches – I made my own English transcriptions that constitute my database (§ 2.1.1).
3. I conducted preliminary analysis on the entire corpus in search of patterns in the MEPs language use. From this analysis, I noticed that the MEPs design their question turns in chunks comprising: Address, preface to the impending question (‘question frame’), and question utterance.
4. Having identified this recurrent pattern of turn organization in the MEPs’ Blue-card questions, I examined both the formats and the functions of each chunk of speech.
5. From the exploration of form-function relationships, I discovered that each of these patterns convey stance.
6. Finally, I examined how these stances function in the MEPs’ engagement in the construction of Self and Other.

The list of the multiple phases of my analysis describes how I have handled my data. The following, on the other hand, offers the reader a guideline to orient to the data.

2.3 Presentation of the Data

The presentation of the data in this thesis has different components that the reader should become familiar with before reading the examples and the analysis. In the following, I label those components and mark them with arrows.

Figure 1: Data transcription method (1)

In the numbering system, i.e., (4.1), the chapter number comes first, separated by a period from the example number that follows. All examples that are longer than two lines are captioned, informing about the particular debate that the example is extracted from. The captions also include the date of the debate. The first lines of each turn, begins with the name and political affiliation of the speaker. Occasionally, the speaker's nationality is noted next to the abbreviations of the political party. Here, I take the verbatim reports as the reference. I mention the speaker's nationality when it is noted in the verbatim reports.

According to this, the extract above is the first example in Chapter 4 (4.1) and is extracted from a debate about a report on competition policy in 2009. The respective debate was held on 20th January, 2011 and the speaker, Phillippe Lamberts, was a member of Verts/ALE Group.

When the examples contain only one turn (in most cases the question turn), the presentation of the data is as follows.

Figure 2: Data transcription method (2)

According to this, the extract above (Lines 1–3) is the first example in Chapter 6 (6.1). On behalf of ALDE Group, Olle Schmidt puts a Blue-card question to Nigel Farage, from EFD, on a debate which was held on the 19th of January in 2011.

After this presentation of the data and the research design, the following chapter describes the contextual background of interaction in the EP.

Chapter 3 Setting the Scene

Debating in the EP requires knowledge about various political issues regarding the past, present, and future. The MEPs need to maintain their accountabilities by displaying knowledge about and awareness of socio-political events, the political and institutional structures within which they perform their political tasks, as well as public opinion about diverse issues. For a linguistic analysis of the MEPs' speech in parliamentary debates, it is equally necessary for analysts to know the complex historical and institutional trajectories that are influencing and are being influenced by the MEPs' discourses. For this reason, this chapter presents an account of the historical and institutional setting that the MEPs orient to.

3.1 Historical Background

3.1.1 The European Ideal

Driven by the romantic nationalism that emerged in the 19th century, the modern nation-states of Europe experienced fanatic and painful nationalistic wars twice in the twentieth century. Both the First World War and then the Second World War motivated Europe towards the idea of a 'united and peaceful Europe' (European Commission, 2015).

The post Second World War period forced Europe to generate a new understanding of nationalism which can be defined as a continental nationalism- as Habermas ([1998] 2001) calls it, 'a territorially based political identity situated in a *shared* history' (emphasis added). The aspect of 'sharedness' has provided the binding feature in the discursive establishment of the EU (Halter, 2009) with emphasis on a common cultural heritage, a shared history, and a collective future.

Likewise, official documents, which are meant to introduce the European Union, represent Europe, with restrictions to the now 28 member countries, as a homogenous-self with a collective historical memory, common benefits, and shared values. An emphasis on a common cultural heritage based on ancient Greco-Roman civilization, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution can be found in various documents published by the Institutions of the European Union. As Gerard Delanty (2010, p. 6) notes, in its formative period the Enlightenment idea of a common cultural heritage was influential in shaping the cultural and political identity of the EU. The 1973 'Copenhagen Declaration of European Identity' is one salient example displaying intentions to build a 'European Identity' based on 'the simplistic appeal to a singular notion of Civilization based on common values that have

somehow survived the divisions of history' (Delanty (2010, p. 7). The third item in the Copenhagen Declaration under the title 'The Unity of the Nine Member Countries of the Community' expresses conformity among the nine Member States of the time⁹, while it asserts uniqueness, hence dissimilarity to what is not European. The item reads as follows.

The diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization, the attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a United Europe, all give the European Identity its originality and its own dynamism.

The significance of common political, economic, and social benefits and values have been at the centre of discourses that are maintained throughout the history of the EU. Likewise, the Union's role in avoiding the risk of a future conflict among European countries is emphasized in the official representations of the EU¹⁰. Indeed, it is stated on the official website of the Union that, the effort to unite Europe on the basis of economic cooperation was meant to avoid conflicts among European Countries. The plan behind the foundation of the Union is declared as follows.

'[...] the idea being that countries who trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict.' (See the homepage of the Union via http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm).

Besides official discourses of a common cultural heritage and a collective identity, philosophers like Karl Jaspers (1947) and historians like Denis de Rougemont (1947), Hendrik Brugmans (e.g., 1963; 1965), and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle (1965, 1990), among many others, supported the idea of a united Europe by contributing to the circulation of what Delanty (1995; 2010) calls 'Grand Narratives' of the Peoples of Europe.¹¹ While some of these narratives propose a collective history, a common cultural heritage, and shared values, some others promote common interests. All these narratives constitute efforts to build a post-national identity that represents Europe and its people as harmonious among themselves and distinguished from 'other' - non-Europeans.

However, there is no consensus about what makes 'us' European. Is being European a geographical, a historical, a cultural, a religious, or a political feature? Quoting Claude Lévi-

⁹ First enlargement: In addition to the six founding countries -Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg- Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined the Union raising the number of member states to nine.

¹⁰ See the introductory page to the EU's official webpage http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/about/index_en.htm.

¹¹ For an elaborative account of 'Grand Narratives' of Europe see Gerard Delanty's (2010) discussion paper titled *The European Heritage from a Critical Cosmopolitan Perspective*.

Strauss (1950), Abélès (2004, p. 12) calls the imagined community of Europe a ‘floating signifier’. His definition does not underestimate the importance of the community, but recognizes the vagueness and ambiguities in the use of the concept of ‘Europeanness’.

3.1.2 Competing Projects for a Future Europe

The European Union consists of relatively powerful countries with respect to their political and economic potential. The EU defines the situation in its official motto as ‘united in diversity’ (see <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>). Indeed, the member countries display co-variation among their many features. Drawn by nationalistic motivations, maintaining the national self appears to be a need for the member countries each of which are representing, to a certain extent, diversities in the bigger whole, the European Union.¹²

Diverse groupings at the Parliament have perceived this motto – *united in diversity* – differently. To clarify, the extent to which diverse groupings are willing to melt their identities in the supranational identity differs depending on the project they embrace for the future of Europe. Three conflicting projects for a future Europe can be identified (Jacobs and Maier, 1998, p. 14). One aims at constructing Europe as a world power. Another project advocates a communitarian approach as it conceives of a social Europe with an emphasis on human rights and democracy. The third project attempts to defend and strengthen the existing national states, and promotes a definition of European identity with an ethnic emphasis. In that respect, the third project emerges as a counter argument to the first two projects (Jacobs and Maier, 1998, p. 14). The Union has been experiencing the consequences of political campaigns which are being run partly in accordance with the third project mentioned above, for instance, in the UK’s divorce from the EU, the so-called Brexit. The discourses deployed to promote the three projects are influenced by and simultaneously influencing the creation of intergroup boundaries within the EU.

3.1.3 Sovereign Debt Crisis

Times of crisis always widen cleavages among diverse groupings in the EU with conflicting agendas for the future of Europe. The European Sovereign Debt Crisis is one of the incidents that divided the EU most (based on a large body of research on the hazardous effects of the Euro Crisis, see e.g. Kalemli-Ozcan, et al. 2016, Reinhart and Rogoff, 2014; Gómez-Puig and

¹² The Brexit campaign was part of the programme of the nationalistic movement in the UK which was led by the UKIP. However, discussing nationalistic politics with regards to EU politics is by no means among the aims of this thesis.

Sosvilla-Rivero, 2014). The crisis is often referred to as a *tragedy*, a *catastrophe*, or a *disaster* in the plenaries. The data in my corpus comprises plenary debates that were held in 2011, when the crisis was relatively stabilized, but the conflicts that it had given rise to still remained.

The European Sovereign Debt Crisis was a period of time in which several EuroZone countries faced the collapse of financial institutions, high government debt and rapidly rising bond yield spread in government securities¹³. As a global impact of the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers Bank in the USA, the financial crisis emerged in 2008, with the collapse of the banking system in Iceland. The crisis spread rapidly to European Union Member States within the Eurozone. The Euro countries Greece and Spain were affected already before 2009 and the crisis soon affected Ireland and Portugal (Cline and Wolff, 2012, p. v). Since 2010, seven Eurozone Member States (Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, and Spain) have received financial support from euro area Member States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) framework (European Commission, Economic and Financial Affairs¹⁴).

The EU has been going through hard times since the financial crisis emerged in the first half of 2008. The crisis has triggered fierce discussions and political conflicts between member countries MEPs whenever national interests collide. The EP is the only EU Institution where such controversies are publicly debated.

Having presented the historical dimension of the EP context, let us now turn our attention to institutional specifications of the Parliament in order to be able to demonstrate the institutional constraints under which diverse and often opposing viewpoints are debated.

¹³ For more detailed explanation of the European Sovereign Debt Crisis visit <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/european-sovereign-debt-crisis.asp>.

¹⁴ For the time and amount of the support that has been provided to the seven aforementioned countries visit http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/assistance_eu_ms/greek_loan_facility/index_en.htm.

3.1.4 The Time-line of the Institutional Collaboration in Europe

Figure 3: Time-line - Foundation of the EP¹⁵

The idea of establishing an institutional collaboration between sovereign nation states dominated the discussions about the future of Europe after 1945. This vision emerged as a means of redemption (Friedman, 2011) for Europe, which had survived murderous wars and mass killings. This idea was envisaged as an institutional framework that would allow Europe to overcome the national states heading towards the ‘United States of Europe’.

Based on this vision, on 9 May 1950 French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, presented a plan to institutionally organize economic cooperation between European states, which had been at war for nearly six years. Every year, May 9th is celebrated as ‘European Day’, commemorating the historical initiative taken by Schuman. With ‘The Schuman Declaration’ in 1950, the decision was taken to share sovereignty and to gradually unite relevant politics. In April 1951, six western European states: France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg signed the Treaty of Paris, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ideal of a federal Europe was abandoned, but the functional collaboration nevertheless reduced the weight of the national states by sharing sovereignty (Baasner, 2016, personal communication, 28 December).

The European Parliament of today is a step by step construction that has developed out of the appointed Common Assembly of the ECSC into an elected parliament. The ideals of

¹⁵ The Time-line includes the foundations relevant to my study and does not offer an exclusive historical account of the EU.

democratic administration and equal representation were present from the very beginning of the institutionalization of the cooperation between the European states. In his declaration in 1950, Schuman envisages European institutions where common administration is ‘counter-balanced’ by representatives of the citizens of the Member States. Although direct elections to the European Parliament had been mandated in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the first elections by direct universal suffrage only took place in June 1979 [Decision 76/787].¹⁶

Already in 1962, the parliamentary assembly starts calling itself the European Parliament. The name, however, is officially sanctioned only in 1987. The Parliament acquires some budgetary power starting from the Treaty of Luxembourg on 1 January 1971. With the Treaty, the Parliament gets some control of the allocation of the funds in the Community budget. Later, on 1 June 1977, the Parliament maximizes its budgetary powers, based on the treaty signed in 1975. The Parliament now has the right to reject the Community budget and to grant discharge, i.e. approval, to the commission for its management of the budget.

From the very beginning of the community assembly, parliamentary procedures that enabled interaction during the plenary sittings seem to be present. In the parliamentary documents dating back to 1960, instances where a speaker was interrupted by another Member of the Parliament can be found. Although there is no mention of a ‘Blue-card’ in internal regulations until 2003, the procedure was in force with the rule of the 30-seconds time-limit. The procedure was possibly initiated by seeking eye contact with the President or by raising a hand. The Blue-card procedure, i.e. the procedure of raising a blue card together with the hand in fact, is occasionally referred to as ‘catch-the-eye’ procedure in the verbatim reports¹⁷ (also known as CRE).

Since April 2006, the EP has provided live streaming of the plenary sessions. Over the following years the EP has ensured the live streaming of all plenaries and committee meeting. In its resolution of 24 October 2007, the Plenary decided to maintain the obligation to translate CRE into all official languages. However, in 2012, the Parliament put into effect its budgetary commitments and started with translation of CRE into English only from July 2011.¹⁸ The

¹⁶ 41976D0787- 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom: Decision of the representatives of the Member States meeting in the council relating to the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage (*Official Journal L 278, 08/10/1976 P. 0001 – 0004*)

¹⁷ Catch-the-eye procedure is, in fact, distinguished from the Blue-card procedure in the ‘Directorate General for Presidency- Directorate for the Plenary’ in the sense that the Blue-card procedure is for the MEPs to ask a question to a current speaker in an on-going plenary debate, while the catch-the-eye procedure enables the MEPs to give a talk up to 1 minute on a topical matter (Directorate Rules 150 and 151) Available [online] at www.europarl.europa.eu/sed/doc/ext/manual/manual_en.pdf.

¹⁸ On amendment of Rule 181 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure concerning verbatim reports of proceedings and Rule 182 concerning the audiovisual record of proceedings

Parliament has also developed an in-house technology that enables CRE's to be linked to multilingual web streaming and gives the possibility to find all plenary interventions by speaker. This technology enables listening to the plenary interventions both in their originals and in simultaneous interpretations that were streamed during the on-going plenary sessions. This facility has a special importance for the present research since it gives access to both the exact speech found in the chamber and their interpreted versions that the MEPs are provided with during the plenaries.

3.2 The Macro Scene

Among the 13 EU institutions the EP holds a privileged position with respect to its representative role and legislative power. The Parliament carries out its functions in relation to other institutions and organizations within and outside the EU.

The Parliament has three major roles: legislative, supervisory, and budgetary¹⁹. For the fulfilment of its tasks (e.g. passing EU directives, deciding on international agreements, deciding on enlargements, discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank, election observations, and establishing the EU budget), the Parliament is required to work in relation to other EU institutions, as well as Non-EU institutions and organizations.

The Parliament's relations both at EU-level and international level provide the MEPs with the context in which the MEPs discursively engage in intergroup relations. It would be impossible to examine discursive construction of groupings in the EP without considering the relational dimensions of the Parliament's activities.

Other elements of the context are found in the organization of the EP that governs the MEPs' institutional activities. In the following section, I describe the main features of the EP in terms of its organisation, activities, and language diversity.

(2012/2080(REG))

¹⁹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-parliament/index_en.htm

3.3 Institutional Frame

3.3.1 The EP Organization

This is your assembly, the only directly-elected European Union institution. (Address to the EU citizens on the EP homepage)²⁰

As one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world, the EP has 751 Members representing over 500 million citizens of the European Union. The election of members is held once every five years in the 28 Member States of the Union. Once the Members are elected, they organize along political lines, forming groups to better defend their positions. During my study, there were eight political groups in the EP: Group of European People's Party (Christian Democrats, PPE) with 273 members, Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) with 190 members, Group of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) with 89 members, Group of Greens/European Free Alliance (Verts/ALE) with 58 members, European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) with 56 members, Confederal Group of the European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) with 36 members, and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFD) with 29 members. In addition to the members that are affiliated to a political party, there are 31 non-attached members.

Besides political groups, there are other temporary groupings in the EP. Some of these resemble project groups. They transcend political parties and are oriented towards the specific issue they are addressing with a purpose to attract attention to it. 'Intergroups' are examples to such groupings. Intergroups are formed by Members from any political group and any committee. The primary aim of intergroups is that of 'hold[ing] informal exchanges of views on particular subjects and promoting contact between Members and civil society'²¹. At the time this chapter was written, there were 28 intergroups functioning in the EP.

Committees represent another type of temporary group. They do the preparatory work for the Parliament's plenary sittings. The MEPs attend a number of specialised standing committees. At the time this chapter was written, the situation was actually similar in 2011, there were 20 parliamentary committees. These specialized committees carry out most of the Parliament's in-depth work and prepare reports to be voted on in the plenaries. Temporary groupings like intergroups, committees, alliances, and such bridge national differences as they transcend nations and political parties. Nevertheless, differences are there and surface in the

²⁰ 'Parliament and You', <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en>, Retrieved 18.01.2015

²¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/20150201PVL00010/Organisation>.

MEPs' discourses whenever interests collide.

3.3.2 Multilingualism in the European Parliament

In the late 1950s only four languages – Dutch, French, German, and Italian – were spoken in the assembly for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Today 24 official languages are spoken in the EP. The Parliament gives equal importance to all 24 languages and thus provides all parliamentary documents in all the official languages of the European Union. The Parliament provides simultaneous interpretations and written translations of the debates in the Parliament²². All Members of the European Parliament have the right to speak in the official language of their choice.

3.3.3 How Plenary Works

The official website of the EP²³ define the plenary sittings as '[T]he high point of the European Parliament's political activity'. The plenaries are held to finalize the legislative work by the committees and the political groups. The plenary sitting is the forum in which the MEPs take part in the EU's decision-making and express their standpoints on behalf of the citizens of the EU.

Parliament meets in plenary sessions every month except for August in Strasbourg. Every plenary session lasts for four days, divided into morning and afternoon sittings. Plenary sessions are also held in Brussels for two days, six times a year.

The MEPs sit in political groups which are not organized by nationality, but by political affiliation. Members may belong to one of the 8 political groups or choose to sit as non-attached Members.

In Plenaries, the Parliament carries out different activities, such as most importantly, debating and voting. The Parliament can debate any issue which it considers important for the EU and its citizens. The Parliament adopts the agenda of the plenaries based on a proposal by the Conference of Presidents of the political groups. The agenda includes statements by the Council, the Commission or the European Council and oral questions to the Council and Commission, which are either followed by a vote or result in motions for resolutions (written formal proposals to the EP).

²² On 17 October 2012, the Parliament decided to draw up verbatim reports as multilingual documents in which all oral contributions appear in their original language (Amendment 1, Parliament's Rules of Procedure, Rule 181 – paragraph 1). My data comes from 2011, when verbatim report of the proceedings of each sitting were drawn up in all the official languages.

²³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>

Each sitting in the Parliament is opened by a speech held by the chair (registered as the President in the minutes). Following his/her address to the Parliament, the chair announces the agenda topic and orchestrates the session by allocating turns one after another. The chair calls out the name of the next speaker from the schedule which is prepared and announced to the MEPs prior to the sitting. Although, the MEPs have been informed prior to the plenaries about the schedule and the allocated time limit for their talk in a sitting, they must wait for the chair to call their names and to give them the floor.

In Plenaries, all the sittings are recoded in detail in the minutes as well as on audio-visual recordings by the Multimedia Unit of the EP.

3.3.4 Participants

The plenary sitting involves interaction between procedurally identified participants, namely:

- 1) The President of the European Parliament,
- 2) The MEPs (currently 751 MEPs) who are affiliated to one of the, now 8, political groups,
- 3) Representatives of The European Commission and the Council of the European Union,
- 4) Technical and service staff,
- 5) Interpreters of the 24 official languages of the EP,
- 6) The audience, who follows the debates via parliamentary broadcasts or the mass media.²⁴ There are also a limited number of places available for individual visitors to follow a session for an hour.

The present study focuses particularly on the interaction between the MEPs, with a focus on how the President²⁵ and the audience influence the ways in which the MEPs design their speeches.

²⁴ The audience might include citizens of the EU, researchers with diverse scientific interests, journalist, bureaucrats, and NGOs amongst other actors of social organization.

²⁵ Here I refer to the Chair of a particular plenary debate. Plenary sittings are chaired by the President of the European Parliament. The President of the European Parliament is assisted in this task by the 14 vice-presidents, who can take over the chair.

Chapter 4 Approaches to Parliamentary Debate

Parliamentary debate can be approached in diverse ways, depending on the analytic angle the researcher adopts. The verbal and embodied activity of debating that the MEPs participate in can be viewed: (a) as a discourse, (b) as an interaction, (c) as a genre, and (d) as a dialogic phenomenon displaying elements characteristic of the parliamentary genre, discourse, and interaction. We shall call this fourth analytic angle that represents my approach to parliamentary debate a ‘communicative activity type’ (Linell, 2009).

This chapter is organized into two main parts: It begins by giving an account of previous research on parliamentary speech, reflecting approaches a-c mentioned above. (§ 4.1). In the second part (Section 4.2), I focus on the fourth approach (d) and trace the development of the concept of ‘genre’ into the dialogical concept of *communicative activity type* (henceforth CAT). Next, in section 4.2.1, I discuss parliamentary debate as a CAT. I have dedicated this section to the discussion of the dialogic aspect of parliamentary discourse, which links an individual utterance to its broader context. Section 4.2.2 describes various parliamentary communicative procedures that occur in debates in the EP. Having presented an overview of various communicative procedures that occur in the EP, in 4.2.3, I describe the complex features of parliamentary interaction, with particular focus on the Blue-card procedure. The following section (§4.3) presents a description of Blue-card Q&A sequences in terms of participants’ procedural rights and obligations. The chapter concludes with a detailed description of the sequential organisation and the turn-taking system in the Blue-card procedure.

4.1 Previous Research

Politicians are engaged in linguistic activities such as ‘seeking consensus, elaborating policy, negotiating and mediating in conflicts, representing interests and opposing the policy of others’ (Bayley, 2004, p. 8) in their everyday political practices. Language, being an influential tool in doing politics, political discourse has emerged as an interest area in linguistics and discourse analytic studies.

Parliamentary Discourse Analysis or Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) in general, involves a large spectrum of discourse analytic approaches, often including eclectic implementations. On the one hand, there is a long tradition of describing rhetorical devices of argumentative and persuasive discourse, dealing with the text on its own (e.g., Bitzer, 1981; Chaffee 1975). However, this approach neglects the contextual properties of political discourse. Van Dijk (2004, p. 339) argues for the necessity to introduce a contextual approach to political

discourse analysis. He proposes an analytic framework for the examination of political texts and talk in a multidisciplinary framework, involving discursive, cognitive, social and cultural dimensions. Van Dijk's Political Analysis focuses on the contextual functions of various structures and strategies of text and talk (1997, p. 33). Rather recently, van Dijk's research (2003) lays more emphasis on a participant's approach and in developing, what he calls, an 'epistemic analysis'. In this analysis, he examines how knowledge influences the design of text and talk.

Moreover, there has been a large body of work applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to political discourse (e.g. Duchesne and Heath, 2005, Ilie, 2004a; 2010a; Krizsán, 2011; Wodak et al., 2009, Wodak, 2015; Van Dijk, 2000; 2003). These studies aim at critically analyzing social inequalities (Fairclough, 1995) with a focus on the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse (van Dijk, 1997, p. 11). Critical approaches to political discourse have been challenged for lacking a coherent theory of language (Widdowson, 1998) and showing insufficient interest in the cognitive aspects of discourse (Chilton, 2005; van Dijk, 2006). For Chilton (2006), the lack of attention to cognition is a serious theoretical gap that needs to be dealt with by the analysts. Van Dijk (2003) responds to this gap with an analytical framework that examines the social dimensions of cognition through cognitive attitude schemata and mental representations which become apparent in discourse.

Among others, interaction analytic approaches provide tools for the examination of political discourse. Previous work in this direction has particularly focused on Question Times²⁶ in national parliaments (Reber, 2014) and TV interviews with political leaders (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a; Heritage, 2002a). A somewhat dialogic approach to PI has been used in studies of cognition in interaction (e.g., Zima et al., 2009; 2010). These studies implement a Construction Grammar approach to the analysis of the emergence of grammatical patterns at the micro-level of a single conversation in Austrian and French parliamentary debates.

In addition, studies by Ilie (2004a; 2007), use an eclectic combination of methods and deploy pragmatic analysis, discourse analysis, and rhetorical analysis. In her work on parliamentary interaction, Ilie compares discursive strategies used in two national parliaments: namely, the British House of Commons and the Swedish Riksdag (National Parliament). Ilie's (2000; 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2004a; 2010a) work provides insights into parliamentary talk as a

²⁶ A 'Question time' is a parliamentary procedure when members of the parliament ask questions to government ministers, including the prime minister.

genre, focusing on its linguistic and rhetorical dimensions. Her comparative studies furthermore show differences in politeness strategies across cultures in parliamentary discourse.

I have now presented an overview of discourse, interaction, and genre approaches to parliamentary debates and will proceed to the fourth approach – parliamentary debate as a CAT – which I regard as an alternative to genre analysis.

4.2 From ‘Genre’ to ‘Communicative Activity Type’

Genres are defined by Bakhtin (1986, p.5) as ‘forms of seeing and interpreting particular aspects of the world’. Specific utterances can only be understood with respect to a larger universe of utterances linked to particular spheres of communication (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 60). Bakhtin (1986, p. 60) coins the term ‘speech genres’ to refer to certain ‘ways of saying’ or ‘*relatively stable types* of [these] utterances’ that emerge in each sphere of communication (Emphasis in original). From a functional approach, Bakhtin (1986, pp. 60–201) argues that speech genres should be examined in relation to the situations of the speech communication.

Scholars (among others Luckmann, 1989, Bergmann and Luckmann, 1995) that prefer the term ‘communicative genre’ put particular emphasis on the situations that control speech communication. According to Bergmann and Luckmann (1995), the speaker is guided and constrained, on the one hand, by inner and outer structures of a communicative genre, and, on the other hand, by ‘a mixture of habit and explicit intention, occasionally even by a communicative plan as part of an interactional project’ (p. 290) As inner structures they refer to textual and interactional elements of speech communication, consisting of ‘words and phrases selected from different registers, formulae and entire formulaic blocks; rhetorical forms and tropes, stylistic devices, metric and melodic forms, rhymes, adjectival or nominal lists, oppositions, etc.’ (Bergmann and Luckmann, 1995, p. 292). Whereas, outer structures consist of ‘the features of a genre which derive from the relation between communicative action and social structure’ (Bergmann and Luckmann, 1995, p. 291). Bergmann and Luckmann’s notion of communicative genre recognizes both the deterministic and performative role of the individual speaker.

Per Linell’s concept of *communicative activity type* (CAT), which is almost synonymous with *communicative genre*, is meant to embed the discourse within the whole social situation (2009, p. 199). Linell (2009, p. 201) proposes ‘activity type’ as a more interactionally situated notion as compared to a more text-oriented notion of ‘genre’. In line with Bergmann and Luckmann (1995, p. 290), Linell (2009, p. 202) considers communicative activities as

components of larger patterns of actions and interactions. According to Linell (2009, p. 202) these activities are ‘subject to habit (routines, norms, rules), physical and social constraints and impositions, intentions (e.g., conscious decision-making), as well as a range of occasional features’.

To conclude, the concept of ‘genre’ as used by Bakhtin, Luckmann and Bergmann & Luckmann foregrounds the patterned use of language. In this approach, we use linguistic ‘ready made’s’ to express what we want to communicate. However, Linell’s CAT is more dynamic and foregrounds the interactive structures that emerge ‘on the spot’. My understanding of Linell’s CAT is a dialogue which occurs in long-term sequences of small-scale encounters. Based on these theoretical perspectives, my approach to parliamentary interaction is that, one single utterance is a component of a larger political communicative project that likely extends over longer periods of time. Indeed, some segments of the project might exceed the actual face-to-face interaction during a parliamentary debate. Such an approach forces the analyst to consider larger trajectories that make MEPs’ actions intelligible. Consequently, the analysis aims at exploring *how* the MEPs discursively forge towards their political goals, instead of investigating *what* meanings they construct.

4.2.1 Debate as a Parliamentary Communicative Activity

Parliaments are scenes where participants in plenary debates display subtle discursive skills, usually, in the form of monologues held from scripted texts. When parliamentary procedures allow interaction here and now, it is constrained by well-defined rules determining who can do what, when, how.

Speakers in the EP are influential social actors in the construction, maintenance, and deconstruction of social representations. Their utterances influence and are influenced by collective frames of perception. Thus, individual utterances in the EP should be considered as links in the chain of a ‘communicative construction’, in Linell’s (2009) terms, as the MEPs discursively co-construct social realities. In that, each social actor or group proposes its attributions to be taken as grounds for legitimizing stances that the group takes towards issues concerning the EP. By doing so, speakers in the Parliament strive to accomplish the following three objectives.

- (1) Force others to reposition themselves on the new grounds they have established through their discourses

As it has been comprehensively argued (i.e. Archakis and Tsakona, 2010; Carbó, 2004;

van der Valk, 2003; van Dijk, 2003) parliamentary discourse is predominantly polemical and argumentative. The notion of argumentation entails doubts about the content that the argumentator is committed to in her/his proposition. Argumentation, in that respect, is a discursive effort to establish one's truth as a truth by consensus.

(2) Repair or maintain or develop a (positive) self-image vis-à-vis Other(s)

The MEPs are obliged to create a competent, trustworthy, powerful professional image of Self, that can influence deliberative and decision-making processes (Vasilescu, 2010, p. 371). In their discursive engagement in establishing accountability, the MEPs appeal to, what Chilton (2004, pp. 111-117) defines as, 'epistemic and deontic' means to legitimize their stances.

(3) Cause maximum damage to their adversaries' faces (Ilie, 2004a)

The MEPs often construct their stances at the expense of Other's accountability, where the MEPs attempt to create an image of Self, as well as the grouping they claim to represent, which is relative to Other's image(s).

The processes listed above occur as a competition between diverse meanings rather than as a coherent evolutionary process. In that, a meaning is built upon previous meanings.

The interaction in parliamentary settings involves a competitive, communicative construction, where certain utterances and attributions are recycled by means of formulating the gist or the sense of a prior utterance. In other words, the MEPs manipulate their adversaries' utterances as a means of deconstructing the grounds for the positions they set up for Self and Other(s). Drawing on the notion of 'recycling with *différance*', (Anward, 2005), the utterances in the parliament can be regarded as a recycled mode of a prior utterance. Consequently, no meaning is complete or definite but, instead, constructed through a long span of dialogue between the participants situated in their historical footings.

4.2.2 Communicative Procedures in the EP

Each utterance in the EP occurs in a context. While it takes some of its functions from that context, it simultaneously constructs the very same interactional situation. PI in the EP consists of several activities, namely; the President's opening speech, debriefing from the EU Presidents, scheduled speeches, one-minute speeches, Blue-card questions, and speeches given by guests. In the following, I describe these parliamentary communicative procedures.

The President's Opening Speech

Parliamentary sittings are chaired by either the President of the EP or one of the 14 vice-presidents of the Parliament. The sittings are opened by the chair with a short speech, where she/he might refer to a recent event, or any other issue of interest. Following that, the chair announces the agenda topic and orchestrates the session by allocating turns one after another.

Debriefing from the EU Presidents

The President of the European Commission, and the President of the Council of Europe, or their assigned representatives may take part in the plenary debates. Upon a request by the Parliament, they may be called upon to make declarations or to give an account of their activities. Their speeches may also be in the form of a response to written and oral questions put to them by the MEPs.

Scheduled Speeches

These are the speeches that are scheduled in advance to plenaries. Speaking time in the plenaries is allocated to the political party based on its size. Except for non-attached Members, speaking time is allocated to political parties and it is up to them to decide who is to represent the group.

One-minute Speeches

One-minute speeches are where the MEPs have the opportunity to speak about a matter of importance they wish to draw the Parliament's attention to. They are pre-scheduled and limited to one-minute speaking time. The speakers take turns when they are called upon by the President. One-minute speech Rule 163 does not allow conversations between participants. That is, the MEPs cannot receive Blue-card questions within their one-minute speeches.

Personal Statements

Personal statements are a parliamentary procedure that allows the MEPs to take the floor. Members may ask to make a personal statement to respond to any remarks made about their person in the course of the debate or opinions that have been attributed to them. They may also make a statement to correct observations that they themselves have made in a speech. No more than three minutes can be allocated for personal statements.

Blue-Card Procedure

Blue-card procedure allows the MEPs to ask questions to their colleagues during a plenary debate. The European Parliament Directorate-General describes the rules concerning Blue-card questions in Rule 162(8)²⁷ as follows.

The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a Blue-card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.

When a Member raises his/her Blue-card, the President, if he/she judges it appropriate, will ask the speaker, normally at the close of his/her speech, if he/she is willing to take the question before giving the floor to the Blue-card speaker. The 'Blue-card' speaker has 30 seconds to ask a question and the original speaker 30 seconds to respond. A speaker can be interrupted by more than one Blue-card holder, at the President's discretion. A Member can make more than one Blue-card request during a debate; it being up to the President to decide whether or not to grant the request. A rapporteur or a speaker under the catch-the-eye procedure²⁸ can also be interrupted by a Blue-card holder. Blue-card questions may not be put to representatives of the other Institutions.

Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of speakers, with no 'catch-the-eye' or Blue-cards.

Blue-card procedure is thus rather restrictive for the MEPs with clearly defined institutional roles. Three mandatory interactants are identified in this procedure: The questioner, the respondent, and the President. Given that the Blue-card is a parliamentary genre, the procedure is performed before an audience comprised of fellow Members of the Parliament, visitors observing plenaries in the Chamber, viewers or readers via the mass-media and social media. The audience as the fourth participant in Blue-card procedure is not supposed to interact verbally. Any interruption may be considered a disruption of the procedure and would be dealt with by the President in terms of assurance of parliamentary order. It is not rare, though, that the overhearing MEPs interfere in the Blue-card questions and answers by means of applause, loud objections or by knocking on the table. Nevertheless, this study does not take on the task to deal with such interferences.

²⁷ *European Parliament Directorate-General for the Presidency Directorate for the Plenary, The Plenary: a User's Guide* via www.europarl.europa.eu/sed/doc/ext/manual/manual_en.pdf, [Retrieved on December 10, 2014].

²⁸ During a debate, the MEPs indicate that they are requesting speaking time by making eye contact with the chair.

4.2.3 Features of the Blue-card Q&A Procedure

PI is complex, involving, on the one hand, legislative practices, and on the other hand, discursive practices. With respect to the former, parliamentary discourse is a means through which the Parliament carries out rational social actions as it holds the legislative power of the EU. Parliaments, as Carbó (2004, p. 303) describes ‘are sites (cross-roads) for specific interplays of historical determinations of a structural sort’. The EP as the Union's law-making body has direct influence on the everyday lives of over 500 million citizens of the EU, besides its indirect, but not minor, global influence. Given the international political role of the EP, it holds the power to exert structural influence on a global scale in social, political, cultural and economic spheres.

With regards to the latter, the discursive interplay of often conflicting ideologies, Ilie (2004a, p. 46) observes that parliamentary debates are prototypical instances of the deliberative genre of political rhetoric, which involves elements of the forensic and epideictic genres. This multiplicity of discursive genres employed in parliamentary discourse poses an interesting challenge for discourse analysis due to the complexities characteristic both to its conceptualization and the production of the accounts (Carbó, 2004, p. 303). In this study, I deal with this complexity through an analysis of individual utterances as a part of larger institutionalized communicative activities. Such an analysis understands human actions and activities as situated in their historical and interactional contexts.

In parliamentary debates, every speech is channelled for multiple group audiences that include both institutional interactants (e.g., Fellow MEPs, Presidents of the EU Institutions, Prime Ministers of the Member States) and overhearing audiences some of whom might comprise the MEPs' constituencies. The MEPs are, therefore, in a double discursive position where: on the one hand, they exchange ideas, information, and opinions, and thereby accomplish their institutional tasks. On the other hand, they strive to impress the overhearing audience and influence the public image of Self (Ilie 2010a, p. 886), *vis-à-vis* the in-group. Consequently, the design of the utterances in parliamentary debates is of primary importance, as is the content.

The various features of parliamentary debates as described above, apply to the parliamentary procedure of Blue-card. In that respect, the Blue-card Q&A exchanges constitute one CAT that is carried out as part of the larger parliamentary activities of debates. MEPs have to comply with the rules and conventions that govern the Blue-card procedure, but in various ways perform their own communicative projects (as for instance making the interlocutor seem

uninformed or ridiculing him or her). Thus the Blue-card procedure, is a multidimensional discursive practice that is, (a) constrained, (b) strategic, (c) structural, and (d) functional.

The Blue-card procedure is *constrained*: PI, Blue-card procedure in particular, is an institutionalized speech event, which is governed by well-defined rules, including pre-allocated turns orchestrated by the President, a 30-second time limit, syntactic constraints obliging the MEPs to use interrogatives as well as an unwritten set of principles constituting the parliamentary code of conduct (regarding the use of i.e. certain forms of reference and address).

It is *strategic*: The MEPs construct their turns in strategic ways in which each element supports the public image they strive to construct for Self and the in-group. Within its institutional constraints, the entire political discourse is characterized by its textual properties, such as:

- institutionalized and conventionalized politeness by means of certain forms of address particular to PI (Avdan forthcoming; van Dijk, 2004; Ilie, 2007; 2010a; Leech, 1983; Lakoff, 1973)
- adversarial impoliteness (Harris, 2001; Ilie, 2007)
- statements embodying ‘collaborative speech’ (Leaper, 1991; Penman, 1980).

That is, speakers in parliamentary debates are members of a ‘community of practice’ (Wodak, 2009) whose actions are linked to form chains in parliamentary communicative activities. The MEPs must collaborate for the sustainability of parliamentary activities by showing some understanding of Others’ utterances and by making their conversational contributions relevant to the interactional event at hands. They do so through ‘collaborative speech acts’ that are high both in affiliation and assertion (Leaper, 1991; Penman, 1980).

- Argumentative and polemical statements.

PI is polemical in Foucauldian terms, defining alliances, recruiting partisans, uniting interests or opinions, representing a party, establishing Other as an enemy (Foucault, 1998). The Blue-card procedure involves a strategic use of limited linguistic means to construct polemical discourses.

It is *structured*: The MEPs’ question utterances display a particular pattern of turn design, that fall into the categories of *address*, *QF*, *interrogative sentences*, each of which is deployed for taking a stance. The MEPs choose from a repertoire of routinized forms of address, QFs, and interrogatives that have emerged in parliamentary style Q&A exchange. The structure of

the question turn provides for the grounding of the stances that the MEPs take in their engagement in intergroup positioning.

It is *functional*: As the MEPs deploy this structure in their Blue-card turns, they accomplish various actions varying from agreeing to opposing, praising to condemning, blaming to accepting or denying, and so on. Blue-card questions are instrumental in constructing a relation between e.g., the opposer and the opposed, or the blamer and the blamed, etc.

In analysing Blue-card questions, it is crucial to consider the various textual features of this parliamentary procedure. The analysis of the Blue-card procedure as a CAT may furthermore reveal general features of PI and a similar analysis may be carried out on other activity types in parliamentary debates.

4.3 Sequential Organization and Turn-taking System in the Blue-card Procedure

As an institutional interaction type, Blue-card procedure is carried out through pre-allocated turns, each of which is limited to 30 seconds. Turn-taking is orchestrated by the President, who calls the names of the speakers one at a time. Blue-card procedure entails a sequence consisting of minimally an adjacency pair – a question and an answer. Typically, both the questioner and the respondent have one turn for each. Occasionally, the sequences can be longer (a) when the President interrupts, (b) when another MEP directs a Blue-card question to the questioner or the respondent of the respective Blue-card sequence (See Appendix 1 for the organization of taking turns in the uninterrupted Blue-card procedure. The Blue-card procedure is different from other parliamentary activities that tend to be monologic scripted performances. First, it is the only opportunity for interaction since it allows questions and answers. The plenaries otherwise constitute statements on agenda topics that are already known to the MEPs prior to the sittings. Second, the Blue-card procedure involves questions that are, at least seemingly, spontaneous. Whereas in other activities types, the speeches are given in the form of pre-allocated turns.

The Blue-card procedure is carried out within strict institutional constraints and the appropriateness of the question is judged by the President based on the rules defined on the Directorate-General for the Presidency Directorate for the Plenary. However, the President needs to interpret the rules in order to judge the appropriateness of single utterances. Occasionally, the President's negative judgement leads to discussions between the MEPs and the President. The following exchange is extracted from a longer sequence which begins with a Blue-card question by William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (data not shown).

(4.1) [Report on competition policy 2009 – 20.01.2011 – (debate)]

1 **President** – This is not so much a speech under the ‘bluecard’ procedure
2 as a personal statement. Mr Lamberts, I implore you to keep it brief, let us
3 see if you can enlighten your colleague with your point of view in just
4 thirty seconds, shall we?

5 **Philippe Lamberts (Verts/ALE)** – Mr President, Lord Dartmouth paints
6 the Greens as advocates of high taxes for the sake of high taxes. I just want
7 to ask you, Lord Dartmouth, one very simple question. If services like
8 education, health and security have value, I guess that you have to find
9 ways to finance them. Am I correct?

10 **President** – No, we are not going to enter into a discussion on this.
11 Mr Dartmouth, you may respond to Mr Lamberts later in the corridor.
12 However, what the regulations do not allow is for one question to be
13 answered with another.
14 You have 15 seconds.

15 **William (The Earl of) Dartmouth (EFD)** – (opening words inaudible as
16 microphone switched off) ... the person who asked the question has the
17 right to respond. You have invented new rules – your own rules – as a
18 chairman. You are completely incorrect, sir.

19 **President** – Yes, I do invent rules. We are inventing rules all the time and
20 we are contributing to the progress of the democratic functioning of the
21 Chamber²⁹. Thank you for recognizing that.

In the sequence above, (in lines 1-2) the president judges the questioner's speech inappropriate as a Blue-card question (*This is not so much a speech under the ‘Blue-card’ procedure as a personal statement.*). Nevertheless, he allocates the turn to the respondent, Mr Lamberts. During the respondent's turn the president interrupts the speech, reminding the participants about the procedural regulations that prohibit one question to be answered with another.

There are also occasions when speakers transgress the time limit. The President then cuts the speaker off. Again, the decision for how long the speaker may exceed the time given lies with the President. On certain occasions, Blue-card question and answer turns have been in excess of up to 59 seconds without an interruption by the President. Although very rare, the President might explain the reason why the speaker has been given some extra time.

²⁹ ‘Chamber’ is used here as a metonymy referring to the European Parliament.

Chapter 5 Theoretical Approaches

The present chapter presents the theoretical basis of the study, approaching every presupposed stable meaning as a continuous and incomplete co-construct. In section 5.1, therefore, I offer a brief account of the constructivist approach, drawing primarily on Berger and Luckman's ([1966] 1967) as well as Fairclough and Wodak's (1997) understanding of discourse as a 'social practice'.

Parliamentary debates are one site of social interaction where intergroup relations are organized through language, within the constraints of institutional structures. Section 5.2 presents the theoretical frameworks that inform the analysis of linguistic practices of intergroup relations.

5.1 Constructivist Approach

'[S]ocial order is a human product. Or, more precisely, an ongoing human production.'
(Berger and Luckman [1966] 1967, p. 52).

In line with Berger and Luckmann, I approach identity as a social construct that 'is maintained, modified, and even reshaped by social relations' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 173). This approach recognizes 'the metaphoric quality of identity as well as its dynamic character, being bound to the interplay of individual consciousness and social structure' (Avdan and Anward, forthcoming). The anti-realist but relativist stance enacted by the constructivist approach (Hammersley, 1992) is consistent with my purpose in this thesis to explore the dynamic and competitive co-construction of intergroup relations in the EP. The constructivist approach presents a focus on the processes by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified (Schwandt, 2003). Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 152) deem conversation to be the predominant 'apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs [his] subjective reality'. Likewise, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) define language as a *social practice* through which meanings of identities are negotiated, maintained and re-shaped. It is through this social practice that 'frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced without much effort' (Andrews, 2012). Language is then a means not only to co-construct social realities but also to establish ritualized ways of constructing social realities.

I therefore take a constructivist approach in my endeavour to uncover the institutionalized linguistic patterns in which the MEPs organise intergroup relations as they discursively co-construct fluid concepts indexing Self and Other distinctions (§ 1.2).

5.2 Focus on Groupings and Intergroup Behaviour

Intergroup behaviour is defined as a ‘social interaction between members of different ‘social groups’’ (Turner and Giles, 1981, p. 3). It is concerned with the ‘relations between members of large-scale social categories, such as nations, races, classes, the sexes, religions, occupations, and so on’ (Turner and Giles, 1981, p. 6). Along the same lines, ‘identity’ is the main issue in concern in intergroup relations since ‘individuals constitute and act as a group to the extent that they define themselves as such’ (Turner and Giles, 1981, p. 6).

Nevertheless, the main focus in the theories of intergroup behaviour is on the attitudes and behaviour towards out-groups. To clarify, intergroup behaviour has to do with (Turner & Giles 1981, p. 3):

1. The division of human society into different social groups and their interrelations: the actions of members of one social group (their in-group) towards or interrelation to the members of other social groups (their out-groups),
2. The collective actions of large numbers of people,
3. The conflicts, tensions, antipathies and 'pathologies' in society related to group membership.

Theories of Intergroup Behaviour were developed by social psychologists such as Howard Giles, John C. Turner, Henri Tajfel, and Muzafer Sherif in the second half of the twentieth century. Turner (1981, p. 66) further proposed theories of *intergroup biases*, and *intergroup discrimination and differentiation* as important aspects of intergroup behaviour. The notion of Intergroup bias³⁰, which means, ‘... subjects are discriminated in their decisions in favour of in-group and against out-group members’ (Turner in Turner and Giles 1981, p. 76), was developed as a sub-theory of intergroup behaviour.

In his foundational work ‘Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior’ Tajfel (1974, p. 69) describes processes of grouping and intergroup boundary setting in terms of social categorisation:

The process of categorization, as it is used by the human individual in order to systematise and simplify his environment, presents certain theoretical continuities between the role played by categorizing in perceptual activities and its role in the ordering of one’s social environment. For our purpose, social categorization can be understood as the ordering of

³⁰ ‘Intergroup bias’ is the term proposed by Howard Giles to replace ‘in-group favouritism’.

the social environment in terms of social categories, that is, of groupings of persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject.

Tajfel's definition as quoted above proves a useful theoretical approach in examining intergroup relations in institutionalized settings, where the participants must maintain intergroup relations as members of groupings, in a setting where there are sets of rules and conventions defining the code of conduct.

PI is highly restricted and groupings seem to have obvious definitions with respect to nationality or political affiliation. Despite the commitment that the MEPs display to conform to certain definitions of in-group, out-group, and intergroup boundaries they index in their speeches, the definitions are not consistent. The MEPs as members of multiple groupings and as representatives of their constituencies are engaged in intergroup relations as they pursue their political ends. In this engagement, language provides the predominant means while PI in the form of Blue-card Q&A establishes the institutional footing.

Theories of intergroup behaviour, thus, provide relevant theoretical tools for the examination of the discursive co-construction and positioning of groupings.

Chapter 6 Conceptual Framework

As was stated above, the thesis adopts a constructivist approach to social interaction in its exploration of the dynamics of intergroup relations in the EP setting. The thesis draws on a large body of literature that ranges across studies of *social identity and intergroup behaviour* (Hogg, 2001; 2006; Linville et al., 1996; 1998; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner and Giles, 1981), *social interaction through discursive positioning* (Harré, 2006; 2012, Davies and Harré, 1990; Hollway, 1984; Moghaddam and Harré, 2010; Harré and Van Langenhove, 1998), and discourse stance (Berman et al., 2002; Biber et al., 1999; 2007; Biber, 2006a; 2006b; Biber and Finegan, 1989; Du Bois, 2007; Haddington, 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; Kiesling, 2009; Ochs, 1990). The complexity of incorporating different theories, methods, and approaches to social interaction has forced me to select and/or develop concepts that are useful for the analytic purposes of the present study. Therefore, I will now describe the ways in which I use certain concepts or why I chose not to use them at all. Relevant notions that have been referred to in the literature include the following: grouping, grounding, positioning, stance-taking, and alignment.

6.1 Grouping

We construct, maintain, and transgress intergroup boundaries based on our perception of how we are or we would like to be, connected with the out-groups we imagine (for empirical elaborations see studies of social identity and intergroup behaviour, eg. Berger, 1966; Ferguson and Kelley, 1964; Festinger, 1954; Sherif, 1966; Tajfel, 1970; 1972; 1974; Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner and Giles, 1981). Drawing on Social Comparison Theory (cf. Festinger, 1954), construction of intergroup boundaries involves the relational activity of comparison between at least two parties: in-group and out-group, where orientations of comparison are relative to the motives and intentions of and constrains on the party that offers the comparison. It is a *selective* and a *continuous* process that entails inclusion of preferred entities through exclusion of what is regarded to be different based on some temporarily prioritized aspects. It is also selective in the sense that one ‘prefers’ those who are more ‘like’ oneself (Tajfel, 1974, p. 72). Tajfel and his associates approach social identity as an ‘intervening casual mechanism in situations of social change’ (Tajfel, 1974, p. 76). Their dynamic approach is relevant in understanding the contingency, relativity, and hence fluidity of intergroup boundaries that represent the core aspects of the notion of grouping as I propose to use the term. I prefer ‘grouping’, as an ‘-ing-form’ signaling a process and a doing to ‘group’,

as a noun indicating a more ‘stable’ phenomenon via its morphology and semantics. Grouping, as a doing, enables those who are engaged in constructions of intergroup boundaries to bring in various locally and temporally contingent meanings of in-group vis-à-vis out-group(s). I suggest the concept of grouping to refer to the fluid, ever shifting feature of Self-definitions and Other-definitions that emerge from ongoing processes of stance alignment and, thereby, the processes of intergroup boundary formation.

6.2 Grounding

The concept of *grounding*, as it is used in this study, refers to such discursive processes in interaction that are meant to provide the participants with a framework necessary for the understanding of the organization of the domain of knowledge. Grounding, is about constructing a reality, in which certain positions are made available for the entities to take up or to attribute to Other(s). In that respect, it is a discursive accomplishment that makes one’s stance intelligible and positions visible. To explain grounding, I will use the following example.

(6.1) [Statements by the European Council and the European Commission on the conclusions of the European Council meeting on 16-17 December – 19.01.2011]

1 **Olle Schmidt (ALDE)** – Mr President, it is always – or at least sometimes
2 – amusing to listen to Mr Farage because he knows all the answers, and he
3 asks himself all the questions. [...?]

4 **Nigel Farage(EFD)** – Mr President, I did say a decade ago that you could
5 not have Greece and Germany put together in the same monetary union
6 and that it would not work.

Olle Schmidt, Member of the ALDE group puts a Blue-card question to Nigel Farage, leader of the EFD and begins his turn with a statement about his prospective respondent that ‘it is always – or at least sometimes – amusing to listen to Mr Farage’ (in Lines 1–2). This statement sets up a position for the respondent that is meant to render the importance and seriousness of the prospective answer to the impending question that the speaker is about to ask³¹. The opening statement even implies some annoyance on the part of the speaker when the speaker self-initiates and accomplishes a repair by substituting ‘always’ with ‘at least sometimes’.

The speaker continues with a proposition that portrays the respondent in an inner conversation in which he asks himself questions and answers them all (in Lines 2–3). The whole

³¹ Not in the extract.

picture that the speaker draws of the respondent both constructs the mocking stance that the speaker takes and provides the positions that he sets up for Other as he caricaturizes his opponent by attributing to him an exaggerated epistemic status (in Lines 2–3 *he knows all the answers, and he asks himself all the questions*). Consequently, the ironic grounding in this preface to the forthcoming question damages Other's public image.

In response (in Lines 4–6), Mr Farage attempts to establish a different grounding that is meant to repair his positive public image and his epistemic accountability. Mr Farage represents himself as someone with foresight, who predicted the recent situation in the monetary union already a decade ago.

In psycholinguistics³², grounding is defined as 'the collective process by which the participants try to reach [this] mutual belief' (Clark and Brennan 1991, p. 129). In this definition, *grounding refers to a conversational* co-creation of 'common grounds', to put it in Clark's (1985) terms, in order to achieve mutual understanding of a domain of interest. In fact, as the example above (6.1) demonstrates, grounding is a process where the participants provide each other with candidate positions. They do so by ascribing some behaviour to the other person and building up their own understandings of a domain in some connection to Others' presupposed understandings (i.e., *he knows all the answers*). Although there could have been claims of mutual understanding (i.e., *I see things exactly the way you see them, I agree with you*, and such), what we actually find is alternative understandings of a presupposed common interest.

Based on empirical evidence, my approach to grounding is different from the notion of co-creating common grounds. Grounding in PI emerges as the competitive efforts of the participants to exercise the most influence in the domains of interest. The competitive feature in my use of *grounding* is crucial for understanding the discursive nature of PI. Parliamentary debates, as Ilie (2003b, p. 34) notes, 'display well-regulated competing discursive processes in a contest-like event'. Bourdieu (1989), likewise Laclau (1994), approach politics as a 'struggle' to impose a single hegemonic perspective over other perspectives. In democratic parliamentary systems, this struggle is always responded to by a counter-struggle, which brings in a competitive dimension of doing politics in parliaments. The struggle is between opposing perceptions of the world where positions are grounded.

³² For further discussion see Clark & Schaefer, 1987, 1989; Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986; Isaacs & Clark, 1987.

Why am I wary of using significantly close concepts like ‘frame’ (Goffman, 1974), context, or ‘storylines’ (Davies and Harré, 1990)? To be able to explain the reason why, I shall present a brief overview of the three concepts.

Goffman (1974) argues that people interpret what is going on in their world through primary frameworks. In Goffman’s (1974, p. 24) view ‘we tend to perceive events in terms of primary frameworks, and the type of framework we employ provides a way of describing the event to which it is applied’. This means that people interpret social situations through ‘frames’ of understanding. Goffman (1974) regards a framework as primary as it is taken for granted by the user and is not taken to be some prior interpretation. These frameworks are built upon a certain set of presuppositions about oneself, one’s relation to Others, one’s view of the world and one’s place in it in relation to Other’s place in that imagined world.

The concept of grounding differs from Goffman’s ‘frame’ in terms of its morphological and semantic properties. While the noun ‘frame’ denotes an existing or fantasized being or an abstract concept, grounding in *-ing* form indicates ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’. My stance as a researcher is inclined to foreground the participants’ potential influence on the processes of the construction of frameworks.

On the semantic distinction between the two concepts, ‘frame’ is oriented towards the imagined boundaries to social situations. As Steinberg (1998) argues frame theory is too static and stresses the contextual and recursive qualities of frames. In that respect, the concept of frame appears problematic in our endeavour to understand the complexities of social formations (Munson, 1999).

As opposed to the static meanings of frames that presuppose rather concrete features of boundary definitions, this study focuses on the emergent aspect of ‘framing processes’ (Benford and Snow, 2000) that I call grounding.

Grounding is a process, and a *doing* that denotes fluidity with respect to the purposeful selection of features that are foregrounded by the participants of a particular interaction and acts as a guide for the participants’ behaviour. In that respect, I regard grounding as being restrictive and imposing in the ways in which the recipient is guided towards certain behaviour. Nevertheless, by that I do not ignore the dialogic aspect of grounding [Bakhtin, 1981; Linell, 1998; 2009; Du Bois, 2007]. Indeed, I concur with Du Bois’ (2007, p. 152) argument that

[W]e need contextual grounding (Gumperz, 1992; Hanks, 1990; Silverstein, 1976) in dialogic and sequential context (Linell 1998; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1996[c]; Voloshinov [1929] 1973) to arrive at a sufficiently enriched interpretation of the utterance (Recanati 1989; Sperber and Wilson 1995).

It is within this dialogic context that the participants manoeuvre towards their ends by applying elementary transformations (Grinder & Elgin, 1973; Chomsky, [1965] 2015; van Dijk, 1972). Grounding is, therefore, a better concept for the examination of purposeful and relational activities that are involved in intergroup relations.

Context, on the other hand, is a rather slippery concept that has been defined and redefined by philosophers, linguists, psychologists, as well as computer scientists. The most simplistic definition may refer to the environment of a social situation that both has influence on and is influenced by that social situation. Yet, what constitutes context has been a source of controversy among researchers across various fields. There are three major approaches to ‘context’ in linguistics. An interactionist approach³³ treats context ‘as inherently locally produced, incrementally developed and, by extension, as transformable at any moment’ (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 165). On the other hand, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) extends the limits of context including the world outside of the text. The third approach is pioneered by Van Dijk (2006; 2008; 2009), who suggests a socio-cognitive approach to discursive context. Van Dijk highlights the dynamic feature of context and defines context as a participant construct of the relevant contextual features of text and talk. The notion of ‘relevance’ is treated as taken from the participant's perspective in contrast to CDA. Relevance in CDA is dealt with in terms of the selective process that the analysts engage in in order to decide what information outside the text should be brought into the analysis.

The first two approaches raise certain analytical problems. However, my aim here is neither to revisit the debates between these two approaches to the concept of context, nor to argue in favour of one approach over the other. Van Dijk's (2006; 2008; 2009) socio-cognitive approach appears to be closer to my concept of grounding in terms of the dynamic properties of context that he suggests. Nevertheless, grounding best serves my purpose in this study to examine stance-taking activities by providing a *symbolic space* for the participants and the positions they set up in discursively created worlds.

The third term that is substantially close to our concept of grounding is ‘storylines’. The concept storyline is developed in theoretical literature concerning positioning to explain sets of shared abstract knowledge about socio-cultural situations that are tied to specific actors in shared social episodes (see for example: Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; James, 2014). Pioneers of Positioning Theory propose storyline as a primary component of

³³ The pioneers of this approach are Auer & Di Luzio, 1992; Drew & Heritage, 1992; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Goodwin, 1995; Schegloff, 1992, 1997.

discursive processes of positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré and van Langenhove, 1999, Harré and Moghaddam, 2003). Story, as a narratological term, refers to a narrative form of experience (Bamberg, 2012). As opposed to the ongoing and ever-changing frameworks that make positionings and stances intelligible to the participants, the concept of story lines indexes complete past experiences.

The need to develop the concept of grounding has emerged from difficulties of applying these three concepts in the analysis of PI. In their noun form, they all refer to some (implicit or explicit) representations of certain conditions. Grounding, on the other hand, corresponds to the infrastructural *work* that sets up a world in which positions are identified and then claimed or attributed to entities. Grounding provides the framework for understanding and (de)legitimizing the attitudes that participants display, and the relations they establish through stance alignment. Having recognized the agency of the participants in the processes of grounding enables the examination of the competitive and intersubjective processes that are involved in stance-taking.

6.3 Positioning

The word ‘position’ refers to the place where an entity is in relation to some other entities. The position of an entity is always relative and relational. Therefore, the positioning of one entity presupposes predefined or projected positions of other entities. As Taylor and Tajfel point out (in Tajfel 1978, Part 1) ‘defining the Self and its allies also defines those who are in the out-group’. Tajfel (1978, Part 1) further develops this claim in the following observation.

There seems always to be a degradation of the out-group that has a special role, by contrast, in defining one’s own qualities and the qualities of those with whom one is allied, one’s in-group.

The concept ‘positioning’ was first used within the social sciences in the 1980s by social psychologist Wendy Hollway (1984) in her study ‘Gender Difference and the Production of Subjectivity’, where she analyses the construction of subjectivity in the area of heterosexual relations. As Hollway (1984, p. 236) puts it, ‘[D]iscourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people’. Likewise, Harré and van Langenhove (1998, p. 16) explain positioning within the persons/conversations grid as follows.

The discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations.

According to Harré and van Langenhove (1998, p. 16) a position in a conversation is ‘a metaphorical concept through reference to which a person’s ‘moral’ and personal attributes as a speaker are compendiously collected’. In studying processes of groupings and intergroup boundary formations, utterances conveying a speaker’s moral and personal attributes are crucial data in understanding the relative positioning of Self and Other in relation to each other. In other words, positioning implies that you compare Self with Other.

For example, concerning autobiographical discourse, Brockmeier and Carbaugh (2001, p. 35) make the following claim.

What makes the telling justifiable’ is also a commitment to a certain set of presuppositions about oneself, one’s relation to Others, one’s view of the world and one’s place in it.

They further emphasize the fluidity of positioning as positions can and do change. Harré and van Langenhove (1998, p. 17) defined positioning as follows.

A procedure of making determinate a psychological phenomenon for the purposes at hand. [...] Fluid positionings, not fixed roles, are used by people to cope with the situations they usually find themselves in.

Positioning theory (henceforth PT) is proposed by Harré and van Langenhove (1998, p. 405) as a theoretical approach to understanding how participants dynamically produce and explain the everyday behaviour of Self and Other(s). In that respect, PT has attracted considerable attention in interaction analysis (see Bamberg, 2004a; 2004b; 2000c; Kittleson & Wilson 2014; Moita-Lopes, 2006; Schiffrin 2006, Tirado & Gálvez, 2008). It has also been used at a micro-level analysis in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992).

According to Harré and van Langenhove (1998) PT is built upon a constructivist perspective that sees the social world as a fluid concept based on a set of meanings shared between individuals. In other words, from a constructivist perspective, the social world is not a fixed reality that needs to be uncovered but rather a continuous construction carried out through a dialogue between individuals. Due to the unfixed, unstable denotation of positioning, PT provides a framework that allows for the exploration of how those shared meanings are discursively negotiated. As Harré and van Langenhove (in Taylor, Bougie and Cauette, 2003, p. 204) suggest, the main underlying premise in PT is that people discursively co-construct meaning of Self, Other, and the social world surrounding them by *strategically* positioning themselves in relation to Others. Consequently, the dialogical aspect of positioning emerges as a key feature in attributing meaning to Self and Other.

Fathali Moghaddam, Elizabeth Hanley, and Rom Harré (1999 in Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, p. 139, some of the prominent names in the development of PT), make the following statement.

Positioning theory is precisely designed to take into account the constant shifting, evaluating aspect of human interaction over time, in just the kind of sequence of small-scale encounters [that are recorded in the Kissinger transcripts]³⁴.

It is thus proposed as a method for analysis of discourse between individuals as they establish, maintain, and transform their relationships (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003, p. 139). It is essential to highlight at this point that in long-term small-scale encounters, such as PI, participants act as representatives of a ‘constituency’ and/or as leaders who might influence intergovernmental politics. In that respect, ascriptions of rights, duties and power are central in the activities of positioning in political contexts. Harré (2012, p. 193) explains:

It seems that what people are taken to mean by what they say and do is partly a matter of what the various people involved in a social episode believe that persons of this or that category are entitled to say and do. Such entitlements are called ‘positions’. [...] everyone does not have equal access to the local repertoire of meaningful actions. Some members of a group are more advantageously positioned than others. Some categories of persons are accorded rights and duties distinct from those of others in the same episode. In many cases, people are satisfied with their rights. In other cases, the distribution of rights and duties can be challenged (Davies and Harré, 1999). Revealing the subtle patterns of the distributions of rights to speak and act in certain ways can open up the possibility of their transformation (Harré, 2006, p. 229).

Despite the highly normative institutional context of the EP within which plenary debates are held, discursive positions are dynamically negotiated by the participants who strive to define who has the right, the duty and the power to say or do certain things. For an empirical illustration see the following example taken from the corpus of the present study.

(6.2) [Krisztina Morvai (NI) – Blue-card question under Rule 149(8) to Hannes Swoboda (S&D) – 18.01.2011]

1 Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Swoboda how he dares to criticize
2 the Hungarian Presidency when it is just starting. He does not even know
3 anything about it. Why does he not instead criticise his comrades in the
4 Socialist Group who were shooting at their own people on the 50th

³⁴ Formerly classified transcripts of Henry Kissinger's diplomatic talks with Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Leonid Brezhnev, Andrei Gromyko, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, George Bush, and other influential political figures of his time. Tan and Moghaddam's (1999) present an analysis of the Kissinger transcripts in their chapter ‘Sustaining Intergroup Harmony’ in Harré and Moghaddam edited book *The Self and Other*.

5 anniversary of the 1956 revolution and who arbitrarily imprisoned
6 hundreds of people? He should ask them and criticise them.

The questioner in the example is oriented towards her interlocutor's rights or eligibility to criticise the Hungarian Presidency as she attacks her recipient's epistemic accountability in 'He does not even know anything about it' and towards her interlocutor's social accountability as she assigns him the duty of criticising 'his comrades in the Socialist Group who were shooting at their own people on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and who arbitrarily imprisoned hundreds of people.' Consequently, the speaker attacks her respondent's prior Self-positioning as being critical to the Hungarian Presidency, when she argues for her respondent's epistemic and moral inaccountability. Harré (2006) states that 'position' refers to disputable rights, duties, and obligations. Positioning then, as example 6.2 also demonstrates, is a discursive and interactional processes through which positions are negotiated. Rights, duties, and possession and use of power are negotiated throughout a dialogical process by which moral attributions are made. Positioning, therefore, has direct moral implications as one positions Self or Other(s) as 'trusted', 'distrusted', 'with us' or 'against us', 'to be saved' or 'to be wiped out' (Moghaddam and Harré, 2010, p. 2).

The concept of 'position', as the central organizing construct of social analysis, is widely suggested (Tan & Moghaddam 1999; Harré and van Langenhove 1998; Taylor, et al., 2003) as a substitution to the concept of 'role'. It is meant to shift the focus of attention from 'the more ritualistic and formal to the more dynamic and negotiable aspects of interpersonal as well as *intergroup* encounters' (Tan and Moghaddam, 1999, p. 205, emphasis added).

Based on the theoretical literature related to positioning I define positioning as a linguistic and discursive activity by which social actors convey presuppositions or assumptions about what people are accountable for. Speakers rely on a set of presuppositions while making inferences about who can or should do what, how, when and where. Harré and his colleagues refer to such presuppositions as 'moral orders'. They base PT on an organisation of the world in various but often intertwined moral orders (Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré and van Langenhove 1998; Moghaddam, Hanley and Harré, 2003). The notion of moral order, in the most general sense, refers to any 'system of obligations that defines and organizes the proper—good, right, virtuous—relations among individuals and groups in a community' (Davies, 2008, p.17). This notion in Positioning Theory is substantially close to the notion of 'communicative project', in Linell's (2009, pp.188–199) terms, as both are used to explain the actions in interaction that make participants accountable for their contributions to a joint project. Moral orders in Harré and van Langenhove (1998) refers to a complex system of loosely defined

rights, duties, and obligations that are attached to participants in dialogue. The concept conveys the assumption that moral orders are complete and that they are known by the participants that perform ‘speech acts’.³⁵ The notion of communicative project, on the other hand, refers to a dialogical process that the participants work out through communication. In fact, Linell (2009, p. 179–188) proposes communicative projects as a ‘dialogical alternative to a monological theory of sequences of monological speech acts’. In line with Linell (2009), I view meaning making as a dialogic and dynamic process. Thus, in my analysis, I limit my use of the concept of moral orders.

So far, I have demonstrated the major features of positioning towards a definition of the concept for the purposes of the present thesis. In the following, I visit a different research tradition, Conversational Analysis, in search of similar analytic tools. I conclude the section by explaining how I use the concept ‘positioning’ in the analysis of PI.

The closest alternative to Positioning Theory can be found in the Conversational Analytic tradition, namely Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA).

MCA focuses on the recognizability of people as certain sorts of people or, more specifically, people as certain sorts of members of society, and how this recognizability is a resource for members in their dealings with each other (Day, 2012).

Generally defined, (Fitzgerald et al., 2009, p. 47) MCA focuses on ‘members’ methodical practices in describing the world, and displaying their understanding of the world and of the common-sense routine workings of society.

Both MC and Positioning are interested in the attributions of actions, moral accountability and facets of identity (Deppermann, 2013, p. 67) Deppermann argues that while PT rests on the methodological tenets of CA (Deppermann, 2013, p. 82), ‘positioning goes beyond MCA in terms of its interest in identities in interaction by attending to the biographical dimensions of identities, namely, continuity, change, and individuality’ (Deppermann, 2013, p. 83). By that, Deppermann acknowledges the discursive and dynamic character of positioning which is not in the focus of attention in MCA. PT, therefore, enables the identification of connections between macro ‘discourses’ and micro-levels of interaction as it acknowledges temporality of positions.

The concept of positioning has aroused some interest among scholars in CA (Day and Kjaerbeck, 2013; Deppermann, 2013). These works have compared PT with MCA as two

³⁵ The British social anthropologist Mary Douglas, who conceived the notion, in fact, conceptualized the moral orders as dynamic co-constructions ([1973]2004).

approaches oriented towards understanding identity and relations. Although positioning has long been used in narrative analysis (see Bamberg, 1997a; 1997b; 2004a; 2004b, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; de Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg, 2006a; 2006b, Georgakopoulou, 2000; 2007; 2013) as an analytical tool towards understanding how people co-construct and change positions in interaction (Bamberg, 1997a; 1997b), it has, in MCA research, only recently come to attention.

It is necessary to note that this thesis benefits from PT as a means for understanding the interactional processes through which participants organize their relations, and thereby determine their stances in particular interactional situations. The study primarily rests on the conceptualization of positioning within the theoretical tradition of positioning. However, this study is not an attempt to implement the positioning analysis model as it has been developed by Rom Harré and his colleagues since the 1990s.

In the following sections, I describe the relevance of positioning in examining intergroup relations. Then, I turn my attention to the particular interactional setting of the EP and present the relevance of positioning to the exploration of intergroup relations in the EP.

6.3.1 Intergroup Positioning

Intergroup positioning in this study refers to the discursive processes, by which speakers position Self and Other(s) on the basis of group membership(s) (cf. Tan and Moghaddam, 1999, p. 183). Take the statement below as an example.

(6.3) [Barbara Matera (PPE) – in answer to a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8) by Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR) – (PL) – 03.03.2011]

1 I stress the fact again that I belong to the political Group of the European
 2 People's Party (Christian Democrats). We are staunchly pro-European and
 3 convinced of the role that this House can play around the world.

Collectiveness in positioning may be indexed explicitly or implicitly. In explicit situations, intergroup relations are recognised in the use of plural forms of person pronouns *we*, *you*, *them* (see *we* in Example 6.3, in Line 2) or nominal forms of address and (self)reference as in 'the group of the European People's Party – Christian and Democrats' (in Lines 1–2). Nevertheless, intergroup relations are not always explicit in parliamentary discourse. A Blue-card question might address a single MEP where the speech does not include any discourse markers indicating a grouping. In such cases the analysis is admittedly interpretive to some extent, based on the institutionally defined representative roles of the MEPs. That is, 'positions

in a discourse are associated with particular rights, duties and obligations for speakers and hearers, as interlocutors operate within certain moral orders³⁶ of speaking' (Tan & Moghaddam, 1999, p. 184). In conversation analytic terms, we make assumption about what individuals are accountable for with respect to their (presupposed) membership categories.

The MEPs take the floor in the EP to fulfil their obligations to speak as participants in a parliamentary debate, besides their presupposed duties to raise certain issues in the Parliament on behalf of their constituency. The verbatim always describes the MEPs in terms of their membership to political groups and with respect to their national identities as in the introductions of the speeches embedding name + surname (political group), (nation state of citizenship).

In 1999, Tan & Moghaddam (1999, pp. 179–184) observed that *Intergroup Positioning* as a field of research had not yet attracted much interest. Since then, there has been a limited response in the field of psychology to this gap in research (see Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; Louis, 2008; Montiel and de Guzman, 2011). The present thesis intends to contribute to the research on *intergroup positioning* by using PT in the analysis of a normatively constrained institutional interaction type of PI.

6.3.2 Tracing Intergroup Relations in Statements by Individuals

MEPs represent their constituencies in their member countries, while they are at the same time responsible to the political groups that they are members of. Their talk in the EP might also express or imply their personal and moral attributes. Nevertheless, in the chambers of the EP, they are assumed to be representatives of certain groupings. By means of their speeches in the plenary debates, MEPs are engaged in constructing meanings of Self and Other(s). By attributing meanings to the in-group and out-group(s), MEPs discursively construct, maintain, or deconstruct groupings and intergroup boundaries. This construction is carried out throughout an on-going discursive process during the plenary debates, where MEPs build their arguments upon prior or projected arguments. By doing so, MEPs get involved in a set of positioning activities: setting up positions for Self and Other(s), allocating positions, taking or occupying a position, maintaining a position, claiming a position that has already been taken by Other(s), and rejecting a position set up for Self. All these positioning activities are carried out on the basis of group membership. Personal and moral attributes of individuals would have

³⁶ Lagenhove and Harré (1999, p. 23) explain that 'positioning always takes place within the context of a specific moral order of speaking.' They explain moral order in terms of the rights and duties of the participants for self and other positioning.

minor impact on the socio-political context, such as the EP, unless they were taken as representative of a group.

6.4 Stance

The concept of ‘stance’ has been viewed from two different angles in linguistic inquiry. One influential perspective on stance is suggested by Douglas Biber (Biber et al., 1999, 2007; Biber, 2006a, 2006b) who considers it to be the expressions of individual speakers or writers, rather than taking it as an activity that takes place in interactive relations. In his methodology, Biber examines stance as ‘personal feelings, attitudes, value judgements, or assessments’ (Biber et al., 1999, p. 966) as indexed in linguistic devices including word choice, phrases, and grammatical features like tense, aspect, and voice (Biber et al, 2007, p. 62)

A second approach emerged from a ‘Stance Project’, which was carried out most actively between 2002-2005 in cooperation between the University of Oulu and the University of California, Santa Barbara. My understanding of stance, in this thesis, is mainly influenced by work that resulted from this project.

Within the project, John W. Du Bois proposed a *stance-taking* model that provided methodological frameworks for the analysis of stance in interaction. Du Bois (2007, p. 163) approaches stance from a Bakhtinian perspective defining it as follows.

A public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self & others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field.

Du Bois and his colleagues have proposed an understanding of *stance* that is accomplished through the intersubjective activity of *stance-taking*. In their approach, stance is an ‘interactional achievement’ (Keisanen, 2006, p. 13), instead of a subjective single-speaker expression as it is seen in the former approach (see Biber, 2006; Biber and Finegan, 1989; and Biber et al, 1999, 2007). Correspondingly, Pentti Haddington (2005, p. 15) defines *stance-taking* as ‘an activity in which interlocutors display their attitudes, positions and points of view dialogically and intersubjectively in and through interaction’.

The way the notion of *stance* is used in this thesis is aligned with Du Bois and his colleagues' approach, seeing *stance-taking* as an intersubjective activity carried out in its ‘dialogic and sequential context’ (Linell 1998; Sacks 1992; Schegloff 1996b; Voloshinov [1929] 1973). ‘Stance’, Du Bois (2007, p. 148) claims, ‘is a property of utterance, not of

sentence; and utterances are inherently embedded in their dialogic contexts'. By context Du Bois (2007, pp. 145-146) means the 'situated realisation of language in use'.

Elinor Ochs (1992), recognizes the relationship between stance and its interactional setting as she argues for an indexical aspect in meaning making processes that involve stance-taking. In her approach, certain stance types become indexical in particular speech situations, events, or genres, or in Linell's (2009) terms, communicative activity types. Ochs' example in her cutting-edge article *Indexing Gender* is from the Japanese cultural context where women often take 'gentle' stances, and thereby connect gentleness and femininity in this cultural context. Ochs' argument for the indexicality of stance is worth examining in institutional interactions where communicative conduct is governed by a set of rules and conventions and where certain linguistic formulations become routine in particular situations as the participants engage *in* stance-taking. Specifically, through recurrent and organized practices of the participants, some stance types and actions become routine in the EP.

Giving central importance to stance in interaction, Kiesling (2009, p. 179) argues that stance-taking is a speaker's primary engagement in conversation. In line with this, the present study adopts a view that all linguistic and interactional activities encode stance. Furthermore, drawing on the dialogical understanding of stance-taking, I argue that speakers accomplish stance by means of comparison (implicit or explicit in varying degrees), where their actions echo prior, presupposed or projected future stances (as in *I agree with you*, echoing a prior evaluative stance).

6.4.1 Du Bois's Stance Triangle

Du Bois' (2007, p. 162) notion of stance-taking is a relational activity involving 'evaluation, positioning, and alignment, as well as the sociocognitive relations of objective, subjective, and intersubjective intentionality'. For the analysis of this relational process Du Bois (2007) provides a triangle model that depicts *stance-taking* as a threefold activity. See the model below.

Figure 4: Stance Triangle (Du Bois, 2007)

In the stance triangle, subject 1 evaluates something, and thereby positions Self, and thereby aligns with subject 2 (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163).

In a short sequence of interaction Du Bois implements the triangle model as follows.

(This Retirement Bit SBC011: 444.12-446.30)

1 SAM; I don't like those.

2 (0.2)

3 ANGELA; I don't either.

In Du Bois' example, Sam (Stance Subject 1) establishes a relation between the Self and the stance object, referred to as *those*, and thereby positions Self. In response to Sam's *Self-positioning* and with reference to Sam's evaluation of the stance object, Angela (Stance Subject 2) aligns her stance with that of Sam's, which she formulates as a second action by deploying the word *either*. Du Bois explains that the aim of his model (2007, p. 174) is to represent 'the minimum structure of stance as dialogic action'.

When applied to sequences that involve long turns at talk, embodying multiple stances, the stance triangle emerges in a state of flux, where either the stance object or the representation of the stance object (the latter can be explained by shifts in stance alignment) is transformed

according to diverse grounds that stance takers establish in their propositions. In such sequences, stance-taking occurs in a *chain* of stance triangles. As Ribeiro (2006, p. 49-50) notes, ‘participant’s subtle shifts in alignment provide intricate contexts that shed light on coherence and the joint construction of meaning’. In this thesis, my aim is to go beyond Du Bois’ stance triangle and trace the shifts in stance alignment throughout longer turns at talk in PI. By so doing, I hope to provide a robust understanding of the MEPs’ linguistic and discursive behaviour as they organize intergroup relations in their institutional interaction.

6.4.2 Stance Categories

In the literature on stance, a classification is often made into *evaluative, epistemic, and affective* stances. Biber and Finegan’s (1989, p. 92) definition of stance as ‘lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message’ implies that a classification as evaluative stance is indexed in the expressions of judgments, epistemic stance in the display of commitment, and affective stance in the expressions of feelings.

Evaluative Stance³⁷

Evaluation, as Du Bois (2007, p. 143) defines the term, is ‘the process whereby a stance-taker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value’. Evaluation in an utterance can be explicitly embedded within the use of adjectives as in *this is great, it was horrible*, and *that is fine*. Even when the evaluative stance is as explicit as in the examples, contextualization is necessary for the interpretation of the situated meanings of the stance (Du Bois, 2007, p. 145).

An Evaluative stance indicates forcefulness in varying degrees depending on the modality conveyed in the utterance. The examples *this is great, it was horrible*, and *that is fine* display the speaker’s commitment to the propositional context indexing evaluation, thereby, directing the interlocutor(s) towards a Self-positioning preferably aligned with the speaker’s stance.

Affective Stance

Affective stance is a ‘socially recognized feeling, attitude, mood, or degree of emotional intensity’ (Ochs, 1990, p. 2). Affective stance, different from evaluative stance is Self-oriented

³⁷ For further discussion on evaluative stance see Conrad and Biber, 2000; Du Bois et al., 2000; Du Bois et al., 2003; Hunston and Sinclair, 2000; Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Lemke, 1998; Macken-Horarik and Martin, 2003; Khamkhien, 2014.

as it foregrounds the stance taker's emotional situation. Berman et al., (2002, p. 5) contrast the affective attitude with the epistemic as an affective attitude entails a relation between cognizing speakers/writers and their emotions with respect to a given state of affairs.

Du Bois (2007, p. 143) notes an affective scale in the speakers' Self-positioning with respect to their emotions. Utterances like *I am glad*, *I am so glad*, and *I am amazed*³⁸ index affective stance along an affective scale. In that, *I am so glad*, being the marked, and *I am amazed*, being the most upgraded form, display the scalarity in the speaker's expression of stance. Such scalarity is found in my data with a clear discrepancy between expressions of positive affect and those that have a negative import. Examine the following examples.

(6.4) I am glad that you have said that

(6.5) I am happy to see you here

(6.6) I am extremely concerned

(6.7) We are extremely worried

Extracts (6.4) and (6.5) exemplify moderate expressions of positive affect. However, examples (6.6) and (6.7) are marked with the adverb 'extremely', conveying upgraded expression of negative affect. The elevation in negatively loaded affective stance enables the MEPs to construct bold intergroup boundaries, displaying strong divergence from Other's presupposed stance.

Epistemic Stance³⁹

In most general terms, epistemology is the 'theory of knowledge' (BonJour, 2003, pp. 21-22). The concept of knowledge is problematic in the sense that it raises questions about the degree of epistemic justification (BonJour, 2003, pp. 21-22). In that respect, problems of epistemic justification make it relevant to talk about scalarity in epistemic status and relativity of epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012a, 2012b; Mondada, 2013a; Ochs, 1996, Palmer, 1986) which is indexed in the choice of verbs (e.g.: know, think, believe, see.), modal verbs (must, can, may, shall, and their past counterparts), adverbs (e.g.: certainly, simply, obviously, possibly.), adjectives (e.g.: clear, evident, obvious, true.), nouns (e.g.: fact, possibility, truth, etc.), and

³⁸ Examples from Du Bois (2007, p. 143).

³⁹ [Epistemic (Clift 2006; Du Bois, 2007; Haviland 1991; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Karkkainen 2003b; Thompson and Mulac 1991; Muhsin, 2001)].

epistemic phrases (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 41) with or without ‘that’ (such as *I know that, I assume we are agreeing*).

Palmer (1986, p. 51), notes this scalar aspect of epistemic stance (he refers to epistemic modality in utterance), as he talks about ‘the degree of commitment by the speaker to what he says’. According to Bybee et al. (1994) this commitment is always ‘less than a total commitment’ to the propositional content of the utterance, since epistemic modality, being the marked case as opposed to the unmarked case that conveys total commitment, indicates an effort to argue for a proposition and is therefore assertive only to a certain extent.

In determining what to include in the stance category of epistemics, I align with Perkins' (1983, pp. 29-30) argument that epistemic markers express the speaker's knowledge or belief or opinion about a proposition. Or in an even broader sense, as in Biber et al. (1999), epistemic stance markers are the representations of the speaker's attitude towards the status of information in a proposition.

Based on the approaches to epistemicity above, I regard epistemic stance as the indicator of the speaker's here and now degree or source of commitment to the uttered proposition that is ‘calibrated’, in Du Bois’ (2007) terms, between stance takers throughout interaction.

The comparative feature of taking epistemic stance has been elaborated in a large body of research on interaction. Participants' relative knowledge about events was first discussed by Labov and Fanshel (1977) in their analysis of declarative questions. Labov and Fanshel's differentiation between A-events (known to A, but not to B) and B-events (known to B, but not to A) has evoked researcher's interest to the distribution of knowledge in interaction (‘epistemic status’ in Heritage, 2002c, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, Heritage and Raymond 2005, 2012; Raymond and Heritage, 2006; ‘Type 1 & Type 2 knowables’ in Pomerantz, 1980; ‘epistemic domains’ in Stivers and Rossano, 2010; ‘territories of information’ in Kamio, 1997). All these concepts have been developed in order to better understand the relative positioning of participants on an epistemic scale that indexes what they are entitled to know, how they know it and to what extent.

The three stance categories – evaluative, affective, and epistemic – enable the analysis of the speaker's orientation in terms of value judgements, emotions, or knowledge. However, in order to be able to bring in the functional aspect of stance-taking in interaction, one needs to look beyond these three stance categories and examine the various stances that speakers may establish in building a relation between Self and Other.

To exemplify, speakers can accomplish epistemic stance by offering a description of a first-hand experience, showing a subjective stance (i.e., *I have heard comments like this before*).

In another instance, speakers can establish a rather objective stance by delivering a reportive (i.e., *It has been said that*) or factual information (i.e., *The fact is that*). The following are the types of epistemic stances that recurrently occur in my data.

Adversarial stance displayed through oppositional, accusatory, mocking, or condemning attitude towards Other.

Deferential stance displaying an orientation towards what Other can or will do.

Neutral stance indexed in reportive, factual, and/or inferential utterances.

These stance types may fall into one or more of the three stance categories – evaluative, affective, and epistemic – depending on how the utterance is framed and formulated. For instance, an utterance such as *Do you really like this?* implicitly conveys a critical or disbelieving stance indexed in the adverbial ‘really’, while the utterance is framed as an opinion seeking yes/no interrogative indicating an epistemic stance. Other stances can possibly be found in PI although my aim here is not to give an exclusive list of stances types that are specific to PI. However, organising various stances that the MEPs recurrently establish in a rather limited list makes it possible to show patterns in the MEPs stance-taking.

6.5 Alignment

‘Alignment’ refers to the ways in which interactants respond to a prior stance taken by means of a question or a statement. As Du Bois (in Haddington, 2004, p. 110) suggests, alignment is ‘putting my stance vs. your stance’. Participants can display alignment by agreeing or disagreeing with Other's stance. Nevertheless, alignment is not always an altogether agreement or disagreement. Du Bois (2007, p. 144), indeed, defines *alignment*, as the act of ‘*calibrating* the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers’ (emphasis added). Alignment, then explains the whole range of possible types of convergent and divergent positions that interactants can take in relation to each other (Haddington, 2005, p. 52). This approach enables a close examination of stance alignment in order to identify stance markers. That is, at what point and in which linguistic formulations do interlocutors construct intersubjectivity in their utterances? Such pragmatic examination, when applied to corpus data, can reveal patterns in stance-taking activities.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

Analysing a conversational procedure in the EP with an interdisciplinary research design brings forth a richness of concepts. Some of the concepts that I operationalize in this thesis have long been developed in diverse research traditions. The present chapter has offered a critical review of five concepts – grouping, grounding, positioning, stance-taking, and alignment – central to my thesis.

I argue that all these concepts are needed for a robust understanding of what the MEPs accomplish by asking a Blue-card question in the plenary debates held in the EP. To clarify, the MEPs construct imaginary and fluid groupings and they position Self and Other(s) in regard to these groupings. The MEPs accomplish positioning by taking stances towards various stance objects of their choice. They thereby align with the prior or presupposed stances of Other(s) by showing convergent or divergent alignment in varying degrees. This is how they relate their stances with those of Other's. The MEPs set up positions for the Other(s) through grounding, which also provides them with the frameworks necessary to make their stances intelligible.

The reader will notice that the five central concepts in this thesis are used to a different degree in the analysis of the discursive chunks – address, question frames, and questions – that recur in Blue-card question turns. For example, address is mostly about positioning and stance which is only implied through the recurrent use of certain address forms. Whereas, QFs constitute the discursive chunk in Blue-card questions, which enable the MEPs to take a stance that might be contradictory to the stance in the focal question of their question turns. Consequently, QFs are mostly about stance-taking. 'Questions', however, are rather broad, involving all the discursive activities of grouping, grounding, positioning, stance-taking, and alignment.

Chapter 7 Addressing

7.1 Introduction

Address has often been studied in terms of politeness and face. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1978) concept of face, Gruber (1993, p.3) argues that politicians always wish to maintain 'a public positive face' (PPF), claiming a consistent image of Self as being rational and trustworthy in contrast to adversaries. Politicians in fact wish to attack each other while at the same time maintaining their own positive images.

Addressing comprises the initial unit in the MEPs Blue-card turns at talk that may convey stance. In PI in the strictly regulated context of the EP, there are a restricted variety of address forms that are available for speakers to choose from. Besides conventional forms of address that MEPs are to comply with, the code of conduct regulating address forms in the EP is governed by the European Parliament Directorate-General. That is to say, MEPs pursue their political projects confronted with a demand to comply with powerful regulations.

Within this normative parliamentary setting, the MEPs have to find the most persuasive and strategic ways of communicating their stances while threatening the accountabilities of their political adversaries. The recurrent use of particular forms of address in certain contexts is characteristic of parliamentary speech, particularly of questions that are the focus of this thesis. It is thus interesting to explore how the MEPs in the EP formulate what they have to say in such a 'convention-based and rule-regulated parliamentary setting' (Ilie, 2010a, p. 890).

Address forms manifest the social or institutional (or both) rights and obligations of participants and power relations, thus contributing to the contextualization of a particular social episode within which each participant is positioned in relation to another. Strategic and contingent choice of address forms is regarded as a practice within positioning processes, whereby interactants make their orientations toward social categories relevant (Harré and van Langenhove 1991; van Langenhove and Harré 1993).

Though being regularized both by parliamentary rules and conventions, address forms are instrumental in the discursive positioning activities that members of parliaments are engaged in as they competitively construct Self and Other(s). Through their choice of address, the MEPs competitively set up positions for Self and Other(s) with respect to the rights, duties, and obligations that they are supposed to comply with. This chapter, thus, explores particular address forms that are traditionally used in the EP to manage in-group and out-group relations.

7.2 Analytical Approaches to Address

In the second half of the 60s Roger Brown and his colleagues Albert Gilman and Marguerite Ford pioneered sociolinguistic investigation of forms of address (Gilman and Brown, 1958; Brown and Gilman, 1960, Brown and Ford, 1961). The sociolinguistic perspective to address forms introduced by Brown and Gilman (1960), is ground-breaking as they demonstrate how address forms (*V* and *T* pronouns) convey power relations. In their analysis, Brown and Gilman (1960) establish a distinction between ‘polite’ and ‘familiar’ pronouns of address. They suggest that exchange of pronominal forms of address influences the shaping of solidarity and power in relationships. They introduce the notions of ‘non-reciprocal power semantic’ and ‘reciprocal solidarity semantic’ referring to interlocutors’ (dis)claim for power or solidarity through the exchange of *T* and *V* pronouns as they address each other. Whereas reciprocal use indexes solidarity, the social relationships indexing power are embodied in the interlocutors’ non-reciprocal *V/T* use.

Brown and Gilman’s (1960) approach has been criticised as being limited in empirical basis. Studies on larger corpora by Leith, 1984, Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990; Norrby and Warren, 2012; Wales, 1983; Williams, 2004 provide an empirical challenge to the generalizations that Brown and Gilman (1960) suggest. For example, Mühlhäusler & Harré (1990), call the universality of the binary distinction into question, given that many languages have more diverse address pronoun systems than the simple *T/V* dichotomy proposed by Brown and Gilman. Based on empirical evidence, Braun (1988) concludes that some languages, such as Polish, do not conform to the binary *T/V* distinction.

Despite the objections to the universality of the binary distinction, Brown and Gilman’s (1960) ‘The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity’ provides the pioneering insight to research address forms and secures its place as one of the most cited works in research on forms of address. Brown and Ford (1961) on ‘Address in American English’ is another work that has received much attention. In this work, Brown and Ford (1961) examine nominal address in American English with a focus on the use of first name (FN) vs. title + last name (TLN). They suggest ‘intimacy’ and ‘distance’ as determiners of the choice between address by FN and address by TLN.

Another author that has contributed a great deal to the research on address forms is Susan Ervin-Tripp. In her (1972) chapter ‘On sociolinguistic rules: Alternation and co-occurrence’. Ervin-Tripp (following Geoghegan, 1971) suggests a formal diagramming to examine the discursive outcomes of using alternative forms of address in American English. Her diagram

resembling a computer flow chart is meant to display ‘the set of paths, or the rule, [which] is like a formal grammar in that is a way of representing a logical model’ (Ervin-Tripp, 1972, p. 305).

Later in the 1980s, in his ‘Principles of Pragmatics’, Leech (1983) revisits Brown and Gilman’s model of address and introduces the notion of ‘social distance’ in discussing what Brown and Gilman calls ‘solidarity’. The notions of *social distance* and *solidarity* are used in both studies, for example to explain interlocutors’ preferences not to go along with or to align with the type of relationship that Other sets up through using a particular form of address.

Leech (1983) builds on Lakoff’s (1973) maxim-based approach to politeness and provides insights in understanding *What did s mean [to convey] by saying X?* (Leech, 2003, p. 104). Leech (2014, pp. 4-9) notes the scalar and situated aspect of politeness that is constructed through interaction. His notion of ‘interpersonal rhetoric’ explains politeness within a relational grid, giving a linguistic account of politeness.

Recent research on (im)politeness has elevated the notion of ‘relational work’ by exploring the connection between impoliteness and the exercise of power in relations (e.g., Locher and Bousfield, 2008a; 2008b; Locher and Watts; 2008, and Culpeper, 2008). This approach to (im)politeness has proved particularly useful in my research, disclosing discursive functions of strategic uses of address forms in parliamentary setting.

7.3 Research on Parliamentary Forms of Address

Parliamentary forms of address have not attracted much interest in the field of linguistics. Nevertheless, previous research in this area has provided insights about strategic uses of pronouns as reference and address forms in political settings across cultures. Among these studies, John Wilson (1990, p. 40), in his work titled ‘Politically Speaking: The Pragmatic Analysis of Political Language’, argues that ‘politicians would be particularly sensitive to the use of pronouns in developing and indicating their ideological positions on specific issues’. In his empirically informed work Wilson (1990) illustrates how the pronominal system can be employed to allocate power, to distribute responsibility, and to create social distance.

More knowledge about parliamentary forms of address is gained from Cornelia Ilie’s comparative studies of the U.K. Parliament and the Swedish Riksdag (2004; 2010a) Ilie’s (2010a) article, where she examines relational, interpersonal and strategic functions of context-dependent, addressee-targeted, and audience-oriented choice of address forms, suggests an analytical framework for the analysis of parliamentary forms of address. In her article, Ilie

(2010a) examines nominal forms of address in the two national parliaments in terms of (in)directness, (non)reciprocity, and (in)consistency. Another pragmatic analysis was conducted on the construction of symmetry and asymmetry through address forms that are conventionally used in the Spanish Parliament (Gelabert-Desnover, 2009).

7.4 Procedural Identification of Addressee

As Ilie (2010a, p. 890) describes, parliamentary forms of address are ‘convention-based and rule-regulated’. According to rule 162(8) of the Directorate General of the EP, speakers are supposed to address the president first in their turns (e.g., *Madam President*, *Mr President*). Though it is not rare that MEPs fail to address the president, the president secures her/his procedural rights and obligations as the chairperson of the debates and takes every other turn throughout the sessions.

Immediately after addressing the president the speaker may address the respondent of the question. This is, however, not mandatory and no matter whether the respondent is addressed in the question or not, he/she gets the next turn to be able to respond to the respective Blue-card question. In addition to the President and the respondent, speakers might address third parties. For example, it is not uncommon that speakers strategically expand the group of addressees to the very general *Ladies and Gentlemen*. See the examples below.

(7.1) *Madam President*, I would like to ask my fellow Member the following question.⁴⁰

(7.2) *Mr President*, Mr Klute, you mentioned that, [...] ⁴¹

(7.3) *Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen*, I should like to reply to the fellow Member who said that [...] ⁴²

Notice that ‘Ladies and Gentlemen’ (i.e., 7.3) are included as co-addressees with regard to their role as witnesses although they are not entitled to speak under the Blue-card procedure.

Having presented, first, the analytical approaches that guide my examination of address forms in the EP, and next, the Blue-card procedure with respect to the identification of addressee(s), let us now turn our attention to the data itself. In the following section I discuss various types of address in terms of their formal properties aiming to reveal patterns of

⁴⁰ Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D) – (RO) directs a Blue-card question to Anne Delvaux (PPE) – (FR) – 13.09.2011.

⁴¹ Hans-Peter Martin (NI) – (DE) directs a Blue-card question to Jürgen Klute (GUE/NGL) – (DE) – 04.07.2011.

⁴² Francesco Enrico Speroni (EFD) – (IT) directs a Blue-card question to Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) – (PT) – 20.01.2011.

parliamentary address. I then analyse how these formats function in the discursive processes of grouping and intergroup boundary constructions.

7.5 Analysis

This section is dedicated, on the one hand, to defining the terms *reference* and *address*, and on the other hand, to distinguishing between the two systems which are similar in form but differ in function with respect to their usage.

7.5.1 Referential Expressions

Reference is the choice that a speaker makes among a variety of types of noun phrases or pronouns provided by a language in order to refer to a concrete entity - a person, a creature, a thing or a place - (Allerton, 1996, p. 621). That is, *Mr President*, *Mr Barossa*, *President of the European Commission*, *the previous speaker*, *my honourable colleague*, or the pronominal form *he* could all refer to the same person, though conveying different connotative meanings with respect to the positioning of the referent on particular grounds.

Drawing on Sacks and Schegloff, (1979); Schegloff, (1972; 1996b); Stivers, (2007), Heritage (2009, p. 310) arrives at the following proposition.

‘The selection of referring expressions embodies very precise recognition of who and what an interlocutor knows, while also encoding nuanced information about the purposes of utterance’.

In light of this assertion, I suggest that referring expressions are loaded with semantic presuppositions defining positioning of both the referee(s) (the person(s) being referred to) and the referrer based on the relations between the participants with respect to their rights, duties, and obligations. Moral considerations concerning who may do what and how may rely either on institutional assignments or the participants' subjectivity, or both. In parliamentary settings, a speaker's choice of referring expressions indicating institutional, personal, intergroup, procedural or relational positioning embodies the speaker's moral attributes. Reference, in that respect, is a representation of the referee(s) based on the referrer's projected moral and personal attributes. This definition, I suggest, is valid for address as well, which resembles reference in form but has a different function.

7.5.2 Distinguishing Address from Reference

Reference forms can be used for address. Therefore, *form* per se does not enable recognition of the divergence between the two systems. Dickey (1997, p. 256) points out that ‘the address meaning of a word [is] to be determined by its usage as an address’ just as ‘the referential meaning by its usage when referring to people or things (that is non-address contexts)’. We see here the central notion that requires attention when dealing with reference and address, namely ‘usage’.

‘Usage’ provides the *context* of the reference form that determines whether it is an address or a reference. The targeted recipient, who, by the Blue-card procedure, is assigned as the next speaker and hence the respondent of the Blue-card question might either be positioned as the *co-addressee* together with the President, and whoever else is addressed in the Blue-card question, or as the party who is being talked about. It is through positioning that participants create relationships between Self and Other(s).

Let us examine how reference forms are determined through their usage in particular contexts. Compare examples (7.4) and (7.5).

(7.4) *Mr President, Mr Klut* I would like to know how ...? (direct address)

(7.5) *Mr President*, why does Mr Bloom not understand what ...? (referencing as indirect address)

The question in (7.4) makes relevant a response by Mr Klut. Mr Klut is positioned as the co-addressee to the President, who is made the addressee only through the address itself. Although the President may take the next turn and comment on the question or judge its appropriateness, he is not entitled to answer the Blue-card question. The question is addressed to Mr Klut. In (7.5), however, the question is directed to the President in the presence of the prospective respondent. Yet, the illocutionary force of the accusatory question is aimed at Mr Bloom who gets referred to without being directly addressed. The question threatens Mr Bloom’s face by accusing him of not understanding the matter of concern. In the formulation, the target of the accusatory question, in this case, Mr Bloom, is positioned as the party who is being *talked about* instead of the party who is being *spoken to*. While address makes relevant a response by the addressee, reference does not necessarily draw the referee into a particular interaction. As demonstrated in example (7.5), the questioner directs the question *why does Mr Bloom not understand what ...?* to the President, attributing the rights and duties of a respondent to the President and positioning Mr Bloom as a referee. Making a face-threatening accusation

in the presence of the prospective respondent without addressing him implies discursive distance maintaining established intergroup relations between political adversaries.

Although Mr Bloom, by the Blue-card procedure, secures his rights to respond to the Blue-card question, the discursive positioning of the participants, the President as the addressee and Mr Bloom as the referee, does not comply with the procedurally allocated rights of the participants. Thus, there is an ambiguity between the procedural roles and discursive positionings which emerges by taking the participants' procedurally defined rights and duties as criteria in recognizing a reference form as a form of address in a particular interaction.

7.5.3 Nominal Forms of Address in the EP

My data shows various nominal address forms that are used *strategically* in the EP. I use the adverb 'strategically' here to refer to the pragmatic choices that the speakers make among a repertoire of forms of address linked to parliamentary interaction. That repertoire is comprised of recurrent forms that evoke four discursive dimensions of positioning through address that I identify in my data, namely *institutional*, *inter-personal*, *procedural*, and *relational* (cf. Ilie's (2009, pp. 890-891) categorization of nominal address forms).

1. Institutional dimension:

- (a) Address marking institutional roles: This group of address forms determines the relationship between the addresser and the addressee as merely institutional, indexing institutionally connoted rights, responsibilities and obligations.

i.e. 'President of the Commission', 'the Chair of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe', 'Madam Rapporteur', 'President of the European Council', 'Prime Minister'

- (b) Address by institutional title + surname: This group of address forms acknowledges the individual that is attached to the *institutional rights and duties*. Here recognition of the addressee is based on, on the one hand, a set of assumptions that are attributed to the addressee as an individual, and on the other hand, institutional connotations of the role. So, in the examples below, the addressee is Van Rompuy as the President, but not just any president, or Rehn as the Commissioner, but not just any commissioner.

i.e. President Van Rompuy, Commissioner Rehn, President Holland, Member Hartong.

- (c) Address by honorific title + institutional title: This group of address forms is similar in the inferences it provides, as it indexes institutional rights and obligations. However, the honorific title evokes gender categories indexed in Madam and Mr. The connotations that are linked to gender categories are context dependent and an analysis of honorific titles should consider the contextual aspects of the use.

i.e. ‘Madam *President*’, ‘Mister *President*’

- (d) Address indexing groupings: This group of address forms indexes membership categories and provides inferences about the addressed out-group, vis-à-vis an in-group. By using instances of this group of address forms, speakers openly engage in *intergroup positioning*.

i.e. ‘Members of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe’.

2. Inter-personal dimension:

- (a) Address by honorific titles + last name: This category of address forms indexes the gender of the addressee(s), and may, thereby provide inferences about the gender category vis-à-vis the *positioning* of the particular individual who is being addressed. As argued earlier an analysis of gendered address forms should recognize the situatedness of the addressing activity.

i.e. Mr Klux, Mrs Morvai, Ms Keller

- (b) Address by personal names incorporating both first and last names: This type of address that apostrophizes a Member does not occur often in the context of the EP plenary debates. The deletion of an institutional title indicates an inter-personal footing and breaks the institutional framing of the relation between Self and addressee.

i.e. ‘*Nigel Farage*, would you tell us’.

- (c) Address marking social ranks - titles of nobility:

i.e. ‘*Earl of Dartmouth*’, ‘*Baroness Ashton*’.

3. Procedural dimension: Address forms exemplified as follows index the sequential order in turn-taking and indicate to whom the speaker’s on-going turn is responding.

i.e. ‘the previous speaker’, ‘the speaker before me’

4. Relational dimension: The speaker might construct diverse types of relations through address

(a) Collegial relation: This type of address form indicates a relationship between Self and addressee on the basis of shared profession, thereby indexing an institutional relation.

i.e. ‘my respected colleagues’, ‘my honourable colleague’, ‘this right honourable colleague’.

(b) Comradeship: This type of address form indexes a relationship between Self and addressee(s) based on an ideological footing, indicating membership to some presupposed grouping.

i.e. ‘*our Fellow* in the Christians and Democrats Group’, ‘my esteemed fellow member’, ‘my dear Friend’

Notice that address in a parliamentary setting often displays a complex format where two or more of these dimensions are combined as in, for example, 4 (b) ‘*our Fellow in the Christian and Democrats Groups*’, where both relational and institutional dimensions are indexed.

7.5.4 Pronominal Forms of Address in the EP

Pronouns are pragmatic tools for the discursive organization of interpersonal as well as intergroup relations. Wilson (1990, p. 46) argues that ‘social relationships and attitudes are marked within the use of the pronominal system’. That is, social organization is indexed in the distributional use of pronouns by specific groups and individuals (Wilson, 1990, p. 46) and the shared knowledge of this indexical usage.

In this study, I use the social dimensions of interaction ‘distance’ (Brown and Gilman 1960), ‘solidarity & power’ (Brown and Gilman, 1950; Brown and Ford, 1961), and ‘inclusion and exclusion’ [Malone 1997, p. 64; Sacks (1992, vol 1., p. 382; Sacks 1992, pp. 163-168, 349; Wilson 1990, pp. 67-70], to describe the discursive functions of pronominal forms of address that are strategically used by the MEPs as they co-construct intergroup relations.

7.5.5 Addressing Practices in the EP

In the following, I examine the identification and *positioning* of the addressee.

7.5.5.1 Mandatory Address to the President

In accordance with European Parliament Directorate-General Rule 162, the speakers in the EP must address the chair of the plenary prior to their talk. That is, the speaker presents her/his talk for the attention of the President and, on the President's behalf to the Parliament, no matter whether the talk is a Blue-card question to a particular MEP, or not.

Although the participatory role of the President is institutionally defined – with regards to her institutional rights and duties – the *discursive positioning* of the President varies depending on the pragmatic preferences of the speakers. The role the speaker designs for the President can be identified with reference to the positioning she/he designs for the President and the participants within a particular interaction. Compare the following three examples.

- (7.6) Mr President, Mr Klute I would like to know how you explain...? (co-addressee)
- (7.7) Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Swaboda ... (moderator)
- (7.8) Mr President, has it ever occurred to Mr Ponga that ...? (report recipient)
- (7.9) With all due personal respect for you, Ms Dodds, would you ...? (Ø address to the President)

In example (7.6), 'Mr President, Mr Klute I would like to know how you explain...?', the President and Mr Klute are juxtaposed as co-addressees. However, in terms of the procedurally determined turn organisation Mr Klute, as the recipient of the Blue-card has the right and/or responsibility to provide a response to the question. Addressing the President does not grant him (Mr Klute) a next turn.

Therefore, the address to the President has 'ritualistic value' (Ilie, 2010a, p. 892), and is further devalued by a direct address to Mr Klute in the second person pronoun *you* in the interrogative structure. By addressing recipients in second person, speakers engage in face-to-face interaction with addressees. In such formulations, the President is side-lined after the mandatory address and the whole turn is directed to the targeted recipient of the Blue-card question. In other words, the position constructed for the President within the relational context created in the respective Blue-card question, is not defined in terms of duties, rights or obligations, leaving the President with a vague discursive position. His institutional position, however, is secured by his institutional role as defined in the European Parliament Directorate-General.

Example (7.7) identifies the President as a moderator between Self and the respondent. In other words, the speaker addresses the President with regard to her/his authority or the right to decide who can ask what to whom during a plenary. The speaker expresses her/his wish to put a question to a third person, Mr Swaboda in the respective example, where the whole turn is addressed to the President. The speech act of asking a question may be performed on the condition of getting permission from the President to ask the question (§ 4.4).

Positioning the President and the prospective respondent, as indicated in address forms, defines the positioning of Self in relation to the other participants. In example (7.7) ‘Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Swaboda ...?’, the speaker accomplishes a discursive distance between Self and the prospective respondent by means of an indirect formulation. The question is formulated as an information-seeking interrogative that the speaker prefaces by stating that a sincerity condition of asking will be met.

The position set up for the President in (7.8) ‘Mr President, has it ever occurred to Mr Ponga that ...?’, attributes to the President the duties of a mediator or rather messenger who should simply communicate the speaker’s stance to the respondent. Though the interrogative is formulated as a direct question addressing the President, it triggers a response by Mr Ponga, given that no one, including the President has access to the respondent’s mind to know what has or has not occurred to him. An indirect question to Mr Ponga as in: ‘Mr President could you ask Mr Ponga if it had ever occurred to him that ...’ would trigger a similar response as that of example (7.8).

Unlike example (7.7) ‘Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Swaboda ...?’, where a rather authoritative position is set up for the President, the positioning of the President in (7.8) ‘Mr President, has it ever occur to Mr Ponga that ...?’ can be defined in terms of institutional duties. Here the President is identified as the report recipient. A position where the President is to convey messages between MEPs implies less hierarchical structure compared to an authoritative position holding the power and the right to regulate the interaction. Yet, in both cases the President is attributed certain responsibilities, indicating an active participatory role rather than only witnessing the interaction between the two MEPs.

Besides, although the question is intended to be conveyed through the President as the mediator, the formulation of the question as an interrogative addressing the President reinforces the face threat by positioning the prospective respondent as not addressed. In other words, the questioner allows an exchange with the respondent only through the intermediary of the President in the presence of the prospective respondent in the chamber. Hence, the questioner accomplishes discursive distance with the respondent, whom he only talks about.

The three variants in examples (7.6), (7.7), and (7.8) display that the mandatory address of the President can be used strategically to accomplish varying degrees of discursive distance between Self and the respondent. This is also true for the cases where the MEPs transgress institutional rules and fail to address the President in their utterances. Example (7.9), ‘With all due personal respect for you, Ms Dodds, would you ...?’ is directed only to the respondent, excluding the President from the particular interaction. The lack of address of the President dismisses the intermediary of the President and channels the intended message directly to the respondent, hence reducing the discursive distance between Self and the respondent.

Besides its discursive functions as argued above, address of the President in parliamentary debates is meant to serve an organisational function. That is, address of the President prior to allocated turns in plenaries marks the beginning of ‘on the record’ utterances. Note that speaking on the record might have institutional (i.e., legal, political, directorial or constitutional) consequences and the speakers are accordingly held accountable for what they utter in the plenaries.

7.5.5.2 Second Person Address

Second person address forms are regarded as the marked form in certain parliamentary settings such as the U.K. House of Commons, where the Members are required to use third person address forms (see Ilie, 2010a). As far as the EP is concerned, there is no such rule. The data in the present study shows that although address in second person nominal and pronominal forms is less frequent than address in third person, it amounts to 31 % of addressing in the Blue-card procedure. This section examines the diverse functions of address in second person in managing intergroup and interpersonal relations through the Blue-card procedure in the EP.

Address in second person pronoun is regarded as being more straightforward and informal, compared to third person address, with respect to the message the speaker intends to convey. The phenomenon is often described in terms of the notion of ‘social distance’ (see Wilson’s [1990] scale of distancing and Ilie, 2004a). Address in second person sequentially positions the addressee as the direct recipient of the question. In the parliamentary context of the Blue-card procedure, speakers may abolish the intermediary of the President and direct their questions to their recipients, reducing the distance between them and their recipients. In such cases, address to the President is ritual (Ilie, 2004a) rather than functional. Let us compare the following examples.

(7.10) [Hans-Peter Martin (NI), (DE) directs a Blue-card question to Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL) – (DA). 10.05.2011]

1 *Madam President*, Mr Søndergaard, I wanted to ask what *you* think of the
2 approach of the legislative footprint and what it means from your point of
3 view that the transparency register will continue to be non-compulsory, in
4 other words that enormous loopholes will continue to exist.

(7.11) [Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE), (DE) directs a Blue-card question to Werner Langen (PPE) – (DE). 25.10.2011]

1 *Madam President*, Mr Langen, I do not want to get into discussions on
2 European law with the Commission. I just want to put one direct question
3 to *you*.

(7.12) [Chris Davies (ALDE), (UK) directs a Blue-card question to John Stuart Agnew (EFD), (UK). 12.12.2011]

1 *Mr President*, I would just like to ask the Honourable Gentleman what
2 evidence he has that the Liberal Democrat Group, under the leadership of
3 our rapporteur Carl Haglund, tried to cancel this debate? I believe that is
4 not true.

(7.13) [Joseph Daul (PPE), (FR) directs a Blue-card question to Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE), (FR). 22.06.2011]

1 *Mr President*, I would like to say the following to the Chair of the Group
2 of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe: I am sure that when
3 he, with his liberal governments, manages to establish full solidarity for all
4 the various countries, I and my group will have already beaten him to it
5 where Greece is concerned, and I will remind him of that here in this
6 Chamber.

(7.14) [Miguel Portas (GUE/NGL), (PT) directs a Blue-card question to Elmar Brok (PPE), (DE). 09.03.2011]

1 *Mr President*, I just want to check whether I heard Mr Brok correctly: did
2 *you* say that a military solution, or a decision of a military nature, does not,
3 in his opinion, require a United Nations decision? If that is indeed what
4 *you* said, I have to say that I disagree with *you* a thousand times over.

In examples (7.10) and (7.11), speakers address the respondents with the honorific title + surname, followed by address by second person pronoun *you* (Line 1 in 7.10 and Line 3 in 7.11). The positioning of the respondents, Mr Søndergaard (in 7.10) and Mr Langen (in 7.11), as the co-addressee to the mandatory addressee, indicates that the speaker's stance is oriented towards the prior or projected stance taken by the respondent who is being talked *with*. Such positioning, involving address in second person format side-lines the President, hence reducing the distance to the respondent. In examples (7.12) and (7.13), on the other hand, the whole turn

is directed to the President, while the respondent is being talked *about*, whereas example (7.14) involves both address formats through a shift from address by third person nominal form (Mr Brok) to address by the second person pronoun *you* (Lines 2 and 4). Such a shift reduces the distance created in the beginning of the turn, enabling the speaker to create varying degrees of distance throughout a particular speaking turn. At this point it is crucial to note that in order to determine whether a nominal form of address is in direct or indirect format, it is necessary to consider the organization of the turn as well as the topical content. For instance, in example (7.14) the initial address is a direct one to the President and Mr Brok gets addressed indirectly as the speaker speaks about him. In the following chunk the speaker addresses Mr Brok directly in second person *you* (Lines 2 and 4). However, in other instances when speakers juxtapose address in nominal form and address in pronominal form (e.g., ‘you, Mr President’; ‘Madam president, you’, ‘you, Mr Farage’), address in both formats points to the same recipient.

In another instance, address in second person pronoun may entail open confrontation with the addressed political adversaries. The following example is taken from a scheduled speech that has triggered plenty of Blue-card questions. The example demonstrates the use of the second person address form as a means to get involved in an open confrontation with the addressee. In his speech, British Member Nigel Farage (EFD Group) openly attacks the then President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, as Mr Farage addresses him with the second person pronoun ‘you’.

(7.15) [Nigel Farage, the leader of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group addresses Herman Van Rompuy, the then President of the European Council – 24.10.2010]

1 *President of Europe* – this long-awaited day. We were told that, when we
 2 had a President, we would see a giant global political figure: the man that
 3 would be the political leader for five hundred million people; the man that
 4 would represent all of us on the world stage; the man whose job was so
 5 important that of course, *you* are paid more than President Obama. Well, I
 6 am afraid what we got was *you*. And I am sorry, but after that performance
 7 that *you* gave earlier... I do not want to be rude, but *you* know, really, *you*
 8 have the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low-grade bank
 9 clerk.

(*Protests*)

10 The question that I want to ask and that we are all going to ask is: who are
 11 *you*? I had never heard of *you*; nobody in Europe had ever heard of *you*. I
 12 would like to ask *you*, *Mr President*: who voted for *you*?

(*Loud protests*)

13 And what mechanism – I know democracy is not popular with *you* lot –

14 what mechanism do the peoples of Europe have to remove *you*? Is this
 15 European democracy?

16 I sense, though, that *you* are competent and capable and dangerous, and I
 17 have no doubt that it is *your* intention to be the quiet assassin of European
 18 democracy and of the European nation states. *You* appear to have a
 19 loathing for the very concept of the existence of nation states; perhaps that
 20 is because *you* come from Belgium, which, of course, is pretty much a non-
 21 country.

 (*Reactions*)

22 But since *you* took over, we have seen Greece reduced to nothing more
 23 than a protectorate. Sir, *you* have no legitimacy in this job at all, and I can
 24 say with confidence that I can speak on behalf of the majority of the British
 25 people in saying: we do not know *you*, we do not want *you*, and the sooner
 26 *you* are put out to grass, the better.

Mr Farage says the above upon the introduction of the then new President of the European Council. The speaker begins by addressing the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, as ‘President of Europe’ (in Line 1). The address as ‘President of Europe’ ascribes the President of the European Council a higher institutional status than president of one of the thirteen regulatory EU Institutions.⁴³ This over-polite form of address that obviously breaches the Maxim of Quality⁴⁴ has an ironical effect and is meant to enhance the damage to the addressee.

Further on, Mr Farage shifts to second person address as he attacks his addressee’s dignity by questioning his identity in ‘who are *you*?’ (Lines 10–11). The speaker claims total ignorance about the addressee’s identity in ‘I had never heard of *you*?’ (in Line 11) as he brings in a wider collective as sharing the same position as he has, ‘nobody in Europe had ever heard of *you*’ (in Line 11). In Line 12, the collocative use of ‘*you*, Mr President’ (address in second person *you* collocated with address by honorific title + institutional title) is congruent with Mr Farage’s open attacks on his addressee’s institutional role. The implication of the addressee as an illegitimate president is further reinforced as the speaker overtly questions who has voted for

⁴³ Various functions of the EU are governed by thirteen EU Institutions plus inter-institutional bodies. The aforementioned thirteen EU Institutions are as listed above: European Parliament, European Council, Council of the European Union, European Commission, Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), European Central Bank (ECB), European Court of Auditors (ECA), European External Action Service (EEAS), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Investment Bank (EIB), European Ombudsman, European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), Inter-institutional Bodies.

⁴⁴ Grice’s Conversational Maxims: the maxim of quantity (be as informative as is needed), the maxim of quality (be truthful, and do not give information that is false or that is not supported by evidence), the maxim of manner (be as clear, as brief, and as orderly as possible and avoid obscurity and ambiguity), the maxim of relation (be relevant, and say things that are pertinent to the discussion).

the addressee in second person *you* (‘I would like to ask *you*, Mr President: who voted for *you*?’ in Lines 11–12). The speaker also prefaces his face-threatening question with, what Schegloff (1988, p. 220) calls an ‘action projection’, stating a sincerity condition of asking (‘I would like to know’). The fact that the speaker formulates his personal attack as an attempt to exchange information, enhances the damage to his adversary. The question ‘who voted for *you*? appears to be a personal attack formulated in second person, instead of a genuine information seeking question. Toward the end, Mr Farage argues that the President has no legitimacy in his institutional role, this time not by implication but by means of an open statement where he continues to attack the respondent using the second person pronoun *you* (‘Sir, *you* have no legitimacy in this job at all’ in Line 23).

At this point, Mr Farage drops the institutional address form and addresses the President with the gender and culture-specific honorific address form, *Sir*. Mr Farage hereby departs from the institutional setting at the discursive level. Whereas the address by institutional title, even though it is meant to be ironical, maintains the institutional interactional situation, the shift to *Sir* enhances the speaker's open objection to the legitimacy of Mr Van Rompuy's Presidency.

Sir in British English is classified as a ‘bare formal title’ (Scott, 1998, p. 52) that might function at two levels: First, it is used in very formal situations to address a stranger. It indicates that the name of the person being addressed is unknown. *Sir*, like *Madam* and *Ma'am*, can also be used ‘in lieu of titles and surnames to indicate respect for or deference to superiors and to those in authority’ (Scott, 1998, p. 52). Indeed, both functions perfectly serve the speaker's obvious interactional intent, that is, to cause maximum damage to his political adversary.

On the other hand, the speaker complies with the conventional use of *Sir* in British English, indicating respect for and deference to superiors. However, his show of respect and deference is contradicted when the speaker rejects the legitimacy of the President. It is argued that, the deletion of the institutional address form and its replacement with the bare formal address *Sir*, reinforces the strong antagonistic stance towards the addressee.

Mr Farage's use of a culture-specific address, *Sir*, implies a nationalistic basis for his antagonism, which becomes rather explicit late in his address as he claims ‘[I] he can speak on behalf of the majority of the British people’. The use of *Sir*, is therefore, a means of doing ‘Englishness’ in the speech by Nigel Farage.

As for another aspect of address in second person format, it could be strategically used to refute institutional structures within the context of the EP. In his address to the President of the European Council, Nigel Farage personalizes the domain of interest and transgresses the constraints of speaking to an institutional body by formulating his address in second person

singular format. It is meant to enhance the face-threat by singling out the addressee as an individual, not as an institutional body, for whom the speaker sets up a position as opposed to a wide collective, represented as Europe, and in particular ‘the majority of the British people’ who are claimed to be saying: ‘we do not know you, we do not want you, and the sooner you are put out to grass, the better.’ From a Positioning Theoretical perspective, the positioning in such an interaction disregards the participant's institutionally defined rights and duties.

My data suggests that the use of the pronominal address form *you* in collocation with a nominal form of address signals a face-threat. In the entire body of data, *you* + *nominal form of address* displays a strong correlation between such formulations and adversariality in the propositional content of the utterance. Let us examine the use in one example.

(7.16) [Krisztina Morvai (NI) – (HU) asks a Blue-card questions to Martin Schulz (S&D) – (DE) – 02.02.2011]

1 We could see how Mr Martin Schulz, leader of the European socialists, is
 2 extremely concerned about democracy and human rights in Hungary. I
 3 must ask *you, Mr Schulz*, where were *you* between 2002 and 2010, when
 4 your socialist comrades in power in Hungary had every single anti
 5 government protest dispersed by force? Where were *you* on 23 October
 6 2006, when fourteen people were ordered to be shot in the eye with rubber
 7 bullets fired at head height? Where were *you* in autumn 2006, when several
 8 hundred people were, as already established by final court [the President
 9 interrupted the speaker] I have one minute, President, don't I, according
 10 to the Rules? Where were *you* then? And I would also like to ask why the
 11 Fidesz government is not asking *you and your comrades* the same question
 12 already? What is keeping the Fidesz government from doing so?

The collocation *you, Mr Schulz* directly targets the addressee, which is meant to enhance the damage to Mr Schulz. Mr Schulz is addressed by a consecutive use of the second person singular *you* (in Lines 3, 5, 7, 10 and 11). The direct address with second person singular *you* instead of address by honorific title + surname indexes adversariality, which is linked to the hostile content of what the speaker says. The sequential order of the two address in ‘you, Mr Schulz’ (7.16 in Line 3) and ‘you, Mr President’ (7.15 in Line 12) entails a functional upgrading of the aggressive component.

Toward the end (in Line 11), the questioner in (7.16) expands the out-group by including the addressee's so-called comrades in her accusatory question, ‘why the Fidesz government is not asking you and your comrades the same question already?’. By this revised definition of the out-group, the speaker executes the activity of *positioning* at the intergroup level.

Another pattern that emerges in my data is that the MEPs deploy second person address (54 out of 84 comprising 64% of direct address) when they take a strong epistemic stance questioning their addressee's domain knowledge.

The following examples illustrate such formulations.

- (7.17) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, if *you* respect your fellow Members, *Mrs Vergiat*, *you* absolutely should not dare to say that your Italian fellow Members are never interested in human rights. [...] *Do you know what* jobs these people did? They were very humble people.⁴⁵
- (7.18) Mr President, just a quick question, Mr Swaboda. *Are you aware* that ...?⁴⁶
- (7.19) Madam President, Mr Bloom, *do you know* what the United Kingdom's problem is?⁴⁷
- (7.20) Madam President, thank you, Mrs Flašíková, for taking my question. *You are obviously very familiar with this report and will certainly be aware that ...*⁴⁸

Example (7.17) is formulated as an exam question ('Do you know what') which is followed by an evaluation (They were very humble people). In this follow up sentence the questioner proposes a categorization of the people that the questioner is oriented towards. The question is an open challenge to the addressee's epistemic status. Example (7.18), on the other hand has an explicit assertive import which is embedded in the *that*-clause, inserting a statement. The question '*Are you aware*' is meant to check the recipient's awareness, hence attacking his epistemic status. The next example (7.19) resembles (7.17) in format. However, (7.19) does not only imply that the recipient might lack knowledge about the domain, but it also signals that the questioner will provide the answer to the question in the forthcoming sentence. In that respect, the interrogative functions as a story preface, rather than a question. Address to 'you' in such formulations, contrasts Self and Other implying that 'you' – the addressee might lack the information that the speaker is about to provide. The last example in this collection (7.20) involves a different discursive strategy, as the speaker, instead of questioning the epistemic status of Other, makes a sarcastic assumption about what the addressee might know.

In the EP, second person address is deployed through different lexical and morphosyntactical means, involving nominal forms as well as the pronominal form 'you'. This

⁴⁵ Roberta Angelilli (PPE) – (IT) puts a Blue-card question to Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL) – (FR), 20.01.2011.

⁴⁶ Dimitar Stoyanov (NI) puts a Blue-card question to Hannes Swoboda (S&D), 15.02.2011.

⁴⁷ Edite Estrela (S&D) puts a Blue-card question to Godfrey Bloom (EFD), 08.03.2011.

⁴⁸ Franz Obermayr (NI) puts a Blue-card question to Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D), 05.04.2011.

form of address is functional in the MEPs' hostile utterance design explicitly marking the target of the hostile content.

7.5.5.3 *Indirect Format in Address*

The data in this study displays a particular indirect format where the prospective respondent is addressed or referred to in third person and the whole turn is addressed to the President. Given that the notion of 'indirect' can be used to refer to indirectness at various levels and forms, the way it is used here needs further explanation. When the prospective respondent is addressed in second person (nominal or pronominal forms), acknowledging Other's recipient role, the addressing is direct. When the respondent is referred to by using third person nominal or pronominal forms, the message is meant to be conveyed to the respondent through the intermediary of a third party, in our case, the President. I call these cases 'indirect addressing'. In this chapter, the notion of indirectness in address is recognized with respect to the positioning of the respondent with a particular institutional footing that determine the rights and duties of the participants. Address by third person forms sets up a position for the respondent as the participant that is being talked *about*, unlike the *positioning* in second person address that positions the addressee as being talked *to* or talked *with*, thereby making her/his response relevant.

The indirect format in address is the most frequent (183 out of 273) address form in my data. Third person indirect address is by convention taken as the default address form in parliamentary settings (see also Ilie 2004a, 2010a, on the U.K. Parliament and Bayley, 2004, on Italian Parliament) and used most in the EP. Nevertheless, unlike, for example the House of Commons, the European Parliament Directorate-General Rule 162 does not restrict addressing to the third person address form. While complying with conventional polite and formal forms, I suggest that, the speakers' use of a third person reference to the prospective respondent might imply an intention to avoid open confrontation with political adversaries in cases where the speakers take evaluative, critical, condemning and/or accusatory stances. In other words, third person referencing to political adversaries is meant to enhance discursive distance between Self and Other(s) to maintain the speakers' positive positions while maximizing the damage to political adversaries. This distancing strategy conveys a message that favours Self and implies that Self is different from Other(s). At this point it is crucial to distinguish between the default use of third person referencing and its strategic use as a discursive manoeuvre in institutional settings.

Positioning through Indirect Format

This section explores how indirect forms of address are strategically used in the Blue-card procedure to construct intergroup boundaries. The example below is taken from a Blue-card question posed on January 18, 2011. It is the beginning of the Hungarian Presidency and the speaker is a non-attached Hungarian MEP, Krisztina Morvai. In response to Austrian Member Hannes Swoboda (S&D), who compares the ‘excellent work’ of the Belgium Presidency with the Hungarian Presidency that he positions ‘in contrast’, Mrs Morvai gives a defense in which she formulates Mr Swoboda’s stance as being critical to the Hungarian Presidency. Mrs Morvai formulates her question in the indirect format whereby the President is attributed the moderator’s/mediator’s position, while the prospective respondent is referred to in third person. The question reads as follows.

(7.21) [Krisztina Morvai (NI) – (HU) directs a Blue-card question to Hannes Swoboda (S&D) – (DE). 18.01.2011]

- 1 Mr President, I would like to ask Mr Swoboda how he dares to criticise the
- 2 Hungarian Presidency when it is just starting. He does not even know
- 3 anything about it.

In example (7.21) the speaker begins by addressing the President and continues by stating her wish to ask Mr Swoboda a question (‘*I would like to ask Mr Swoboda*’). She refers to her prospective respondent in third person singular ‘he’ and then mentions the Hungarian Presidency as the object of the debate towards which both parties (Mrs Morvai herself and Mr Swoboda) are presupposed to be oriented. In such a formulation, the President is positioned as an institutional authority as the moderator of the debate, where he/she has the authority and duty to call upon speakers and to ensure that the proceedings are properly conducted.

As suggested earlier, such an indirect formulation allows Mrs Morvai to enhance the discursive distance between herself and Mr Swoboda implying disalignment with the critical stance that Mr Swoboda is presupposed to be taking towards the Hungarian Presidency. The discursive distance created by means of third person address enables the speaker to take an antagonistic stance without getting involved in an open confrontation with her respondent. Mrs Morvai attacks her respondent through the propositional content of her accusation: that Mr Swoboda dares to criticize the Hungarian Presidency without knowing anything about it. Nevertheless, she avoids open confrontation with Mr Swoboda by positioning him as third person in his presence. Thus, the speaker attempts to deny the recipient a participatory role as respondent.

Contrarily, the positioning in example (7.21) requires Mr Swoboda to clarify ‘how he dares to criticize the Hungarian Presidency when it is just starting’ (Lines 1 and 2) through the intermediary of the President. Such a set-up of the interaction is meant to enhance the face-threatening illocutionary force directed toward the respondent. In his response, Mr Swoboda is put in a position where he is forced to address an institutional body rather than a fellow Member (the questioner herself). In that respect, this use of the indirect format conveys a rather hostile threat to the addressee’s face.

The analysis of indirect address reveals that this supposedly ‘polite form of address’ (Illie, 2009) could convey varying degrees of distance and hostility with respect to the positioning of the respondent vis-à-vis Self. Having examined the notions ‘distance’ and ‘hostility’ in indirect address, let us now elaborate on the notion of ‘politeness’. The following section examines the correlation between the use of indirect forms of address and politeness conveyed through address.

Routine Politeness

Third person address, as an indicator of discursive distance, is the routine form of address in the Blue-card procedure. *Distance* has been widely argued in sociolinguistics (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983; Johnstone, 2008) as occasioning politeness in discourse. Address by means of third person nominal and pronominal forms enables the MEPs to establish varying degrees of discursive distance between themselves and their opponents. Let us now examine this pattern in a collection of Blue-card questions. In the examples below indirect address is italicized, and the face-threatening passages are highlighted in bold.

(7.22) [Niki Tzavela (EFD) directs a Blue-card question to Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Verts/ALE) – (FR) 02.02.2011]

1 *Mr President*, with all due respect to *Mr Verhofstadt* and *Mr Cohn-Bendit*,
 2 I should like to say *to the High Representative* that **I have very strong**
 3 **objections to what has been said by the two gentlemen.**

(7.23) [Marc Tarabella (S&D) directs a Blue-card question to Charles Tannock (ECR), 02.02.2011]

1 *Mr president*, I would simply like to address *Mr Tannock* **in order to**
 2 **denounce his attitude** towards those who are demonstrating today, [...]

(7.24) [Andrew Duff (ALDE) directs a Blue-card question to Godfrey Bloom (EFD), 09.03.2011]

1 *Mr President*, I would like to ask *Mr Bloom* just **how his diatribe was**

2 **received at Cambridge. I cannot imagine an economics class tolerating**
 3 **such fatuous and intemperate nonsense.** I would also like to ask *him*
 4 this: **does he not find that** there is unemployment in the United Kingdom?
 5 **Does he not know of** the excessive deficit position of the UK? **Does he**
 6 **not care that** inflation in Britain is greater than it is in the euro area and
 7 that sterling is a fragile currency?

(7.25) [Edite Estrela (S&D) – (PT) directs a Blue-card question to Paulo Rangel (PPE) – (PT). 23.03-2011]

1 *Mr President*, I should just like to ask *Mr Rangel* whether, given that he is
 2 saying here that the next Portuguese Government will present the same
 3 austerity measures and will commit to the same targets that have been
 4 negotiated with Brussels, **does he not think it infantile and imprudent**
 5 **to provoke a political crisis;** whether he thinks that Portugal will pay too
 6 high a price and that it will require too many sacrifices from the Portuguese
 7 people? It is to this that I should like an answer. Is it not lust for power
 8 leading them to take this attitude?

(7.26) [Bernd Posselt (PPE) – (DE) directs a Blue-card question to Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR) – (PL) 09.06.2011]

1 *Mr President*, **I would simply like to ask my fellow Member whether he**
 2 **is not aware that** we have adopted a resolution in Parliament with a large
 3 majority – I myself voted in favour of this resolution – in which we clearly
 4 underlined the European perspective of Ukraine. We have done this not
 5 once, but many times.

(7.27) [Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR) – (PL) directs a Blue-card question to Barry Madlener (NI) – (NL) 06.07.2011]

1 *Mr President*, I would like to ask *the previous speaker* **if he is aware that**
 2 Israel is the only democracy in this part of the world, that Arab citizens in
 3 Israel elect their representatives to the Knesset in free elections, that these
 4 representatives criticise the state in whose parliament they sit, and that
 5 nothing happens as a result. Moreover, I have a question for *the previous*
 6 *speaker, who has campaigned so vigorously on behalf of the Palestinian*
 7 *state;* **is he aware** of the activities currently engaged in by organisations
 8 forming part of the governing coalition in Palestine, which Europe
 9 considers to be terrorist organisations?

In all the examples listed above, the speakers comply with the European Parliament Directorate-General, Rule 162 by addressing the President. This is followed by a preface stating the speaker's wish to ask a question. Address is included in these prefaces. Address in third person format, as Leech (1983, p. 141) explains, emerged as a polite form of address, 'as if *s* can only politely enter into a conversation with *h* through the evasive tactic of pretending that *h* is a listener, but not an addressee'. This gesture of politeness is made routine in the Blue-card procedure through the use of third person address forms. From a Positioning Theoretical

Approach, positioning Other as addressee would entail an interactional relation distinct from that of the positioning as hearer. That is, addressing the recipient directly is an initiating move by the speaker makes relevant a response by the addressee. However, address in third person format cancels the moral order that legitimizes a response by the recipient.

Consequently, while direct address in second person format reduces the distance between the participants, positioning them as partners in a particular interaction, address in third person side-lines the recipient and reduces her/him to a listener. In this respect, the recipient is positioned as the addressee by implication by being talked *about* in his presence rather than being talked *to* or talked *with*.

In cases where this pattern that embodies politeness made routine through the use of third person address forms is recognised, the speakers take either affective stances (examples (7.22) and (7.23)), clearly positioning Self as opposed to the political adversary, or epistemic stances (examples (7.24), (7.25), (7.26), (7.27)), questioning the eligibility of the political adversary's involvement in a particular debate topic. Thus, these instances of politeness have an 'ironical' function in discourse when followed by a face-threat.

Complying with the routine politeness in the parliamentary setting allows the speakers to maintain institutionally defined inter-personal relations while, at the same time, taking adversarial stances on a particular matter of concern. By means of indirect address, the speakers may avoid overtly coming into conflict with their respondents by maintaining a distance they create by carrying out the interaction through the intermediary of the President.

In a pragmatic analysis that focuses on forms and uses of address in the Blue-card procedure, it is necessary to pay attention to the cases which do not include an address of the recipient. The following section examines such cases.

7.5.5.4 Lack of Address of the Recipient

Though the Blue-card question is directed to a Member, that Member does not necessarily get addressed or even referred to in the question turn. See the following examples.

- (7.28) *Mr President*, the question is: so, what do we do, now that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has said, 'You must not send any more asylum seekers back to Greece'?⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Dutch Member Judith Sargentini, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group puts her question to German Member Manfred Weber (PPE). 15.02.2011.

(7.29) *Madam President*, how can that possibly be the case? Surely, they have to wait until June to make that decision?⁵⁰

In examples (7.28) and (7.29), the whole turn is openly directed to the President as the only addressee in the utterance. By doing so, the speaker fails to recognise the institutional and procedural rights and obligations of the prospective respondent as the recipient of the Blue-card question. When the question speech lacks address to the recipient, the positions are set up only by implication with respect to the participant roles allocated by the procedure. In such cases, in order to be able to identify the addressee, it is necessary to have knowledge in common with the speaker about the context of the utterance.

The two examples above are the only cases where the speakers fail to address their prospective respondents. It may, therefore, be concluded that the MEPs prefer to address their fellows overtly stating whom the illocutionary force of their adversarial utterances is meant to affect.

7.5.5.5 Shifts in Address Form

Speakers may deploy various forms of address throughout their utterances. Shifts between address forms invoke different positionings of their opponents by temporally foregrounding certain sets of rights, responsibilities, and obligations. This is a strategic choice made by the speakers, aimed at grounding their stances.

The following extracts are taken from two different stages of the same speaking turn where the speaker, Christian Democrat MEP Werner Langen, deploys different forms of address targeting the same person.

(7.29) [Debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission: Conclusions of the European Council meeting held on 23 October 2011 – 27.10.2011]

1 Mr President, President-in Office of the Council, this is no doubt a good
2 interim result, however the institutional crisis is far from over. We must be
3 clear on this.

4 [...] Firstly, democracy needs time, Mr Van Rompuy. You are quite right
5 about this. Democracy also needs clear decision-making structures and
6 parliamentary control – and these are precisely what we lack.

By convention MEPs address the Presidents of EU Institutions and official guests such as Prime Ministers of Member States that are present in the chamber during a plenary.

⁵⁰ Proinsias De Rossa, on behalf of S&D puts her Blue-card question to Manfred Weber (PPE). 15.02.2011.

Nevertheless, it is not rare that MEPs fail to implement this code of conduct. Mr Langen, being an experienced MEP who is well aware of the conventions regarding parliamentary discourse begins his speech by addressing the Presidents of the two EU Institutions. What he evaluates is the results of a recent European Council Summit. Thus, his choice of address ‘Mr President, President-in Office of the Council’ (in Line 1) indicates that his comments are on issues at the EU institutional level. Thereby the two addressees, as well as Mr Langen himself as a MEP, are positioned with regards to their institutionally defined roles. Later in his turn, however, Mr Langen addresses the then President-in Office of the Council, Mr Van Rompuy by MR + Surname. Following this addressing, Mr Langen evaluates Mr Van Rompuy’s personal belief concerning ‘democracy’ and offers his own personal beliefs concerning the matter. Such a shift in the choice of address form alters the interactional context and the positions set up earlier in the turn at talk for Self and the addressee. To clarify, while address by institutional titles indicates positioning within an institutionally hierarchical structure, address by Mr + Surname may provide a challenge to the hierarchical authority as the speaker violates conventional practices of parliamentary behaviour. Hence, the speaker positions Self and his addressee at a personal level where both participants suggest prerequisites for democracy without disaligning with each other.

Strategic shifts in address form are also recognised in adjacent address expressions. Variations of adjacent expressions consist of combinations of nominal forms or combinations between nominal and pronominal forms.

Let us examine immediate shifts in address in examples of such variations. See the following extract from a speaking turn by leader of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group, Nigel Farage, addressing the then President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy.

(7.30) [Debate on the Conclusions of the European Council meeting (18-19 October 2012) – 23.11.2012]

1 *Mr President: Mr Van Rompuy*, when *you* first appeared here, in what
 2 proved to be a rather expensive speech I said you would be the quiet
 3 assassin of nation state democracy – and sure enough, in your dull and
 4 technocratic way, you have gone about your course. But I have to say you
 5 are even worse than I thought you were going to be. [...]

It is no surprise to those who are more or less familiar with EU politics that the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group, represented by Nigel Farage, displays bold antagonism towards the President of an EU institutions. They are called, ‘Eurosceptics’, the group being

critical toward the legitimacy of the EU Institutions including the European Parliament - where they are members themselves. Nigel Farage, articulates the discourse of ‘foes of democracy and solidarity’ as a traditional intergroup antagonism between the advocates of national solidarity and the supporters of the idea of a unified Europe. His immediate shift in address to the President of the European Council from address by institutional affiliation (Mr President in Line 1) to address by Mr + Surname (Mr Van Rompuy in Line 1), thus implies deprecation of the addressee within the respective institutional role. The purposeful violation of the parliamentary convention is an indicator of the speaker’s attitude towards the addressee. Such a shift in address form signals the face threatening act to come. Indeed, the speaker seeks open confrontation with his addressee as he brings the interactional situation down from an institutional level to a personal level by means of the pronominal form of address in second person *you* (in Line 1). By using a set of *you*’s Mr Farage transgresses the institutional hierarchy and, at a discursive level, undermines Mr Van Rompuy’s institutionally defined position. Mr Farage’s utterance constitutes a strong reproach of his addressee as signaled in the addressing. The comparison between what the speaker thought the addressee would be (‘I said you would be the quiet assassin of nation state democracy’ in Lines 2 and 3) and what the addressee has turned out to be (‘you are even worse than I thought you were going to be. [...]’ in Lines 4 and 5) is meant to justify the speaker’s projections about his addressee. The confession of failure to anticipate how bad the addressee would be, as in ‘[B]ut I have to say you are even worse than I thought you were going to be’, adds a mocking effect and intensifies the threat to the addressee’s face. The straightforwardness reinforced by means of the second person address is meant to enhance the intergroup antagonism that lies at the basis of in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. Mr Farage’s utterance is a clear example of an often-recycled discourse by his political group that positions the in-group as advocates of national solidarity opposed to EU Institutions where EU institutions are accused of manipulating the political and economic power they hold in order to attack nation state democracy.

The following example (7.32) displays choices of address forms exactly contrary to those of Nigel Farage in the example above. Czech MEP, Miloslav Ransdorf, speaking on behalf of European United Left/Nordic Green Left European Parliamentary Group (GUE/NGL) puts a question to the Chair of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) within the Blue-card procedure.⁵¹

⁵¹ Specific identifying information about the participants of the exemplified interactions are provided as basic context description in order to display the party-political dynamics that are influential in the

(7.31) [Debate on the Council and Commission statements on the preparations for the European Council meeting of 23–24 June 2011. 22.06.2011]

1 Mr President, I listened attentively to *Mr Verhofstadt, the Chair of the*
2 *Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*, and I would
3 like to ask him whether I am correct in thinking that his motto might be
4 that Greece is everywhere, since Greece is not just a Member State of the
5 European Union, but is actually a state of mind, and that Greece is
6 therefore everywhere.⁵²

The form of address in example (7.31) shifts from address by *Mr + Surname* to address by institutional role (in Lines 1 and 2), implying institutionally established intergroup relations. That is, the speaker makes it explicit that he addresses Mr Verhofstadt with respect to his institutional role as the Chair of the ALDE Group. The use of indirect address indicates distance through a positioning with respect to party political intergroup relations; an out-group member addresses the chair of the opposing political group. The speaker maintains those positionings throughout his turn where he seeks confirmation for his interpretation of the addressee's stance.

The following examples illustrated a similar formulation where there is an immediate shift from address by Mr/Mrs + surname to address by institutional title, maintaining and re-instantiating intergroup relations within the European Parliament's institutional setting.

(7.32) [Non-attached Hungarian Member Krisztina Morvai (NI) – (HU) asks Mr Schulz (S&D) – (DE) a Blue-card question – 02.02.2011]

1 We could see how *Mr Martin Schulz, leader of the European socialists*, is
2 extremely concerned about democracy and human rights in Hungary. I
3 must ask you, Mr Schulz, where were *you* between 2002 and 2010, when
4 *your socialist comrades* in power in Hungary had every single anti-
5 government protest dispersed by force? Where were *you* on 23 October
6 2006, when fourteen people were ordered to be shot in the eye with rubber
7 bullets fired at head height? Where were *you* in autumn 2006, when several
8 hundred people were, as already established by final court (*the President*
9 *interrupted the speaker*) I have one minute, President, don't I, according
10 to the Rules? Where were *you* then? And I would also like to ask why the
11 *Fidesz* government is not asking *you* and *your comrades* the same question
12 already? What is keeping the *Fidesz* government from doing so?

production of the discourses under focus. This information facilitates in-depth research into discursive constructions and contestations of groupings in the EP.

⁵² Miloslav Ransdorf (GUE/NGL) – (CS) puts a Blue-card question to the Chair of ALDE Group. 22.06.2011.

(7.33) [Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D) – (FI) asks Paulo Rangel (EPP) – (PT) a Blue-card question – 23.03.2011]

1 Mr President, *Mr Paulo Rangel, Member of the Group of the European*
2 *People's Party (Christian Democrats)*. I will not have the opportunity to
3 ask this in the Portuguese Parliament, so I will ask *you* straight: why is
4 *Portugal's Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)*
5 not supporting this very important proposal?

6 The whole euro area and the European Union may suffer a crisis if
7 decisions are delayed. Why do *you* not support the solutions proposed,
8 right here and now?'

In both examples (7.32) and (7.33), the speakers identify the moral orders within which they set up positions for their addressees and Self, in terms of the adversarial status of the participants as Members of opposition groups. That is to say, the speakers address their opponents as representatives or members of out-groups, hence maintaining intergroup boundaries through address.

I suggest that immediate shifts in address format are a discursive strategy for acknowledging or challenging the institutionally marked roles. The speaker's immediate shift from address by institutional title to address by *Mr + Surname* signals that an antagonistic stance will be taken by the speaker through a face-threat to the recipient in what follows. Through shifts from address indexing an inter-personal relation to address embedding institutional roles comply with institutional structures, the speaker maintains institutionally defined intergroup relations.

7.6 Insights Gained

A pragmatic analysis of address forms recurrently deployed in the EP has proven to be essential to understanding how intergroup positioning is carried out through a strategic choice of address. By means of addressing and referencing the MEPs accomplish three activities at once:

- identifying the participants of the particular discursive situation,
- setting up positions for the political adversaries,
- positioning their in-group in relation to the positions they set up for the political adversaries.

Not only for abiding by parliamentary rules and conventions, but also for political accountability the MEPs have to make their ideological positions clear and take definite stances. They display convergent or divergent stance alignment with certain groupings as they

discursively maintain intergroup relations. Pronominal address forms enable the MEPs to create a dichotomy between ‘us’ and Others (Others being *you* or *them*), while nominal forms provide concrete definitions of Self and Other. Nominal forms vary explicitly in terms of group boundaries. *Address forms indicating group membership and comradeship* (i.e., ‘Members of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe’, ‘our Fellows in the Christians and Democrats Group’) are explicit. Whereas, address by *honorific title + surname* (i.e.: Madam X, Mr X) and address by *personal names* (i.e., Nigel Farage) is less explicit. Intergroup boundaries are constructed through implication, based on personal connotations of a name that is taken for granted to be common knowledge about the participants’ political, national, religious, so on and so forth affiliations. The Parliament as a community of knowledge co-constructs its discourses based on an assumption that choice of address form provides inferences about the positioning of the targeted Other.

As noted above, the position of the in-group is always relative to the position set up for the out-group. Harré and van Langenhove (1998, p. 22) note the relational aspect of positioning in saying, ‘within a conversation each of the participants always positions Other while simultaneously positioning him or herself’. The opposite is also valid as Taylor and Tajfel (in Tajfel, 1978, Part 1) assert that, ‘defining the self and its allies also defines those who are in the out-group’. Through comparison with presupposed out-groups the MEPs claim a favoured position for their in-groups, using the Blue-card procedure to attack political adversaries and hence maintain a ‘public positive face’ for Self. The implication is that Self is distinguished from the opponents based on out-group biases.

Blue-card questions, already in the turn initial address, accomplishes positioning and grouping. The two relational activities appear primary to questions seeking information. Though being restricted by parliamentary rules and conventions, a variety of address forms is available for the MEPs to choose between. The MEPs’ choice of address forms displays the discursive functions they accomplish through addressing.

Let us now summarize different types address forms that are strategically used in the Blue-card procedure and revisit their discursive functions.

a. Direct address

1. Address only to the respondent
i.e. Mr X, I would like to ask you why you do not understand ...
2. Address to the President and to the respondent as co-addressees
i.e. Mr President, Mr X, I would like to ask you why you do not understand ...

b. Indirect Address (Type I)

1. Respondent addressed via President as the moderator
i.e. Mr President, I would like to ask Mr X why he does not understand ...
2. Respondent addressed via President as the mediator
i.e. Mr President, could you ask MR X why he does not understand ...

c. Indirect Address (Type II)

The respondent is referred to but not addressed

i.e. Mr President, could you tell me why Mr X does not understand ...

d. Lack of address to the recipient

The respondent is neither referred to nor addressed

i.e. Mr President, why is it not understood that tax on industrial waste puts extra burden on producers?

Though indirect forms of address are the institutionally preferred forms of address, the EP does not prohibit address in second person. Indeed, about one-third of the Blue-card questions in my data (84 out of 273) exhibit the direct format. Similar to indirect forms of address, direct forms of address enable the speakers to pursue diverse discursive strategies that influence intergroup relations. The most salient function of direct address is that the President, if she/he ever gets addressed, is side-lined to a moderating position and the interaction is carried to the inter-personal level rather than remaining on an institutional level.

Plenaries are available to a large audience (§4.1), including fellow MEPs, the audience of visitors, online viewers of the EP telecast⁵³, and the audience that watches plenary videos via the Parliament's webpage⁵⁴. Address in second person *you* channels the message directly to the addressee, thereby also implicitly 'breaking the constraints of speaking to the overhearing audience' (Bramley, 2001), hence drawing the particular interaction out of its institutional context.

At times, when the MEPs seek an open confrontation with their addressees, a second person address form might imply an oppositional stance towards institutionally defined rights and duties, implying discontent about the addressee's institutionally defined rights and duties. Consider the following Blue-card question.

⁵³ EuroparlTV via <http://europarltv.europa.eu/en/home.aspx>.

⁵⁴ Videocast via <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/debates-video.html>

(7.34) [Jacek Protasiewicz (PPE) – (PL) asks Nigel Farage (EFG) – (UK) a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8) – 21.11.2012]

1 I have just two very simple questions for Mr Farage. If you believe that
2 this House is useless why have *you* run for election to this House to
3 represent your constituents here? And why do *you* come to Strasbourg
4 each month to take part in our debates?

In the example above, the speaker questions his addressee's (Nigel Farage) motives for campaigning for the elections to the EP, as well as his rights and duties to be present in the House. In his attack on his opponent's face, the speaker openly targets his opponent by addressing him in second person you (in Lines 2 and 3).

The discursive functions of the MEPs' strategic use of second person address have one thing in common: second person address breaks a particular interaction out of its institutional constraints. Let us support this claim by examining one last example of address in second person. Here the President of the EP, Martin Schulz, addresses the non-attached Dutch Member Barry Madlener.

(7.35) [Martin Schulz (S&D) – (DE) asks Barry Madlener (NI) – (NL) a Blue-card question – 21.11.2012]

1 There is, however, one thing that I would like to say very clearly to *you*,
2 *Mr Madlener*: I must, and do, acknowledge that *you* are sitting here, that
3 *you* have been elected and that *you* represent your constituents, but *you*
4 should be aware that I will do everything I can, as will many others here,
5 to ensure that people like *you* have no place in Europe.⁵⁵

Mr Schulz takes a bold opposing stance towards Mr Madlener and the grouping that is presupposed to exist as he defines the target of his opposition in his address to 'you' (in Lines 1, 2, 3, and 5) and 'people like you'. Such adversality is directed towards the addressee, not as an institutional body but as a member of a grouping. The positioning of the addressee, therefore, does not recognise the addressee's rights and duties as a Member of the EP. Instead, it indicates a stereotyping of Mr Madlener in being addressed as 'people like you'. The positioning activity in example (7.35) embeds Mr Schulz negative moral and personal attitudes towards Mr Madlener as Mr Schulz openly attacks his addressee, using second person address forms 'you, Mr Madlener' (in Line 1 and 2), 'people like you' (in Line 5). This use of second person address

⁵⁵ Debate on Programme of activities of the Polish Presidency of the Council. In various occasions in the EP Mr Schulz has accused Mr Madlener of being 'racist' and condemned Mr Madlener's accounts favouring Dutch citizens over citizens of other states in terms of some moral presumptions.

transgresses the boundaries of institutional relations and detaches the interaction from the restrictions of the institutional context.

Having laid the discursive function of second person address use in positioning of Self Other(s), let us now revisit the findings of the analysis of indirect address.

Address in third person nominal or pronominal forms is conventional but not regularized in the EP. Nevertheless, indirect address is considered to be the polite and appropriate form in parliamentary settings (see Ilie 2004a, 2010a). It can be hypothesized that this is due to an intention to assure order in the chamber by putting a discursive distance between the MEPs and, hence, avoiding open confrontation between the MEPs. Despite this norm that indirect address is the polite form, it is by no means less harmful to the recipient's face. Indeed, my data illustrates that the MEPs reinforce the intensity of the face-threats to their adversaries through indirect forms of address conveying messages through the intermediary of the President.

The hostility is recognized in the positioning of the addressee within a particular Blue-card procedure. That is, direct forms of address make relevant a response by the recipient with respect to the allocation of participatory roles. In direct forms the questioner *speaks to* or *speaks with* the prospective respondent, whereas in indirect forms, the respondent is either *spoken about* or *spoken for*. In the latter case, the respondent's institutional position to provide a response is not acknowledged, leaving him with a vague positioning within this particular interaction.

As Leech (1983, p. 125) suggests, 'the goal of some speech acts, such as thanks and apologies, can [then] be seen as the restoration of equilibrium, or at least the reduction of disequilibrium, between *s* and *h*⁵⁶'. In the EP context, restoration of equilibrium is explained by often-hostile threat to a political adversary's face that follows the conventionally appropriate polite forms of address. After all, MEPs must maintain intergroup relations as they discuss highly sensitive issues concerning the over five hundred million citizens of the Union. It is therefore essential for the MEPs to sustain the already established interactional format that politeness makes routine, prior to their adversarial questions.

This chapter dealt with the re-occurring interaction practice, where the speakers comply with the conventional polite forms of address in parliamentary setting, in terms of *routine* politeness. It is concluded that indirect address allows the participants to take opposing stances and avoid open confrontation by providing a routine politeness. When polite forms of address are followed by a face-threat, routine politeness has an ironical effect that is meant to cause

⁵⁶ *s* for speaker, *h* for hearer.

maximum damage to the addressee's face. The recurrent pattern, indeed, creates routine hostility through the ironical effect it creates.

The analysis revealed that the MEPs are strategic also in the ways they shift address forms. This is explained in terms of intergroup relations which inform about institutional positions. An immediate shift from address by Mr/Mrs +surname to address by institutional roles and titles is meant to reinforce institutionally defined intergroup relations, while a vice-versa situation implies a stance contesting the institutional rights and duties of the addressee.

The role attributed to the President displays diversity at the discursive level despite very clearly defined rights, duties and obligations at the institutional level (See the European Parliament Directorate-General). The President has a procedural position as a mandatory addressee. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed that the speakers design diverse worlds/contexts for a particular interaction where they strategically set up positions for the President which in return designate the relationship between Self and Other. A moderator's role attributed to the President positions the President with regards to her/his institutional rights and duties keeps the interaction within the boundaries of institutional discourse. On the other hand, setting up a position for the President and the prospective respondent as co-addressees enables the speaker to enhance the straightforwardness of the message that is intended to be conveyed while maintaining an institutional discourse.

In contrast to prior arguments (see e.g. Leech 1983, Wilson 1990) suggesting a correlation between address in second person and the intimacy or friendliness between *speaker* and *hearer*, my data demonstrates that in highly normative institutional settings, such as the EP, speakers comply with conventional polite forms regardless of the degree of familiarity and friendliness that obtain in relationships. The MEPs comply with routine politeness even when they speak to their allies. Furthermore, analysis of direct address illustrates that direct address in pronominal form *you* might be hostile to the addressee as it reinforces the straightforwardness of the message. Consecutive use of *you*, for instance, is meant to target the addressee based on an out-group bias, hence maintaining intergroup boundaries.

I, therefore, suggest that the implications and functions of diverse forms of address on interpersonal and intergroup relationships should be evaluated with regard to specific interactional situations. Speakers in the parliaments are well aware of the rules and conventions that govern the interaction in this institutional setting and although they act accordingly they also make their stances obvious without violating these long-established rules for PI.

The main premise of my argument is that the use of a particular address form designates the positions available for the addressee, and for Self respectively. On this basis, the choice of

address forms is different in different contexts, in similarity to other pragmatic devices. Thus, address in a particular form in the parliamentary context might have different implications as compared to its use in other discursive situations. The analysis, therefore, included references to the content of the texts disclosing the dynamics behind the strategic choice of address forms.

Chapter 8 Question Frames

8.1 Introduction

Question frames (henceforth QF) constitute the second segment of the MEPs' question design in the Blue-card procedure. QFs can be defined as a system of 'prefatory statements' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a), which may involve interrogative phrases (e.g., *Can you tell, Will you explain*) or declarative expressions (e.g., *I want to know, The question is*).

From the rule governed and convention based parliamentary type of linguistic and interactional practices, there emerges certain recurrent forms of QFs in Blue-card questions. Specific design patterns do not only provide the MEPs with a linguistic repertoire for this particular interaction setting, but also invoke certain understandings of the recurrent formats. Indeed, previous research on formal aspects of question design in political settings shows that specific design features are 'understood and treated by interactants as embodying adversarialness in various forms' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, p.753).

Given that doing politics is essentially about conflict, the MEPs take bold stances towards the matters that they are engaged in, forming oppositional relationships with certain Others. This chapter focuses on patterns of QFs in order to explore what types of linguistic behaviour these QFs bring about in the MEPs stances, and what types of relations the MEPs establish with their opponents.

8.2 Methodological Frameworks

MEPs often use schablone-like QFs to preface their focal question or statement utterances. A QF projects the next action (Schegloff's notion of 'action projection', 1988, p. 220) in a particular interaction as in; *I would like to ask my fellow Member, Can the honourable colleague explain*, and *I would be interested to know*. Crucially, QFs, establish a relation between the questioner and the recipient in terms of the type of action it projects. QFs enable speakers to take a stance prior to their focal questions and independent from the stance conveyed in the question.

For analytical purposes, it is necessary to distinguish between QFs from other systems of 'prefatory statements' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991; Heritage, 2002a). Other prefatory statements 'contain contextual background information that renders the question intelligible to the audience and provides for its appropriateness' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, p. 753). Such prefaces are meant to constrain

the recipients within a preferred way of understanding where certain positionings are designed for the participants with pre-established intergroup relations. These prefatory statements, in fact, can be *explanatory statements* following interrogatives or focal statements. In either format, statements that are embedded in an interrogative are meant to legitimize the stance taken by the speaker by explaining the surrounding conditions and the motivation behind the act of asking a particular question. Such prefatory statements are included in the current analysis as features of grounding that are meant to create a reality that makes the interlocutors' stances intelligible to each other.

Questions may well be asked without frames and still convey the intended illocutionary force (c.f Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, p. 760). QF is, then, a stylistic element that adds indirectness to the utterance because with QFs

- (a) speakers metacommunicatively formulate the illocution type 'question' and as explicit naming of the illocution type of an utterance can be seen as violating the maxim of quantity the speaker obviously adds additional meaning to his question. (i.e., *I wanted to ask, Could I ask, The question is*)
- (b) cast the question as concerning the contingencies that affect whether an answer will be forthcoming (Clayman and Heritage, 2002, p. 760). (i.e., *Can you explain, Would you tell*)

As a recurrent element of the Blue-card questions, QFs constitute the focus of analysis in this chapter, which is largely guided by research on Q&A sequences in institutional settings (see Archer, 2005 on courtroom interaction; Clayman and Heritage 2002a, 2002b, 2002c on news interviews; Haddington, 2005). Clayman and Heritage (2002a) claim that QFs are phrases that add 'indirectness' to journalists' adversarial questions to political figures. In their work, Clayman and Heritage identify two forms of QFs, namely Self-oriented and Other-oriented QFs. On the basis of the data used in this thesis, I expand on their analytical model in terms of the types of QFs that are recurrently used in the EP. Besides the two forms that Clayman and Heritage (2002a) have found in their analysis on journalistic questioning practices of American Presidents, my data includes a distinct form where the question frame depersonalizes the projected action by excluding both Self and Other. QFs such as 'The question is ...' and the passive form 'The question that needs to be asked is ...' fall into this group which I label *Object-oriented QFs*.

For the analysis of QFs, I have coded the 273 Blue-card sequences into three categories: (a) Self-oriented QFs, (b) Other-oriented QF, and (c) Object-oriented QFs. I examine QFs in terms of the types of stance activities they accomplish as part of the MEPs' positionings.

8.3 An Overview of Question Frames in Blue-Card Procedure

The following table presents the distribution of the three types of QFs in the EP corpus including the cases where questions are not framed at all.

Table 2: Question Frames in the Blue-card procedure.

	Self- Oriented QFs [*]	Other- Oriented QFs ^{**}	Object- oriented QFs	No Frame ^{***}	Not analysable data ^{****}	Total
#	183	22	2	64	2	273
%	67.03	8.06	0.73	23.45	0,73	100

^{*} This category includes 11 cases where a Self-oriented QF is not followed by a question, but a statement.

^{**} This category includes 4 cases where an Other-oriented QF is not followed by a question, but a statement.

^{***} Direct questions that are not framed by any of the three categories discussed above.

^{****} This category includes two special cases where the speech is not audible due to technical problems.

The QFs operated in the Blue-card procedure within the scope of the present study displays an overwhelming frequency (%67.03) of Self-oriented frames. They express the speaker's epistemic rights and responsibilities together with varying degrees of commitment to a particular stance. Such QFs are indicators of Self-positioning indexed in the first-person pronouns *I* or *we*, combined with epistemic verbs or verb phrases such as 'ask', 'would like to know', 'am interested in knowing', 'was wondering'. As Du Bois (2007, p. 152) emphasizes, drawing on Benveniste, 1971; Culioli, 1990; Ducrot, 1972, 1984), 'the personal pronoun *I* points directly to the speaking subject', who, in my data, is engaged in intergroup positioning by asking his/her political adversary questions and/or responding to prior questions by the adversaries.

Other-oriented QFs comprise 10.63% of the 207⁵⁷ QFs that were employed within the Blue-card procedure. 13 out of 22 Other-oriented frames question the prospective respondent's ability to supply the answer. While some of these (6 out of 13) contain the past tense form of an auxiliary modal verb *could*, some (3 out of 13) are formulated in the present form *can*. *Can* is rather straightforward in conveying the intended message (as it projects a real-time action), thus enhancing the illocutionary force of speech acts of request or acts of questioning of

⁵⁷ Notice that 207 out of 273 Blue-card question speeches include QFs. (See Table 2).

potentiality. As Langacker (2013, pp. 40-41) argues, the present formulation, locates the occurrence to the present time, which can be distinguished from the use of the past form, *could* that indicates ‘greater epistemic distance of elements outside IR (Immediate Reality)’.

There is only one case in my data where the speaker frames a question using the modal auxiliary verb *will*. *Will, would*, function as ‘willingness frames’ as Clayman and Heritage (2002a, pp. 759-760) put it. The rare occurrence of willingness frames appears to be a significant feature of PI.

In other rare cases the MEPs formulate question frames orienting solely towards the question itself (2 cases, covering 0.73% of my data). We label these Object-oriented QFs where the subject and the object refer to the same entity as in ‘The question is why are you so against European tax-payers’. In such cases, the speaker neither references Self nor refers to the respondent in the QF. The exclusion of both Self and Other enables the speaker to achieve neutrality in positioning along an epistemic scale. That is, the speaker neither expresses an interest in what Other will or can tell, nor in what Self wants to know. Instead, the question itself is focalized.

Finally, the MEPs may formulate their questions without deploying any of the above-mentioned QF types (amounts to %23.44 of the data).

8.3.1 Self-Oriented Question Frames

This type of QF is formulated by using first person singular *I* or plural *we* followed by a verb like *wonder*, or verb phrases like ‘would like to know’, ‘must ask’. Otherwise, the speaker might formulate a QF using a variant of *I* (*me/ my/ mine*) or *we* (*us/our /ours*) as in *My question is* and *It is my pleasure to challenge Mr X*. An alternative formulation that comprises 13.95% of (24 out of 172) the Self-oriented QFs incorporates declarative expressions which are registered in first person singular *I* or plural *we* (e.g., ‘I have a question for you’). The first-person formulation personalizes the projected action in the QF (e.g. asking, wanting to know, wondering) and links the stance of the speaker to a particular stance-taking activity.

The first-person pronouns *I* and *we*, indexing the stance-taker(s), are followed by predicates, such as *want to ask, have to ask, and am asking*, positioning the speaker with respect to some presupposed rights and responsibilities to elicit information. The speaker, however, displays a shift in stance from the epistemic stance in the verb phrase to a strong evaluative stance indexed in adjective phrases, such as *truly simple, or really easy* that modify the noun *question*.

A recurrent formulation of QFs in the EP incorporates diminishing adjectives such as *simple*, *basic*, *easy* modifying the noun, *question* (i.e. ‘I have one very simple question to the honourable Member’, ‘I want to put an easy question to my colleague’). Using these adjectives, speakers comment on the focal question, taking an evaluative stance towards it.

I also observe that the speakers may incorporate ‘stance adverbials’ (Biber et al. 1999, p. 854) such as epistemic adverbs *really*, *truly* as in ‘I have one *really* easy question for my colleague’. Such discourse markers in the QFs in my data are used as pre-modifiers in adjective phrases – embodying gradable adjectives, such as *simple* and *easy* – that contain a comment on the focal question as discussed earlier. When adverbials, expressing *truth* or *reality*⁵⁸, are used as modifiers of gradable adjectives, they presume the appropriateness of the evaluative stance.

In the various 1st person QFs, the speakers can accomplish *Self-positioning* and convey the following information.

(a) *Unknowing epistemic stance*

e.g. ‘I would like to know’, ‘I want to hear your comments’

Speakers in the examples express epistemic stance and display varying degrees of commitment to their stances. The use of first-person pronoun *I*, in syntactic subject position followed by stance predicates *would like to*, *want to*, expresses the speaker’s commitment to the projected epistemic actions expressed in their infinitive forms *to know*, *to hear*.

(b) *Responsibility/obligation to know*

e.g. ‘I must ask you’, ‘I should like to ask Mr X’, ‘As it is also my role to ask questions’

In the examples above, the first-person pronoun ‘I’ in syntactic subject position in the first two and the first person possessive determiner ‘my’ in the third example denote a responsibility to know particular information.

(d) *Deferential stance*

e.g. ‘Can I ask Mr X’, ‘Could I put a simple question’

In such formulations, the Self-positioning of the speaker indicates rights and obligations to request particular information. Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 762) claim that this format is

⁵⁸ My stance here is to consider the concepts ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ as two related but distinct concepts. Nevertheless, Willems and Demol (2006) show interesting connections between the two concepts.

‘indirect and deferential of the Self-referencing’⁵⁹ on the basis that the formulation is a request for permission. A request for permission in a parliamentary context implies acknowledgment of the respondent’s right to reject the Blue-card question, and acknowledges the President’s authority to proceed with or interrupt the present interaction. This format of QFs is, therefore, congruent with the institutionally defined rights and duties of the participants in terms of the turn-taking organisation in the Blue-card procedure.

(e) Epistemic status indexing temporality

‘I am wondering’, ‘I was wondering’

In such QFs, the first-person pronoun, in syntactic subject position, is followed by a predicate, which is grammatically marked by the progressive. The ‘ongoingness’, in effect, invokes a strong commitment to the proposition of wondering at the time of speaking (cf. Brisard and De Wit, 2014, p. 206).

The difference between (a) and (e) is that in (a) the speaker assumes that the respondent knows the answer (i.e., ‘I want to hear your comments’) while in (e) the speaker does not make this assumption (i.e. the speaker indexes that the answer may not be known at all). Nevertheless, (a) and (e) both convey an ‘unknowing epistemic stance’.

Characteristically, first person pronoun *I* accomplishes ‘footing’, in Goffman’s terms, contextualizing the present instance of the discourse containing *I*. *I*, as Benveniste (1971) explains, ‘indexes whatever is denoted by the speaker’s utterance with its spatio-temporal location in relation to the location of the speaker and the moment of his or her utterance’. *I* indexes the speaker to here and now and links different parts of the talk (Sacks 1992, 1:32) thereby relating the speaker to other participant(s) and objects in a particular utterance.

As far as political context is concerned, *I*-the speaking person is a representative of an ideology who always takes a stance on behalf of a grouping. Self is positioned with regards to the desire, the right, or the responsibility of knowing a particular thing and denotes intergroup relations based on the differentiation of Self from presupposed Other(s). Self is also positioned in relation to the addressee who is forced to take a stance by providing a response to the question.

Self-oriented QFs state a desire or intention to know something about a particular topic. The epistemic stance that the speaker takes in the QF accords with the procedural purpose of a

⁵⁹ Clayman and Heritage (2002a) label this type of question frame ‘self-referencing’. However, in our study the actions that the speakers are engaged in are oriented toward distinguishing between self and other.

Blue-card question. Thereby, at least at this stage of the turn at talk, the speaker complies with the Rules 162(8) and 149(8) of the Rules of Procedure governing Blue-card questions (§ 4.2.2). Sincerity is enhanced as speakers resort to discourse markers such as the adverbials *really*, *very much* as in ‘I would *really* like to know’, ‘I am *very much* interested in hearing’ or epistemic markers like *frankly* as in ‘Frankly speaking, I would be interested to know’. Such QFs portray the speaker as a sincere questioner, perhaps ominously projecting the question to come as critical or aggressive.

8.3.2 Other-Oriented Question Frames

This type of QF attributes agency to the addressee. It does so by referring to the addressee's willingness or ability to collaborate in the debating of a particular topic that the questioner is oriented towards. Such frames may be formulated, as *can you*, *will you*, *could you*, *would you be able to*, which are followed by speech act verbs such as *tell*, *explain*, *answer*. Variations of this frame might be formulated by means of third person nominal or pronominal forms such as *Can Mrs X explain*, *Would she be able to tell us*, *Will the honourable colleague be able to answer the question*.

Other-oriented QFs attribute the projected action (e.g., explain, tell, or answer) to the addressee, which consequently exempts the questioner from consequences of the projected action. While frames like *can you*, *could you*, or *will you be able to* question the ability or capacity of the addressee to perform a certain action, frames such as *will you*, *would you* followed by a verb like *tell*, *explain*, *comment* are indicators of the autonomy of the addressee (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a). Such formulations contain polite modification of their illocutionary force, because, as Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 760) note, they give the addressee a ‘way out’, allowing the addressee to maintain negative face.

Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 760) argue that the two types of Other-oriented⁶⁰ QFs - willingness frames and ability frames - differ in the degree of deference they convey. Willingness frames are relatively deferential compared to ability frames as they refer to the respondent's personal preferences and enable the respondent to choose between answering or not.

With regard to tempus, it may also be argued that the basic forms of modals, *can* and *will* differ from the derived forms *would* and *could* in terms of the degree of deference they convey. *Can* and *will* designate 'immediacy' of the situation, as Langacker (1991) puts it, while ‘the past

⁶⁰ Clayman and Heritage (2002a) use the term other-referencing. With regards to the complexity of the concept ‘reference’ (§ 7.6.1; 7.6.2) I prefer the term ‘other-oriented’.

tense conveys a meaning of non-immediacy' (Brisard and Se Wit, 2014, p. 203). Immediacy anchors the temporal location of the event, i.e., requested activity as in *Can you explain, Will you tell*, to the present time and location of the interactional situation and forecasts a future speaking event. The past forms, *could* and *would*, on the other hand exhibit either tentative or past possibilities (Fachinetti, 2013, p. 372), and hence entail non-immediacy, mitigating the forcefulness of the request to the recipient. Present tense forms *can* and *will* therefore appear to be relatively forceful and less deferential compared to the past forms *could* and *would*.

My data include an additional formulation that falls into the category of Other-oriented QF. Examine the examples below.

(8.1) [Gerald Häfner (Verts/Ale) puts a Blue-card question to Herbert Reul –09.06.2011]

1 *Perhaps Mr Reul would like to explain us* why he is so against the
2 taxpayers

(8.2) [Hans-Peter Martin (NI), (DE) puts a Blue-card question to Philippe Lamberts, (Verts/ALE), (FR) – 20.01.2011]

1 Mr President, Mr Lamberts referred to the special supports that banks have
2 received from the European Central Bank. *Perhaps he could explain in a*
3 *little more detail* what he means and how this worked. He also made
4 reference to the fact that this support is to be abolished. How would he
5 propose that we take control here, ensuring that the wrong people do not
6 make a fat profit?

In examples (8.1) and (8.2), the adverb *perhaps* is used in expressions that place certain expectations on the respondent (i.e., *Perhaps he would do X*). *Perhaps*, indeed, softens the imposition, allowing the respondent to refuse to meet the request, for example, (In 8.1, Line 1 and in 8.2, Line 2). Such indirectness conveys politeness that mitigates the forcefulness of the imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In both examples the indirectness is reinforced with address in third person pronominal form, *he*. It is worth noting that example (8.1) is a willingness frame formulated with the use of *would like*, which denotes politeness licensing the possibility that the respondent might refuse to explain the accusatory propositional content in the question. The combination of the unimposing *perhaps* and address in third person enhances the indirectness and results in over-politeness. In the example the speaker displays a strong commitment to the propositional content, accusing the respondent of being 'so against the taxpayers'. The over-politeness displayed in the QF contradicts the hostile accusation formulated with the assertive *why*-interrogative in 8.1 (in Lines 1–2). As Archer (2005, p. 99) asserts '*wh*-interrogatives generally have a presupposition which the questioner is understood

to assume to be true, they are a good (albeit implicit) indicator of the speaker's perception of his/her world'. The strong presupposition that the indirect *why*-interrogative entails ('why he is so against taxpayers') prevents the respondent from rebutting the accusation. Based on the speaker's strong commitment to the propositional content in the indirect *why*-question, I suggest that such QFs, as in example (8.1), have the rhetorical function of conveying *adversarial stance*. The question uttered fulfils its accusatory function even when it goes unanswered.

The adverb *perhaps* in example (8.2) functions at two discursive levels: On the surface, it distances the speaker from a knowing stance. By avoiding an expression of certainty, *perhaps* allows the recipient to align with either of the probabilities: *could* or *could not explain in a little more detail*, thereby diminishing impoliteness. Implicitly, however, *perhaps* indicates uncertainty concerning the occurrence of the event ('explain in a little more detail'). Given that uncertainty, such an epistemic stance entails doubts about the ability of the recipient to explain the matter in concern.

To conclude, examples (8.1) and (8.2) illustrate the ambiguous discursive function of the adverb *perhaps*. On the one hand, *perhaps* allows the speaker to seemingly take a non-knowing stance, thereby weakening the credibility of the propositional content and allowing its user to display politeness. On the other hand, it raises doubts about the recipient's ability or willingness to collaborate in the information or opinion exchange on a particular topic that questioner is oriented towards. The latter would damage the recipient's public image.

8.3.3 Object-oriented Question Frames

As a third category I suggest Object-oriented QF, which foregrounds the impending question. Examples in my data include 'The question is' and 'The question that needs to be asked is'. These frames neither reference Self (the speaking subject and/or the grouping on behalf of which the questioner claims to be speaking), nor the addressee, and instead impersonalizes the question and the propositional content of the question. This is meant to present the propositional content as common ground, hence indisputable. It may well be, then, suggested that despite the grammatical absence of the questioner in a phrase like 'the question is', this type of QF indicates the questioner's strong commitment to the propositional content. The formulation enables the speaker to convey her/his commitment by implication, without openly placing Self in the particular interaction as a disputing party. Compare the following two examples.

(8.3) The question is: why are you so against taxpayers?

(8.4) I would like to ask you why you are so against taxpayers?

Example (8.3) triggers a response to the question without positioning Self in regard to the question. In example (8.4) Self is positioned as having the right to ask and assumes an unknowing epistemic stance.

The absence of the addressee in the QF, on the other hand, neutralizes the imposition of the propositional statement in the impending question. It orients the frame towards the impending question, without targeting the respondent in the QF.

To summarize, the absence of a reference to the interlocutors and the ideological groupings that they are associated with, renders the speaker as objective in his stance, even though the upcoming focal question may well exhibit a clearly hostile stance.

Having analysed the three types of QFs in terms of their forms, the following section examines how QFs position Self and Other.

8.4 Positioning and Stance-taking in QFs

Based on the analysis above, I would like to suggest that *question frames* are prime devices for expressing epistemic stance. Through Self-oriented QFs, speakers position Self as not knowing, searching for particular information. Such positioning is often incongruent with the speakers' display of a strong commitment to the proposition embedded in the focal questions. Notice the following example.

(8.5) *I would like to ask why you sound so aggressive*⁶¹

While the QF, 'I would like to ask', proportionally positions Self (the stance owner), along an epistemic scale, with respect to some presupposed rights and responsibilities of a not-knowing stance, the impending *why*-interrogative, as discussed earlier (§ 8.3.1.2), indicates the speaker's certainty about the proposition. In so doing, the speaker shifts his stance on the epistemic scale.

Self-oriented QFs might index the addressee's position through reference to the addressee in second or third person nominal or pronominal forms (e.g. 'I would like to ask *you*, *Mr X*', 'Could I ask *Mr X*', 'I wonder if *Mrs X* could tell us'). In such frames, both the questioner (the speaking subject and the grouping she/he represents) and the prospective respondent are explicitly positioned with respect to their epistemic rights and responsibilities: the questioner's

⁶¹ 09.06.2011– Gerald Häfner (Verts/ALE) – (DE) puts his Blue-card question to Herbert Reul (PPE) – (DE)

claimed right to obtain specific information vis-à-vis the respondents presupposed responsibility to provide this information.

As is the case with Self-oriented question frames, Other-oriented QFs convey the speaker's epistemic stance. The speaker implies her/his stance through a request to the addressee without referring to Self (i.e., 'Can you explain', 'Will you tell'). Such indirectness allows speakers to distance Self from the responsibility of the stance in the focal question. Moreover, through such QFs, speakers provide their addressees with the option of dis-aligning (through non-conforming or non-confirming answers) with the stances that are indexed in the question. Respondents may simply answer the QF without responding to the focal question. For example, a 'no' answer to a question like 'Will you explain why you are so against European taxpayers?' would function as a declaration of not having the intention to answer the question without responding to the accusation in the subordinate clause. Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 760) explain this form of indirectness as a way of mitigating 'the forcefulness of the question' while, at the same time, giving the respondent (the US Presidents in their study) 'an 'out', a way of sidestepping the issue that is signalled by the design of the question itself'. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, this format is by no means a gesture of friendliness. On the contrary, such indirectness allows *adversarial positioning* while the speaker is seemingly polite in her/his request for information.

Notice that Other-oriented QFs might index the questioner's position through Self-referencing as in 'Could you tell *me*', or in 'Would you be able to explain *us*'. Such formulations reinforce the distinction between Self (the in-group) and Other (the out-group) through the dichotomy of *us* vs *you* or *us* vs *them*, thereby, maintaining intergroup boundaries.

To summarize, while Self-oriented QFs foreground the speaker's Self-positioning along an epistemic scale ((i.e., 'I want to know', 'I am wondering', 'I would like to know', 'I must ask'), Other-oriented QFs are instrumental in Other-positioning by proposing a stance for Other (i.e., 'Can you explain', 'Will you answer', 'Could you tell'). Both Self-oriented QFs and Other-oriented QFs indicate a scalar epistemic state in their positioning of Self-and/or Other. However, Object-oriented QFs (i.e., 'The question is'), foregrounding 'the question', provide for a neutral stance. The exclusion of both Self and Other sets up positions for the speaking subject vis-à-vis the recipient, without explicitly including a reference to Self or Other. Such QFs indicate that the interlocutors share responsibility for the focal question as they are positioned as equal.

8.5 Social Distance in Stance

As an indicator of indirectness in an interrogation, QF reinforces the relational distance between the interactants. While framed-questions are less straightforward and relatively distancing compared to non-framed questions⁶², framed questions, as well, vary in the degree of distance indicated to hold between interactants. We have been able to observe the following QF formats (a) to (e).

- (a) Self-oriented QF with the inclusion of Other
e.g. *I would like to ask you + wh-clause/ if-clause*
- (b) Self-oriented QF with the lack of the addressee
e.g. *I would like to know + wh-clause/ if-clause*
- (c) Other-oriented QF with the inclusion of Self
e.g. *Could you tell us + wh-clause/ if-clause*
- (d) Other-oriented QF with the exclusion of Self
e.g. *Could you explain + wh-clause/ if-clause*
- (e) Object-oriented QF excluding both Self and Other
e.g. *The question is + wh-clause/ if-clause*

Some QFs display a relational situation between Self and Other, as in (a) and (c), and thereby reduce the distance between the questioner and the respondent. QFs like (b) and (d), however, exclude one of the participants, accomplishing an individual act as opposed to formulating a relation. and enhance the distance between the interactants. The QF found in (e), on the other hand, excludes both Self and Other, indicating no relational situation whatsoever between the questioner and the respondent. *Positioning* in these QFs is achieved by implication, where the question itself is in focus.

So far in this chapter I have offered micro-analysis of QFs with respect to their various forms and discursive functions. The following section (8.7) provides a macro-level analysis, displaying how QFs relates to the focal question.

⁶² Here I draw upon Clayman and Heritage's (2002, p. 759) differentiation between direct and indirect forms in terms of the divergence they entail between what is said and what is meant. In indirect forms, they state, 'meaning is circuitously implied rather than literally stated'. In this thesis, such indirectness is taken as an indicator of relational distance between interactants.

8.6 Shift in Stance

Question frames enable speakers to display various degrees of politeness in their utterances, which could otherwise cause damage to the recipient. Here, I have no intention to revisit the already discussed correlation between indirectness and politeness⁶³. My aim here, instead, is to discuss how this indirectness influences the speakers' stance-taking.

Notice that QFs enable speakers to take multiple and diverse stances throughout their speaking turns. Speakers might, and most likely do, take diverse stances towards positioning Self and Other in the QF and depending on their political ends, they might display multiple stances (*epistemic*, *evaluative*, and/or *affective*). My data suggests that, the MEPs may shift from a 'seemingly' epistemic stance in the question frame to evaluative or affective stances in the impending question or statement.

Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 760) argue with regard to their data that the 'Other-referencing [oriented] question frame is not essential to the substance of the question -each question could have been asked without it'. Nevertheless, the question would not have the same discursive function if formulated as a non-framed interrogative. Therefore, I argue that there is a difference in the illocutionary force of the question when it is prefaced by one of the question frames; Self-oriented, Other-oriented, or Object-oriented. Let us elaborate on this argument with reference to the following examples. The question frames are italicized in the collection below.

- (8.6) *Perhaps Mr Reul would like to explain us* why he is so against the taxpayers⁶⁴
- (8.7) *I would like to ask him* how much time he has spent in Russia, since he presents himself as such a profound expert on this country. [...] *Perhaps it would be a good thing if you could* tell us about this.⁶⁵
- (8.8) *I would like to ask Mr Swoboda* how he dares to criticize the Hungarian Presidency⁶⁶

As examples (8.6), (8.7), (8.8) illustrate, the indirectness achieved through the QFs allows the speakers to take multiple stances within the same utterance. While QFs are indicators of

⁶³ Empirically elaborated in Blum-Kulka, 1987; Clark and Schunk, 1980; Clayman and Heritage, 2002a; Van der Wijst, 1995; Ilie 2004a, 2010, and theoretically established in Brown and Levinson, 1987.

⁶⁴ The questioner is Chris Davies (ALDE) and the respondent is Paul Nuttall (EFD). 15.02.2011.

⁶⁵ Jaroslav Paška (EFD) puts a Blue-card question to Mr Ungureanu (PPE). 06.06.2011.

⁶⁶ Krisztina Morvai (NI) puts her question to Hannes Swoboda (S&D). 18.01.2011.

epistemic stance, the questions may also index evaluative or affective stances⁶⁷. The QFs in the examples above, ultimately function to neutralize the adversariality in the impending questions. The questions have self-evident answers, and accomplish actions other than questioning. The adversariality is mitigated by displaying deference to the respondent's intentions (i.e., 'would like to explain' in 8.6), motivations (i.e., 'why he is so against the taxpayers' in 8.6), and capacity (i.e., 'if you could tell us' in 8.7) and also by claiming an apparent sincerity in asking a question ('I would like to ask him' in 8.7) & ('I would like to ask Mr Swoboda' in 8.8). QFs, hence, enable MEPs to take adversarial stances and frame their stanced utterances with appropriate institutionally routine phrases.

Such shifts in stance create multiple consecutive positionings for the participants. In the examples above, the question frames position Other along an epistemic scale (not-knowing Self vs. Other who potentially will or can know), in respect to some presupposed epistemic rights and responsibilities of the proposed stance, which displays a desire to know the answer to a particular question. In other cases, the questions accomplish adversarial stances, such as mocking, accusing or challenging Other. So, Self vs. Other positionings, firstly, invoke a difference between someone who knows vs. someone who doesn't and then, between the mocker and her/his target. As the latter stances may be perceived as affected by the stances in the QFs, a study of stance should consider the sequential order of the segments of talk that convey a speaker's stance.

8.7 Insights Gained

The data of the present study displays three types of QFs - namely: Self-oriented frames, Other-oriented frames, and Object-oriented frames - that are employed by speakers in the Blue-card procedure. QFs add an element of indirectness to questions and 'entail some divergence between what is said and what is meant' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002, p. 759). The indirectness in QFs, similar to indirect address forms, enable speakers to neutralize the cost to the recipient that is, otherwise, intended in the questions or statements uttered in the EP. Speakers display an intention to collaborate with their interlocutors and at least appear to exchange information about a particular subject matter.

As was shown in Chapter 7 on Address Forms, the MEPs generally use polite forms of address, showing deference to a certain degree. When moving on to formulate question frames,

⁶⁷ The examination of stance-taking activities in questions is the task of Chapter 9. The argument in this chapter about stance categories in questions is based on the results gained from the coding of the data with respect to stance types.

the MEPs continue doing ‘being polite’ and doing ‘being collaborative’, even though the focal question or statement might then display hostility towards the addressee.

The primary function of a QF is not to manipulate the intended illocutionary force (e.g., accusing, requesting), but to soften the forcefulness to the extent that damage to the recipient is adjusted to an ‘appropriate’ degree. Since the Blue-card procedure is a Q&A sequence, the MEPs are obliged to collaborate in the exchange of particular information. All QFs that fall into the categories of Self-oriented, Other-oriented, and Object-oriented QFs are initiators of potential interaction and vary in degree of indirectness. While Self-oriented QFs primarily position Self (the speaking subject and the grouping that she/ he is supposed to represent), Other-oriented question frames position Other, proposing positions for Other. Object-oriented QFs are neutral in terms of indirectness, but, by nature of the conventions that hold for questioning, collaborative. Object-oriented QFs enable speakers to formulate their Blue-card questions as commonsensical, while epistemic right and responsibilities are, as always, attached to the speaking subject.

The analysis has shown that the MEPs’ *Self* and *Other positioning* occurs along an epistemic scale. The ways in which the MEPs formulate their QFs invoke a *hierarchical positioning* in terms of Other’s epistemic rights and responsibilities. Hierarchy is indexed in the relationship between the party attributed with authority (the authority to ask or the authority to comment on) and the party that will be affected by the exercise of that authority, i.e. who has the right to know, hence the authority to ask, and who bares the responsibility of providing the required information. Hierarchy in QFs is traced in modality indicating; 1. the speaker's commitment indexed in the stance predicate (i.e., want to know, am wondering, must ask) following a first-person pronoun in syntactic subject position (*I* or *We*) or 2. deference to the respondent conveyed in Other-positioning (indexed in second or third person address) through proposing a position for Other in the stance predicate (i.e., *Can Mr Raul tell*; *Will you explain*). The speech act of questioning entails a hierarchical binary relation between the questioner and the respondent with respect to their rights and obligations: Self-positioning by the use of Self-oriented and Object-oriented QFs encode claims that the questioner is entitled to put a particular question to Other. Other-oriented QFs, on the other hand, display deference to the respondent's intentions and/or capacity to answer, hence indexing recognition of the respondent's rights to determine what action to perform next. In the following table, I demonstrate different formulations of QFs that are found in my data in terms of the degree of epistemic modality they convey.

Table 3: Scalar epistemic modality in QFs

A. Self-oriented QFs positioning the Self on an epistemic scale	B. Permission asking Self-oriented QF	C. Other-oriented QF proposing Other-positioning	D. Other-Oriented QF suggesting an interpretation of Other's Self-positioning	E. Object-oriented QF
(1) I ask you	(1) Can I ask you	(1) Can you tell	(1) Perhaps you will tell us	The question is
(2) I am wondering	(2) Let me ask you	(2) Could you tell	(2) Perhaps you would like to explain	
(3) I will ask you		(3) Will you tell		
(4) I want to ask you		(4) Would you tell		
(5) I would like to ask you				

A speaker's claimed rights and authority to ask a question diminish from A to D. Similarly, Self-oriented QFs in group A vary in degree of modality. A(1) and (2) index high commitment by tense: the stance predicate in present-simple 'ask' in example A(1) and the stance predicate in present progressive 'am wondering' in A(2) indicate 'epistemic immediacy' based on what the 'speaker considers to be real at the time of speaking' (Bisard and De Wit, 2014, p. 203). A(3) and A(4), on the other hand, express the speaker's wish for a future act. Example A(5), is an indirect way for the speaker to position Self as having low epistemic rights.

Group B type of Self-oriented QFs are closer to Other-oriented QFs in the degree of deference they display, in the sense that they indicate recognition of the respondent's rights to determine the next action.

The Object-oriented QF is the only type of QF that does not index any sort of hierarchy between the participants. This type of QF, instead, orients solely towards the domain of information that the impending question addresses. Nevertheless, with regard to institutional positioning, invoking the epistemic rights and responsibilities of questioners and respondents, this type of QF provides speakers with epistemic authority over their opponents.

Based on the results attained from the analysis of 207 question frames operated in the EP Blue-card procedure, this chapter concludes that question frames are instrumental in the MEPs formulations of often adversarial questions in a regular and conventionally *appropriate* way.

Chapter 9 Question Design

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on utterances produced under the Blue-card procedure in which MEPs display ‘doing questioning’.

Qs that are asked in the EP, especially Blue-card Qs, should follow clearly defined norms, specifying who can ask what, when and how (§ Chapter 4). Despite the normative constraints within which Qs and responses to Qs are produced under the Blue-card procedure, each question is the ‘contingent outcome, situated accomplishment of people interacting with each other’ (Sidnell, 2010, p. 20). In the formal EP context, speakers present their Blue-card questions as contingent (i.e., I am quite simply very surprised by what Mr Szegedi is saying [...] I would like to ask him straight out⁶⁸), although they may actually have prepared them prior to the debate.

One of the central features of Qs is that they ‘place prospective constraints on the next turn’ (Clark, 2012, p. 85-87), which, in effect, makes a certain stance pragmatically appropriate, conforming with the ‘expectations’ (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 806) of the corresponding question. Certain interrogative formats characteristically project particular stances. *Wh*-interrogatives, due to their primary function of seeking information, provide for an epistemic stance, both for the questioner (by virtue of ‘questioning’), and for the respondent. Polar interrogatives, on the other hand, induce respondents to display some degree of convergent or divergent stance alignment, with the stance indexed in the corresponding question. Consider the following:

Q: Do you also think that this is so cool?

A1: Yes. (Convergent stance alignment)

or

A2: No. (Divergent stance alignment)

By virtue of the polar format, the questioner projects the next action to be either a convergent or a divergent stance alignment.

Qs in political settings, particularly parliamentary interaction, are handy tools that participants use to engage in interpersonal and intergroup positioning.. Through its interrogative format, lexical choice, topical content, as well as sequential position, an utterance

⁶⁸ Marc Tarabella (S&D), (FR) puts a Blue-card question to Csanád Szegedi (NI), (HU) – 12.12.2011.

can accomplish actions other than questioning. For instance, an interrogative sentence such as *How could you do X?* might be designed to express outrage or to accuse the recipient rather than to elicit information (Clayman and Heritage, 2002c), (c.f. Archer, 2005 and Greenbaum & Quirk, 1990, who deal with such ambiguity in terms of the rhetorical functions of questions). Such questions are designed for positioning on a moral scale rather than an epistemic scale, focusing on what the other should or shouldn't be doing.

At other times, an utterance formulated as an opinion seeking question may have an assertive import, displaying the speaker's strong commitment to the propositional content. Such questions not only express the speaker's stance towards a given stance object, but also force Other to position Self relative to the stance of the questioner. Examine the example below.

Q: Do you also think that this is so cool?

The speaker takes an evaluative stance towards the stance object indexed in *this*. The interrogative, addressing second person, indexed in *you*, is formulated as a positive polarity question, preferring a 'yes' answer that will, in effect, align the stances of the two subjects. The pragmatic marker *also* proposes a 'similarity', 'alikehood' between the two stance-takers in their stances towards the shared stance object. Question sentences establish a relationship between the questioner and the respondent (at least) in terms of their claimed or candidate positions as indexed in the linguistic and sequential features of the question utterance.

As Bolinger (1957, p. 2) argues, no single linguistic criterion (e.g., syntax, intonation, sequential position) is either sufficient or necessary to define a question, although a question is readily recognizable to interlocutors. An examination of the grammatical form of an utterance merely provides a primary resource for determining whether an utterance 'does questioning' (Schegloff, 1984, p. 34). Several previous studies in linguistics (e.g., Freed and Ehrlich Eds., 2010; de Ruiter Eds., 2012) have shown that in order to be able to determine whether a particular utterance is understood as 'doing questioning', both formal and sequential considerations are necessary.

9.2 Question Design

Distinguishing Qs with reference to syntactical structure of utterances is not an easy task since 'interrogative sentences are not themselves questions' (Clark, 2012, p. 81) and '[t]he syntactic form of a question is not always a good indicator of its pragmatic function' (Hobbs, 2012: 48). Besides, questions might accomplish various actions that are not necessarily consistent with

their primary function of seeking agreement, confirmation, information, etc. as indexed in the unit of action projection in the question utterances. This means that, an utterance, framed as an information seeking question, may well, through its assertive import, accomplish assertion rather than questioning. Examine the example below:

(9.1) [Chris Davies (ALDE), (UK), directs a Blue-card question to Paul Nuttall (EFD), (UK) – 03.03.2011]

1 [...] Can he then also tell us [...] why is he so against council taxpayers,
2 ratepayers and local governments across Europe, in his own country and
3 elsewhere, who have to bear the burden of dealing with such waste, which
4 he says the producer should not have to pay for?

In the example above, the speaker frames his focal question as a request for information designed as a positive polarity interrogative (*Can he then also tell us* in Line 1). The focal question (*why is he so against council taxpayers, ...* in Lines 1–4), however, has a strong assertive import, accusing Other of being *against council taxpayers, ratepayers and local governments across Europe, in his own country and elsewhere* (in Lines 1–3).

A single interrogative utterance can, therefore, carry out multiple simultaneous projects: Firstly, a speaker may project the next action by expressing an interactional purpose, such as seeking information or looking for an agreement/disagreement or requesting a confirmation/denial (i.e., *Can he then also tell us* in 9.1, Line 1). Secondly, a speaker may accomplish actions such as accusing, asserting, condemning (i.e., [*he is*] *so against council taxpayer, ...* in 9.1, Lines 1–3), which are not typically associated with the communicative activity types of questioning and answering. Lastly, a speaker may establish grounds for the positions she/he sets up for Self and Other through the topical content of the question. In the example above the speaker attributes a stance to Other based on a set of assumptions ([*he is*] *so against council taxpayer* and *council taxpayers, ... who have to bear the burden of dealing with such waste* in Line 3) that serve to ground the positions set up.

9.2.1 Syntactic Forms

Interrogative sentences can be recognized with reference to the syntactic structure of utterances. Based on this formal approach, I use the term interrogative to refer to utterances that contain direct questions formulated with verb–subject inversion (e.g. *Wh*–interrogatives polar (yes/no) interrogatives, disjunctive interrogatives, and tag interrogatives).

In the following section, I present a categorization of interrogatives that is informed by, above all, Bolinger (1957, 1978), Quirk et al. (1985), and de Ruiter's (2012 Ed.) study of

questions. Previous research on news interviews (e.g.: Clayman, 1988, 1989; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Haddington, 2004, 2006, 2007, Heritage and Roth, 1993; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; and Greatbatch, 1988) and courtroom interactions/ trial talk (e.g.: Adelswärd et al., 1987; Archer, 2005; Stenström, 1984; Atkinson and Drew, 1979) provide empirical standpoints for arguments about the functions of interrogative types.

The following section reviews literature on the formal features of interrogative types in English. The section includes the categories that are found in my data.

9.2.1.1 Polar (Yes/No) Interrogatives

Polar interrogatives request the addressee to supply a truth-value, by either answering ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (Biber et al. 1999, p. 206). In that sense, polar interrogatives are rather restrictive compared to *wh*- interrogatives (content Qs), although slightly liberating compared to tagged interrogatives whose ‘primary function is not to elicit information from the addressee but, rather, agreement or confirmation’ (Biber et al. 1999, p. 206). Nevertheless, polar interrogatives are not always answered by ‘yes’ or ‘no’. As the data of this study demonstrates, polar interrogatives might also be responded to ‘by providing another pragmatically appropriate answer like ‘I don’t know’ (Quirk et al. 1985). My data also suggest that any form of interrogative, including a polar interrogative, might be responded to with a meta-comment where the respondent avoids providing the questioner with the expected answer.

Polar interrogatives vary in conduciveness depending on syntactic, lexical, and prosodic features of interrogative design (Bolinger, 1957; Pope, 1976; Stenström, 1984). Polar interrogativeness that import weak assumptions and, hence, are the least conducive are those that are not biased towards a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ answer. As far as polar interrogatives are concerned, Stenström (1984, p. 49) explains the scalarity in conduciveness as follows⁶⁹:

(2) Did John go to London? (Positive polarity Q)	↑ weak assumption least conducive strong assumption most conducive ↓
(3) John went to London, didn't he? (Tag Q)	
(4) John went to London? (Declarative Q)	

Most conducive Qs contain some elements that make them biased towards one type of answer. Negative polar interrogatives fall into this category as they request some kind of a confirmation of the speaker's assumption. Stenström (1984, p. 47) states that this is valid for all

⁶⁹ Examples adopted from Stenström (1984, p. 49). Stenström prefers *questions* to *interrogatives* to refer to this category.

conducive Qs in both polarities. Positive conduciveness prefers a positive answer (e.g.: ‘Did someone see him?’), while negative conduciveness is biased towards disagreement (e.g.: ‘Didn't anyone see him?’), (Stenström, 1984, p. 47).

Declarative Qs, as in (5a) and (5b) are strong in conduciveness as they convey strong assumptions. They resemble an assumption more than a question by providing a self-evident answer (Quirk et al. 1985, Wikberg, 1975⁷⁰). Declarative Qs are largely⁷¹ characterized by final rising intonation (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 814).

(5a) You don't believe in the EU project?

(5b) You think this all vain?

From a positioning perspective, the level of conduciveness in an utterance informs about the fixedness of the position that the speaker sets up for her interlocutor. The more conducive a question is, the less it gives the recipient a way out of the position that the question sets up.

9.2.1.2 Tagged Interrogatives

Tag Qs (also called as tagged declaratives) ‘are made up of an elliptical interrogative structure attached to a declarative form’ (Archer, 2005, p. 24).

(7) This is awesome, isn't it?

The primary function of tagged Qs is not to elicit information from the addressee but, rather, agreement or confirmation. Biber et al. (1999, p. 208) identifies two types of tagged Qs: Reversed polarity tags and constant polarity tags. Reversed polarity tags do ‘checking’ as in example (8) and constant polarity tags ‘copy’ the preceding proposition as in example (9).

(8) You know all the answers, don't you Mr X? (*Reversed in polarity*)

(9) This is a peace project, is it? (*Constant in polarity*)

While in (8) the polarity of the tag is opposite to the polarity of the clause, in (9) the tag has the same polarity value as the clause.

Tag Qs, Kimps and Davidse (2008, p. 700) argue, ‘essentially convey interpersonal meanings, i.e., meanings to do with the speech participants’ position vis-à-vis the descriptive content of their communication, and with the linguistic and social roles they assume in this

⁷⁰ Wikberg (1975) prefers to call declarative questions as ‘assertive’.

⁷¹ Couper-Kuhlen (2012) argues against the totalization that all declarative questions have final rising intonation.

exchange'. Consequently, tag Qs provide for interpersonal stance-taking activities. They are designed to get the respondent either to align or disalign altogether.

9.2.1.3 Disjunctive (Alternative) Interrogatives

Disjunctive Qs involve list construction and explicit differentiation of alternative propositions (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 823–824). Disjunctive Qs resemble polar interrogatives when formulated as in the example 'Would you like to be remembered as the creators of peace or war, or not to be remembered at all?', or they resemble *Wh*-interrogatives when formulated as in 'What would you like to contribute to Mr X, peace or war or not having any influence at all on issues concerning humanity?' Nevertheless, not all disjunctive Qs are like polar interrogatives. Sadock (2012, p. 107) explains:

In the alternative questions the speaker expects the answer to be a statement as to which of the alternatives that the question presents is correct. With a polar disjunctive question, however, the expected answer is 'yes' if either (or both) of the disjuncts is true, and 'no' otherwise.

All in all, in determining in which formal category a question falls, the context and the sequential organization should not be disregarded (Wikberg, 1975, Stenström, 1984). It is necessary to identify what the MEPs accomplish by employing various types of interrogatives in their political endeavours.

9.2.1.4 *Wh*-Interrogatives

Wh-interrogatives are initiated by one of the following *wh*-question words: *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *what*, *which*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* being the exception (Quirk et al. 1985, pp. 817–823). These are least problematic to identify because of explicit question words they embody. *Wh*-interrogatives, 'indicate an element to be specified by the addressee' (Archer, 2005, p. 25). They are relatively emancipating in the sense that they typically make possible an answer from an 'open range of replies' (Quirk et al. 1985, p. 806).

9.2.1.5 Negative Interrogatives

Negative interrogatives are formed using negative interrogative syntax (e.g. *Don't you ...? Isn't this?*). Using this question design speakers suggest something *not* to be the case (Quirk et al 1985, p. 808) and indicate their expectation of and preference for a given answer (Archer 2005, p. 26).

Since negative interrogatives are designed for ‘confirming’ answers, in adversarial settings, negative Qs drive Other towards a particular positioning set up that may eventually damage her/his public image. In that respect, negative interrogatives are more hostile in their import. See the following example.

(10) Does she not believe that the move to equality between men and women is hindered precisely because of views such as hers [...]?

Example (10) is designed to get a confirmation from the respondent of the accusatory proposition that *the move to equality between men and women is hindered precisely because of views such as hers*.

Indeed, a ‘confirming’ answer is not necessarily a ‘yes’ answer. Examine the following example.

(11) Does he not know we are in the middle of one of the worst recessions of modern times?

The question in example (11) is conducive of a negative answer. In this case, a ‘yes’ answer will go against the proposition that the respondent does not know we are in the middle of one of the worst recessions of modern times. While, a ‘no’ answer will confirm the proposition of the question.

Based on her Estonian data, Keevallik (2009, p. 139) show that ‘[C]onduciveness of a negative question as well as its linguistic format depend on the action the question implements in a conversational sequence’, where either a positive or a negative form of answer may be confirming the proposition in the negative interrogative. I will likewise be considering the exact position of the question, in regard to the sequence of speaking turns as well as within a single turn.

9.2.1.6 Indirect Questions

It is not an easy task to determine whether an utterance is an indirect question or a declarative. There are two distinct approaches to indirect Qs. One approach is in line with Bolinger (1957) for whom verb–subject inversion is one determiner. For Bolinger, utterances such as *I want to know why he did it* are not Qs at all. However, utterances such as *I don't know do they have names*, *She may ask me why don't I mind my own business* have the potential to be regarded as indirect Qs on the basis that they have interrogative syntax with verb–subject inversion.

Nevertheless, Bolinger argues that, in order to be able to determine whether such Qs are direct or indirect, intonation and other markers should be taken into consideration.

The second approach is rather inclusive, widening the indirect question category to forms as in the former example *I want to know why he did it*. According to this approach, indirect Qs may be formulated as *Wh*– interrogatives, polar interrogatives, or disjunctive Qs. *Wh*–*interrogatives* make use of the same interrogative words as their direct interrogatives, while indirect polar and indirect disjunctive interrogatives begin with *whether* or *if* forming the reported clause (Archer, 2005, p. 26). In their analysis of Qs in news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 759) include both formulations where verb–subject inversion occurs and where it does not. To them, 'indirectness typically takes the form of a phrase, clause, or sentence that precedes and frames the focal question' where the focal question does not necessarily emerge in interrogative form. This approach is driven by Brown and Levinson's definition of indirectness: 'any communicative behaviour, verbal or non-verbal, that conveys something more than or different from what it literally means' (1978, p. 139).

(12a) Can you explain this matter to the citizens of EU?

Can, for instance, be taken as a viable request for explanation and not a question about the respondent's potential ability to explain. Obviously, the context and the sequential organization should also be regarded in determining the illocutionary force of the interrogative. Let us now examine example (12a) within its sequential context.

(12b) Q: Questioner, R: Respondent

Q: The majority did not vote for us for this. This is not what the people want. So the question is: Can you explain this matter to the citizens of the EU?

R: Yes, Mr President. I can. I am for the measures that have potential to provide the European citizens with more jobs. This might even include austerity measures.

When identifying the communicative project in this particular example two things need to be taken into account: First, the preparatory statement, I shall call it the preface to the impending question, prepares for the clause that potentially qualifies as a question. Second, the response should be taken into account. The response 'Yes I can' treats the interrogative as a question about the ability of the respondent and the follow up statement recognizes the request

for explanation in the question and provides an explanation for the matter that the question concerns.

My approach to indirect Qs is in line with the latter approach since, notwithstanding the syntactic form of Qs; the utterances that are analysed in this chapter are designed as Qs by one MEP to another. Whether they include an interrogative or not, the utterances are meant to trigger some sort of response, which does not necessarily match the illocutionary force of the particular clause or the type of response it was meant to elicit. In spite of the fact that most ‘Blue-card Qs’ are responded to in accordance with the parliamentary procedure governing the Blue-cards. As discussed earlier (§ Chapter 4), parliamentary Q&A sequences should follow strict rules and conventions, involving a pre-allocated turn-taking system as well as limiting syntactical and lexical variations: Blue-card holders are obliged to ask questions and respondents are supposed to provide ‘relevant’ answers, whose appropriateness is judged by the President. Nevertheless, as Clayman (2010, p. 257) observes in his analysis of news interviews, ‘this constraint, while pervasive, is also quite ‘loose’ in the sense that what is considered an allowable question is rather broad’. In order to determine what qualifies as a question, consideration of the features of the utterance’s design alone is not sufficient. A prior clause/utterance, for example, is crucial in understanding whether a question is direct or indirect or not even a question at all. What is more, the organization of certain kinds of institutional settings surrounding sequences of Q&A plays an equally significant role. This study is, therefore, interested in the ways in which an utterance accomplishes ‘doing questioning’ as part of the institution of the EP.

9.2.2 Pragmatic Functions

From a functional approach, in order for an utterance to accomplish questioning, interrogative syntax is not a prerequisite (see Levinson, 1983; Clark, 2012; Lerner, 1991; Weber, 1993). As Clark (2012, p. 81) states, ‘[q]uestions are things people do with language’. In this thesis, I am simply interested in the ‘functions’ that speakers accomplish by asking questions

Archer (2005, p. 25), in her analysis of courtroom interaction, suggests a typology of interrogatives in terms of their ‘primary seeking functions’. Notice the following.

Table 4: Grammatical Q-types arranged according to their primary ‘seeking’ function

Confirmation/denial seeking			Information-seeking
Polar interrogatives	Disjunctives		<i>wh</i> -interrogatives
Negatively oriented polar interrogatives	Negatively oriented disjunctives		Negatively oriented <i>wh</i> -interrogatives
Tagged declaratives			

Archer’s model associates certain syntactic forms that typically ‘do questioning’ with certain discursive functions. In determining how a particular interrogative utterance functions in a particular interaction, sequential position needs to be considered, in addition to the form of the interrogative (Archer, 2005; Bolinger, 1957; Stenström, 1984; Weber, 1993). An interrogative utterance, such as *Who are you?* can have different functions, varying from genuinely seeking information to an adversarial rejection to acknowledge Other’s identity, depending on the sequential position of the question in a particular interaction. Previous research has also shown that interrogatively framed utterances may primarily accomplish something besides or other than questioning (see Heritage, 2002; Clayman and Heritage, 2002c; Ilie, 2015, Schegloff, 1984). It is therefore necessary to examine possible multiple pragmatic functions of questions in the analysis of questioning.

Characteristically, questions are used to elicit a response from Other by placing prospective constraints on the next turn (Clark, 2012, pp. 85-87). Speakers, through an ‘action projection’ or a ‘preference’ that is embedded in the interrogative utterance, not only place constraints on the response, but also construct their stances towards the domain of interest that is focalized in the utterance. They simultaneously establish relations with their interlocutors. I suggest, therefore, that questions are vehicles for stance-taking in which interpersonal as well as intergroup relations are managed.

Furthermore, questions, as Archer (2005, p. 223) notes, serve for ‘constructing a ‘story’ or ‘reality’’, providing the grounds for the relational activities of grouping, positioning, stance-taking, and alignment that the interlocutors are engaged in.

In this thesis we therefore examine the functions of questions within the particular interactional context that they are produced in terms of following:

- The types of functions that question utterances project
- The types of functions that question utterances accomplish
- The aspects of grounding that the questions display

9.3 Interrogative Formats in the Blue-card Procedure

The data corpus contains 427 interrogative sentences and 59 Blue-card questions that do not feature any interrogatives at all (amounts to 13,82% of the data). My main focus is on how speakers under the Blue-card procedure design their Qs as a discursive strategy in stance-taking. In other words, how different question types function in taking stance on behalf of a grouping in relation to presupposed other groupings. In order to be able to demonstrate the questions' functions in the discursive construction of groupings, I concentrate, first, on the types of interrogatives utilized in *Blue-card questions* and the frequencies of their occurrence.; I then turn to the discursive functions of the question types as *stance-taking* activities.

Table 5: The distribution of interrogative types in the data corpus

Type \ Directness	Direct		Indirect		n	%
	n+	n-	n+	n-		
Polar	120	59	30	44	253	59,25
Wh	96	37	17	12	162	37,94
Alternative	3	0	2	0	5	1,17
Declaratives	5	2	-	-	7	1,64
Total					427	100

n+ refers to the number of positively formulated interrogatives

n- refers to the number of negatively formulated interrogatives

In table 2, *n* refers to the number of interrogative utterances. *n+*, then, is the number of positively formulated interrogatives, while, *n-* refers to the number of negatively formulated interrogatives. The table distinguishes between direct and indirect interrogatives and demonstrates the distribution of positively and negatively formulated interrogatives in terms of their directness.

There is an overwhelming dominance of polar interrogative type in the MEPs' formulations of Blue-card questions (253 polar interrogatives, covering 59,25%). While 150 of these display positive polarity (amounting to 59,29% of the polar interrogatives), 103 polar interrogatives have negative format (amounting to 40,71%). 74 polar interrogatives display an indirect formulation, distributed between positive and negative interrogatives (amounting to

29,25% of the polar interrogatives). The rest of the interrogatives comprising the data corpus are predominantly *wh*-interrogatives (162 interrogatives comprising 37,94% of the whole corpus). 113 *wh*-interrogatives have a positive format (amounting to 69,76% of the *wh*-interrogatives), while in 49 of them, negative format is deployed (30,24% of the *wh*-interrogatives). *Wh*-interrogatives in my corpus are mostly (133 out of 162, covering 82,10%) formulated as direct interrogatives.

The quantitative distribution of the interrogatives that are used in the Blue-card procedure shows that the MEPs deploy the polar interrogative format more often than other formats. Given that polar interrogatives are more restrictive compared to *wh*-interrogatives and slightly more liberating than tagged interrogatives (§9.3.1.1), the MEPs remarkable choice of polar interrogatives over other formats can be seen as a design choice for moderate restrictiveness in interrogatives utterances. The MEPs choose interrogative formats that will allow them to influence the scope of answers, while displaying a collaborative stance that allows respondents to give a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ answer.

In the corpus, 273 (63,94%) interrogatives have a positive format, while 154 (36,07%) embody a negative polarity item. Interestingly, the MEPs deploy positive format far more than negative format (§ 9.3.1.5). Negatively formatted interrogatives, as argued earlier (§ 9.3.1.5) are designed to get a confirmation in response. As far as the adversarial intergroup relations in parliamentary settings are concerned, a negative interrogative with accusatory import will less likely be confirmed in the response. The MEPs’ choice for positively formatted interrogatives can be seen as a discursive strategy to avoid a rejection in the response, which is generally the last turn in Blue-card sequences.⁷²

On the other hand, 322 (75,40%) are direct interrogatives, while 105 (24,59%) display an indirect format. QFs that add indirectness mostly preface the initial interrogative in Blue-card questions, which may include multiple interrogatives. In such cases, the indirectness that is accomplished by QFs might be maintained in the consecutive interrogatives within the same question turn, unless there is a shift in directness, for example, through a change in address from third person to second person address.

Having described the distribution of interrogative types that are typically deployed in the EP, the following sections examine the MEPs linguistic behaviour as they construct their stances in interaction. From now on I will be focusing on how MEPs tweak the institutional and

⁷² Characteristically, in Blue-card procedures, both the questioner and the respondent have one turn for each. The procedure does not involve response receipt by the questioner (§4.3).

grammatical notion of a “question” for their own purposes.

9.4 Peripheral Positioning through Assertive Questions

‘[A]sking a question is not an innocent thing to do’ (Steering and Drew 2008, p. 7)

Most of the questions in the Blue-card procedure are of a more conducive nature, challenging or confronting Other. Such questions are not necessarily oriented towards finding out information (cf. Schegloff, 1984; Egbert and Vöge, 2008 for discussion), instead, ‘can be used to accomplish a variety of different actions’ (Raymond, 2003, p. 939). Previous research has sought to account for interrogatively formatted utterances that do not (primarily) do questioning: Schegloff (1984), for instance, elaborates the performative force of questioning in his analysis of rhetorical questions. In another instance, Heritage (2002b, p. 34) examines negatively formatted interrogatives, that ‘do not accomplish questioning in the sense of information seeking’ but are designed to assert an opinion or express an outrage or accusation. On *wh*-interrogative formats, Egbert and Vöge (2008) focus on the disaffiliative and complaint implicative function of German question words, *warum* and *wieso*, corresponding to English *why*.

9.4.1 Pragmatic Functions of Interrogatively Formatted Assertions

Interrogatives are thus designed to accomplish various functions such as asserting an opinion, challenging the respondent's epistemic status, accusing, condemning, or judging the respondent based on a set of presuppositions that are expressed to some degree of explicitness. Overwhelmingly in my data, parliamentary style questions function as assertions, to which the speakers display high commitment.

As a general category, we shall call questions with assertive import *assertive questions*. Questions examined in this category enable speakers to establish epistemic or moral supremacy by setting up peripheral positions for Other. They do so through Qs that are oriented towards the respondent's rights and responsibilities concerning a domain of knowledge (i.e., *Why does not he understand, Do you know what, Are you aware that*).

The following lists the various ways in which the MEPs frame the interrogatives and the divergent functions their questions accomplish.

Interrogative frame

- opinion seeking
- requesting information or clarification or explanation
- seeking confirmation
- agreement seeking

Pragmatic function

testing, checking, eliciting, asserting, claiming, accusing, blaming, etc

Assertive Qs in the Blue-card procedure function in two dimensions: First, corresponding to their accomplishments, and second, what they set out to elicit in response.

As for the former, characteristically in the Blue-card procedure, the MEPs design their assertive Qs as a means to test or check or challenge Other's epistemic status with regards to a certain matter. I shall call this as the *pragmatic function* of Qs.

As for the latter, most of the interrogatives in my data force the respondent towards a preferred answer that may accord with the positioning designed in the interrogatively formatted utterance. Such questions are formatted in ways in which the speaker projects the respondent's next action – agree, accept, confirm, tell, explain, clarify (i.e., Would you *agree*, Won't you *accept*, Could you *confirm*, Will you *tell*, Can you *explain*). This second dimension conveys the Q's *eliciting function*. Based on this differentiation, the following sections under 9.5 will examine what the MEPs accomplish by using the following types of Qs.

- A. Exam Qs (§9.4.1)
- B. Checking Qs (§9.4.1)
- C. Challenge Qs (§ 9.4.2)

These types may be formulated as

1. Opinion seeking Qs (§ 9.4.3.1)
2. Agreement seeking Qs (§ 9.4.3.2)
3. Confirmation seeking Qs (§ 9.4.3.3).

Assertive Qs can be formatted as polar interrogatives (i.e., *Do you know what* or *Is the honourable Member aware that*) or *wh– Qs* (i.e., *Why does not he understand* or *How do you stand on the fact that*). My data includes both positive and negative interrogatives deploying all the interrogative frames listed above. The following offers a close analysis of interrogatively masked assertions that are strategically employed in the EP as a means to set up a peripheral (out-group) position for Other.

9.4.1.1 Exam Qs and Checking Qs

Exam Qs are not regarded as *real Qs* in terms of their information-eliciting function. That is, exam Qs are not designed to elicit information but instead to test what Other knows about a particular matter. Searle (1969, p. 66) differentiates between *real Qs* and *exam Qs* in his proposal that ‘[I]n real questions, *S* wants to know (find out) the answer; in exam questions, *S* wants to know if *H* knows’. Bearing the cognitive connotations of this distinction in mind, I find it useful to implement this distinction for analytic purposes.

34 out of 427 Qs (7,96%) in the Blue-card procedure are of this type. The exam Qs are formulated as polar interrogatives where positive and negative polars are equally distributed. These formulations may incorporate

1. a *that*-clause, indicating the questioner's high commitment to the proposition made in the *that*-clause;
- or 2. a *wh*-clause, prefaced or followed by a statement that provide some sort of candidate answer to the focal Q.

In order to establish a distinction between the two formulations described above, I call questions that fall into the first group ‘checking’ Qs. Questions that fall into the latter I call ‘exam’ Qs. Checking Qs provide questioners with epistemic supremacy over respondents through propositional content that provides some sort of candidate answer to the focal Q. On the other hand, exam Qs involve an unknown element, about which the questioner tests the respondent’s knowledge. In the following, I present the collection of the various formulations of checking and exam questions found in my data.

Positive polarity Qs

Do you know + *that*-clause

Does he know + *wh*-clause

Did you know + *that*-clause

Do you realise + *that*-clause

Are you aware + *that*-clause

Has it ever occurred to him + *that*-clause

Has Mr X ever considered + *that*-clause

Negative Polarity Qs

Do you not consider + *that*-clause

Did you not know + *that*-clause

Do you not see + *that*-clause
Is he not aware + *that*-clause
Does he not know + *wh*-clause

Demonstrative *that* indexes the speaker's orientation towards what is being presented in the statement that follows as factual. The question rests on an external motivation that is articulated by the questioner. The propositional content embedded with *that* is designed to reduce the questioner's responsibility for the stance. The positioning of Self is indexed in the objective stance that the speaker takes through statements of facts rather than opinions. In this way, the questioner avoids an explicit evaluative stance even if the proposition asserts the questioner's opinion about the matter under discussion.

Negative formulation conveys preference for a confirming answer (Greenbaum and Quirk, 1990, Clayman and Heritage, 2002b). In their analysis of news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002b, pp. 208–209.) show that this question design exerts pressure on the respondent by facilitating one response over another. As far as checking and exam Qs are concerned, the strong bias towards a confirming answer conveys, what Bolinger (1957, p. 99) describes as a ‘predisposition of the speaker to a particular type of response’. In the confrontational and competitive setting of parliamentary interaction, by proposing an unknowing stance to Other, speakers attack the epistemic accountability of their opponents, which, in effect, maintains the epistemic accountability of Self.

Qs oriented towards the respondent's state of knowledge (e.g., ‘Are you aware of the fact that ...?’) exhibit asymmetrical *epistemic positioning* between the questioner (informant) and the respondent (receiver of the information, which she/he is potentially lacking). That is, the questioner takes a knowing stance that assumes that she/he is in a position to test the respondent's degree of knowledge on a particular matter. This observation contradicts Heritage's (2007, p.2) argument that

the act of questioning, however it is managed, invokes a claim that the questioner lacks certain information (or lacks certainty about it)—we can think of this as the ‘lack of knowledge’ (or K–) position, and that the addressee has this information—we can think of this as the knowledgeable (or K+) position.

In the political context of the EP, these Qs are meant to raise doubts about the accountability of Other by questioning her/his epistemic degree and/or status. In order for the epistemic stance to be legitimized or justified, the stance-taker must display adequate knowledge, familiarity, or consideration of the stance object. To put it in Heritage's terms, the epistemic status of the stance-taker must be congruent with the stance taken. On the other hand,

it is equally urgent for Other to maintain her/his epistemic authority or credibility. These Qs are, therefore, potential threats to Other's face while simultaneously establishing a higher level of accountability and maintaining the positive public image of Self.

9.4.1.2 Challenge Questions

My data includes 6 challenge Qs as defined above, covering 1,4% of the corpus data. Challenge questions are designed to raise doubts about the appropriateness or necessity of a presupposed action or the truth of a prior account by Other. Such questions project Other's next action by implying doubts about Other's capacity to accomplish the projected action. Previous research has provided empirical data about the uses of *why* interrogatives in English conversation as vehicles for challenge (see (Clayman et al, 2006, 2012; Clayman and Heritage, 2002c; Egbert and Vöge, 2008; Emmeretsen, 2007; Koshik, 2003; Schegloff, 1984). These studies have demonstrated that why-challenges are used to display divergence in stance alignment⁷³, potentially leading up to a confrontation in interaction. In this section I am concerned with why-challenges as well as other formats of challenge questions in my corpus.

Challenge questions can be framed as *information seeking questions*, conveying a strong bias towards the unanswerability of the question. In the following, the MEPs are debating international conflicts that climate change has given rise to in the Arctic. The speaker is a Member of the GUE/NGL Group, expressing her group's opposition to the militarization of the Arctic and the current presupposed mal-treatment of the ecosystem in the region by countries surrounding it. She provides a summary of her 3.5-minute speech where she openly declares her groups stance. The extract below includes that summary:

(9.2) [A sustainable EU policy for the High North (debate) – 20.01.2011]

1	Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL) – (DE) [...] We, the Confederal Group of the
2	European United Left – Nordic Green Left, demand that the Arctic should
3	not be allowed to become the next geopolitical hotspot. In common with
4	numerous environmental organisations, we are calling for a moratorium
5	on new oil extraction projects in the Arctic. A treaty needs to be agreed –
6	similar to the Treaty on the Antarctic – that prohibits the extraction of
7	mineral resources in the region. Last but not least, we are calling for the
8	immediate demilitarisation of the region and therefore for the
9	establishment of the Arctic as a demilitarised zone.
10	Because my group and I are unable to support the results of the own-
11	initiative report presented here, the GUE/NGL has submitted an alternative

⁷³ Authors use the term *disaffiliative* to explain the phenomenon that I consider as *divergent stance alignment*.

- 12 report.
(*The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8)*)
- 13 **Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D) – (FI)** Mr President, I would like to ask how
14 the representative of the Confederal Group of the European United Left –
15 Nordic Green Left thinks it possible that we could achieve some sort of
16 moratorium when none of the actors or countries in the region wants one.
17 How would the indigenous peoples view it if the European Union were to
18 tell them what to do from above? Parliament has already committed one
19 sin, the ban on the sale of seal products, which has angered them a good
20 deal. *Why should we annoy them even more?* Now it is diplomacy and
21 cooperation that are needed.
- 22 **Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL) – (DE)** Mr President, *I am not in favour of*
23 *that and, of course, it is not possible to impose this from above.* The
24 question remains, however: Who was consulted? Which states are
25 involved? Which indigenous peoples are affected? Was there any
26 consultation with the people who may benefit from the situation, or with
27 those who may lose their livelihood? I think that further dialogue is
28 needed. The talks held so far are not enough. We need to try to keep this
29 dialogue as broad as possible, also consulting with wider sections of
30 society, possibly including the indigenous peoples in particular.

Mrs Jaankonsaari's Blue-card question involves multiple questions, all of which are designed to maintain divergent stance alignment between Self and Other. Here, I am interested in the final *why* interrogative: *Why should we annoy them even more?* (in Line 20). The interrogative rests upon the assumption that indigenous people have been annoyed by the *we*-group. This assumption provides the grounds for the positions that the speaker sets up in her utterance *Why should we annoy them even more?*, questioning the reasons for annoying the indigenous people. Through the use of *we*, the speaker mitigates the force of accusation while maintaining inter-group boundaries for the *we*-group. The latter is accomplished through, what I call *in-group disentanglement* (Avdan, 2015). Through an implied disapproving stance, the speaker displays a divergence from the *we*-group's actions or stance.

The question '[W]hy should we annoy them more?' reproaches or challenges the grounds for Other's presupposed prior action, that she, by taking a disapproving stance, formulates as having annoyed the indigenous people in the Arctic. The questioner does not necessarily expect an answer. Instead, she implies that there is no basis for the presupposed prior action. Consequently, the accusation embedded in a challenge Q is meant to trigger confrontation between the parties. Challenges are designed to be rejected (Emmeretsen, 2007, p. 579), and thus constitute potential face threats to Other.

In her response '[M]r President, I am not in favour of that and, of course, it is not possible to impose this from above' (Lines 22–23) however, Mrs Lösing avoids confrontation by

strategically aligning with her questioner's stance towards the handling of the Artic issue. Through text-deixis 'that', referring to the questioner's prior account, she provides an affiliating response maintaining the topical domain that the question imports. Her response is strategic in rejecting the accusation, since she avoids providing a *because*-prefaced justification and instead designs a non-conforming answer. Moreover, her use of 'of course' suggests that Mrs Lösing's stance is obvious and known. The respondent treats the question as irrelevant or unnecessary and, thereby, accomplishes a counter-challenge to the prior challenge, suggesting that there is no basis for such challenge.

Characteristically in challenge questions, questioners request some facts, figures, and specifications, conveying a strong bias towards the unanswerability of the question: either by raising doubts about Other's epistemic status or about the relevance of the grounds or premises that are presupposed for the prior stance. Consider the following examples.

(9.3) [Kinga Gál (PPE) – (HU), directs a Blue-card question to Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE) – 08.06.2011]

1 Mrs Lunacek, I would like to ask you whether you can *list* the Member
 2 States of the European Union whose constitution includes the institution
 3 of an ombudsman or commissioner for the rights of future generations.
 4 How many Member States have such an institution as the one in Hungary
 5 that is actually functioning and is mentioned in the Hungarian
 6 constitution? Also, assuming you have read the current Hungarian
 7 constitution, the new Hungarian constitution adopted in April, can you
 8 *name* constitutions which contain more and farther reaching articles on
 9 environmental protection and future generations than the new Hungarian
 10 constitution? I challenge you to name them.

(9.4) [Ria Oomen-Ruijten, – (NL), directs a Blue-card question to Thomas Mann (EPP), (DE) – 15.02.2011]

1 Madam President. Look, I do not want there to be any misunderstanding
 2 about this. I therefore ask you, Mr Mann, to *specify* where in this report it
 3 says that solvency will compulsorily apply to second-pillar pensions? I,
 4 personally, am against that, but where does it say that?

(9.5) [Andrey Kovatchev (PPE) – (BG), directs a Blue-card question to Hennes Swoboda, (S&D), (AU) – 15.02.2011]

1 Mr President, Mr Swoboda, I would like to ask you a question. You cited
 2 data from 2008 and 2010. Would you *tell* me where you got these figures
 3 from, and do you believe them to be correct?

Challenge questions, as shown in the examples (9.3), (9.4), and (9.5), can be prefaced with Other-oriented QFs, conveying requests for particular actions (e.g.: *list* in Line 1, *name* in Line 8 in (9.3), *specify* in Line 1 in (9.4), and *tell* in Line 2 in (9.5)). However, in the answers

to Blue-card questions, such requests are treated as questions and are responded to in some way.

As elaborated earlier (§ 8.4.2), Other-oriented QFs can be framed as challenges to Other's ability (e.g.: *can you list, can you name*) to perform a requested action. Challenge questions are often framed as sincere information seeking questions. QFs oriented towards Other's ability signal a forthcoming challenge in the impending question. Nevertheless, in order to determine whether an information seeking question accomplishes challenge, it is necessary to consider the sequential organization and the topical content of the turn. Note that requests as such emerge within sequences that are constructed as confrontation. Questioners construct their oppositional stance by topicalizing Other's epistemic or moral accountability as the basis for the challenge.

My data suggest that responses to challenge Qs are not necessarily designed as confrontations. Most frequently, the MEPs strategically avoid confrontation when faced with challenges that request facts, figures, and specifications. In cases when respondents engage in an Other-initiated confrontation either by rejecting an implied accusation in the question content or by engaging in an argumentative account of their own (cf. Emeretsen, 2007), they receive follow-up challenge questions under the Blue-card, most frequently by another MEP whose stance is aligned with the first questioner. These second challenge turns in my data are prefaced with a face threat resembling '[M]adam President, maybe it was not understandable, but I shall make the question more simple' or a declaration of Other's failure to provide the requested information. The following sequence is taken from a debate on a forthcoming Eurozone summit. It includes consecutive challenges to the same respondent, namely the leader of the EFD Group.

(9.6) [Preparation of the Eurozone summit of 11 March 2011 (debate) –08.03.2011]

1 **Martin Schulz (S&D) – (DE)** Madam President, *I am assuming that you*
2 *will not know the answer*, Mr Farage, but I have question for you. You
3 constantly refer to Belgium as a non-existent nation. You have said this to
4 Mr Van Rompuy and now you have mentioned something similar to Mr
5 Verhofstadt. *Do you know on what basis the Belgian state was founded?*

6 **Nigel Farage (EFD) – (UK)** Madam President, *I am pleased that Mr*
7 *Schulz has asked me that*. The difficulty is that when you form an artificial
8 state that has within it more than one language group – which is clearly the
9 case in Belgium – you may, for a period of time, be able to hold it together,
10 but whether it is Belgium, whether it is Yugoslavia or whether it is the
11 European Union, if you have entirely different languages and cultures, it
12 will not hold together. The reason you are so upset about Belgium, and Mr
13 Van Rompuy got terribly upset about it and Mr Verhofstadt never likes it,
14 is that – is this not the truth, Mr Schulz? – Belgium is a microcosm for the
15 whole European project.

16 **Martin Schulz (S&D) – (DE)** Madam President, I will only be 30 seconds.
17 It is interesting that *the representative of a party which calls itself the*
18 *United Kingdom Independence Party* does not know that the Kingdom of
19 Belgium was founded at the suggestion of the United Kingdom.

20 **Proinsias De Rossa (S&D)** – (Blue-card question to Mr Farage under Rule
21 149(8)) Madam President, I hope Mr Farage is not offended by a question
22 from a citizen of the Irish Republic. *Could I ask him what is the basis of*
23 *the United Kingdom?* I understand it consists of the nations of the English,
24 the Scottish, the Welsh and the Northern Irish. Is this not a Union of
25 nations? A very proud one, I might add?

26 **Nigel Farage (EFD)** – Madam President, that is a good question. *Mr*
27 *Schulz, you are quite right that Belgium was a British invention, and a*
28 British mistake. We have made many over the years. We have got some
29 things right and some things wrong, just as your country, Germany, has.
30 Germany's history has not been whiter than white, I think you might agree.
31 You are quite right. Actually, holding together the United Kingdom has
32 been something that has been deeply troubling. Indeed, Ireland went its
33 own way, back in 1921, I think, when independence for Ireland was
34 established. You are right. It is very difficult to hold together different
35 cultures. I do think that the Union of England, Scotland, Wales and
36 Northern Ireland works, at the moment, because it has consent. If it did not
37 have consent, then there would be popular calls for referenda and those
38 nations would be able to break away. But my point is that in this European
39 Union, nobody is being given that opportunity.

Before analysing this particular sequence, it is necessary to give some background that prepared for the challenge. On 24th February 2010, the recipient, Mr Farage referred to Belgium as a 'non-country' in his prominent address to the then President-in Office of the Council, Mr Van Rompuy. Mr Farage told his colleague that he had 'the appearance of a low-grade bank clerk' and 'the charisma of a damp rag'. Mr Schulz was the first to denounce Mr Farage on the day of the event.

On the 8th March 2011, prior to the Blue-card question, Mr Farage gives his scheduled speech where he maintains his adversarial stance against Belgium. His utterance that has triggered Mr Schulz's challenge reads: 'Mr Verhofstadt, who comes from Belgium and who thinks all nation states should be abolished – well, perhaps his own will be very shortly.'

Mr Schulz in the excerpt above designs his challenge as an exam question checking his recipient's knowledge about the foundation of Belgium ('Do you know on what basis the Belgian state was founded?'). The affirmative polar question per se does not convey preference and therefore establishes the neutrality of the speaker's interrogative stance. However, the speaker prefaces his question expressing his assumption that the recipient will not know the answer (*I am assuming that you will not know the answer, Mr Farage, but I have question for*

you in Lines 1–2) which is indeed his answer to his own question (in Line 5 *Do you know on what basis the Belgian state was founded?*). Here, the contrastive discourse marker *but*, following the assumption, positions the impending question as unnecessary or vain. In effect, the use of *but* plays down the projected answer. The neutral design of the question, therefore, mitigates the prejudiced import in the preface, which has a powerful effect. Notice that the challenge here addresses MR Farage in person, distancing the particular interaction from its institutional setting.

In his response, although Mr Farage acknowledges the question (*I am pleased that Mr Schulz has asked me that* in Lines 6–7), he avoids providing an answer. Instead, he makes a meta-comment on the matter of common interest, maintaining his oppositional stance towards Belgium throughout his speech (i.e., in Lines 7–8, implicitly referring to Belgium as an *artificial state* and in Lines 14–15, claiming that *Belgium is a microcosm for the whole European project*, which he explicitly opposes). The equation between Belgium and the whole European project expands the out-group.

Here, Mr Farage provides an explanation for his antagonistic stance in his prior speech where he called Belgium a ‘non-country’ (not in the example). Mr Farage’s explanation maintains his antagonistic stance towards Belgium and hence widens Self and Other differentiation.⁷⁴

In his follow up statement, on the other hand, Mr Schulz’s stance rests on an institutional footing as he refers to Mr Farage as ‘the representative of a party which calls itself the United Kingdom Independence Party’ (in Lines 17–18). Consequently, the challenge to an individual Member is enhanced so that it targets the social accountability of his Party.

Q&A sequences in the EP do not often involve third-turn *report* receipt (§ 4.6) However, in this sequence, Mr Schulz, is allocated the third-turn (Lines 16–19) to ask a follow up questions. In the sequence above, Mr Schulz’s Self-positioning indicates that he has adopted the rights and duties of both the *elicitor* (by asking a question) and the *recipient* (by taking the report receipt) of Mr Farage’s response. This dual positioning allows Mr Schulz to complete his set up of a hostile adversative stance towards Other. Mr Schulz’s follow-up statement that ‘[I]t is interesting that the representative of a party which calls itself the United Kingdom Independence Party does not know that the Kingdom of Belgium was founded at the suggestion of the United Kingdom’ functions as a confirmation of his assumptions in his first turn (Lines 1–5).

⁷⁴ Nigel Farage, the leader of UKIP in UK was a prominent political figure in the campaign that prepared for Brexit.

The fourth turn in the sequence is taken by a fellow Party Member of Mr Schulz, S&D Mrs De Rossa. Mrs De Rossa's question 'Could I ask him what is the basis of the United Kingdom?' (in Lines 22–23) resembles Mr Schulz prior question 'Do you know on what basis the Belgium state was founded?' (in Line 5). In the follow-up question the object of orientation, Belgium, is replaced with the United Kingdom, the recipient's country of origin. Although Mrs De Rossa designs her question rather politely and deferentially by incorporating a permission seeking QF, it is adversarial in effect. By establishing a resemblance between Mr Farage's own country and the country he has attacked, the question reverses the grounds for Other's stance.

The sequence is closed when Mr Farage confirms the assumptions that have prepared for both of the questions. Mr Farage first addresses Mr Schulz saying 'Mr Schulz, you are quite right that Belgium was a British invention, and a British mistake.' (in Lines 26–27). Although the answer confirms the assertion in the prior talk by Mr Schulz, the speaker maintains his adversarial stance against Belgium in calling it a 'British mistake'. The speaker, then, confirms the presupposed assertions in Mr De Rossa's utterance in saying 'You are quite right. Actually, holding together the United Kingdom has been something that has been deeply troubling.' Again, although the speaker confirms the presupposed proposition, he maintains his stance, displaying divergent alignment with his opponents.

The sequence above provides a prototypical example of the turn-taking organization under the Blue-card procedure where challenge questions that are provided non-conforming answers are re-challenged through follow-up statements and/or questions by third parties. The data corpus includes prolonged sequences involving up to five consecutive follow-up Blue-card Qs.⁷⁵ In these sequences, the MEPs use the Blue-card either to back up the questioner or the respondent. When the former is the case, the follow up question maintains the *positioning set up* embedded in the primary question. In the latter case, the follow up question often provides a counter-attack against the prior questioner's presupposed adversarial stance. Such an organization of turn-taking reinforces inter-group boundaries and maintains *inter-group positionings*.

⁷⁵ Note that Blue-card procedure does not permit a third-turn in the form of a follow up question or statement. Each Q & A pair is a sequence on its own. By prolonged sequence, here, we mean the interaction between more than two MEPs maintaining a particular topical issue under the Blue-card Rule 149(8).

9.4.2 Seeking Functions of Interrogatively Formatted Assertions

The MEPs design their Blue-card Qs in various ways to seek the Other's

1. opinion about,
- or 2. agreement upon,
- or 3. confirmation of

the assertion in the question utterance. This section examines these three interrogative framings of assertions in the EP.

9.4.2.1 Assertions through Opinion Seeking Qs

One recurrent questioning practice in my data involves *polar* or *wh* interrogatives where an assertion is masked with an *opinion seeking* question. Such questions make up 13,91% of the corpus distributes among positive and negative format.

The first example is taken from the plenary debate held on 23rd March 2011, in preparation for the forthcoming European Council meeting. The participants are two Portuguese Members of the EP from two different political groups, namely S&D and PPE. At the time of the debate, Portugal was on the verge of a government change. Portuguese Social Democratic Party (PSD), which is part of the PPE Group, was taking over the government from the Portuguese Socialist Party (PSP), which had been governing for the past 13 years. The questioner is affiliated with the PSP while the respondent is affiliated with the PSD.

The following exemplifies a recurrent stance design in my data deployed in the interactional setting involving Q & A sequences. Both the questioner and the respondent take ambiguous stances through interrogatives that do not do questioning and responses that do not provide answers but meta-comments. Excerpt 9.7:1 presents the question.

(9.7:1) [Preparation for the European Council meeting on 24-25 March 2011 – (debate) – 23.03.2011]

- 1 **Edite Estrela (S&D) – (PT)** Mr President, I should just like to ask Mr
- 2 Rangel whether, *given that he is saying here that* the next Portuguese
- 3 Government will present the same austerity measures and will commit to
- 4 the same targets that have been negotiated with Brussels, *does he not think*
- 5 *it infantile and imprudent to provoke a political crisis; whether he thinks*
- 6 *that Portugal will pay too high a price and that it will require too many*
- 7 *sacrifices from the Portuguese people?* It is to this that I should like an
- 8 answer. *Is it not lust for power leading them to take this attitude?*

Mrs Estrela's speech under the Blue-card procedure includes multiple questions, two of which are framed as opinion seeking questions: a positive one follows a negatively formulated

one ('does he not think it infantile and imprudent to provoke a political crisis; whether he thinks that Portugal will pay too high a price and that it will require too many sacrifices from the Portuguese people?' in Lines 4–7). The former includes two openly negative adjectives – infantile and imprudent – both diminishing terms. Given that negatively formatted polar questions are strongly conducive of a confirming answer (see 9.2.1.5 Negative Interrogatives in this chapter), the questioning action here is meant to impose the criticism conveyed through lexical choice. In short, lexical choice enhances the forcefulness of the negative polar question. The interrogative format here accomplishes assertions rather than questioning, leading up to a confrontation. Consequently, the assertive import of the question triggers a response to the condemning stance that the question conveys, rather than an answer to the question per se.

In her follow-up question (*whether he thinks that Portugal will pay too high a price and that it will require too many sacrifices from the Portuguese people?* in Lines 5–7), the speaker brings in the moral aspect by representing Portugal/ the Portuguese people as the victims of the decisions made by the out-group (Portuguese Government) that the speaker defines as 'infantile and imprudent' (in Line 5). The speaker achieves a 'neutralistic posture' (Clayman, 1988, 1992) by avoiding reference to Self, while she attributes an adversarial stance to the out-group, represented by the respondent, towards the victimized Portuguese people. Given that victimizing the nation of a Member State by all means violates the commitments of the EP, the speaker sets up a hostile position for her opponent by means of critical assertions disguised in opinion seeking questions, while maintaining the neutral Self-positioning.

Moreover, the speaker positions her respondent as the source of motivation behind her question (*given that he is saying here that* in Line 2). In her Self-positioning, Mrs Estrela maintains her neutrality and distance to the information, on the one hand, by employing reported speech, and on the other, by implying equal epistemic access to the reported information among the overhearers, including Self. The latter is achieved through footing indexed in the spatial deixis *here*. The footing here with respect to epistemic status enables the speaker to bring (unidentified) third parties into the interaction as witnesses of what she evaluates as 'infantile and imprudent'. Consequently, the domain of knowledge is presented as common grounds, leading up to her harsh criticism that is indexed in her adjective choice.

In parliamentary settings, certain stance designs have become routine stance practices based on, what Esther N. Goody (1978, p. 5) calls a 'repertoire of available interrogative strategies'. It is routine practice that the MEPs often embed their adversarial stances in interrogatively framed statements. In such formulations, the questioner's statement of intention to put a question (e.g., 'I would like to ask') is incongruent with the functions that the questioner

accomplishes (e.g., accusing, condemning, challenging, etc.).

Let us now look at the response design in the respective example in order to be able to find out what type of responses such questions may trigger. The following is Mr Rangel's response to Mrs Estrela's Blue-card question.

(9.7:2) [Paulo Rangel (PPE) – (PT) in response to Edite Estrela's Blue-card question]

1 Mr President, *I will be very happy to answer*, although I did not want to
2 turn a European Parliament debate into a debate on Portuguese politics. In
3 fact, if Mrs Estrela wants to debate Portuguese politics, she has a simple
4 solution: we must have elections, stand as a candidate for the Portuguese
5 Parliament and she will have the opportunity, in opposition, to debate the
6 policies intended for Portugal with the Portuguese Social Democratic
7 Party. I would just say the following: we cannot take another government
8 that has failed four times in two years. It is impossible, it is unsustainable
9 and the markets do not find it credible: there are no more solutions with
10 the Portuguese Socialist Party in government.

Mr Rangel acknowledges the questioning practice in 'I will be very happy to answer' (in Line 1) as he affiliates with the interactional positioning in this particular Q&A setting by stating his eagerness to provide an answer to the preceding question. Nevertheless, he recognizes Mrs Estrela's argumentative stance in his formulation 'Mrs Estrela wants to debate Portuguese politics'.

Neither the question nor the answer utterances accomplish the actions projected in the QF 'I should just like to ask', and the preface to the answer 'I will be very happy to answer'. Such prefacing, embodying 'action projection' (Schegloff, 1988, p. 220) is a routine practice in the EP (§ 6.3.3.2) that enables speakers to take *collaboratively packaged adversarial stances*. The following explains the ambiguous stance-taking in the respective example which is characteristic of my data.

- The projected action in the QF is *questioning* while the impending utterance accomplishes other functions such as accusing, condemning, attacking the Other.
- The projected action in the preface to the response is *answering* while the impending utterance accomplishes a counter-attack, representing the opposition as a failed government.

Both participants promote their own agendas in their utterances, switching the stance orientation towards diverse stance objects. They do so as they *pretend* to be performing the actions (questioning and answering) projected in the *interactional positioning* under the Blue-

card procedure. The respondents design their utterances in response to their questioner's stance (based on their own interpretation of Other's stance) instead of what the interrogative demands.

Another recurrent Q design in the EP incorporates a statement of fact into a seemingly opinion seeking question. This group of Qs is oriented towards the respondent's prior, presupposed, or projected stance with respect to a factual statement provided in the question content. I call this group Fact+ Qs since the questions contain statements of fact are framed within an interrogative. Notice the formats below.

- (1) How do you stand on the fact + *that*-clause
- (2) How would you address that problem and the fact + *that*-clause
- (3) What he has to say to the fact + *that*-clause
- (4) What was your take on the fact + *that*-clause
- (5) Could you give some thought to the fact + *that*-clause

This question format is recurrent in my data, comprising %9,36 (40 instances) of the questions analysed in this study. They are mostly formulated as opinion seeking Qs, or Qs requesting a clarification/explanation. Let us now consider some concrete examples from my data. The following is taken from a debate on the maternity leave directive, which introduces higher pay for maternity leave.

(9.8) [The maternity leave directive – (debate) – 25.10.2011]

- 1 **Antonyia Parvanova (ALDE)** – Madam President, I would like to *ask the*
- 2 *honourable Member for his views* on the fact that his government is
- 3 approving an increase, which is more than twice the increase necessary for
- 4 maternity leave, on a military budget – which is actually intended not only for
- 5 security but for killing somebody else's children.
- 6 **Derek Roland Clark (EFD)** – Madam President, the honourable Member
- 7 has pointed out an anomaly in the laws. She is right: it is wrong; it should
- 8 not happen.

A relative clause is one linguistic device used to insert the speaker's stance into the question in the form of statements. The example above (9.8) includes two consecutive relative clauses ('which is more than twice the increase necessary for maternity leave, on a military budget – which is actually intended not only for security but for killing somebody else's children' in Lines 3–5) where the speaker gradually enhances the sharpness of her oppositional stance towards the state of play of the maternity leave directive. That is, in her second relative

clause she brings in the moral dimension of the debate by substituting the technical word ‘abortion’ with *killing somebody else's children*.

Furthermore, the MEPs design what they say so that the propositional content is congruent with the impending question. The adverbial *then* is operationalized to establish that link by rendering the appropriateness of the question. In some instances, *then* is turn initial position, linking the utterance to a non-verbalized, implied proposition (Haselow, 2011, p. 3604). Notice the example below:

- (9.9) [Preparation for the European Council meeting – (debate) – 02.02.2011]
- 1 **Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE) – (DE)** Mr President, with regard to the
2 preparations for the energy summit and the political priority areas: Mr
3 Reul, *what then is your view of the fact that*, in a major interview today in
4 the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitungin Germany, Mr Oettinger warned the
5 European Union against setting too ambitious renewable energy targets?
6 This comes only a few weeks after the Renewable Energy Directive, of
7 which all of us here were very proud, entered into force. As regards
8 thorough preparations on the subject of energy efficiency: *what is your*
9 *view of the fact that* the energy efficiency action plan is still lying in a
10 drawer and so there would in fact be absolutely no chance of debating it at
11 the summit?

By means of the statement of fact, the questioner in (9.9) displays total commitment to the propositional content, attempting to avoid any discussion about the truth value of it. In that respect, the two Qs (*what then is your view of the fact that* starting in Line 3 and *what is your view of the fact that* starting in Line 8) are powerful tools for imposing what the questioner presents as fact. The respondent may, of course, object to the so-called factual statement and come up with a new proposal, which is, indeed, the frequent case in the EP. The following Q & A sequence presents an example of such confrontational interactions.

- (9.10) [Stress tests of nuclear power plants in EU – (debate) – 09.06.2011]
- 1 **Hans-Peter Martin (NI) – (DE)** Madam President, I have a question for
2 Mr Strejček. *What do you say* to the fact that as far as we know, the Czech
3 Republic would prefer not to take part in serious stress tests and that it does
4 not want to be involved in the question of criminal attacks? *What is your*
5 *own approach* to the nuclear industry and what are your personal
6 relationships with these lobby groups?
- 7 **Ivo Strejček (ECR) – (CS)** Madam President, at this point, I would first
8 like to emphasize to my fellow Member that I have no contacts with this
9 lobby group. Secondly, I am not aware of any statement by the Czech
10 Government to the effect that Czech nuclear power plants are out of

11 control, as reported by Commissioner Oettinger.

In the sequence above, Mr Martin requests Mr Strejček's opinion about what he inserts as a fact about the Czech Republic's attitude towards nuclear tests. Interestingly, immediately after labelling his impending statement as a 'fact', the speaker softens his own labelling with an epistemic hedge 'as far as we know' (in Line 2), recognizing the possibility that Self might have inadequate or faulty knowledge about the matter of concern.

In response to Mr Martin's Qs, Mr Strejček displays divergent alignment with Other's epistemic stance and takes a not-knowing stance in return ('I am not aware of any statement by the Czech Government to the effect that Czech nuclear power plants are out of control' in Lines 9–11). Thereby the factual statement, which implies an accusation to the Czech Government, remains unknown or unproven.

The MEPs deploy negative format in order to reinforce the conduciveness of their Qs which embody a statement of a fact. Notice the example below.

(9.11) [Pino Arlacchi (S&D) asks Mr Madlener(NI) a Blue-card question –Situation in Egypt (debate) – 16.02.2011]

1 Mr President, the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy
2 has been described. It has been said that it was inevitable that Islamic
3 fundamentalists would take over power democratically, and so on and so
4 on. *Do you not think* that this picture is catastrophic, and wrong? *Why do*
5 *we not take into account* the fact that the reasons for Islamic
6 fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East are strongly linked to
7 tyrannical governments, and that there is now an opportunity for
8 democratic regimes to reduce both?

Embedding a factual statement within an explanation or an opinion-seeking question is a forceful argumentation strategy that the MEPs use in the Blue-card procedure. As is the case in the example (9.11 in Lines 5–9) the question imposes the statement that 'the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East are strongly linked to tyrannical governments, and that there is now an opportunity for democratic regimes to reduce both' whose truth is taken for granted. Consequently, based on a set of assumptions, the questioner forces her respondent towards a particular positioning set up that the negative interrogative prepares for.

Here the two negatively formatted Qs are prefaced with generic third party attributed statements (*has been described* and *It has been said* in Line 2) that are reported as the external motivation behind the question, which is designed for stance alignment.

It is also worth noticing that a formulation, as in example (9.11), may embody a suggestion which resembles a complaint (*why do we not take into account the fact that +*

clause). The questioner wants to know the reason why a taken-for-granted fact has been ignored. In that, the complaint targets *we* with implied exclusion of Self (cf. § Shifting distribution of *we*). Self, being the provider of the fact has a distinct positioning from those comprising the *we*-group other than Self. The use of *we* instead of accusatory *you* mitigates the face threat and adversariality in the speaker's stance while strategically maintaining intergroup boundaries. This use of *we* (with an implied complaint to Other) complies with the routine politeness in parliamentary settings (cf. § Routine Politeness in 7.6.3.3).

Fact + Qs are one of the ways in which opinion seeking Qs and Qs requesting a clarification/ an explanation may be designed. In the next section, I focus on other formats of this function where questioners are engaged in taking epistemic stances towards peripheral Other-positionings.

9.4.2.2 *Assertions through Agreement Seeking Qs*

While assertions are often framed as opinion-seeking questions as analysed above, they can also be masked as *agreement seeking Qs*. Notice the examples below:

- (1) Would my colleague agree with me that + *assertion*
- (2) Does she share my dismay at the + *assertion*
- (3) Does he also see things in the same way I do?

Most frequently the MEPs direct agreement-seeking questions to their allies, projecting an agreeing answer. These questions function as invitations to Other for stance alignment towards establishing a joint position. Typically, they are all responded to with agreeing answers displaying convergent stance alignment with the questioner's presupposed stance. My data includes agreement-seeking questions that only incorporate positive polarity interrogatives as exemplified above. Agreement seeking questions are built upon the speaker's evaluative stance and invites Other to stance alignment through agreement.

9.4.2.3 *Assertions through Confirmation Seeking Qs*

On the other hand, assertions framed as *confirmation seeking Qs* are hostile in effect as they are meant to disclose a disregarded or hidden presupposed fact – a fact which inevitably would damage the accountability of Other.

- (1) I would like to ask my colleague if he does not accept that + *assertion*
- (2) Would you not accept that + *assertion*
- (3) *Would she not admit that* + *assertion*
- (4) *Assertion* + Should she not accept that?
- (5) Can you confirm the fact that + *assertion*
- (6) Could you confirm whether + *assertion*
- (7) I would like to know if he is willing to confirm that + *assertion*
- (8) Do you not accept and understand that + *assertion*

Different from agreement seeking questions that are meant for alignment in some evaluative stance, confirmation seeking questions construct and/or reinforce Self and Other differentiation. While agreement indexes mutual convergence in stance alignment, confirmation entails one party's act of ensuring the truth of an assertion made by Other.

Confirmation seeking questions in my data are often in negative format when asking Other to accept or admit a presupposed content (see examples 2, 3, 4, and 8). The less hostile variant, when the questioner asks for confirmation, shows some deference to the respondent by providing her/him the chance to deny the accusation that is embedded in the propositional content. Moreover, in these questions, the questioner displays less commitment to the propositional content, presenting it as something that needs to be confirmed by the respondent. However, in its more hostile variant, the respondent is asked to accept or admit a taken-for-granted proposition.

Most frequently, respondents provide a re-representation of the proposition of the question to which they provide an ambiguous confirmation. Consider the following sequence:

- (9.12) [Nuclear Power Plants in Europe – (debate) – 09.06.2011]
- 1 **Ashley Fox (ECR) (UK)** – Madam President, *would not Ms Harms accept*
 - 2 *that her position and the position of her group is that they are not interested*
 - 3 *in the stress tests: they are not interested in any objective evidence at all.*
 - 4 *Their objective is to close down the nuclear industry and they have a fixed*
 - 5 *objective. Would she not admit that this is actually true?*
 - 6 **Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE) – (DE)** Madam President, as we currently
 - 7 *have no nuclear power stations where, in the case of a core meltdown, the*
 - 8 *effects could be restricted to the reactor, I am of the opinion that we should*
 - 9 *get out of nuclear power. I am happy to admit that openly. It is not a secret.*

The double interrogatives (*would not Ms Harms accept* + *that clause* in Lines 1–3 and

Would she not admit + that clause in Line 5) in Mrs Fox's turn convey an accusation and they are meant to force Other to disclose her stance. The respondent, however, openly admits the stance attributed to her which was designed to damage her accountability (*I am happy to admit that openly* in Line 9). She strategically repels the accusation without confronting Other. The account that the respondent conveys through the topical content of her utterance provides for a new grounding for the debate. That is, Ms Harms provides a re-representation of the grounds for her attributed stance in order to maintain her accountability. Despite providing a conforming answer (*I am happy to admit that openly*), the respondent admits to something different than what was meant as an accusation in the question.

9.5 Interrogatively Formatted Condemnations

MEPs strategically use an interrogative format to tackle moral rights and accountabilities of their adversaries. The interrogative format enables the speakers to take a neutral stance, positioning Self as the party who seeks information. Such questions are hostile to the recipient due to their conduciveness. They accomplish adversarial functions other than questioning.

In this section, I examine recurrent interrogative formats that the MEPs employ as means of expressing condemnation and attacking Other. I focus on all expressions of accusation, blame, disapproval, and outrage as long as they are formulated as questions. The following table demonstrates the types of question formats that the MEPs employ in order to convey condemnations of Other.

Table 6: Accountability Questions and their interrogative format

	<i>n</i>	%	% of the corpus
Why-interrogatives			
• Why+narrative elaborations?	15	27,78	3,51
• Why+suggestions	5	9,26	1,17
How could you do X?	20	37,04	4,68
Polar (Yes/No) interrogatives			
• Interrogatives that import doubt through the adverb <i>really</i>	8	14,81	1,87
• Interrogatives that import outrage or accusation	6	11,11	1,40
Total	54	100,00	12,63

One recurrent format in my data embodies *why* questions that are meant to demonstrate the propositional content embedded in the utterance as something indisputable, evidential, and

accessible to all (4,68% of the corpus). *Why* Qs of this type can be formulated in two ways: (1) *Why* question word followed by a narrative, expecting Other to provide an explanation and (2) *Why* question word followed by a suggestion, forcing Other to accept or reject. The following are examples from my data, in which the MEPs engage in grounding by means of *Why* Qs:

- (9.13) Why you have not thanked Mr Oettinger. Why did you not say thank you?⁷⁶
- (9.14) Why should we annoy them even more?⁷⁷
- (9.15) Why is he so against council taxpayers, ratepayers and local governments across Europe, in his own country and elsewhere, who have to bear the burden of dealing with such waste, which he says the producer should not have to pay for?⁷⁸
- (9.16) Why has the Commission not objected to this lack of independence? Why have you failed fully to assess the powers of the media authority and the Media Council, which, in my view, fall within the scope of European law, against the Charter of Fundamental Rights?⁷⁹
- (9.17) Why do you then think that, if quotas are imposed on companies, that one-third will include just those illiterate women that may also exist in our society?⁸⁰
- (9.18) Why is Portugal's Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) not supporting this very important proposal?⁸¹

The first variant of *why* questions is formatted as *why* + narrative elaborations, implying that Other has taken an 'inappropriate' stance. Bolinger (1957, p. 160) argues that *why* 'puts the hearer on the defensive'. That is, positioning of Other forces her to defend the stance that is being attributed to her in the propositional content of the question. The questioner displays little deference to the respondent by requesting an explanation for an assertion that is taken for granted to be true and substantially damaging to Other. Clayman and Heritage (2002a, p. 769) define this type of question as 'accountability question', which is hostile in effect as it 'embodies at least a modicum of aggressiveness on the part of the journalist [questioner]'. In contrast to the rare use of accountability questions in news interviews (%4,48 in Clayman and

⁷⁶ 09.06.2011 - Angelika Niebler (PPE). –(DE), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Rebecca Harms (Verts/ALE). –(DE)

⁷⁷ 20.01.2011 - Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D). –(FI), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL). –(DE)

⁷⁸ 03.03.2011 - Chris Davies (ALDE), (UK), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Paul Nuttall (EFD), (UK).

⁷⁹ 16.02.2011- Judith Sargentini, (Verts/ALE)– (NL), puts her question to Neelie Kroes (PPE)– (NL).

⁸⁰ 08.03.2011 - Siiri Oviir (ALDE). – (ET), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Godfrey Bloom (EFD), (UK).

⁸¹ 23.03.2011 - Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D) - (FI), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Paulo Rangel (PPE) – (PT).

Heritage, 2002a, pp. 769-770), my data displays that this is a routine question type in parliamentary interaction, covering %12,65 (54 out of 427 questions § Table 6). The fact that accountability questions are more common in parliamentary setting can be explained with respect to the competitive character of parliamentary interaction. While journalists in news interviews are to retain their ‘neutralistic stance’ (Heritage, 1998, p. 15; Clayman, 1988, pp. 482-498; Clayman, 1992, pp. 163-198; Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, p. 769; Lewis, 1984, pp. 122-4), politicians in parliamentary debates take bold stances in pursuit of their political ends.

Let us revisit the notion of ‘(in)appropriateness’ used above. In some cases, (in)appropriateness can be identified with reference to the stance-taker's institutional or social roles. It is certainly inappropriate for a MEP, for example, to be ‘against council taxpayers, ratepayers and local governments across Europe’, as the British Member Paul Nuttall (EFD) is accused of in example (9.15). In other cases, (in)appropriateness is indexed in discourse makers as in example (9.17). The discourse marker *then* establishes a link between the preceding account and the interrogative (Haselow, 2013) that renders the appropriateness of the question and external motivation behind the impending question. Here, *then* indexes common grounds, presupposing that what comes prior to it is something that the parties agree upon. Given the ‘retrospective contrastive’ (Hancil et al., 2015, p. 6) feature of *then* as a discourse marker, ‘Why do you then think’ implies an inconsistency between the account preceding *then* and the action that the respondent is claimed to be performing.

In this type of *why* questions, negative format is recurrent (see examples (9.13), (9.16) and (9.18)). The two consecutive questions in (9.13) ‘Why you have not thanked Mr Oettinger. Why did you not say thank you?’ imply failure on the side of the respondent to perform a ‘preferred’ (Quirk et al., 1972), or ‘expected or desired’ (Bolinger, 1957, p. 97) action, here: thanking Mr Oettinger. The speaker takes an explicitly critical stance towards his respondent in his follow-up statement: ‘I think the accusations that you have made against him here are outrageous.’

Another variant of conducive Qs, as suggested by Bolinger (1957, p. 158) is so-called *Suggestions for Action*, which can be formatted as *why ... not*. Suggestions in parliamentary setting can be used as a means to force Other to *Self-positioning*, where the questioner puts constraints on Other’s Self-positioning by establishing topical domains and by suggesting that Other perform a particular action within those domains. Therefore, suggestions are potentially face threatening. Consider the following example from a highly sensitive debate on the situation in countries that have gone through difficult times during the European Debt Crisis. Dutch conservative Member Peter van Dalen puts his so-called question under the Blue-card

procedure to the Portuguese Member Ilda Figueiredo.

(9.19) [Developments in the ongoing debt crisis and the EU response (debate) – 11.05.2011]

1 **Peter van Dalen (ECR) – (NL)** Mr President, I wanted to ask Mrs
2 Figueiredo, if what your country has agreed is as bad as *all that*, and if it
3 is so bad to find yourselves under a real regime whereby you even have to
4 restructure your whole economy, *why not leave the euro area*? The euro is
5 a strong currency and there have to be prerequisites for that. If that troubles
6 you, *you should just leave*!

7 **Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL) – (PT)** Mr President, what is unacceptable
8 is that a question like this can be asked when Europe's leaders were unable
9 to admit in time that their policies were responsible for exacerbating the
10 situation of Portugal, which, as is well-known, had a fragile economy and
11 had to be subjected to the policy of the *strong euro*, which serves the
12 interests of Germany, France and others, but does not serve the interests of
13 Portugal or of other countries with *weaker economies*. That is why the
14 Portuguese people are fighting this policy, as are the Greek people and
15 workers across Europe. What we need is another policy here in Europe too.

Mr van Dalen constructs his stance based on a set of assumptions regarding Other's prior stance. The speaker employs conditional clause resembling *if ... why + suggestion* format. *All that* in the first conditional clause (*if what your country has agreed is as bad as all that* in Line 2) and *so* in the consecutive conditional (*and if it is so bad to find yourselves under a real regime* in Lines 2–3) refer to prior statements and evaluation by Other, namely Mrs Figueiredo. Designing questions in conditional format conveys doubts about the respondent's prior account and thus damages the accountability or trustworthiness of the respondent. In our example, the speaker displays no alignment with the respondent's position. In this way, the questioner takes a neutral stance and accomplishes distance between the positions of Self and Other.

It is worth noting that the questioner carries out positioning at the intergroup level by suggesting to his respondent that Portugal should leave the euro area (in Line 6). The respondent, in turn, remains on the intergroup level by avoiding first and second person references. Although she maintains the already established groupings of 'strong euro' (in Line 11) and 'weaker economies' (in Line 13), she outcasts a different positioning for Portugal and weaker-economies. She shifts the orientation from Portugal's implied failure to fit into the strong euro area to Portugal's having been victimized by Europe's leaders and their policies. In sum, the respondent strategically avoids taking oppositional stance. Instead, she engages in establishing new topical domains that would create a world distinct from the one her opponent has depicted in his question. Although components of stance-taking in both turns resemble (e.g.:

stance subjects specify, topic stance object specify), the two stance-takers do not meet on the same grounds, as they depict two different worlds.

Having analysed adversariality in *why* questions, in the following I turn my attention to expressions of outrage as in Clayman and Heritage's (2002b) prototypical example *How could you do X* and its variants. This type of accountability question conveys the questioner's apparently oppositional stance with an implication that there is no proper explanation for the recipient's presupposed actions. The corpus includes 20 interrogatives of this type, covering 4,68% (§ Table 6). Consider the following examples:

(9.20) [Review of the Belgian Presidency of the Council (debate) –18.01.2011]

1 **Krisztina Morvai (NI) – (HU)** Mr President, I would like to ask Mr
2 Swoboda *how he dares* to criticise the Hungarian Presidency when it is
3 just starting. He does not even know anything about it. Why does he not
4 instead criticise his comrades in the Socialist Group who were shooting at
5 their own people on the 50th anniversary of the 1956 revolution and who
6 arbitrarily imprisoned hundreds of people? He should ask them and
7 criticise them.

8 **Hannes Swoboda (S&D) – (DE)** Mr President, I am familiar with this
9 kind of argument, which states that if you criticise a government, you
10 criticise its people. It was like this in former times in my own country too.
11 Let us be clear. We did not start the debate. It was the Hungarian
12 Government with this – as I said here – contested law. It is a law greatly
13 disputed by many Hungarian citizens who suffered under Communism and
14 during the Nazi regime. They are afraid that their liberty of expression is
15 in danger. That is the thing that should be addressed.

(9.21) [Developments in the ongoing debt crisis and the EU response (debate) –
11.05.2011]

1 **Barry Madlener (NI) – (NL)** *How can it be that* you, as a Dutch
2 parliamentarian, do not even mention the scandal that the Dutch Finance
3 Minister was not invited to the summit last week? *How can it be that* you,
4 as a Dutch parliamentarian, do not even mention the fact that the
5 Netherlands is paying so much, and *how can it be that* you completely
6 betray the interests of Dutch taxpayers by pouring billions' worth of
7 taxpayers' money into a bottomless pit?

8 **Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE) – (NL)** Mr President, I have clearly stated
9 what is necessary to restore confidence. Mr Madlener's simplistic
10 solutions would worsen – rather than improve – the position not only of
11 Dutch citizens, but also of the citizens of all our Member States. I find it
12 quite worrying that Mr Madlener still fails to grasp that fact.

(9.22) [Situation in the Arab World and North Africa – Situation in Yemen (debate) –
06.06.2011]

1 **Paul Murphy (GUE/NGL)** – Mr President, I would like to ask *how the*
2 *speaker can possibly* describe a peaceful flotilla – which I participated in
3 along with two other MEPs – bringing humanitarian aid, medicine and
4 reconstruction material to Gaza, as a provocation? How can he justify the
5 sabotage by the Israeli regime of the Irish ship and of the Greek and
6 Scandinavian ship that put the lives of 20, 30 or 40 people in danger –
7 actions that, in my opinion, were carried out by the Israeli state?

8 **Geoffrey Van Orden (ECR)** – Mr President, my colleague will know full
9 well that the whole point of that first flotilla was to provoke precisely the
10 response that it got. That is exactly what he wanted. These things are
11 politics by confrontation: he wanted a violent reaction.

12 The blockade of Gaza by the Israeli authorities was perfectly legal under
13 international law. It is quite wrong to say that humanitarian aid is being
14 denied to the people in Gaza. So, I am afraid that the whole basis for these
15 flotillas is unfounded. What the honourable Member is saying – and indeed
16 where he comes from, and the sort of actions he takes part in – is evidence
17 of the real nature of the design of these particular political actions.

From a *Positioning Theoretical* perspective, the questions above imply that Other has taken some course of action that is not congruent with his *institutional rights and obligations*. Speakers create a tension between what should have been done and what is actively constructed in what they say. Notice that the questions are followed by assertions justifying the motive or rationale behind the question. In example (9.20), the questioner attacks the epistemic status of the recipient by accusing his recipient of not having adequate knowledge for his critical stance towards the Hungarian Presidency ('how he dares to criticise the Hungarian Presidency *when it is just starting. He does not even know anything about it* In Lines 2–3). The assertion does not only support the appropriateness of the question, but also establishes the grounds for the positioning of Other as taking an inappropriate evaluative stance towards the Hungarian Presidency. The speaker's opposition to Other's prior evaluative stance is based on her argument that Other does not have the epistemic status to be able to account for his evaluative stance. Likewise, in example (9.21) the recipient's actions are implied to be inappropriate for a Dutch parliamentarian. The consecutive questions *How can it be that you, as a Dutch parliamentarian, do [not ...]* (in Lines 1, 3, and 5) convey a strong accusation both through the question design, incorporating hostile accountability questions, and the propositional content, accusing the recipient of betraying the interests of Dutch taxpayers (see Line 6). This particular example (9.21) also illustrates a Blue-card design that involves multiple questions involving 'frame resonance' (Du Bois, 2014).

How can it be that you, as a Dutch parliamentarian, do not even mention the scandal that the Dutch Finance Minister was not invited to the summit last week?

How can it be that you, as a Dutch parliamentarian, do not even mention the fact that the Netherlands is paying so much, and

how can it be that you completely betray the interests of Dutch taxpayers by pouring billions' worth of taxpayers' money into a bottomless pit?

The resonance between the three questions builds on an accountability question frame *How can it be that you do not even do X*, expressing outrage against presupposedly improper prior actions of Other. The accusation is upgraded by means of these three consecutive questions. When resonance between questions is built on the hostile designs of questions (such as accountability Qs, exam Qs, checking Qs or challenge Qs) multiple questions enhance adversariality and hostility to the recipient by implying multiplicity of unanswerable questions.

In the last example (9.22) the speaker designs a question in response to a prior accusation: 'how the speaker can possibly describe a peaceful flotilla [...] as a provocation?' (in Lines 1–4). The speaker inserts a narrative describing the controversial flotilla to Gaza as a peaceful action, 'bringing humanitarian aid, medicine and reconstruction material to Gaza', in which the speaker participated along with two other MEPs ((in Lines 2–4). Here the speaker takes a clearly adversarial stance in response to his opponent's prior evaluative stance. By using the hostile 'How could you do X' type of accountability question, the speaker rejects the positions that his opponent has set up. The narrative, on the other hand, establishes new grounds on which the speaker sets up new positions for Self and Other.

Finally, polar questions are another recurrent interrogative format (14 corresponding to 25,92% of the corpus, § Table 6) that the MEPs employ to take a condemning stance. Polar interrogatives are characterized by a basic grammatical format, placing the operator before the subject that reduces the answers to a 'preferred' *yes* or 'preferred' *no* (cf. Horn, 1989, Schegloff, 2007).

Polar interrogatives that I am concerned with in this section target the accountability of Other. Such interrogatives are often constructed upon a 'formulation' of Other's prior or presupposed stance. The formulation may be embedded in the interrogative or may build the grounds for the interrogative in the form of a preface or a follow-up statement. Most frequently, this type of interrogative includes the adverb *really*, implying doubts about the recipient's commitment to the stances attributed to her in the question content. Consider the following examples:

- (9.23) Is this *really* how you see it?⁸²
- (9.24) Does he *really* view this in such an incredibly positive light?⁸³
- (9.25) Do you *really* think it is appropriate to pick fights on this matter?⁸⁴
- (9.26) Does the right gentleman *really* think it is correct to vote for legislation that will, in effect, push up the cost of vehicles?⁸⁵
- (9.27) Mr Vigenin, but did I *really* hear you say that you regard the demonstration which took place after the elections, or, in other words, the demonstration which, in actual fact, was held to protest against the falsification of these elections and all the irregularities that took place, as proof of the fact that the elections and the situation are improving?⁸⁶
- (9.28) I would like to ask my fellow MEP who spoke just now if it can *really* be considered appropriate to apply the terms ‘freeloaders’ and ‘fortune seekers’ to people who are fleeing from a situation of great political distress – and all the political groups agree on this – such as the one in North Africa.⁸⁷
- (9.29) Does he *really* believe – knowing the way the European market works – that if we want to have something on the market, such as a particular type of scanner, it will remain the case that only one company makes them?⁸⁸
- (9.30) Do you *really* believe, Mr Karas, that no one was aware before the introduction of the single currency of the truism that common governance and political union are also needed? perhaps no one was quite brave or honest enough to tell the citizens of Europe this.

In each of these examples the questioner is engaged in *epistemic positioning* of Other by incorporating epistemic verbs (e.g.: think, believe, consider, view, see, hear). Here, the adverb *really* conveys doubts about the Other's sincerity in her epistemic stance with a strong implication of the inappropriateness of that stance. That is, Other's right or obligation to *know*, *think*, *believe*, and so on, is questioned, which in effect, targets the accountability of Other for the activities that are assumedly bound to the claimed or attributed position.

The question design incorporating the adverb *really* in polar accountability questions has a set of interactional functions that can be summarized as follows:

⁸² 06.06.2011 - Hans-Peter Martin (NI) – (DE), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Paul Nuttall (EFD), (UK).

⁸³ 06.06.2011 - Franz Obermayr (NI) – (DE), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Mr Fjellner (PPE) – (SV).

⁸⁴ 20.01.2011 - Roberta Angelilli (PPE), (IT), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), (FR).

⁸⁵ 15.02.2011 - Chris Davies (ALDE), (UK), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Paul Nuttall (EFD), (UK).

⁸⁶ 19.01.2011 - Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR) – (PL), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Kristian Vigenin (S&D) – (BG).

⁸⁷ 04.04.2011 - Silvia Costa (S&D) – (IT), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Daniël van der Stoep (NI), (NL).

⁸⁸ 29.09.2011 - Gesine Meissner (ALDE) – (DE), Blue-card question under Rule 149 (8) to Agustín Díaz de Mera García Consuegra (PPE) – (ES).

1. It maintains the topical domains that have provided the focus of orientation in the prior talk (Heritage, 1985, pp. 101-102).
2. It establishes a new stance orientation by selecting the domains of re-presentation.
3. It implies the inappropriateness of the presupposed prior stance and initiates new positioning.
4. It invites Other to confirm or deny the re-presentation inserted in the formulation (Heritage, 1985, p. 102).
5. It thereby forces Other to re-position Self, complying with what is implied to be proper or improper.
6. Finally, it leaves Other with a vague positioning by implying doubts about the presupposed or prior stance.

It is notable that, in all of these examples, the question is designed to favour ‘no’ answers despite apparent expectation of a confirmation. Given that a ‘yes’ answer confirming the questioner's suspicions about an improper prior action would harm the respondent, the question is hostile in format, forcing the respondent to provide the preferred answer. Moreover, all these examples establish the grounds that provide the reasoning or motivation behind the question. By way of illustration, in example (9.28), the speaker recalls an agreement among all the political groups that people such as the one in North Africa are fleeing from a situation of great political distress. The speaker imports this agreement as the common grounds and motive behind condemning her respondent's use of the words ‘freeloaders’ and ‘fortune seekers’ when referring to such people. In another instance, namely example (9.29), Other's epistemic status based on his knowledge about the way the European market works, is implied to be preventing him from believing ‘that if we want to have something on the market, such as a particular type of scanner, it will remain the case that only one company makes them’.

In sum, interrogatively framed accusations that put the accountability of Other at stake typically establish the grounds, justifying the reasons for asking such questions. Such questions embody strong assertions that contribute to grounding and make positionings intelligible.

Polar interrogatives can be designed to be relatively explicit in their adversarial/accusatory import as in ‘My masters, are you mad?’⁸⁹ Apparently, the MEPs sometimes use interrogative syntax not as a means for questioning, but instead to express outrage or to accuse their opponents. This type of interrogative does not occur often (6 out of 427 covering 1,40% of the data) in the EP, under the Blue-card procedure. In all these 6 cases,

⁸⁹ 27.09.2011 - Daniel Hannan (ECR), (UK).

the interrogatives are treated as doing something other than questioning. Either the respondent or the President reacts to the accusatory import. Note that, it can be considered a violation of the Directorate General of the EP to use a Blue-card for reasons other than questioning even though they are literally interrogatives. As depicted so far, the MEPs often use the Blue-card procedure (a) to expand their speaking time, (b) to make their stances explicit, and (c) to set up undisputable positions for Self and Other(s), instead of seeking information. Even, the type of interrogative that concerns me in this section constitutes an explicit violation of parliamentary rules. Notice the sequence below.

(9.31) [Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law
(debate) – 20.01.2011]

1 **Roberta Angelilli (PPE) – (IT)** Voilà! If you, Mrs Vergiat, respect
2 colleagues then you absolutely should not allow yourself to say that
3 Italian colleagues are never interested in human rights.

4 I have been here for 16 years. And you can check if you like what I've done
5 in the Parliament, and I don't think I deserve any lessons on human rights
6 from you.

7 **President** – Madam Angelilli, that was a statement. Blue-card means that
8 you have to ask a question.

9 **Roberta Angelilli (PPE) – (IT)** On behalf of my colleagues, we wanted
10 to ask if Mrs Vergiat is ashamed of herself, yes or no? With respect to these
11 four people [pointing to the pictures of the four men that her Italian
12 colleagues were holding throughout her talk]. Now, do you know what
13 jobs they did? They were very simple people. One of them was a butcher,
14 one of them was a security guard, one of them was shopkeeper, and one of
15 them was a security officer. And yesterday, the children of these people,
16 who were aged between 14 and 15 have said that every single day of their
17 lives they remember their parents covered in blood. Do you really think it
18 is for us calling a waste of question? Do you really think it is appropriate
19 to pick fights on this matter?

20 **Marie-Christine Vergiat, author. – (FR)** Mr President, I regard this as a
21 question in the form of a personal accusation. No, I am not ashamed, Mrs
22 Angelilli, because I made a point of saying that I thought that the Years of
23 Lead were difficult years for Italy. I do think that the Years of Lead were
24 difficult years for Italy! I know how many victims there were in Italy. I
25 have taken a personal interest in this period.

26 Therefore, no, I am not ashamed. [...]

Mrs Angelilli's Blue-card address includes multiple instances of interrogatives some of which I have analysed earlier in this section. Here, the focus of interest is on the very first

question in her second turn. This example is one of the rare cases where the President interrupts the Blue-card procedure and gives the floor to the speaker for a second time to reformulate her utterance so that it would contain an interrogative. Mrs Angelilli's first turn contains defensive statements in response to Mrs Vergiat's prior accusations. Mrs Angelilli recognizes the accusations in her formulation 'If you, Mrs Vergiat, respect colleagues then you absolutely should not allow yourself to say that Italian colleagues are never interested in human rights.' (Lines 1–3). The if-clauses in the questions are interesting in the sense that they formulate something that should be obvious (e.g., *respect colleagues* in our example), but by being put in the conditional it is insinuated that the recipient does not do that.

Mrs Angelilli, then, provides an account explaining why Mrs Vergiat's accusations are improper (*I have been here for 16 years. And you can check if you like what I've done in the Parliament*, in Lines 4–5). However, the President (in Lines 7–8) interrupts the procedure by reallocating the turn to Mrs Angelilli, allowing her to provide a question that would comply with related parliamentary rules. Upon the warning she has received from the President, Mrs Angelilli frames her apparently accusatory utterance as a polar interrogative that prefers an confirming answer but, at the same time, conveys doubts about Mrs Vergiat's moral accountability (*On behalf of my colleagues, we wanted to ask if Mrs Vergiat is ashamed of herself, yes or no?* in Lines 9–10).

In response, Mrs Vergiat openly declares that she regards the question as a personal accusation, thus not a real Q (*I regard this as a question in the form of a personal accusation*, in Lines 20–21). Nevertheless, she answers the Q by rejecting the accusation with a 'no' answer followed by a 'because'–prefaced account where she argues for her stance and rejects the hostile position that Mrs Angelilli has set up for her.

Interrogatives that are oriented towards moral accountability of Other are meant to attack the public image of Other, which in return maintains the positive image of Self by positioning Self as someone who is concerned about the moral dimension.

The following is another example where the questioner raises doubts about the moral accountability of Other.

(9.32) [Emission performance standards for new light commercial vehicles (debate) – 15.02.2011]

1 **Paul Nuttall (EFD)** – Mr President, *does the right honourable gentleman*
 2 *really think* that it is correct to vote for legislation that will, in effect, push
 3 up the cost of vehicles? He knows it will, and I know it will. In effect, what
 4 it will be doing is putting small firms in Liverpool and Manchester – in his
 5 own constituency – out of business. *Does he think* that is fair? *Does he*

6 *think* it is morally correct? *Is he prepared* to stand on that platform in the
 7 elections in three years' time?

8 **Chris Davies (ALDE)** – Mr President, the UK Government, in the form
 9 of the Department for Transport, actually undertook an assessment of the
 10 effects of this measure. It found they were likely to be more beneficial to
 11 businesses than even the Commission had estimated.
 12 The net savings on running a vehicle, when fuel prices are at record highs,
 13 are greater than any potential increase in the cost of the vehicles – net
 14 savings for businesses and lower prices for consumers. This is what the
 15 UK Independence Party is so determined to fight against. In doing so, it
 16 wants businesses to pay more than they need.

Mr Nuttall's turn contains consecutive interrogatives formatted as positive polarity questions that are all conducive of confirming answers, in this case 'no'. Notice the following:

- *Does the right honourable gentleman really think* that it is correct to vote for legislation that will, in effect, push up the cost of vehicles? (in Lines 1– 3)
- *Does he think* that is fair? (in Line 5)
- *Does he think* it is morally correct? (in Lines 5 – 6)
- *Is he prepared* to stand on that platform in the elections in three years' time? (in Lines 6 – 7)

The propositional content of the first three questions imports the speaker's critical views about a legislation amendment concerned. From a stance theoretical perspective, taking his own evaluation of the stance object as common grounds, the speaker provides polar scenarios by means of the interrogative format. Polar interrogatives here set up hostile positions for Other by constraining Other to either divergent or convergent stance alignment, both of which will be harmful.

Let us further examine the hostility in the respective questions. Mr Nuttall's very first question presupposes that his opponent, Mr Davies, is in favour of legislation 'that, in effect, push up the cost of vehicles'. A 'yes' answer, on the one hand, would confirm Mr Nuttall's assumptions about the consequences of legislation. On the other hand, having accomplished common grounds, a 'yes' answer would confirm that it is *correct*, *fair*, and *morally correct* to vote for legislation. In effect, a 'yes' answer conveys 'positive disagreement' (Pope, 1976). Notice the upgrade in the critical stance by using *correct* in the first interrogative, *fair* in the second, and *morally correct* in the third. Consequently, a confirming answer would mean accepting the position that the questioner has set up for the respondent.

A 'no' answer would equally harm the respondent. Compare the following:

Q: Does he think it is morally correct?

A1: Yes, I think it is morally correct.

A2: No, I think it is not morally correct.

Alternative answer A2 accomplishes convergent alignment through 'negative agreement', in Pope's terms (1976), with the questioner's critical stance.

Both 'yes' and 'no' answers provide conforming responses, accepting the premises of the question. In the example above, either answer acknowledges the assumption that 'that legislation will, in effect, push up the costs of vehicles' without dealing with its truth-value. The questioner's assumptions provide the common grounds for both answers.

The respondent in this case, Mr Davies, avoids conforming answers. Instead he provides a meta-comment through which he establishes new grounds towards a reconstruction of the conditions that presupposedly prompted the question. In his representation, he maintains his accountability by grounding his stance on an assessment conducted by the UK Government. By incorporating factual talk, he strives to maintain his epistemic accountability in response to his questioner's attack on his moral accountability.

Let us turn our attention back to the question. Notice that the questioner mitigates the adversariality by incorporating the non-finite subordinate clause 'to vote' instead of a direct accusation as in 'you voted for legislation that will, in effect, push up the cost of vehicles'. Consequently, the speaker accomplishes some neutrality in his evaluation by using the non-finite format, which, as asserted by Holt and Johnson (2010, p. 22), distances the speaker from the accusation. Moreover, the non-finite format enables the speaker to engage in *universal positioning*, concerned with the correctness of voting for legislation assumed to be having harmful effects, instead of orienting towards a particular person's actions. In other words, the speaker's questions here are designed to account for the 'universal' moral order based on the argument that 'to vote for legislation that will, in effect, push up the cost of vehicles' and that in turn is assumed to be 'putting small firms in Liverpool and Manchester – in his own constituency – out of business' is morally incorrect.

Furthermore, the speaker attributes equal epistemic status between Self and Other with respect to the truth of his assumptions as he claims 'He knows it [legislation] will, and I know it will' (in Line 3). Such equal distribution of knowledge simultaneously indicates shared responsibility for the presupposed domain knowledge. Consequently, the speaker constructs shared 'territories of knowledge' (Labov and Fanshel, 1977) or 'epistemic territories' (Heritage,

2010; 2011; 2012; Heritage and Raymond, 2005; ‘epistemic footing’ in Heritage and Raymond, 2012) in his statements, which are meant to be the grounds for his hostile questions. The epistemic footing of the questions enhances the hostility through an implied contradiction between the moral stance taken by Self and the questioned moral accountability of Other.

Let us turn our attention from the discursive function of ‘He knows X, I know X’ to its interactional function. The evidential quality of the declarative ‘you know’ has been elaborated in previous research (Assmus, 2011; Brinton, 1996; Keevalik, 2008; 2016). The declarative ‘He knows it will, I know it will’ sets up a joint position, as discussed earlier, in pursuit of alignment in the projected stance (cf. Assmus, 2011), which is represented as the expected logical action under the presupposed conditions. Notice that, the respondent here is addressed by the third person pronoun *he*, incorporating the indirect format in parliamentary address. As argued earlier (§ 7.6.5.3) address by third person forms sets up a position for the respondent as the party that is being talked *about*. Through this type of address, the speaker avoids acknowledging the respondent’s pre-assigned rights and responsibilities of being the recipient of the question.

Notice also that, as far as the complex institutional setting is concerned, parliamentary talk is produced, if not primarily, at least equally for an overhearing audience. While ‘questioning’ interactionally recognizes the respondent as the recipient of the accusation, institutional footing positions overhearers as the recipients of a complaint. Parliamentary Q&A sequences do not often involve a third turn, as it is also the case in the respective example. Drawing on Heritage’s (1985, p. 102) argument concerning turn organization in news interviews, the avoidance of the third-turn receipt in question-answer sequences along with the institutionalized footing permits overhearers to view themselves as the primary recipients of the talk.

Let us combine the two arguments elaborated above. On the one hand, the joint position constructed through ‘He knows it will, I know it will’ seeks alignment. On the other hand, the indirect reference rejects the respondent’s recipient role, while allowing the overhearers to adopt that role (cf. Heritage, 1985). Consequently, the speaker’s interrogatively expressed outrage or complaint about Other is left to the overhearers’ judgment with an expectation of alignment.

While the first three questions are framed as opinion-seeking questions importing blame, the closing question is a challenge question. Consecutive questions ‘Does he think that it is fair?’ and ‘Does he think it is morally correct?’ rest on the same assumption embedded in the first interrogative, while maintaining doubts about Other’s moral accountability on the matter of concern. The challenge question ‘Is he prepared to stand on that platform in the elections in

three years' time?' maintains adversariality oriented towards the Other's moral accountability.

Most frequently (90,62% of polar accountability questions) in my data, polar accountability questions are formatted as opinion seeking questions. Notice the examples below:

- (1) Do you not think that your comments were completely unfair?
- (2) Is it acceptable, in your opinion, that + assumption
- (3) Do you think it is in good taste that + assumption
- (4) Does he consider this acceptable?

To conclude, interrogatively framed accusations trigger confrontation. While their interrogative format makes for relevant responses, the aggressive content enhances divergence between the interlocutors.

9.6 Interrogatively Formatted Open Personal Attacks

My corpus includes interrogatives that import explicit personal attacks against Others' dignity. Such use of the Blue-card procedure is dealt with under the Directorate General of the EP. The following are the only two cases where the interrogative package is used to openly insult Other(s).

- (9.33) [Barry Madlener (NI) – (NL), puts a Blue-card question to Constance Le Grip (PPE) – (FR) – 30.11.2011]

1 Madam President, I would like to ask Ms Le Grip whether her fellow party
2 member, Minister Alain Juppé, has gone mad, or whether his statement
3 truly represents his party's position. He said today that violent armed
4 conflicts would break out across Europe if we no longer had the euro. Do
5 you share that view, Ms Le Grip, or has Mr Juppé just gone slightly
6 bonkers?

- (9.34) Daniel Hannan (ECR), (UK) puts a Blue-card question to Clemente Mastella (PPE) – (IT) – 27.09.2011]

1 [...] 'That is the logical end of the policy we began on when we started
2 borrowing. And who, ultimately, is going to stand behind this fund? Why,
3 the taxpayers of the eurozone: in other words, the taxpayers of, among
4 other places, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy. 'My masters, are
5 you mad?'

Apparently, the interrogatives are not designed to seek information, but to express outrage or accuse. The accusation in (9.33) is formatted as an indirect question that targets a third party

in his absence. Through an alternative question formatted as indirect the speaker seeks confirmation by or agreement with his respondent on his assumptions about the mental state of his target.

In (9.34) the speaker formulates a direct polar interrogative with an affirmative format. The question, ‘My masters, are you mad?’ expects a rejection of the proposition and thereby triggers a confrontation.

Based on the analysis of various formats of question that are employed in the Blue-card procedure, the following section draws conclusions about what interrogatives are used for in the EP.

9.7 Insights Gained

The in-depth analysis of the questions that appear under the Blue-card procedure has provided insights about the three formal and functional dimensions of parliamentary questions:

- Interrogative design (e.g., Wh–interrogatives, polar (Yes/No interrogatives), indirect interrogatives, alternative interrogatives)
- Interrogative category (e.g., opinion-seeking Qs, information-seeking Qs, and confirmation-seeking Qs)
- Accomplished function (e.g., to accuse, complain, challenge)

Most frequently, utterances can be characterized differently across these dimensions. For example, Wh–interrogatives that request clarification of a prior stance utterance may have a rhetorical effect which is meant to set up a troublesome position for Other (e.g., ‘The question I would like to ask to my honourable colleague: Why is he so against tax payers across Europe?’) In another instance, the MEPs convey a strong condemning stance towards Other(s) by means of a seemingly information-seeking question (e.g., ‘We would like to know, on behalf of my colleagues, whether she is ashamed of herself, yes or no?’).

Prior to the present Chapter, Chapter 8 empirically demonstrated that questions can be framed in various ways in which they project an action that relates the participants to a communicative project through the joint activities of questioning and answering. ‘Action projection’ is embodied in the QFs, initial to the focal question, such as ‘would like to ask’, ‘would be interested to know’, or ‘Could [the Other] tell’, ‘Will [the Other] explain’, indexing the participants’ claimed or inferred stances.

There are certain types of question design that are recurrently employed in the EP. Qs in the EP often have strong assertive import and are designed to make an assertion rather than ask a question. Such Qs can be packaged as:

- Opinion-seeking Qs – built upon a statement of ‘fact’.
- Agreement-seeking Qs – built upon an expression of subjectivity, striving towards building inter-subjectivity and thereby stance alignment between the Self and the Other.
- Confirmation-seeking Qs – built upon a ‘taken for granted truth’, which the Other is forced to confirm or deny. Such Qs are designed in ways which either response would damage the Other’s public image.

The analysis displays that these types of questions are recurrently used in the EP to package often adversarial stances that are indexed in the topical content of the question utterances. The primary function of Qs in the EP is, thus, not to ‘do questioning’, but instead

- to make assertions that are meant to place constraints on the projected answer,
- to propose positions for Other vis-a`-vis Self,
- to force Other into Self-(re)positioning, which may eventually damage Other’s public image.

Based on the findings presented above, this study shows that Members of the European Parliament display multiple stances throughout a single turn in a communicative activity of Blue-card Q&A exchange. They do so by building a stance in each discursive chunk (i.e., address, QF, and Qs). It is also observed that these stances are often incongruent in terms of: the proposals in preceding statements (e.g.: ‘I would like to ask Mr X a question’), format (i.e.: interrogatives, declaratives, statements) and accomplishment (i.e.: accusation, praise, denial) of the stanced utterances. At the end of the day, the MEPs are obliged to observe certain parliamentary rules and comply with traditional ways of conduct as they formulate their utterances which are meant to deliver maximum damage to their political Other(s).

Blue-card question turns often contain multiple interrogatives, providing for a particular positioning project. Syntactic and pragmatic features of these interrogatives may be recycled in consecutive question utterances. In the example below, the non-attached Hungarian Member Krisztina Morvai is using the Blue-card procedure to respond to German Socialist and

Democrat Martin Schulz's prior criticism of the violations of democracy and human rights in Hungary.

(9.35) [Preparation for the European Council meeting on 4 February 2011 (debate) – 02.02.2011]

1 **Krisztina Morvai (NI)** –We could see how Mr Martin Schulz, leader of
2 the European socialists, is extremely concerned about democracy and
3 human rights in Hungary. I must ask you, Mr Schulz, *where were you*
4 *between 2002 and 2010, when your socialist comrades in power in*
5 Hungary had every single anti-government protest dispersed by force?
6 *Where were you on 23 October 2006, when fourteen people were ordered*
7 to be shot in the eye with rubber bullets fired at head height? *Where were*
8 *you in autumn 2006, when several hundred people were, as already*
9 established by final court (*the President interrupted the speaker*) I have
10 one minute, President, don't I, according to the Rules? *Where were you*
11 *then?* And I would also like to ask why the *Fidesz* government is not asking
12 you and your comrades the same question already? What is keeping the
13 *Fidesz* government from doing so?

The repetitive use of the same adversarial question design (*Where were you when* see Lines 3, 6, 7, and 10) functions as grounding for the speaker's divergence from Other through an implication that Other was absent on more than one occasions when Hungarian citizens were in despair. Hence, the repetitive use maintains the hostile position that the questioner sets up for Other.

Questions in the EP are vehicles for intergroup positioning, which is done through positioning Other as dissimilar and distant by raising questions about Other's social, moral, and epistemic accountability on matters that concern the EU and its people. I have identified three predominant agendas in the MEPs questions that provide for their endeavour for intergroup positioning:

1. Qs oriented towards *grouping* (e.g., individuals as representatives of EU citizens, States as Members of the EU).

Such questions present potential threats to Other's social accountability by raising questions about the rights, responsibilities and obligations that the MEPs' social, political, institutional, and such affiliations bring about.

2. Qs oriented towards Other's state of knowledge. (e.g., 'Do you know that', 'Is he aware that', 'Has it ever occurred to you that').

Such questions present potential threats to Other's epistemic accountability by raising doubts about what Other might know or should know.

3. Qs oriented towards Other's rights with respect to and responsibilities for certain collectives (e.g., peoples of the EU, EU taxpayers, workers, pensioners).

Such questions present potential threats to Other's moral accountability by questioning the appropriateness of Other's prior or presupposed stance ('How could you do X?' is a typical example for such Qs).

There are also questions that are open expressions of outrage. These questions are prevented to an extent by parliamentary rules and conventions that are meant to assure the continuum of the 'dialogue' in the chamber based on mutual respect and dignity. Nevertheless, my data includes cases where questions clearly do not expect an answer but are meant as an insult to Other (e.g., 'Are you insane?', 'Has she gone mad?').

The analysis has shown that, in the EP, the Blue-card procedure is hardly used to put genuine questions that seek some information or the opinion of Other. In response, very few questions are treated as genuine. In order to be able to determine whether an interrogative format is used to ask a genuine question or to package an assertion which might potentially be hostile to Other, it is necessary to consider other linguistic and interactional factors that the interrogative utterance rests upon. After all, a question is a 'pattern of behaviour' or 'practice', in Bolinger's (1957, p. 5) terms, that is instrumental in organizing interpersonal as well as intergroup relations.

Chapter 10 Stance Chain

After analysing the different ‘chunks’ (Address, Question Frames, and Questions) that a Blue-card address consists of, I will now turn to a more holistic analysis of one specific address. This chapter aims to build on the stance-taking model proposed by John W Du Bois (2007), by expanding the scope of the analysis beyond the stance triangle – ‘the minimum structure of stance as dialogic action’ (Du Bois, 2007, p. 174). Through an enlarged view of stance-taking in dialogue, I want to show the dynamic aspect of stance-taking by examining temporal and interpersonal transformations of the stance object as well as the shifting distribution of stance alignment in longer sequences of interaction. The present chapter includes repetitions of Du Bois’ Stance-taking model previously reviewed in Section 6.4. I revisit the model in this chapter to narrow down his ideas to my own analysis.

10.1 Stance Theory Revisited

As has been argued (Ducrot 1984; Du Bois 2007; Martin 2003), ‘every utterance in interaction contributes to the enactment of stance, even if this stance is only evoked and not explicitly spelled out’ (Du Bois and Kärkkäinen, 2012, p. 438). Stance refers to the linguistic articulation of the speaker’s attitude towards a particular stance object. The stance object can be anything towards which the stance_taker displays an attitude, indicating epistemic modality, evaluation, or affect. The object of stance may be a thing, a person, a situation, an utterance, and ‘even another participant’s [prior (e.g.: ‘You have liked this’) or projected next (‘You will like this’, ‘Do you like this?’)] stance’ (Du Bois and Kärkkäinen, 2012, p. 439, content in square brackets added). In that sense, stance is an attitude towards or a response to a presupposed existing object, or an occurrence. This is where the dialogic dimension of stance comes into play. Wu (2004, p. 3) recognizes the emergent aspect of stance that involves more than a single individual speaker. She defines stance ‘as an emergent product which is shaped by, and itself shapes, the unfolding development of interaction’.

At this point let me remind the reader of Du Bois’ (2007, p.163) definition of stance.

A public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field⁹⁰.

In his definition, the three components of *stance-taking*: *evaluation*, *positioning*, and

⁹⁰ The sociocultural field consists of two social actors and an object to which both are oriented.

alignment are carried out through processes of distributed action, which involves ‘joint engagements’ (Kärkkäinen, 2006) of stance-taking. Du Bois (2007) argues for the commonality of the stance object as something towards which stance subjects orient. For Du Bois (2007, p. 159) the shared stance object is ‘the cornerstone of the dialogic construction of intersubjectivity’. However, my data indicates that the stance object hardly ever coincide between the different speakers. The present chapter demonstrates the fluid transformation of a stance object across longer sequences of interaction as the speakers manipulate each other’s utterances. Taking a dialogic perspective to stance-taking ‘naturally’, as Du Bois (2007, p. 140) puts it, leads to a concern with intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity in stance-taking explains how participants respond to a prior stance with a stance of their own (Du Bois & Kärkkäinen, 2012, p. 441). For Du Bois (2007) and Kärkkäinen (2006) stance-taking is a ‘joint engagement’ that creates intersubjectivity between participants. Du Bois (2007, p. 159) argues for intersubjectivity in stance-taking through the example below⁹¹:

- (This Retirement Bit SBC011: 444.12-446.30)
- 1 SAM; I don’t like those.
 - 2 (0.2)
 - 3 ANGELA; I don't either.

Here, Du Bois is concerned with ‘how one speaker’s subjectivity reacts to another’s subjectivity’ and thereby with the dialogic emergence of intersubjectivity. One takes stance always in comparison to a prior or a projected future stance based on a set of presuppositions. At this point, it is necessary to highlight the presuppositional aspect in the processes of stance-taking in order to understand the dialogic processes involved in the identification of the stance object. In Du Bois’ aforementioned example (*I don’t like those*), the demonstrative *those* is the linking component that brings both stance-takers on the same grounds, oriented towards a presupposedly shared stance object.

In other instances, references to the interpretation of a prior stance can extend beyond the current face-to-face engagement (Du Bois & Kärkkäinen, 2012, p. 442). This later observation is especially relevant in institutional interaction – e.g., parliamentary debates – where

⁹¹ The reader will notice that I have already cited the respective example by Du Bois in Section 6.4.1 for the demonstration of the three components of Du Bois’ stance-taking triangle – Subject 1, Subject 2, and Stance Object – along with the three main activities – evaluation, positioning, and alignment – that the stance-takers are engaged in. In the present Section, however, I cite the example again to refer to Du Bois’ argument about the construction of intersubjectivity in stance-taking. This repetition is necessary to show how intersubjectivity occurs in my data.

participants approach each other either as allies or opponents across longer periods of time. This means that participants in parliamentary settings are driven by some already established understandings of each other prior to a particular interaction.

Du Bois' stance-taking model offers analytic tools for the examination of intersubjectivity in stance-taking in short sequences, such as the example above. Nevertheless, as also acknowledged by Du Bois and Kärkkäinen (2012, p. 442), in some circumstances a stance can remain relevant over longer sequences of interaction. Moreover, my data demonstrates that speakers can display multiple stances over longer sequences that provide for their positioning projects across time. In order to be able to capture the fluid transformations of the components of the stance – stance object, discursively constructed stance-takers and, the scale of stance alignment – I propose a model of stance-taking which occurs in a chain of stance triangles, going beyond a single triangle model.

10.2 Temporality in Stance-taking in Interaction

In my analysis of parliamentary debates, I examine how one speaker's stanced utterance relates, on the one hand, to another speaker's stanced utterance, and on the other hand, to prior and next stances of Self in longer sequences of interaction. My analysis displays a particular pattern where MEPs strategically manipulate their opponents' stanced utterances in order to set up long-term positions for Self and Other(s).

More specifically, they display shifting alignment through moment-by-moment unfolding of the changing contingencies that make stances intelligible. The concept of grounding that I propose in this study proves analytically useful in explaining this dynamic and often competitive process of providing the frameworks that make stance-taking recognizable. In the next section (10.2.1), I examine the fluid transition of the stance object as well as the shifting stance alignment in longer turns at talk. In the following section (10.2.2), I trace these transformations in one selected Blue-card sequence comprised of one scheduled speech, one Blue-card question turn, and the response turn.

10.2.1 The Temporal Unfolding of Stance in Longer Turns at Talk

The shortest speaking time allocated in the EP is for the 30-seconds limited Blue-card question and answer turns. Members of the Parliament cannot simply stand up and make a short statement such as 'I don't like those' as in Du Bois' example from *Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBCSAE)*. The MEPs are supposed to elaborate as much as possible within their time limits. Besides, as described earlier (§ 4.3 & 4.4) participants (the questioner

and the respondent) are allocated one turn each within one Blue-card exchange. These aspects of this particular communicative activity type force as well as enable the speakers to strategically unfold their stances across the span of their turn.

In the following example, I map out such shifts in stance alignment as well as in the participants' orientation towards diverse stance objects. The following Blue-card question is taken from a debate on the situation in Egypt at the time of the debate.

(10.1) [Situation in Egypt (debate) – 16.02.2011 – Pino Arlacchi (S&D) asks Barry Madlener (NI) - (NL) a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8)]

1 **Pino Arlacchi (S&D) – (IT)** Mr President, the tragic outcome of the
 2 Egyptian transition to democracy *has been described*. It *has been said* that
 3 it was inevitable that Islamic fundamentalists would take over power
 4 democratically, etcetera. *But* do you not think that this evaluation is
 5 *catastrophic, and wrong? Why do we not take into account the fact that*
 6 *the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East*
 7 *are strongly linked to tyrannical governments, and that there is now an*
 8 *opportunity for democratic regimes to reduce both?*

The questioner prefaces his talk with an account, providing the external motivation behind the impending question(s). The reportive account as in *has been described*, *has been said* (in Line 2) indicates that the background information that prepares for the impending question is second-hand information. In our example here, the report designed in passive format with no explicit agent is a marker of an epistemic stance, where the source of information is not encoded. My data reveals a particular pattern where Blue-card question turns include a formulation of a prior utterance in participial format. Such formulations, meant to give an account for the current and projected next stance, often have turn-initial positions, which in effect, establish connectedness with previous turn(s) and meanwhile cancel expectations (Heritage, 2013b, p. 331-227). From a stance analytic approach, I argue that reportive utterances in present perfect format (*has been said/ described/ claimed*), when employed in turn-initial position, enable the speaker to take a neutral stance by way of a rather 'formal and impersonal' construction (for discursive features of participial format see Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 51). By means of the formulation, speakers accomplish *suspended alignment* (§ 6.5), the stance-taker avoids revealing stance until she/he sets the 'suitable' grounds for the impending positioning.

With regards to studies in evidentially across languages (Babel, 2009; Demonte and Fernández-Soriano, 2013; Travis, 2006), the reportive format with agent deletion indicates doubts about the proposition which is more of a belief that is open to question. In the case of

PI, my data displays that reportives may be used to signal divergence from the stance in the reported account. In example (10.1), the two consecutive reports (*the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy has been described. It has been said that it was inevitable that Islamic fundamentalists would take over power democratically, etcetera* in Lines 2–4.) are followed by an interrogatively formulated objection to the reported argument (*But do you not think that this evaluation is catastrophic, and wrong?* (in Lines 4–5). The speaker in example (10.1) signals a shift from his neutral stance towards the reported statement ‘It has been said that it was inevitable that Islamic fundamentalists would take over power democratically’ not only through a passive formulation but also by adding, the adverb ‘etcetera’ in place of a further report. *Etcetera*, following a narrative account indicates that the utterance completion is ‘projectable’, in conversation analytic terms (Jefferson, 1991, p. 73) with reference to the grounding accomplished in the utterance prior to *etcetera* (in Line 4). Moreover, in effect, it downgrades the necessity to complete the preceding account, which is assumedly displaying similar or repetitive properties.

The speaker in example (10.1) then continues with a negative polar question, indicating a strong evaluative stance, oriented towards the reported account. ‘But do you not think that this picture is catastrophic, and wrong?’ (in Lines 4–5). The stance marker ‘but’ preceding the focal question, is a further signal of the speaker’s divergence from the reported stance. The question format here forces the respondent to position Self through a preferred evaluative stance conveyed in the adjectives ‘wrong’ and ‘catastrophic’ (in Line 5). Furthermore, the demonstrative *this* in *that this picture is catastrophic, and wrong* designs the stance object as a shared one. The speaker remains focused on the reported propositional content throughout his speech where he gradually enhances his divergence in stance alignment with his stance partner.

The follow-up question (*Why do we not take into account the fact that* in Lines 5–8) designed as a *why* interrogative has a strong assertive import that is inserted through a statement of fact (for in-depth analysis of the two consecutive interrogatives in the respective example § 9.3.2, example (9.11)). While the speaker’s turn-initial utterance identifies the stance object as ‘the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy’, in his concluding interrogative sentence, the speaker shifts his orientation towards a new stance object, namely ‘the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East’, which he identifies in the assertive content of his interrogative utterance.

In the following table, I show the above argued dynamic feature of stance-taking in terms of the shifts in stance alignment with respect to the positioning project at hands.

Table 7: Stance Chain: Example (10.1) – Question Turn

Stance Object	Function	Alignment scale	Neutral/ Reportive
Mr President, <i>the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy</i> has been described.	Report	Displays affiliation with the reported account	Step by step divergence in alignment
<i>It</i> has been said that <i>it</i> was inevitable that <i>Islamic fundamentalists</i> would take over power democratically, <u>etcetera</u> .	Report (with a hint of future stance)	Hints a divergence from the presupposed stance in the reported account	
But do you not think that <i>this picture</i> is <u>catastrophic</u> , and <u>wrong</u> ?	Evaluation	Displays divergence from the reported stance	
<u>Why do we not take into account the fact that the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East</u> are strongly linked to tyrannical governments, and that there is now <i>an opportunity for democratic regimes</i> to reduce both?	Proposal	Displays commitment to a counter theory	
			Oppositional

Consequently, I argue that, stance-taking in longer turns at talk occurs in multiple stance triangles which have some components in common, while introducing new aspects in the stance project. Stance-taking in this activity type, therefore, does not occur through a triangle model but instead a chain of triangles that involve transformations in stance object, simultaneously displaying a shifting distribution of stance alignment.

10.2.2 Transitions of the Stance Object Across Long Turns of Talk in Interaction

As noted earlier, question turns in the Blue-card procedure are often preceded by a display of recognition of a prior utterance, introduced with a reportive (e.g.: ‘it is said’, ‘you say’). Such reportives often appear initially and are followed by an evaluation and then a proposition. The example above (10.1 see also Appendix 3), involves two consecutive reportives, each of which have different conversational functions in terms of Self and Other positioning. That is, the reportive in turn opening position (‘Mr President, *the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy* has been described’) positions Self as ‘doing reporting’ despite the strong evaluative import found in the identification of the stance object, namely ‘the tragic outcome

of the Egyptian transition to democracy'. The subsequent formulation (*It has been said that ...* in lines 2–4) , on the other hand, while 'doing reporting' what has been said before about the domain of a common interest, it also signals a divergence in stance alignment (i.e., etcetera). In this second reportive, the stance object, first gets blurry with the double use of non-referential pronoun *it* in its object position (*It has been said that it was inevitable that*) but is then identified with the membership category *Islamic fundamentalists*, which the speaker identifies as a shared stance object in what he formulates as a report. The former speaker, Barry Madlener, in fact, mentions neither *the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy* nor uses the term *Islamic fundamentalists* in his speech which has triggered the Blue-card question (See Appendix 3, Lines 1–19). However, the questioner, Pino Arlacchi, transforms the object of the previous speaker's stance in a way that allows him to build up his own stance. While *the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy* brings to mind victims of such a tragedy without pointing at any offenders, the reference to the category of *Islamic fundamentalists* displays an effort to distinguish a particular group of people from the rest of the Egyptians. Since, such a distinction is not found in the former speaker's (Barry Madlener) scheduled speech (see Appendix 3, Barry Madlener's first turn), I argue that the questioner transforms the stance object into something relevant to his stance-taking project.

The stance object becomes rather ambiguous (*this evaluation*) in the *evaluation* which the speaker designs as a conducive negative polarity interrogative, introduced by the stance marker *but* (But do you not think that *this evaluation* is catastrophic, and wrong?). *This evaluation* here is identified as a shared stance object based on an assumption that there is a shared view of *this evaluation* that the speaker is evaluating. Consequently, with the anaphora *this*, the speaker attains intersubjectivity by relating Self and his interlocutor.

In determining the first stance object (*the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy* in Lines 1–2), the questioner uses prior utterances in what he designs as a report. By doing so the speaker designs his turn as a response to prior utterances, in which the first stance object 'the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy' is presupposed to be identified. His concluding interrogative, however, formulated as a *why*-Q (in Lines 5–8) proposes a new object (*the fact that the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in the Middle East*) for the projected next stance. The two stance objects might be comparable in terms of their relatively similar properties. At the end of the day, speakers must design their turns so that their utterances will be taken to be relevant to the communicative project at hand (questioning and answering), as well as the sequential organization of the dialogue. It may well

be argued that the MEPs begin their question turn with a formulation of a prior utterance where they display interest in a selected object of a presupposed prior stance.

10.3 Stance Receipt

The moment-by-moment divergence from the reported proposition and the completion of the turn with the insertion of a new proposition display a switch from one stance object to a new one. Consequently, the stance partners are moved into the realm of a new ‘stance triangle’, where they are forced to reposition Self with respect to the new stance object, as well as recalibrate alignment with their stance partners. Such a dynamic organisation of question turns enables stance-takers, on the one hand, to relate the question turn to prior stances and the topical orientation of a particular debate, and on the other hand, to set constraints for the next turn aiming at influencing the online expansion of the current debate agenda.

In the following example, I show how this strategic organisation of question turn gets responded to in my data. The sequence is taken from a debate concerning the conclusions of a European Council meeting on 27 October 2011. The debate is predominantly focused on some reform proposals for the handling of the European Debt Crisis. Participants in the sequence below are members of two political groups, namely the EPP and the S&D, comprising the left-right coalition in the EP that has been holding the majority in the Parliament for more than three decades. The members of the two groups are obliged to be subtle in their practices when conversing with each other, since they are in an institutional position which requires both collaboration and competition.

(10.2) [Conclusions of the European Council Meeting (23 October 2011) – (debate) – 27.10.2011]

1 **Liisa Jaankonsaari (FI), (S&D):** Mr Langen, you spoke quite rightly
2 about *the crisis of structures* and they have been mentioned here a good
3 deal. We also often speak about *the crisis of values*. I think that *this* is also
4 about *a crisis of values*, because greed has acquired far too much power.
5 There are greedy investors, unscrupulous speculators, and unfair credit
6 rating companies. *It is thus a matter of values*. Do you also think that *this*
7 *is a crisis of values*?

8 **Werner Langen (DE), (EPP):** Mr President, this was not a question, but
9 rather a statement. We Christian Democrats practice *these values*. *This* is
10 the fundamental basis for our political activities.

In the example above, Mrs Jaankonsaari evaluates Mr Langen's presupposed prior stance through a report of his prior utterances ('you spoke quite rightly about the crisis of structures' (in Lines 1–2). She aligns her stance with that of Mr Langen's towards the presupposedly shared stance object, namely *the crisis of structure*. After having established a link between Self and Other, Mrs Jaankonsaari proposes a new object: *the crisis of values* (in Line 4). Nevertheless, the representation of the entity that is the focus of orientation is maintained as a shared stance object indexed in *this* in '*this* is also about a crisis of values' and *it* in '*It* is thus a matter of values'. By means of the stance predicates 'is also about a crisis of values' (in Lines 3–4) and 'is thus a matter of values' (in Line 6), the speaker evaluates the stance object, thereby positioning Self with respect to a selected feature of the stance object. By doing so, the speaker establishes a reason for the modification of the stance object to the stance object that the prior speaker, Mr Langen, is presupposed to be oriented towards (i.e., the shift from *the crisis of structures* to the *crisis of values*).

The questioner concludes her turn with a *Yes/No*–interrogative seeking agreement to her views (*Do you also think that this is a crisis of values?* in Lines 6–7). This interrogative embodies a stance projection in the predicate *do ... think* through the subject *you*. The questioner projects Other's stance as a potential stance alignment, employing the adverb *also* aimed at establishing common grounds as well as the joint action of *think[ing]* ('that this is a crisis of values'). Through a positive polarity interrogative, the questioner forces the respondent to reposition Self⁹² within the constraints that the question brings about. The questioner projects either a total convergence or divergence in the respondent's stance alignment, to be indexed in a *yes* or *no* answer.

The dynamic organisation of the question turn leaves the respondent faced with a set of ambiguities that force him to determine the moment-by-moment unfolding of the questioner's stance and to strategically design his stance project in the response turn. Notice the shifts in stance object in the respective question speech.

⁹² Note that the question turn is second in position in the Blue-card sequence, the scheduled speech by Mr Langen being the first.

Table 8: Stance Chain: Example (10.2) – Question Turn

Stance Object	Function	Alignment scale	Neutral/ Reportive
Mr Langen, you spoke quite rightly <i>about the crisis of structures</i> ...	report & Evaluation	Displays affiliation to the reported account by the stance partner	Step by step divergence in alignment
I think that <i>this</i> is also about a crisis of values, ...	Evaluation	Displays divergence in alignment through a new proposal	
<i>It</i> is thus a matter of values	Evaluation	Maintains divergence in alignment	
Do you also think that <i>this</i> is a crisis of values?	Proposition	Invites the stance partner to align his stance towards the new stance object	
			Adversarial

The respondent, Mr Langen, however, provides a nonconforming answer to Mrs Jaankonsaari's agreement seeking question. Mr Langen recognizes Mrs Jaankonsaari's interrogative utterance as a statement, denying the questioning feature of it ('Mr President, this was not a question, but rather a statement.'), which explains why he is about to give a nonconforming response. Mr Langen's response is more oriented towards his questioner's evaluative stance than the request for agreement.

In his response, 'We Christian Democrats practice these values. This is the fundamental basis for our political activities', Mr Langen re-claims a position on behalf of his political group. His defensive response presupposes that there are doubts about his group's practice of some unidentified values. The demonstrative *these*, modifying *values* provides for creating common grounds, on the basis of a presupposedly shared stance object. Despite the shift in the stance object (see the table below), both participants contribute to creating common grounds, indicating a set of presupposedly shared values. Nevertheless, the response is less than affiliative since the respondent avoids convergence in alignment. See the table below.

Table 9: Stance Chain – Example (10.2) – Response Turn

Stance Object	Function	Alignment scale
Mr President, <i>this</i> was not a question, but rather a statement.	Evaluation	Disaffiliates through nonconforming response
We Christian Democrats practice <i>these values</i> . <i>This</i> is the fundamental basis for our political activities.	Propositional Statement	Avoids alignment based on in-group – out-group differentiation

Stance-taking in the EP is a complex and dynamic interactional process that involves strategic shifts in alignment in terms of the degree of convergence and divergence that participants display in their moment-by-moment setting up of grounds for the present and projected positions. Although participants might display orientation towards a seemingly shared stance object, the diverse groundings they accomplish, in fact, determine the stance object. My hypothesis is that, *stance-taking* in everyday conversations as well occur in such a dynamic, where stance-takers strive to influence the direction of the conversation while, at the same time, complying with the constraints of the communicative activity type that they are engaged in. In order for the stance takers to come up with a stance of their own, they have to bring up Self/Other (in-group/out-group) differentiations. This means that stance-takers must display an understanding of prior stance(s) to which their next action responds. By this way, stance-takers establish a link and relevance between prior, present, and next stances and make their stances intelligible.

10.4 Concluding Remarks

Given that stance-taking is a ‘joint engagement’ (Kärkkäinen, 2006), participants must display recognition or some understanding of their stance partner’s prior stance as well the stance object that the stance partner is presupposed to be oriented towards. My data indicates that the MEPs typically link their stance utterances to prior or projected future stances through a formulation, involving a description or report of what the stance partner accomplished (i.e., ‘you told us’, ‘you say’ it is suggested’).

Such formulations in stance-taking processes are handy vehicles that enable participants to accomplish various acts: On the one hand, participants display an engagement to the prior utterances. On the other hand, participants modify the stance object as well as the grounding of the stance.

Reportives are performed routinely under the Blue-card procedure and have a conversational function in identifying a stance object and establishing relevancies for the participants for the positioning projects at hand. My data indicates that reportives signal a derivation in stance alignment and thus signals troublesome junctures. Participants characteristically build their impending stance acts upon the attributions they make in the reportives. Consequently, reporting is not an innocent thing to do. Neither does it build a neutral stance for the speakers in PI. On the contrary, it is an important component of stance-taking in longer turns at talk as it provides for the grounding of the speaker's stance.

In my data, reportives are generally found early in the turn and are followed by an evaluation of the stance attributed to the stance partner in the formulation (i.e., 'you spoke quite rightly' as in 10.2, 'this picture is catastrophic, and wrong' as in 10.1). The evaluation can be designed as a statement or as an interrogative seeking opinion, confirmation, acceptance, or confession. My data indicates that negatively formulated interrogatives, which are conducive to a confirming answer, are routinely employed under the Blue-card procedure. Such interrogatives are designed to set up contradictory a position for Other, compared to the previous attributed stance. Evaluations typically convey the speaker's stance towards the stance partners attributed stance.

Blue-card questions in my data are often concluded with a proposal where the speaker delivers her/his stance towards the stance object of her/his choice. Up to this point in the Blue-card question turn, the stance object that the prior speaker is supposed to be oriented towards is manipulated and transformed into a new stance object for the speaker's current positioning project. Propositions may be designed as interrogatives in diverse forms (i.e., 'Why do we not take into account the fact that [...] ' as in 10.1, 'Do you also think that this is a crisis of values?', as in 10.2), typically inviting the stance partner to stance-alignment in relation to the new stance object that the speaker has identified.

Approaching stance-taking as a dynamic interactional process provided insights into the fluid transformations of the stance object as participants manipulate each Other's stanced utterances in order to ground their stances and positioning projects. The chain of stance triangles model, proposed in this chapter, enables examination of the moment-by-moment unfolding of stance both in longer turns at talk and longer sequences, both of which are typically found in

parliamentary interaction. The analysis also demonstrated the dialogic process of continuous grounding that enables participants to set up temporal positions within the course of a turn in order to construct, maintain, and/ or transgress intergroup boundaries.

Chapter 11 Conclusions

As this study empirically demonstrated, the Blue-card Q & A procedure constitutes the most dynamic and interactive institutionalized communicative activity type in the EP. The procedure allows the MEPs to take the floor ‘spontaneously’ for a 30-second speaking time in order to ask a question to another MEP. However, my analysis showed that the MEPs employ Blue-card questions for purposes other than questioning. They accomplish functions that do not necessarily do questioning, but accusations, complaints, assertions, etc. In fact, the MEPs appear to be engaged in the construction and maintenance of intergroup relations through the discursive activities of *grouping*, *grounding positioning*, *stance-taking*, and *alignment*. The present study has examined these activities using an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating knowledge gained from research in social psychology, interaction analysis, and discourse analysis.

11.1 Advocating an Interdisciplinary Research

Interdisciplinary research synthesizes knowledge that has been developed in distinct research traditions and applies it to the exploration of a particular phenomenon. Interdisciplinary research uses insights from diverse disciplines towards a ‘co-production of explanations for the variables of interest’ (Lach, 2014). This thesis has brought together insights from Positioning Theory, which has emerged in social psychology as an approach to social interaction, and the Stance-taking model, which has been developed in linguistics as a systematic method for analysing linguistic behaviour in human interaction.

Having undertaken the task of exploring the behavioural patterns in the MEPs’ use of their linguistic and discursive repertoire in their competitive endeavour to (re/de)construct and maintain intergroup relations, this interdisciplinarity has proven useful and complementary. Most importantly, the stance-taking model has provided the linguistic methodological tools for the examination of the interactional processes of positioning.

Furthermore, this study argues that the combined use of Harré’s Positioning Theory and Du Bois’ Stance Theory makes it possible to interpret how contradictory ideologies and adversarial political agendas come into action in parliamentary interaction, how they frame and form the MEPs verbal behaviour.

For instance, Qs that are oriented towards Other’s state of knowledge (e.g., ‘Do you know that’, ‘Is he aware that’, ‘Has it ever occurred to you that’) neatly illustrate how stance analysis

complements positioning analysis to uncover intergroup relations that the MEPs engage in in pursuit of achieving their political ends. Such questions are designed as yes/no interrogatives, checking the respondent's state of knowledge (knowing or not knowing), or state of awareness. While stance analysis demonstrates how the questioners build epistemic supremacy over their respondents by checking what Other already knows, positioning analysis uncovers the asymmetrical epistemic status between the questioners and the respondents which eventually set up troublesome positions for the respondents.

Furthermore, the combined use of the two theories also enabled the analysis to reveal what the MEPs accomplish in each discursive chunk (address, question frames, and 'questions') as part of their larger projects towards organizing intergroup boundaries. For instance, the analysis has shown that the MEPs' choice of address forms does positioning, indexing institutional roles (i.e., Mrs President, the Leader of Socialist and Democrats), relational distance (i.e., My dear friend, My honourable colleague), social, political and demographic connotations (i.e., Lord Darthmouth, Sir, Madam, Mrs, Ms). Hence, Other-positioning by means of address determines what sorts of consequences Other's actions will bring about. QFs, on the other hand, enable the MEPs to accomplish both positioning and stance-taking. The MEPs take not-knowing stances aimed at displaying collaborative intentions in using the Blue-card question procedure. They thereby set up positions for the self and Other, invoking the rights and obligations to seek as opposed to provide certain information. The MEPs package their often-adversarial stances as well as their claims for higher epistemic status in the focal 'question' with modest metacommunications, seeking to elicit information. 'Questions' are the focal aspects of Blue-card addresses, enabling the MEPs to execute diverse functions, that are characteristically not congruent with the actions that the QFs project. Let me remind the reader of an example in which the speaker designs a polite information seeking question frame (*We would like to ask the honourable Member*) for her accusatory question displaying adversariality (*is she ashamed of herself, yes or no?*). 'Questions' enable the MEPs to display their stances by means of setting up positions for Other.

My analysis shows, that positioning and stance-taking should not be understood as separate, sequentially occurring activities. Speakers carry out both activities, as combined engagements along with *grouping*, *grounding* and *alignment*, in an effort to influence the social organization of interpersonal as well as intergroup relations.

11.2 Research Questions Answered

Parliamentary debates are carried out through institutionally governed communicative activities, among which the Blue-card question and answer exchange has been analysed in-depth in this study. Being the only ‘spontaneous’ interaction in the EP, the analysis of the Blue-card procedure provided knowledge about the ways in which the MEPs design their utterances when they do not read their speeches from scripted texts. This thesis has found that repeated patterns of linguistic and discursive behaviour brings about a style in *stance-taking* that is associated with parliaments as *communities of practice*. These patterns, on the one hand, restrict speakers to a certain utterance design that begins with address, continues with a preface expressing a desire to ask a question (Question Frame), and concludes with an utterance, not necessarily an interrogative, that triggers a response. On the other hand, every chunk in the utterance enables speakers to set the grounds for making their stances intelligible.

The analysis of address forms has shown that the choice of address forms as well as the shifts in these forms provides for the organization of interpersonal/intergroup relations. Strategic choice of address with respect to parliamentary footing designates the positions available for the stance partners in a particular interaction. In order to be able to determine how the MEPs’ choice of address forms contribute to their stance and the positions they set up for Self and Other(s), the address must be examined within the interactional situation of the particular utterance.

QFs enable the MEPs

- to accomplish some sort of a distance between Self and the stance partner through the indirectness that QFs add to question utterances,
- to claim that the speaker is performing routine actions (asking, wondering, wanting to know), that comply with the rules and conventions governing the Blue-card procedure in the EP,
- to perform multiple stances through a shift from the QF to the focal question.

The analysis of questions shows that the MEPs predominantly take epistemic stances in order to accomplish epistemic supremacy over their adversaries. They do so through statements of facts and strong assertions that they embed in the topical content of their question utterances.

Within the constraints of the Blue-card Q&A procedure, although the MEPs are primarily restricted to interrogative syntax, they predominantly make assertions and direct

accusations to their adversaries in utterances framed as information seeking or opinion seeking questions. The routine forms of address, QFs and question types enable the MEPs to package their strongly adversarial evaluative stances with an unknowing epistemic stance (e.g.: *We would like ask the honourable colleague* if she is ashamed of herself, yes or no'). In other instances, the MEPs may frame a proposition, conveying strong commitment to its truth, as a confirmation seeking question (e.g.: '*Would you admit* that you have no interest in the matters concerning the EU?').

With regard to the quantitative distribution of certain question types, my data shows that the Blue-card procedure involves a variety of interrogative formats, the majority of which are formulated as Yes/No Qs (59,25%). Characteristically, this structure does not ask for information. Thus, the overwhelming use of Yes/No questions indicates that, in most cases, the MEPs *do not seek information* through the use of Blue-card questions.

Wh-interrogatives (amounting to 37,94% of the data) constitute the second most used interrogative type. However, two question formats, namely interrogatives starting with *who* and *when*, are not found in the data. *How*-and *why*- interrogatives, on the other hand, are typically used to express outrage or to accuse. Furthermore, *why*-interrogatives can be ironic, conveying a sarcastic suggestion.

In terms of positioning Other, and thereby Self, I have identified three main functions that the MEPs accomplish by using the Blue-card.

- The MEPs raise doubts about Other's social accountability by questioning the appropriateness of Other's actions to institutionally defined positions.
- The MEPs raise doubts about Other's epistemic accountability by questioning Other's state of knowledge.
- The MEPs raise doubts about Other's moral accountability by questioning Other's rights with respect to and responsibilities for certain collectives such as EU citizens, European taxpayers, and hardworking people of the EU.

The analysis has shown a discrepancy between the seeking functions that are expressed in Qs and the actual functions that speakers accomplish through their Qs. Strong assertions can be framed as opinion-seeking Qs, or the MEPs use confirmation-seeking Qs to accuse Other(s). In that respect, questioning in Blue-card procedure displays incongruity between the purposes, the use, and the functions of the procedure.

11.3 Questioning as a Parliamentary Practice

Whether or not to allow question periods at a parliament has been subject to some discussions about their use, functions, and consequences. There have been efforts to adopt a parliamentary-style question procedure in the U.S. However, these efforts have met strong objections in the U.S. Congress on a number of grounds. Among those, three points are relevant for the present study.

- A question period is a poor form of oversight,
- A question period will intensify partisanship,
- A question period will be generally filled with theatrics and manipulation (Glassman, 2009).

The opponents of introducing questions times in the U.S Congress are concerned about the powerful effects of such parliamentary practice. The results of this thesis have shown that these concerns are valid for the EP context as well.

At the same time, as shown in the current thesis, The Blue-card question procedure plays a significant role in the EP. Blue-card Qs constitute interactional tools for the social organization of intergroup relations. It enables the MEPs to maintain their stances and re-establish positions for Self and Other(s).

Ordinarily, Blue-card questions are meant to elicit information that the questioner presupposedly lacks. However, the analysis has shown that the MEPs accomplish various functions other than questioning through propositions embodied in the Blue-card questions. For example, *wh*-interrogatives that request clarification of a prior stance utterance may have a rhetorical effect which is meant to set up a troublesome position for Other (e.g.: *The question I would like to ask to my honorable colleague: Why is he so against tax payers across Europe?*). In other instances, the MEPs convey strong condemning stances towards Other(s) by means of seemingly information seeking questions (e.g.: ‘I would like to know, on my behalf of my colleagues, whether she is ashamed of herself, yes or no?’).

The analysis has demonstrated that participants in this communicative activity type design their Blue-card question turns as responses to a prior stance by their political others in order to argue what differentiates Self from Other(s). The discursive chunks, comprising address, QFs, statements and/or questions enable speakers to construct a stance object for their own stance-taking where they incorporate reports and evaluations of selected parts of the prior turn. Consequently, my data indicates that Blue-card questions are typically designed as responses to Other’s prior or presupposed stances.

The results of the analysis have proven that the Blue-card procedure does not work for the purposes it is meant for. That is, the procedure provides for *intergroup positioning* through actions other than questioning. The MEPs typically employ interrogatively framed assertions as a means to establish epistemic or moral supremacy over Other(s) in their endeavour to influence public opinion. From a linguistic perspective, I conclude that the use, hence, the functions of the Blue-card procedure does comply with its officially declared purposes (§ 4.2.2).⁹³

Such use of the Blue-card cannot be seen as a ‘failure’ to comply with institutionally defined purposes of the procedure. In fact, given the restrictions on interaction in the European Parliament, the MEPs are strategic and quite creative in the way they use parliamentary forms of linguistic resources. Being restricted to a single question turn and a single response turn within one Blue-card procedure, neither of the interactants gets the opportunity to further elaborate on, back up, or annotate their prior utterances. Furthermore, they are obliged to use certain forms of address and design their 30-second-limited speech in ways in which it contains an interrogative sentence. The analysis has shown that, the MEPs exploit these restrictions and the conventional cliché-like Blue-card question design as a means to construct, reinforce, and transgress intergroup boundaries.

11.4 The Dynamic Aspect of Stance-taking

This thesis contributes to Stance Theory by introducing a *temporal* understanding of stance-taking in interaction which occurs over long turns at talk. In my analysis, I have shown the dynamic and interpersonal transformations of the stance-object throughout one Blue-card question as the MEPs manipulate Other’s utterances. My data indicates that the MEPs routinely employ reportives as a means firstly, to display recognition of a prior (i.e., ‘you said’) or projected (‘you may say’) stance, and secondly, to introduce a new stance object that would serve their positioning projects.

While the MEPs shift their orientation from one stance object, towards which Other is presupposedly oriented, to another stance object of their choice, they display shifting distributions of stance alignment. Through moment-by-moment unfolding of the grounds for

⁹³ Description of the Blue-card Procedure in the European Parliament Directorate-General for the Presidency Directorate for the Plenary, The Plenary: a User’s Guide.

stances taken by Self, the MEPs force Other into *repositioning* along with the positions that the speakers set up for Self and Other.

11.5 The Notion of ‘Collaborative Competition’

As this study has shown, the rules of the Blue-card Q&A procedure are clearly defined, the Parliament is well-informed about the rules, and the MEPs are familiar with the conventional discourses and linguistic formats that have been recycled in the EP. When the MEPs stand up to put a Blue-card question, they do their utmost to differentiate Self from some imagined Others. Grouping appears to be an essential action that the MEPs accomplish via interaction in the Parliament. In this study, I have empirically shown that Parliamentary Interaction in the form of Blue-card Q&A exchanges occurs in what I call a ‘collaborative competition’ where the MEPs’ engage in intergroup positioning. Let us elaborate on the two seemingly contradictory activities, namely collaboration and competition, which occur intertwined in the EP.

Parliamentary interaction is *collaborative*: The analysis has shown that the MEPs display *collaborative intentions* to exchange information, ideas or opinions (i.e., *I would be interested to listen to you, I would like to hear your views, I am very much interested to know your opinion*). Such collaborative intentions are often recognized by respondents as they provide some sort of an answer to the preceding Blue-card question. In some cases, respondents openly display *recognition* (i.e., *Thank you for the question Mr X, I appreciate your question Ms X*) and *reciprocation* (i.e., *I will be happy to answer, It’s my pleasure to exchange ideas on this matter*) of their questioner’s initiation of a collaboration.

Parliamentary interaction is *competitive*: My data indicates that the MEPs’ display of collaboration is often followed by an adversarial question that builds up hostile positions for Other (i.e., *We would like to ask the honourable Member whether she is ashamed of herself, yes or no?*). The MEPs manipulate their opponent’s prior or projected utterances in an effort to construct or reinforce intergroup boundaries. However, these boundaries hardly ever coincide between the different speakers. See the example below.

(11. 1) Emission performance standards for new light commercial vehicles (debate) – 15.02.2011

- 1 **Chris Davies (ALDE), (UK)** – Madam President, Mr Nuttall tells us that the
- 2 requirement to recycle electrical waste puts up the price of products. Can he then
- 3 also tell us who – if not the producer – should pay for the disposal of those
- 4 products? Why is he so against council taxpayers, ratepayers and local

5 governments across Europe, in his own country and elsewhere, who have to bear
6 the burden of dealing with such waste, which he says the producer should not have
7 to pay for.

8 **Paul Nuttall (EFD), (UK)** – Madam President, I too enjoy my jousts with Mr
9 Davies. It seems that we have these little jousts on every speech that I give. [...] *I*
10 *am standing up for hardworking taxpayers.*

The positions that the MEPs set up often bring about ambiguities as the MEPs compete for the same position, on the side of the EU citizens, or more specifically the EU taxpayers. That is, the MEPs claim an already occupied position, leaving their opponents with a vague position. In such cases references to what has been said or done by the opponents are strategically used to argue for the inappropriateness of the opponent's stance, thereby legitimizing self-positioning.

In his response to his questioner's accusation, Mr Nuttall openly claims the position 'standing up for hardworking taxpayer' (in Lines 8–9). The respondent rejects the position set up for him by his questioner and claims the position ('standing up for hardworking taxpayers') that was already, by implication, claimed by his questioner in the preceding speech. By implication, the speaker forces his questioner to reposition Self as he has invaded the position claimed by the questioner.

The MEPs construct a reality moment-by-moment by means of the discursive chunks - Address, QFs, and Questions - they recurrently employ. They strive to make their realities as the grounds for the understanding of stances taken by Self and Other. To do that, the MEPs might need to go against Other's realities. Indeed, the analysis has shown that the Blue-card question procedure occurs along with competitive processes of grounding.

Consequently, the study has displayed that intergroup positioning in the EP emerges in a 'collaborative competition' between contradictory ideologies and political agendas. All participants engage in the maintenance and negotiation of intergroup boundaries, even though the fluid definitions of boundaries are hardly in agreement between the different speakers. The MEPs discursively fence off/in some imaginary territories, leaving their adversaries with vague positions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The organization of taking turns in uninterrupted Blue-card procedure

Participants

A: the respondent

B: the questioner

C: President

A, B, C, A, C, B, C, A, C

Example taken from the plenary debate held on 20th January 2011. Debate item 1: The report by Mr Eppink, on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary affairs, on the Report on Competition Policy 2009 (2010/2137(INI))

1 **Philippe Lamberts**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, first
2 of all, I would like to thank Commissioner Almunia, who is not here today but who,
3 even though it is not the European Parliament's domain, spends a considerable
4 amount of time with us in the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and
5 is therefore investing time in an ongoing dialogue with Parliament on these matters.
6 I would also like to thank the rapporteur. We often do this formally but, Mr Eppink,
7 although our parties often disagree on many things, I must say that while drawing
8 up this report, there were no taboo matters in our discussion. All points were fully
9 addressed in a very constructive spirit, and this should be highlighted.

10 I would now like to move on to three points with which I believe the Commission
11 should move forward. One, as was pointed out, is the importance of the financial
12 sector, which, in truth, is given too much weight in the economy.

13 We know the financial crisis has meant that the financial groups that came through
14 did so bigger and stronger. So there really is a problem of market distortion in that
15 area, and this does not only relate to special State aid measures established by
16 Member States to help their financial sector, but also, and we emphasised this in
17 the report, various forms of direct aid from the European Central Bank (ECB) that
18 are, I am sorry to say, not very transparent at all.

19 We therefore urge the Commission to focus on the way in which the ECB has
20 helped the banks, because it is clear that the banks that went to the ECB to seek
21 help benefited from a kind of aid that those that were better managed did not
22 request. Banks that were properly managed, therefore, have somehow been victims
23 of a market distortion.

24 The second sector is that of raw materials, particularly food commodities. We know
25 that large agro-industrial businesses and major retailers have a market position that
26 gives them far too strong an influence over price formation. A market survey on
27 this issue is absolutely vital.

28 Another point, and not the least important, is tax competition. You know that most
29 Member States, including my own and many others, practise forms of tax
30 competition that are very harmful to the general European interest. These forms of
31 competition must be stopped. I know that the Commission is beginning to take an
32 interest in this issue once again, but I strongly urge Commissioner Almunia and
33 Commissioner Šemeta to tackle this problem.

34 Moving on to my last point, we were pleased to note that Commissioner Almunia
35 has already imposed fines in various sectors since the beginning of his term of
36 office, particularly in the air freight sector. We also welcome the opening of the
37 investigation into Google, which I think partially answers the point Mrs in 't Veld
38 made a moment ago.

(The speaker agreed to take a blue card question under Rule 149(8))

39 **President.** –Mr Lamberts, Mr Hans-Peter Martin has used his blue card to signal
40 that he wishes to ask you a question. Are you willing to listen to him? Many thanks.

41 Mr Martin, you have 30 seconds to question Mr Lamberts on the matter.

42 **Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** –(DE) Mr President, Mr Lamberts referred to the special
43 supports that banks have received from the European Central Bank. Perhaps he
44 could explain in a little more detail what he means and how this worked? He also
45 made reference to the fact that this support is to be abolished. How would he
46 propose that we take control here, ensuring that the wrong people do not make a 47
fat profit?

48 **President.** –That is a big question to answer in just thirty seconds; however, I have
49 every confidence in Mr Lambert's powers of summation.

50 **Philippe Lamberts, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.** – (FR) Mr President,
51 answering that kind of question in 30 seconds is clearly an almost impossible task.

52 What is the issue here? The European Central Bank (ECB) agrees to provide
53 liquidity to banks that request it, in an unlimited way, accepting all kinds of assets
54 as collateral for that liquidity. However, we do not have a very clear idea of the
55 nature of those assets. We also strongly suspect that many of them are, as they say,
56 syphilitic or toxic assets whose real market value is very difficult to determine and
57 some of those assets might even be worthless.

58 Under such conditions, this therefore constitutes a direct form of aid. Clearly, if the
59 ECB did not provide this liquidity in exchange for these guarantees, which are
60 actually quite short-lived, then it is possible that some of these financial institutions
61 would go bankrupt.

62 Finding an answer to this is not simple; however, in any case, the first step is to
63 have transparency as regards those assets.

64 **President.** –Thank you, Mr Lamberts, for such a clear response on such a
65 complicated issue.

Appendix 2: Prolonged Blue-card procedure with follow-up questions and supplementary explanations.

The example is taken from the plenary debate held on June, 8 2011. Debate item 11: Council and Commission statements on the revised Hungarian constitution.

1 **Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE).** – Madam President, I strongly disagree with all of
2 those who have said that it is not respecting sovereignty if we debate and criticise
3 a Member State’s constitution here, or that it would, as somebody has said, be a
4 dangerous precedent and acting outside of European competence.

5 The constitutions of Member States have to be in accordance with European values,
6 with our value community which we have defined. There are at least two things I
7 would like to mention which are not in line with that. Others have mentioned
8 others.

8 The first is that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is not included and
9 that has to be included in the future. Also, marriage and family values as defined
10 there go beyond the reality of people living in Europe and in Hungary, and it is not
11 the rule of diversity that we have.

12 One other thing relates to the so-called Green Ombudsman for the rights of future
13 generations on environment and sustainability. This post is now subordinated to
14 the general Ombudsman, as other Ombudsmen have been, and so it is weakened.
15 This is also an area where competences are taken out of the sphere of regulations
16 that were there before, and it makes clear that the issue of sustainability,
17 environmental protection and the rights of future generations – another part of
18 European values which needs to be important, is no longer as important as it was
19 before. One last point: there was also an Ombudsman on data protection. That post
20 has been abolished totally, so transparency of information about the State, for
21 example on public procurement, is not there anymore. This is something that is
22 heavily criticised by me and by my group.

(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

23 **Kinga Gál (PPE).** –(HU) Mrs Lunacek, I would like to ask you whether you can
24 list the Member States of the European Union whose constitution includes the
25 institution of an ombudsman or commissioner for the rights of future generations.
26 How many Member States have such an institution as the one in Hungary that is

27 actually functioning and is mentioned in the Hungarian constitution? Also,
28 assuming you have read the current Hungarian constitution, the new Hungarian
29 constitution adopted in April, can you name constitutions which contain more and
30 farther reaching articles on environmental protection and future generations than
31 the new Hungarian constitution? I challenge you to name them.

32 **Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE).** –Madam President, my reply to Ms Gálisas
33 follows. The issue was not a comparison with other Member States’ constitutions.
34 The issue was: what is a European value? What is part of our fundamental rights?
35 What is enshrined in the common values that I hope you share as well?

36 With regard to the rights of future generations, environmental sustainability is
37 something that is enshrined in the rights of our common European Union. Some
38 Member States have that and others might not have it, but the fact is that in the new
39 constitution, the government of Hungary has abolished this symbolic Ombudsman.
40 There is now only one Ombudsman and the symbolic value, stated in writing, is no
41 longer there. You know how important symbols are in politics as well. That means
42 that you do not want to have this symbolic representation, either at the political or
43 the Ombudsman level.

(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

44 **József Szájer (PPE).** – Madam President, maybe it was not understandable, but I
45 shall make the question more simple. Ms Lunacek, in your country – I know you
46 are from Austria – is there a Green Ombudsman? In Hungary, there was a Green
47 Ombudsman several years ago and there will be one, according to the new
48 constitution. Is there a Green Ombudsman in your country? Yes, or no?

49 **Ulrike Lunacek (Verts/ALE).** –Madam President, I must say to Mr Szájer: sorry,
50 that is not the problem. Hungary had a Green ...

(Laughter)

51 OK, laugh if you want to. I do not mind laughter, I like humour, but the issue is
52 that, with the new constitution in Hungary, this Green Ombudsman has been
53 abolished and he has been subordinated. All the four Ombudsmen or
54 Ombudswomen that existed have been subordinated to one general office of the
55 Ombudsman. The issue of sustainability of future generations is not as visible as it
56 was before and that is the criticism I have.

57 My country does not have such a post. Of course, as a Green, I would fight for that,
58 but you have written a new constitution and this abolishes a symbolic and a political
59 value that I guess was important to you, as you say now. Why did you abolish it
60 then? Why did you not keep it there so that everybody could see a Green
61 Ombudsman who is in favour of the rights of future generations, environment and
62 sustainability? You have not explained that, colleagues.

63 **Alexander Alvaro (ALDE).** –(DE) Madam President, I have a lot of sympathy
64 with the position of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian
65 Democrats) in other areas. We work closely together on economic issues. However,
66 in this particular case, we must make it clear that we should not play party politics
67 here. Above all, we must emphasise that it is scandalous to criticise the constitution
68 of a Member State in this forum, whichever Member State that may be.

69 There are Member States, and here I am looking at Mr Busuttil, among others,
70 since he brought up the issue so forcefully, who seek the support of the European
71 Union when they experience problems; it is an expression of European solidarity
72 that we should provide help when, for example, Malta experiences a problem with
73 refugees. However, solidarity must be based on shared values, and all of the groups
74 within this House are responsible for sustaining such values.

75 Although the Charter of Fundamental Rights may only be binding on European
76 legislation and its implementation, Articles 2, 6 and 7 of the Treaties are binding

77 on all Member States. A two-thirds majority was cemented into the Hungarian
78 constitution, so that, realistically speaking, any future Hungarian Government will
79 be unable to amend any of the country's laws. This goes against the principle of
80 parliamentary democracy. This limiting of the powers of the constitutional court is
81 something quite unique and threatens the principle of the separation of powers. We
82 cannot discount the possibility that there is a breach of international law in relation
83 to criminal proceedings.

84 There is so much I could say, but I certainly wish to state the following: it is not
85 just the right of the EU and the European Commission to make their voice heard in
86 this case; it is also their duty. In the past – even long before the European Union
87 existed – Europe too often held back on criticising abuses in Member States. My
88 country, along with others, has experience of this. When the politicians remain
89 silent, sooner or later the people will make themselves heard and then we need to
90 ask ourselves whether it is too late and whether we have failed.

(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

91 **Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE).** –(HU) Mr Alvaro, this is true, just one sentence. We
92 agree. This criticism is shameful. My question is this: on what grounds do you base
93 your opinion that a fundamental law adopted by a two-thirds majority cannot be
94 changed in a democratic country? It could be changed so far. It can be changed in
95 other countries as well. Please be specific. Which exactly are the common values,
96 common European values, that the Hungarian constitution excludes, rejects, or
97 comes into conflict with? Because what you are saying is too general.

98 **Alexander Alvaro (ALDE).** –(DE) Madam President, many thanks for your
99 question. I accept the criticism that I have dealt in generalities in the minute's
100 speaking time allocated to me. However, I can provide more concrete examples.

101 European values are one thing; however, European values also mean, for example,
102 that a Member State should operate on the rule of law, which entails issues such as
103 the separation of powers and the democratic principle. When, for example, a
104 constitutional court has no jurisdiction in budgetary and taxation matters, this
105 constitutes a restriction in the separation of powers and is unquestionably a dubious
106 situation. Accordingly, I believe that we can discuss such issues.

107 With regard to the other questions, such as the two-thirds majority, I must ask to
108 what extent this is compatible with parliamentary democracy if future governments
109 no longer have any room to manoeuvre. It is certainly open to question whether life
110 imprisonment without any right of appeal or judicial review by the supreme court
111 is compatible with the principles of democracy and the rule of law upheld in the
112 European Union. These are questions that need answers and I believe that the
113 Commission must investigate.

(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

114 **József Szájer (PPE).** – (HU) Mr Alvaro, I would like to ask you whether you are
115 aware that the Hungarian constitution previously in force specified 27 laws that
116 could only be modified by a two-thirds majority, while the new constitution
117 specifies only 26. What is the problem here? A recent scholarly analysis came up
118 with this number; it is not my own calculation.

119 **Alexander Alvaro (ALDE).** –(DE) Madam President, I believe that people will
120 forgive me if I answer a question based on a subjective opinion with a subjective
121 opinion of my own. No, I do not think it is the most modern.
(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

122 **Manfred Weber(PPE).** –(DE) Madam President, Mr Alvaro, you have just
123 demonstrated how to extend your speaking time by accepting numerous questions.
124 However, I would like to ask you whether you are aware that the provisions for the
125 Hungarian constitutional court – I am not sure whether you have read the
126 Hungarian constitution in its entirety – are almost identical to those that apply to
127 the constitutional court in Germany. Therefore, I wanted to ask you whether the
128 German constitutional court is just as undemocratic and worthy of criticism as the
129 Hungarian constitutional court? I would like to hear your answer to this question.

130 **Alexander Alvaro(ALDE).** –(DE) Madam President, Mr Weber, as you have just
131 stated that it is only identical in certain sections, it is quite clear that there are also
132 sections where it may be open to question whether the fact that the Hungarian
133 constitution circumscribes the jurisdiction of the constitutional court in tax and
134 budgetary issues is compatible with the principle of the separation of powers.

135 If you were now to tell me that the German constitutional court could not decide
136 on tax issues, for example, following a judgment by the German Federal Court of
137 Justice, or if budget law could not be examined by the German constitutional court
138 for example, by way of a constitutional dispute between government institutions,
139 such as a party in the German *Bundestag*, then I would agree with you. However,
140 the German constitution does permit this, while also allowing a case to be taken to
141 the German constitutional court in such questions.
(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

142 **Vytautas Landsbergis (PPE).** –Madam President, I would like to refer to
143 something that was mentioned before; the rights of future generations. It looks very
144 unique in the Hungarian constitution, something that is being enshrined in the
145 Hungarian constitution, and recognised seemingly also here.

146 This raises a question I would like to ask about the basic right of those eventual
147 members of future generations – to be *born*. Is caring about future human beings a
148 European value – or not? Maybe not European, only Hungarian? Then Europe
149 should look to Hungary with gratitude for reminding it of some fundamentals.

150 **Kinga Gál (PPE).** –(HU) It is not stated at a constitutional level that everyone
151 should set their own houses in order. Mr Alvaro, I said to you as well, as a Liberal
152 MEP, that those who respect and emphasise the right to being different in all areas
153 should be prepared to accept that being different can appear in the spirit, in the
154 choice of values and the structures of the constitutions. This is what I wanted to 155
say.

156 This does not mean that we do not respect the basic values of the EU, or we do not
157 comply fully with the requirements set out in European law or international law.
158 *(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))*

159 **Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D).** –(HU) Mrs Gál, I would like to give an answer as

160 to why the previous rule stating that amendments to the constitution could only be
161 accepted with the support of a four-fifths majority of MPs had to be changed. This
162 rule, which had been accepted by a parliamentary majority that obtained 72% of
163 the votes between 1994 and 1998 to protect the rights of political minorities and
164 the opposition, was abolished by Fidesz. What was the reason for this? The
165 opposition did not participate in the work in the absence of this guarantee; it was
166 not a case of being deprived of this right, as this rule had been changed.
167 Commissioner Reding, I would like to draw your attention to this.

168 **Kinga Gál (PPE).** – (HU) Mr Tabajdi, I have not been a Member of the Hungarian
169 Parliament since 1990, but my colleagues, who were Members, or even party group
170 leaders and speakers of the House at the time, claim that there was no such rule in
171 force. This is not true. I think you should carry out this debate in the Hungarian
172 Parliament; this is completely outside the scope of the debates in the European
173 Parliament.

174 **Sylvie Guillaume (S&D).** – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the new
175 Hungarian constitution drafted by the Orbán government is not lacking in rather
176 striking articles, as my fellow Members have pointed out.

177 The chapter on private life appears to be the high point of a constitution that is
178 based, as we have noted, exclusively on Christian religious references and
179 traditional family values. It would appear that this text also allows the right to
180 abortion in Hungary to be restricted by stating, and I quote, ‘that the life of the
181 foetus will be protected from the time of conception’. The Hungarian Government
182 has backed up its words by action in this area by launching an anti-abortion
183 communication campaign which would still, apparently, appear to be using funds
184 from the European PROGRESS programme (Community Programme for
185 Employment and Social Solidarity).

186 At a time when the European Union is holding up progress and gender equality as
187 common fundamental values, it is somewhat surprising that these European funds
188 should be involved in a campaign of this nature. I should therefore like to take the
189 opportunity of this debate to question the Commission on the validation of the
190 funding for this campaign by the PROGRESS programme.
(*The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8)*)

191 **Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz (PPE).** – (HU) Mrs Guillaume, I would like to ask you a
192 question. In your opinion, how have the regulations concerning the concept of
193 abortion and the rules pertaining to abortion in the new constitution changed
194 compared with the previous constitution?

195 **Sylvie Guillaume (S&D).** – (FR) Madam President, I should like to encourage a
196 response from the Commission about the programme in question. I have already
197 put the question to the Commission, and I am awaiting a response to learn whether
198 it has indeed been verified that these funds have indeed been used for this
199 campaign.

Appendix 3: Complete Blue-card Sequence

The example is taken from the plenary debate held on 16th February 2011. Debate item 12: The statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the situation in Egypt.

- 1 **Barry Madlener (NI).** - *(NL)* Mr President, now that the dust has settled in Egypt,
2 it is time we opened our eyes to what is really happening in North Africa.
- 3 Many of the protesters are seeking, not democracy, but the imposition of sharia.
4 ‘Allah akbar’ was a slogan which was often heard during the protests. Journalists
5 were harassed, a Dutch correspondent was threatened with death and the saddest
6 thing of all is that the splendid American journalist Lara Logan was sexually
7 abused by a mob.
- 8 The ayatollahs behind dictator Ahmadinejad and Al Qaida must be having a field
9 day. The Muslim Brotherhood can now continue their holy war against Israel and
10 the West.
- 11 I call on our members not to be naïve today. The Egyptians are facing an important
12 choice. Will the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood come to power, or will Egypt get a
13 secular government? Under sharia law, Coptic Christians, apostate Muslims,
14 women and gays will have no decent future in Egypt. If the Muslim Brotherhood’s
15 Islamists have their way, Israel will once again be the target of violence.
- 16 The only fair position that we can adopt today must be: Egyptians, choose freedom,
17 not sharia! Islam and democracy do not mix. The new Egyptian constitution must
18 not be given over to sharia. Imams should not be allowed to control politics. The
19 Dutch Party for Freedom has the guts to say that out loud. Do Parliament and the
20 European Commission have the guts to say that today? That is the question we
21 must answer today. (Note that the speaker does not take the question immediately
22 after his speech. There are other speeches in between.)
- 23 **Pino Arlacchi (S&D).** - *(asking Mr Madlener a Blue-card question under Rule*
24 *149(8))* Mr President, the tragic outcome of the Egyptian transition to democracy
25 has been described. It has been said that it was inevitable that Islamic
26 fundamentalists would take over power democratically, etcetera.
- 27 But do you not think that this evaluation is catastrophic, and wrong? Why do we
28 not take into account the fact that the reasons for Islamic fundamentalism and
29 terrorism in the Middle East are strongly linked to tyrannical governments, and
30 that there is now an opportunity for democratic regimes to reduce both?
- 31 **Barry Madlener (NI).** - *(NL)* Mr President, I am outlining here one of the real
32 dangers that Egypt is facing, namely that it might fall prey to the Islamist Muslim
33 Brotherhood. I am also calling on us and the Commission to face up to that risk
34 and to send out an important signal to the Egyptians, and that is that they can forget
35 our support if they opt for the Muslim Brotherhood and sharia. That is, I think, a 36
36 very important signal to send out today and I hope that you will support me in this.
37 Europeans must, of course, be the friends of the peoples and the allies of freedom.
38 However, with the future in mind we must also act accordingly in relation to

39 regimes and dictatorships that are still firmly in place in other Arab countries. I
40 believe that we can only do so if we are under no illusions and if we help these
41 peoples to develop what is needed for democracy: the rule of law, a free market
42 economy and the structures that are required for

Appendix 4: Stance Receipt

The example is taken from the plenary debate held on 27th October, 2011. Debate item 6: Conclusions of the European Council Meeting (23 October 2011)

1 **Werner Langen (DE), on behalf of (EPP):** Mr President, the outcome is a good
2 interim solution, but we haven't overcome with the institutional crisis yet. We have
3 to recognize that. I don't have much speaking time but there are five comments I
4 would like to make:

5 Firstly, democracy takes time, Mr Van Rompuy. You are quite right. Democracy
6 though also needs clear decision-making in structure and parliamentary control – 7
 and it is lacking there.

8 Secondly, the markets react quickly – faster than politics and democracy. And as
9 long as the markets are fearful and not clearly regulated, that we don't have clear
10 rules on them, we are simply going to postpone the problem, rather than solving it.
11 That is why both within the EU we need these clear rules and at global level. It is
12 your responsibility with the UK, the States and others. Tax evasion is involved in
13 this as well. We also have to limit the financial markets.

14 Thirdly, responsibility for the debt crisis lies on the shoulders of the States
15 themselves. This excessive indebtedness has not sanctioned in the last 10 years
16 either by the markets nor by the EU Commission, nor by the Stability and Growth
17 Pact. We need institutional changes to be introduced here. And inflation, some
18 people think, money simply printing out, not a solution. It undermines the poorest
19 and it doesn't help with the situation. It is an unsocial solution is inflation.

20 Fourthly, cohesion policy has failed. The Structural and Cohesion Funds they
21 wanted to improve and boost competitiveness. But they did the opposite. And we
22 cannot simply leave it like this.

23 Fifthly: we need to amend the Treaties. In terms of their content. I am not going to
24 go into the details of this. Mr Schulz has already mentioned one and I think that is
25 enough. Mr Rehn would have further competencies. I have great respect for him 26
 but we want to have the right to the initiative for the Parliament and the Council
27 because the Commission work too slowly, and we are depended on, the decisions
28 and proposals are depended on the external influences.

(The speaker's speaking time is over. The President interrupted the speaker.)

(The speaker agreed to take a Blue-card question under Rule 149(8))

29 **Liisa Jaankonsaari (FI), on behalf of (S&D):** Mr Langen, you spoke quite rightly
30 about the crisis of structures and they have been mentioned here a good deal. We
31 also often speak about the crisis of values. I think that this is also about a crisis of
32 values, because greed has acquired far too much power. There are greedy investors,
33 unscrupulous speculators, and unfair credit rating companies. It is thus a matter of
34 values. Do you also think that this is a crisis of values?

35 **Werner Langen (DE), on behalf of (EPP):** Mr President, this was not a question,
36 but rather a statement. We Christian Democrats practice these values. This is the
37 fundamental basis for our political activities.