How To Combine Rationalist and Constructivist Accounts of International Politics.
Building Bridges on Terra Firma

Author:

Diana Panke
Center for European Studies
Otto-Suhr-Institute
D-14195 Berlin
Tel.: +49 (0)30 838 54831
www.fu-berlin.de/europa

Diana.Panke@urz.uni-heidelberg.de

Abstract:
Constructivist approaches in International Relations mushroomed recently. Since they are often engaged with the same research questions as their rationalist counterparts, the production of competing hypotheses challenges the latter. Instead of rejecting rationalist approaches on the basis of constructivist arguments or vice versa, this paper develops an interactionist approach that allows identifying scope conditions for competing hypotheses. It is argued that existing bridge-building attempts have suffered from a bias towards either rationalism or constructivism, because they ultimately rely on one-sided action theoretical premises. The interactionist approach developed in this paper, by contrast, identifies contextual variables that influence the varying impact of communicated ideas without action-theoretical recurrences. Thus, it avoids overlaps of hypotheses and establishes grounds for the theoretical consistent coexistence of rationalist and constructivist hypotheses.

I.   Introduction: The Constructivist Challenge of Rationalism

Constructivism found its way into political science decades ago. When Onuf, Kratochwil and Wendt[1] introduced constructivist approaches into International Relations, the broader field did not imagine that the so called 'idea-based' approaches[2] will provide a major challenge to the well established 'interest-based' theories. Nowadays, constructivist approaches no longer lead a shadowy existence, but mushroomed recently. Sine the bulk of rationalist and constructivist approaches focuses on similar research questions, a lot of competing hypotheses exist. According to methodological standards within the current scientific paradigm, hypotheses are maintained, as long as they are not falsified.[3] When competing hypotheses regarding the same research question can point towards empirical evidence, there are two possibilities. Firstly, both hypotheses might be dismissed, since empirical evidence of a competing hypothesis could be evaluated as a falsification. Secondly, neither hypothesis is falsified by empirical evidence for the competing hypothesis, but the scope conditions of both hypotheses need to be clarified, so that overlaps are avoided. The latter approach is implicitly chosen by so called 'bridge-building attempts'.

Recently, Checkel criticised these undertakings for their focus on the action theoretical micro-mechanism[4]. I draw on this critique and develop a bridge-building theoretical frame, which avoids falling into the action-theoretical trap (leading to uneven and thus fragile fundaments for bridges). The bridge between rationalism and constructivism, as developed within this paper, avoids one-sided action theoretical assumptions and does not introduce a bias towards either constructivism or rationalism through the back door. This approach allows for a neutral determination of scope conditions for competing rationalist and constructivist hypotheses. It takes issue with prominent constructivist and rationalist claims in the gap bridging literature. Contrary to constructivist bridge-building approaches I argue that neither

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[1]   Nicholas Onuf, 'Do Rules Say What They Do? From Ordinary Language to International Law', *Harvard International Law Journal* 2 (1985), pp. 385-410, Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989). Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Thrasymmachos Revisited: On the Relevance of Norms for International Relations', *Journal of International Affairs*(1984), pp. 343-356, Friedrich Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions. On the Conditions or Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations', *International Organization* 3 (1987), pp. 335-370.

[2]   Judith Goldstein, and Robert O. Keohane, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework', in J. Goldstein and R. O. Keohane (eds.) *Ideas and Foreign Policy. Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, (Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 3-30.

[3]   Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[4]   Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Social Constructivisms in Global and European Politics: A Review Essay', *Review of International Studies* 2 (2004), pp. 229-244.

the transparency nor the norm density is a condition that is especially conducive for arguing and thus the application of constructivist hypotheses. Likewise, the shadow of the vote and different voting procedures are not particularly favourable for bargaining dynamics and the application of rationalist hypotheses.

In order to illustrate the meta-theoretical considerations, this paper draws on the debate between rationalist and constructivist accounts of the influence of the European Commission on policy-outcomes in the European Union as an instance for the influence of actors with lacking or weak bargaining powers (such as small states, NGOs, or secretariats). Neither rationalist nor constructivist theories alone are suited to grasp the influence of the Commission as a supranational entrepreneur adequately. While the former emphasize efficiency-increasing influence, the latter theorize substantial influence of weak actors on policy-outputs. In order to account for the full range of weak actors' influence, the development of ideal scope conditions for rationalist approaches, accounting for efficiency-increasing influence, and for constructivist approaches, accounting for substantial influence, is elementary. Hence, the core differences between rationalist and constructivist approaches are elaborated (II). Whether weak actors can influence politics substantively or only enhance the effectiveness of the policy-making process depends foremost on the impact of communicated ideas[5], which varies between reflexive and instrumental learning. Therefore, existent gap-bridging undertakings that offer hypotheses on the contextual scopes of competing rationalist and constructivist hypotheses are reviewed (III). These approaches, however, rely on a uni-directional lane: they start at the constructivist mainland and stretch towards the rationalist island.[6] Since most of them rely on the assumption that the social constructivist action theory is primary and thus prior to the rationalist theory of action, existing bridge-building theories are biased towards constructivism (III). In order to avoid a one-sided bias, a systemic perspective, on interactions as an over-arching meta-theoretical frame, is developed. It abstracts from the action-theoretical level and allows thus for the development of unbiased hypotheses on scope conditions for competing rationalist and constructivist approaches (IV). This paper illustrates the theoretical considerations with the puzzle on the varying range of influence that the European Commission can exert. Regarding this empirical puzzle,

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[5] Ideas are non-material entities, they are states of mind (see Thomas Risse, and Antje Wiener, "Something Rotten' and the Social Construction of Social Constructivism: A Comment on Comments', *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (1999), pp. 775-782: 779). Ideas on the characteristics of the situation and on truth, rightness and appropriateness are constitutive for interests and preferences in two regards. Firstly, situational definitions are important since they delimit the contents of action-plans that can be pursued in a meaningful manner. Secondly, interests and deduced preferences are themselves based on ideas of truth (causal ideas), rightness (normative ideas) and/ or appropriateness (ideas on values).

[6] compare Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Social Constructivisms in Global and European Politics: A Review Essay', *Review of International Studies* 2 (2004), pp. 229-244.

hypotheses on contextual factors are deduced (V). The spheres in which ideas are suited to bring about reflexive collective learning reflect the ideal scope for the application of constructivist approaches and, thus the empirical conditions under which substantial influence of weak actors most likely occurs. Hypotheses on contextual variables that are conducive for instrumental learning likewise match ideal scope conditions for rationalist approaches, and thus for efficiency-increasing influence of weak actors. Thus, the puzzle on the varying influence of weak actors such as the European Commission is solved.

The systemic perspective on interaction as a meta-theoretical framework allows for the unbiased deduction of ideal scopes of competing rationalist and constructivist hypotheses. It hopes to contribute to the circumvention of inconsistencies present in the current research and avoids ontological debates on the rightness of premises, which quite naturally, cannot be solved.

II.   Rationalism and Constructivism: Common Grounds and Differences

As rationalism, constructivism is not a substantial theory of IR.[7] Rather the major difference between rationalism and constructivism is of ontological nature[8] and can be acuminated to the different takes on the impact of communicated ideas (varying between single loop /instrumental and double loop/reflexive learning[9]). At its core, rationalism is based on a methodological-individualist concept of rationality, according to which the actor is prior to and can be studied independent of social structures. It is presumed that human beings act according to a strategic rationality. While actor's substantial interests are conceptualized as exogenously defined and fix during interactions, strategic preferences on how substantial interests are best pursued can change, when communicated ideas (via speech acts of bargaining) about external constraints (such as the distribution of bargaining power) influence means-ends calculations (instrumental learning). On the contrary, constructivism is based on the ontological assumption that intersubjective meaning is constitutive for intentional action.[10]

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[7]   see also Thomas Risse, 'Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und die Theorie Internationaler Beziehungen - Warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde', in G. Hellmann, K. D. Wolf and M. Zürn (eds.) *Forschungsstand und Perspektiven der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), pp. 99-132; Cornelia Ulbert, 'Sozialkonstruktivismus', in S. Schieder and M. Spindler (eds.) *Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen*, (Olpaden: Leske + Budrich, 2003), pp. 391-420; Emmanuel Adler, 'Constructivism and International Relations', in W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. A. Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*, (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 95-118.

[8]   see also Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[9] Chris Argyris, and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective* (Massachusetts/California/London et al.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978).

[10]   Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations', *International Organization* 3 (1987), pp. 335-370.

Thus, the actor is not the ontological prior, but agent and structure are mutually constitutive.[11] Intersubjective meaning influences and is constitutive for the selection and development of actors' substantial interests. It is created and changed through the exchange of argumentative speech acts during interactions. The possibility of changing intersubjective meaning, in turn, requires the conceptualization of endogenous substantial interests (reflexive learning).[12] It follows that communicated ideas are treated differently. In rationalist accounts, ideas communicated directly or indirectly through speech acts of bargaining (see below) can only lead to instrumental learning and thus to changes in strategic preferences. Constructivism claims that argumentatively communicated ideas (see below) can bring about reflexive learning and thus changes in substantial interests.

Table 1　　　　　　　　*Ontological assumptions*

	Rationalist approaches	Constructivist approaches
Dominant speech acts within interactions	Bargaining	Arguing
Potential impact of communicated ideas	Instrumental learning about external constraints	Reflexive learning
Change of preferences/interests	Endogenous strategic preferences, exogenous substantial interests	Irrelevance of strategic preferences, endogenous substantial interests

The prominence of constructivist approaches is easy to explain: They introduce a variety of alternative hypotheses into the study of International Relations. Constructivist approaches do not establish completely new research agendas, but are interested in the same research questions as rationalist approaches. Like their rationalist counterparts, constructivist theories

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[11] Cornelia Ulbert, 'Sozialkonstruktivismus', in S. Schieder and M. Spindler (eds.) *Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen*, (Olpaden: Leske + Budrich, 2003), pp. 391-420, Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations', *International Organization* 3 (1987), pp. 335-370, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[12] This is because the intersubjective ideational structure is constitutive for actor's substantial interests in two regards. Firstly, substantial interests to be pursued in action plans are developed on the basis of a common conception of the situation in which actors find themselves. When the situational definition changes, the original action plans might not fit any more to the social construction and would thus prevent useful interactions. Therefore, a changing construction of a situation can lead to a redefinition of actor's substantial interests. Secondly, when the ideas underlying substantial interests change during interactions, a change in substantial interests might occur as the result of processes of reflexive learning. Such processes of reflexive learning might not only change substantial interests, but can also affect identities.

on the war and peace in the international system,[13] on compliance with international norms;[14] and on the influence of actors without formal power[15] provide empirical evidence for their hypotheses. Hypotheses are maintained, as long as they are not falsified.[16] Thus, competing hypotheses that additionally refer to empirical evidence are potential falsifications. However, they need not be completely dismissed, when scope conditions for hypotheses can be clarified, so that overlaps are avoided. As argued here, the latter point of departure leads to a difficult, but fruitful way in handling competing constructivist and rationalist approaches. The debate on the range of influence of the European Commission as an actor with relatively low bargaining power illustrates the added value of such an integrated approach.

Theoretically consistent rationalist approaches implicitly conceptualise interactions as bargaining processes. With an increasing informational advantage, weak institutional actors with access to arenas of interaction improve the efficiency of interstate-bargaining though the activation of existing interests[17] or through mediation efforts such as the arrangement of package-deals, issue-linkages, and side-payments.[18] Thus, rationalist approaches gather processes of instrumental learning and efficiency-increasing influence of the European Commission. Constructivist approaches presume that interactions are characterised by arguing. In this processes, actors without formal bargaining power, like the European Commission in the Council of Ministers, can exert substantial influence, if the argumentatively communicated ideas are new and innovative.[19] For the EU, there is empirical

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[13] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[14] Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change', *International Organization* 3 (2001), pp. 553-588.; Checkel, *Sanctions, Social Learning and Institutions: Explaining State Compliance with the Norms of the European Human Rights Regime*, p. 1-44;Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Why Comply? Constructivism, Social Norms and the Study of International Institutions', *ARENA Working Papers* (1999), pp. 1-61, Martha Finnemore, and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization* 4 (1998), pp. 887-917.

[15] Thomas Christiansen, 'The Role of Supranational Actors in EU Treaty Reform', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (2002), pp. 33-53, Thomas Christiansen, Gerda Falkner, and Knud Erik Jörgensen, 'Theorizing EU Treaty Reform: Beyond Diplomacy and Bargaining', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (2002), pp. 12-32, Thomas Christiansen, and Knud Erik Jörgensen, 'Negotiating Treaty Reform in the European Union. The Role of the European Commission', *International Negotiation. A Journal of Theory and Practice* 3 (1998), pp. 435-452; Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704, Oran R. Young, 'Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the Development of Institutions in International Society', *International Organization* 3 (1991), pp. 281-308.

[16] Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

[17] Andrew Moravcsik, 'A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation', *International Organization* 2 (1999), p: 283-285.

[18] Stanley Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe', *Daedalus*(1966), pp. 826-915, Paul Taylor, *The Limits of European Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen, 'Neo-Functionalism: Obstinate or Obsolete. A Reappraisal in the Light of New Dynamism of the EC', *Millenium* 1 (1991), pp. 1-22.

[19] Emmanuel Adler, 'The Emergence of Cooperation: National Epistemic Communities and the International Evaluation of the Idea of Nuclear Arms Control', *International Organization* 1 (1992), pp. 101-145, Emmanuel Adler, and Peter M. Haas, 'Conclusion: Epistemic Communities. World Order and the Creation of

evidence that arguing and bargaining coexist in interactions.[20] Hence, rationalist and constructivist accounts alike are only suited to explain parts of the complex reality of social interactions, albeit different ones. Theoretically consistent rationalist and constructivist approaches with similar substantial foci are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, they may complement one another, when an overarching meta-theoretical frame is developed, which allows deducing hypotheses on the ideal scopes of both approaches. Ideal scopes distinguish spheres in which weak actors most likely have substantial influence, from spheres in which weak actors' influence is at its best confined to increasing efficiency. In order to solve this puzzle, the crucial task is the elaboration of conditions, under which either rationalist or constructivist approaches offer the better hypothesis. But how can bridges between approaches, based on different ontological assumptions, be built?

III. Bridge Building Approaches

In his seminal article, Harald Müller introduced the Habermasian concept of communicative action,[21] a logic of action in which actors are prepared to change their ideas in the wake of the better argument.[22] The first stage of the debate crystallised around the question of whether communicative action actually exists and whether the modelling of communicative action

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a Reflective Research Program', *International Organization* 1 (1992), pp. 367-390, Jakob Edler, *Institutionalisierung europäischer Politik. Die Genese des Forschungsprogramms BRITE als Reflexiver Sozialer Prozess* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), Christian Joerges, and Jürgen Neyer, 'Transforming Strategic Interaction into Deliberative Problem-Solving: European Comitilogy in the Foodstuffs Sector', *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (1997), pp. 609-625, Christian Joerges, and Jürgen Neyer, 'Von intergovenementalen Verhandlungen zur deliberativen Politik: Gründe und Chancen für eine Konstitutionalisierung der europäischen Komitologie', in B. Kohler-Koch (eds.) *Regieren in entgrenzten Räumen. PVS Sonderheft Nr. 29*, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), pp. 207-233.; Beate Kohler-Koch, 'Die Gestaltungsmacht organisierter Interessen', in M. Jachtenfuchs and B. Kohler-Koch (eds.) *Europäische Integration*, (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 193-224.: 205; Thomas Christiansen, 'The Role of Supranational Actors in EU Treaty Reform', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (2002), pp. 33-53, Thomas Christiansen, Gerda Falkner, and Knud Erik Jörgensen, 'Theorizing EU Treaty Reform: Beyond Diplomacy and Bargaining', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (2002), pp. 12-32, Thomas Christiansen, and Knud Erik Jörgensen, 'Negotiating Treaty Reform in the European Union. The Role of the European Commission', *International Negotiation. A Journal of Theory and Practice* 3 (1998), pp. 435-452.; Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704, Oran R. Young, 'Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the Development of Institutions in International Society', *International Organization* 3 (1991), pp. 281-308.

[20] Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704.

[21] Strategic rational actors calculate means-end relationships, when they pursue their given substantial interests. According to the logic of communicative action, participants of an interaction transcendent their substantial interests and strategic preferences, in order to achieve mutual understandings (Verstaendigung) (Habermas 1995).

[22] Harald Müller, 'Internationale Beziehungen als Kommunikatives Handeln. Zur Kritik der utilitaristischen Handlungstheorien', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 1 (1994), pp. 15-44.

adds value to theories of International Relations. In order to distinguish strategic from communicative action empirically, typical speech acts were linked to both logics of action.[23] Whereas bargaining is the mode of communication that is attributed to strategic action, communicative action is characterised by arguing. The emphasis of the debate shifted as soon as empirical insights pointed towards the coexistence of arguing and bargaining in international negotiations.[24] In the next step, the quest for contextual conditions that facilitate communicative action became dominant. Hypotheses on the prospects of argumentative influence were developed though a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning. Thereby, stages of interactions, degrees of institutionalisation and transparency were discussed as contextual variables influencing successful argumentation.

Distinguishing between the definition of a situation and the co-ordination of action plans, Habermas, in his earlier writings, provides for spheres in which the different logics of action are ideally located.[25] As long as there is no common construction of the situation, actors can only use communicative action and cannot engage in strategic action because only substantial interests and strategic preferences deduced from a common definition of a situation can be pursued reasonably in interactions.[26]

Secondly, it is often made the case that arguing is favoured by high a degree of institutionalisation,[27] because the embedded norms and ideas constitute a common life world,

[23] Harald Müller, 'Spielen hilft nicht immer. Die Grenzen des Rational-Choice-Ansatzes und der Platz der Theorie Kommunikativen Handelns in der Analyse internationaler Beziehungen', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 2 (1995), pp. 371-391, Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Reden ist nicht billig. Zur Debatte um Kommunikation und Realität', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 1 (1995), pp. 171-184.

[24] Harald Müller 2002, *Arguing, Bargaining and all that. Reflections on the Relationship of Communicative Action and Rationalist Theory in Analysing International Negotiations*. Frankfurt; Thomas Risse 2002, *Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und die Theorie Internationaler Beziehungen - Warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde*, in *Forschungsstand und Perspektiven der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland*, edited by M. Zürn; Bernhard Zangl, and Michael Zürn, 'Argumentatives Handeln bei Internationalen Verhandlungen. Moderate Anmerkungen zur Post-Realistischen Debatte', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 2 (1996), pp. 341-366.; Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704.

[25] Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

[26] see also Thomas Christiansen, 'The Role of Supranational Actors in EU Treaty Reform', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (2002), pp. 33-53.: 36, Ole Elgström, 'Norm Negotiations. The Construction of New Norms Regarding Gender and Development in EU Foreign Aid Policy', *Journal of European Public Policy* 3 (2000), pp. 457-476., Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704: 692-693; Harald Müller, 'Spielen hilft nicht immer. Die Grenzen des Rational-Choice-Ansatzes und der Platz der Theorie Kommunikativen Handelns in der Analyse internationaler Beziehungen', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 2 (1995), pp. 371-391.

[27] Nicole Deitelhoff 2003, *Talking States into Persuasion. Norm-Entrepreneurs and the Manipulative Nature of Communicative Settings in Norm-Construction*, in *http://www.ibdiskurse.de/ipc/papers/deitelhoff.doc*. Frankfurt/Main.; Bernhard Zangl, and Michael Zürn, 'Interessen in der Internationalen Politik: Der Akteurszentrierte Institutionalismus als Brücke zwischen Interesseorientierten und Normorientierten Handlungstheorien', *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 3 (1999), pp. 923-950: 943.

which, according to the Habermasian discourse theory, presupposes successful communicative action.[28] Thus, arguing is more successful when it takes place in a highly institutionalised arena.

Thirdly, it is claimed that public settings strengthen communicative action,[29] because the public is a substitute for a common ideational reference system and allows for the triadic structure, which, according to Saretzki, characterises argumentative interactions.[30] The corresponding hypothesis is that arguments matter increasingly, the higher the transparency of interactions is.

In a nutshell, these bridge-building considerations suggest, that the ideal spheres of constructivist approaches are the beginning of interactions, highly institutionalized arenas, and settings with high transparency. Rationalist hypotheses, on the other hand, are ideally applied to advanced stages of interactions, poorly institutionalized arenas, and interactions taking place behind closed doors.

The identification of these aspects is without doubt an important contribution. However, the bridge-building approaches presented above are strongly biased in favour of communicative action. As a consequence they overestimate the ideal scope of constructivist approaches and overemphasise the substantial influence of formally weak actors such as NGOs or the European Commission.

This is because the action theoretical assumptions (strategic and communicative logic) are incompatible. Hence, the construction of a meta action-theoretical logic that encompasses the logic of strategic and of communicative action is impossible.[31] Therefore, conventional bridge building approaches apodictically set either strategic or communicative action as 'naturally'

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[28] Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

[29] John Elster, *The Cement of Society. A Study of Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Thomas Risse, 'International Norms and Domestic Change: Arguing and Communicative Behavior in the Human Rights Area', *Politics and Society* 4 (1999), pp. 529-559.; Thomas Risse 2002, *Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und die Theorie Internationaler Beziehungen - Warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde*, in Forschungsstand und Perspektiven der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland, edited by M. Zürn.

[30] Thomas Saretzki, 'Wie unterscheiden sich Argumentieren und Verhandeln? Definitionsprobleme, Funktionale Bezüge und Strukturelle Differenzen von zwei verschiedenen Kommunikationsmodi', in V. v. Prittwitz (eds.) *Verhandeln und Argumentieren. Dialog, Interessen und Macht in der Umweltpolitik*, (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 19-33.

[31] Although some authors claim that the development of meta-frames is possible, such attempts implicitly consider one action theory as primary. E.g. Hartmut Esser ('Die "Logik" der Verständigung. Zur Debatte um Arguing" und "Bargaining" in internationalen Verhandlungen', in F. U. Pappi, E. Riedel, P. W. Thurner and R. Vaubel (eds.) *Die Institutionalisierung internationaler Verhandlungen. Mannheimer Jahrbuch für Europäische Sozialforschung, Band 8*, (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2004) develops a sequential framing model that is ultimately based on the strategic logic of action.

predominant.[32] This leads to a bias in favour of the 'natural' logic of action, when contextual conditions are examined which either hinder the evolution of the primary logic of action or favour the evolution of the secondary logic of action.[33]

The contextual approach based on the logic of communicative action as prior is additionally problematic, because causal chains between contextual factors and modes of action are very weak. Even propositions deduced from the Habermasian discourse theory are not convincing.[34] Although deliberations in normative *discourse theory* presupposes that persuasion can take place, its transfer to the *empirical-analytical level*, according to which approximations to the ideal discourse conditions favour the logic of communicative action, remains unexplained. Moreover, even interactions under approximated ideal discourse conditions, face the risk of dissent. This cannot be theorized, if the Habermasian normative theory is transferred to the empirical-analytical level.

In a nutshell, existing bridge building approaches rely on a primary logic of action. This produces biases and prevents a neutral deduction of ideal scopes for competing rationalist and constructivist hypotheses. The most important shortcoming, however, is that such approaches cannot theorize instances in which persuasion fails to appear, in spite of constant contextual variables. This is because the possibility of persuasion is linked to the logic of communicative

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[32] This becomes obvious, when the Habermasian take is compared to Elster's writings (Habermas 1995; Elster 1989).

[33] I exemplify the point on the influence of action-theoretical presumptions on the impact of contextual variables with the discussion on the impact of transparency. Saretzki's argument on the triadic structure of arguing implicitly presumes that communicative action is naturally dominant: Whenever a triadic structure can be established, communicative action will take place. Saretzki argues that the public can serve as a standard for the evaluation of arguments and allows, therefore, for the required triadic structure (Thomas Saretzki, 'Wie unterscheiden sich Argumentieren und Verhandeln? Definitionsprobleme, Funktionale Bezüge und Strukturelle Differenzen von zwei verschiedenen Kommunikationsmodi', in V. v. Prittwitz (eds.) *Verhandeln und Argumentieren. Dialog, Interessen und Macht in der Umweltpolitik*, (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 19-33.). This leads to the deduction of the hypothesis that public settings favour communicative action (see also Thomas Risse, 'International Norms and Domestic Change: Arguing and Communicative Behavior in the Human Rights Area', *Politics and Society* 4 (1999), pp. 529-559.). Contrary, Checkel claims that arguing is endorsed by private settings, because the actors are then freed of the pressure to make their marks (which is only important for means-ends calculations of strategic rational actors) (Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Social Construction and Integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (1999), pp. 545-560.: 549, Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change', *International Organization* 3 (2001), pp. 553-588.: 563). The discrepancy of both hypotheses stems from the different logics of actions that are presumed to be primary. Whereas the presumption of the logic of communicative action as naturally predominant leads to the proposition that public settings favour processes of persuasion, Checkel's hypotheses is based on the strategic logic of action and leads to the proposition that private settings are conducive to processes of persuasion.

[34] The Habermasian discourse theory aims at the development of propositions about ideal decision making procedures for modern societies, as procedures allowing for deliberation and thus for legitimate outcomes (Jürgen Habermas, *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983). Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995). Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995). see also Gary Stuart Schaal, and David Strecker, 'Die politische Theorie der Deliberation: Jürgen Habermas', in A. Borodocz and G. S. Schaal (eds.) *Politische Theorie der Gegenwart. Eine Einführung*, (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999), pp. 69-93.).

action. However, not every argument transports per se good ideas, as ideas that are able to persuade others and lead to a change of substantial interests. It is elementary for an unbiased bridge-building approach that it assesses theoretically the *quality of communicated ideas*. The quality of communicated ideas, in turn, is crucial for different processes of collective and individual learning.

IV.   The Systemic Approach to Interactions

Rooted in the different action theoretical presumptions, the most important difference between rationalist and constructivist hypotheses rests upon the impact, which communicated ideas can exert upon the actors. Existing bridge-building approaches allow for the integration of rationalist and constructivist elements in theories, but the bridges suffer from a clear inclination towards constructivism or rationalism.[35] Within this paragraph, I develop a systemic approach on interactions. It is not biased towards either rationalist or constructivist theories, since it does not refer to action-theoretical presumptions. It does neither presume that communicative action has a primary status, nor that strategic action is primary. Most fundamentally, it starts from the *behavioural[36] premise* that instrumental and reflexive learning are processes, which are not consciously controlled by the affected actors[37]. Instead, both learning processes are considered systemic effects of interactions.

   Under which conditions can the different types of learning be expected? In order to develop propositions about ideal scopes of competing rationalist and constructivist approaches we have to distinguish between processes of *individual learning*, processes of *collective learning*. Propositions on ideal scopes must be based on the prospects for processes of collective learning, because collective learning (as learning processes of all interaction's participants) influences outcomes of interactions much stronger than individual learning processes (as learning processes of only some participants). Interactions are essential for both *reflexive* and *instrumental collective learning*, because interactions accelerate opportunities for learning by increasing the flow of ideas. However, the flow of ideas alone is not sufficient

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[35]   i.e. Cornelia Ulbert, Thomas Risse, and Harald Müller, eds, *Arguing and Bargaining in Multilateral Negotiations. Final Report to the Volkswagen Foundation*, *Berlin/Frankfurt a.M.: Freie Universität Berlin, Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*, (Berlin/Frankfurt a.M.: Freie Universität Berlin, Hessische Stiftung für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung: 2004). For a bridge building attempt with a bias towards rationalism isee Hartmut Esser, 'Die "Logik" der Verständigung. Zur Debatte um Arguing" und "Bargaining" in internationalen Verhandlungen', in F. U. Pappi, E. Riedel, P. W. Thurner and R. Vaubel (eds.) *Die Institutionalisierung internationaler Verhandlungen. Mannheimer Jahrbuch für Europäische Sozialforschung, Band 8*, (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2004), pp.

[36]   Unlike action, which by its nature is intentional, behaviour is unintentional in character.

[37]   see also Cliff Zukin, and Robin Snyder, 'Passive Learning: When the Media Environment is the Message', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3 (1984), pp. 629-638.

for the deduction of ideal scopes of rationalist and constructivist theories, because it cannot account for the type of learning that might occur.

In order to distinguish between contexts which are either especially conducive for reflexive or for instrumental learning, a systemic perspective, avoiding the predominance of one-sided action theoretical assumptions, on interactions is necessary. A system is characterized by two necessary conditions. These are "(a) a set of units or elements is interconnected so that changes in some elements or their relations produce changes in other parts of the system, and (b) the entire system exhibits properties and behaviours that are different from those of the parts".[38] A system of interaction is composed of the totality of all speech acts,[39] which were expressed by the participating actors, as the units of the system, during interactions.

Graph 1 about here

In every system, structures can evolve. In systems of interactions, structures are the dominant pattern of speech acts, which influence the dynamics of ideational change (unconscious reflexive or instrumental learning). According to the systemic approach, *collective learning,* as learning processes of the participants in a system of interaction, is a systemic effect of interactions. Collective learning occurs only under specific conditions, conditions that constitute the two possible structures that can evolve within systems of interaction: arguing and bargaining. Structures of interaction are defined by certain *relationships between structure and content of the dominant pattern of speech acts*. Both elements structure and content of speech acts are elaborated in turn.

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[38] Robert Jervis, *System Effects. Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997): 6.

[39] Speech acts and logics of action can be distinguished analytically (see also Katharina Holzinger, 'Kommunikationsmodi und Handlungstypen in den Internationalen Beziehungen. Anmerkungen zu einigen irreführenden Dichotomien', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 2 (2001), pp. 243-286., Harald Müller 2002, *Arguing, Bargaining and all that. Reflections on the Relationship of Communicative Action and Rationalist Theory in Analysing International Negotiations.* Frankfurt/ Main, Thomas Risse 2002, *Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und die Theorie Internationaler Beziehungen - Warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde*, in Forschungsstand und Perspektiven der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland, edited by M. Zürn.). Whereas actors behaving according to the logic of communicative action can only use arguments, actors behaving according to the strategic logic of action or the logic of appropriateness can potentially use both types of speech acts, since the selection of the speech acts is subject to the type of rationality. It is, for example, strategically rational for an actor to use an argument instead of a speech act of bargaining, in order to pursue her interests, when her bargaining power is perceived as too low and the changes for influence are expected to be higher through arguing. Hence, from the fact that actors use arguments it cannot be deduced the actors follow the logic of communicative action and are themselves consciously motivated to become persuaded. This analytical distinction fits well with the interactionist approach, since this approach links prospects for learning to the dominant pattern of speech acts in combination with systemic preconditions and **not** to logics of actions.

The structure of speech acts can take two different forms. It can either be an argument or a speech act of bargaining. An argument links a proposition to reasons related to the intersubjective world.[40] A speech act of bargaining is characterized by a demand, a concession or a rejection, which can additionally be linked with a threat or reasons that are related to the subjective world. However, a dominant pattern of speech acts is not sufficient to bring processes of *collective learning* about. *Collective learning*, as learning processes of the participants in a system of interaction, requires meaningful communication. Communication is not meaningful when actors cannot relate to each other and talk cross-purposes. Meaningful communication presupposes that all participants share standards of how to evaluate the content of speech acts. Meaningful communication is characterized by the possibility that B (as well as the other participants) understands the content of the speech act of A, evaluates the quality of communicated ideas and replies to A in a manner that allows A (and also the other participants) to reply meaningful again.

Graph 2 about here

In interactions that are based on the mutual exchange of meaningful speech acts, results (compromises or consensus) can be achieved incrementally, to which all participants can agree (without voting or authoritative decision). Hence, *collective learning* can only take place when communication is meaningful. For meaningful interaction to evolve, it is necessary to have a consensus among the actors of how the content (not the intention!) of speech acts is to be understood. Only when this precondition is fulfilled, meaningful communication is possible. In order to initiate processes of *collective reflexive or instrumental learning* of the participants of interactions, the contents of the speech acts must therefore fulfil certain criteria. Which criteria for the quality of the content of speech acts can be defined in the abstract?

Processes of *reflexive collective learning* presuppose two elements. The necessary condition is that arguments are the dominant pattern of speech acts. The sufficient condition is that standards for the evaluation of the quality of ideas are shared among the actors. Such standards refer to what constitutes truth (causal ideas), rightness (normative ideas) or

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[40] Both concepts, the subjective and the intersubjective world, are social constructions. Whereas all actors are affected more or less equally by the intersubjective world, the subjective world refers to the internal conditions (domestic constellations such as positions and influence of organized interests) with which an actor is confronted. His own subjective world affects an actor more intensively than other participants of interactions (who themselves face their own subjective worlds).

appropriateness (ideas on values) in a given context to a particular point in time.[41] When both conditions are fulfilled, I refer to this pattern of meaningful communication as 'arguing as a structure of interaction'. Only when arguing as the structure of interaction has emerged, it is likely that argumentative speech acts lead the participants to question the ideas, which underlie their own substantial interests without having been consciously prepared or motivated before. When ideational change occurs, a change of substantive preferences is possible, when the ideas underlying the original substantial interests are affected by the ideational change (*reflexive collective learning*).[42] Processes of *reflexive collective learning* can result in a consensus as outcomes of interactions.

Table 2   *Two Structures in Systems of Interaction*

	Structure 'arguing'	Structure 'bargaining'
Pattern of dominant speech acts	Arguments (propositions with reasons related to the intersubjective world)	Bargaining acts (demands, threats, concessions, reasons related to the subjective world)
Shared standards for the evaluation of the content of speech acts	Common standard for truth or rightness or appropriateness	Common conception of what constitutes bargaining power AND shared attitude on the reputation of the speakers
Systemic effect: possible influence of communicated ideas on the majority of actors	**Reflexive learning**	**Instrumental learning**
Incrementally achieved results of interactions	Consensus	Compromise

There is a second pattern of meaningful communication, to which I refer as 'bargaining as the structure of interaction'. For bargaining as a structure of interaction to

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[41]   Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

[42]   Since reflexive learning is an unintentional process (see also Cliff Zukin, and Robin Snyder, 'Passive Learning: When the Media Environment is the Message', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 3 (1984), pp. 629-638.: 629-630), it is also possible that short cuts lead some of the actors to accept an argument as true, right or appropriate, even though common standards are lacking, because they attribute authority to the speaker. However, short cuts do not contribute to the establishment or maintenance of any of the structures of interaction, because it is unlikely that all actors undertake similar short cuts simultaneously.

evolve, it is not only required that acts of bargaining constitute the predominant pattern of speech acts, but also that actors share a standard for the evaluation of credibility. The standard of credibility has two components, incorporating a subjective and an intersubjective part. The intersubjective standard for the evaluation of a bargaining speech act refers to the bargaining power of an actor. Bargaining power is a complex social construct, which does not only entail formal vetoes but also such elements as the preference intensity and the alternatives of action. Regarding the subjective part, it is necessary that a positive attribution of a particular actor's reputation is undertaken by the other actors. Otherwise a threat, demand or concession is not meaningful, because the other actors cannot rely on its realization. Besides bargaining acts as the predominant pattern of speech acts, it is necessary that actors share a common conception of bargaining power and a common perception of the actors' reputation for bargaining as the structure of interaction to evolve. Within bargaining as the structure of interaction, *instrumental collective learning* about the distribution and nature of external constraints (such as the costs imposed by threats) is likely and can result in a compromise.

Only when a structure of interaction has evolved, it is likely that unintentionally (without having been consciously prepared or motivated before) the participants of an interaction start to question the ideas, which underlie their own strategic preferences and/or substantial interests, in reaction to communicated ideas. When ideational change occurs, a change of strategic preferences or substantial interests can be expected, when the ideas underlying the original interests and preferences are affected by the ideational change. When *collective reflexive learning* takes place, actors alter their substantial interests. When, on the other hand, bargaining dynamics evolve, *instrumental collective learning* processes and changes of strategic preferences are most likely.

The developed systemic approach on interactions has the advantage of accounting for the coexistence of argumentative speech acts and speech acts of bargaining without generating tensions between them. This meta-theoretical bridge and its concept of two structures of interaction is a heuristic yardstick that allows grasping the potential impact of communicates ideas from reflexive to instrumental collective learning. Since the systemic approach abstracts from logics of action, it can neutrally bridge the gap between rationalist and constructivist theories with similar substantial foci. This requires that ideal scopes of both approaches are examined with recourse to the contextual existence of the preconditions for the evolution or maintenance of any of the structures of interaction.

V.   Illustration – Development of Hypotheses on Scope Conditions

In this section, the systemic perspective is illustrated using the example of the influence that the European Commission can exert within the European Union. For this purpose, hypotheses on the impact of various contextual settings on the evolution of one of the two structures of interaction are developed. Empirical inquiries, however, would be beyond the scope of this paper.

Consistent rationalist and constructivist theories arrive at different propositions regarding the range of influence of the European Commission. Contradicting claims regarding the Commission's influence in pre-agreement interactions can only be resolved, when the impact of communicated ideas, ranging from reflexive to instrumental collective learning is contextualised without one-sided reference to action theoretical presumptions. In order to develop hypotheses on contextual elements that favour the evolution of one of the two structures of interaction, it is necessary to inquire whether common standards exist in the European arenas of interaction, on which the content of speech acts can commonly be evaluated by the participating actors. It is not possible to discuss the probability that bargaining as a structure of interaction can evolve in the abstract, since credibility and bargaining power are situational constructs that can vary from interaction to interaction. Therefore, the conditions are discussed next, under what arguing as the structure of interaction is likely to evolve, to be interrupted and to be prevented.

In general, with truth, rightness and appropriateness, there are three possible standards on which the quality of arguments can be evaluated.[43] The likelihood that these standards are shared among the actors varies with regard to the standards themselves.

The standard of truth encompasses epistemological and methodological principles and sometimes even ontological elements and is usually shared within a scientific paradigm. Since the actors in European arenas of interaction are specialised experts, especially at the lower levels, such as the working groups of the Council as well as the administrative level of intergovernmental conferences (IGCs), it is very likely that actors share a standard for what constitutes truth. Therefore, it is to be expected that arguing as the structure of interaction can evolve and that reflexive collective learning can occur, when arguments are primarily related to questions of truth in the intersubjective world. Especially in the wake of perceived environmental changes, the standard of truth becomes important in linking external

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[43] Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995).

developments to the issue at hand. Since environmental changes are strongly related to the definition of a situation, the standard of truth is very important at the very beginning of interactions.[44]

Normative ideas are candidates for the expression of a common interest and are evaluated in regard to the standard of rightness.[45] The quality of normative ideas is measured by the extent to which they articulate the common interest.[46] In interactions, aspects of truth precede the stage in which norms are developed, because interests can only be developed on the basis of a common definition of the situation. Since causal ideas can be used in processes of norm construction, it is possible that arguing as the structure of interaction evolves during the elaboration of norms. However, at the end of interactions, when norms must definitely be defined in content and scope, it is unlikely that a common evaluative standard still exists. This is because the scope of a new norm most likely overlaps with the scope of norms already in existence on European, national or regional levels. Scope conflicts cannot be resolved by reference to only a single common interest. Rather, norm hierarchies have to be established. For the structure of interaction 'arguing' to be maintained, this would require that the actors share a hierarchy of standards. In the European context, diversity suggests that no overarching hierarchy of standards for rightness is shared. Hence, it is to be expected, that bargaining as the structure of interaction evolves at the end of interactions.[47]

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[44] Approaches on framing demonstrate that actors are facing a risk of dissent regarding the construction of a situation.When the type or content of evaluative standards varies across the competing constructions, an overarching standard would be required, which allows for weighing and comparing of the arguments for the competing frames, in order to decide which frame should be preferred. Actors can always make references to the common life world (Habermas 1995: 148-151). This, however, cannot prevent dissent, because the life world in itself might be too broad, leading to disagreement about which part of the life world is relevant. In such situations, the life world itself cannot serve as an overarching standard, allowing for the establishment of arguing as the structure of interaction.

[45] Jürgen Habermas, 'Handlungen. Sprechakte, Sprachlich Vermittelte Interaktion und Lebenswelt', in J. Habermas (eds.) *Nachmetaphysisches Denken - Philosophische Aufsätze*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 63-104.

[46] Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995): 42.

[47] The 'hierarchy of norms' argument finds empirical support in studies on the development of the norm 'gender mainstreaming' in the developmental aid policy of the European Union. Even though there is a widespread consensus among the European member states that the norm of gender mainstreaming expresses a common interest, the norm was defined through bargaining at the end of the interactions (Ole Elgström, 'Norm Negotiations. The Construction of New Norms Regarding Gender and Development in EU Foreign Aid Policy', *Journal of European Public Policy* 3 (2000), pp. 457-476, Ole Elgström. 2001. Consolidation "Unobjectable" Norms: Negotiating Norm Spread in the EU. Paper read at 4th Pan-European IR Conference, 8-10 September 2001, at Canterbury.). While Elgström cannot explain this finding, the systemic perspective suggests that 'gender mainstreaming' is in conflict with scope and content of other norms inherent in the focal idea 'good governance'. Conflicts over norms cannot be resolved by reference to either one of the standards for rightness. Solving norm conflicts within arguing as the structure of interaction would require that actors share an overarching common standard for the hierarchy of norms. This however, cannot be expected in the Council of Ministers and the IGCs because of the diversity among the member-states and the richness of norms on the European level.

Appropriateness serves as the evaluative standard for the quality of ideas relating to values. The standard of appropriateness itself is constituted by axiomatic interpretations of values as authentically.[48] The authenticity of elements is diffused through socialisation.[49] Since it is unlikely that actors on the European level are socialised completely in the same way, because of the ideological and cultural diversity,[50] the evolution of, and especially the maintenance of, arguing as the structure of interaction cannot be expected with regard to elements of appropriateness. Because distributive and re-distributive issues are inherently value-laden in regard to questions of distributional justice,[51] they facilitate the evolution of bargaining as the structure of interaction.

In a nutshell, the expected influence of the European Commission varies according to the stability of the environment, the stage of interaction, and the issue at hand. All contextual factors that are conducive to reflexive collective learning open a window of opportunity for the European Commission that can be used for substantial influence on outputs via strategies of persuasion. However, weak actors possess not per se the better arguments: Whether or not the Commission's ideas win the ideational competition, depends on their quality.

The systemic approach is as a heuristic tool that allows the discussion of the impact of institutional variables, such as the extent of transparency, degrees of institutionalisation, shadows of the vote and voting modalities on structures of interactions.

There is disagreement whether the transparency of settings influences the likelihood that arguments matter. Approaches that take the communicative logic of action as naturally dominant argue that transparency increases the impact of arguments, because the public

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[48] Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns. Band 1 Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995): 41

[49] Ibid: 40-42

[50] The issue of how far the engagement within European institutions leads to the identity changes of the participating actors is highly debated (see Jan Beyers, 'Where does Supranationalism come from? Ideas Floating through the Working Groups of the Council of the European Union', *European Integration Online Papers (EioP)* 9 (1998), pp, Jan Beyers, and Guido Dierrickk, 'The Working Groups of the Council of the European Union: Supranational or Intergovernmental Negotiations?' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 3 (1998), pp. 289-317, Brigid Laffan, 'The European Union: A Distinctive Model of Internalization', *European Journal of Public Policy* 2 (1998), pp. 235-253. vs. Lisbet Hooghe, *The Commission and the Integration of Europe. Images of Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Wolfgang Wessels, 'Comitology: Fusion and Action. Politico-Administrative Trends in the EU System', *Journal of European Public Policy* 2 (1998), pp. 209-234.). The debate, however, centres rather on the question of degree of socialisation into European institutions rather than on the question of whether the identities of the actors are identical.

[51] Thomas Saretzki, 'Wie unterscheiden sich Argumentieren und Verhandeln? Definitionsprobleme, Funktionale Bezüge und Strukturelle Differenzen von zwei verschiedenen Kommunikationsmodi', in V. v. Prittwitz (eds.) *Verhandeln und Argumentieren. Dialog, Interessen und Macht in der Umweltpolitik*, (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 19-33.: 35-36

serves as a third standard, allowing for the triadic structure of arguing.[52] The analytical distinction between speech acts and logics of action is an important progress, on which the concept of argumentative self-entrapment is built.[53] According to his argumentation, the public forces state actors to use argumentative speech acts, regardless of the underlying logic of action. Changes of positions occur not because the actors are intrinsically motivated to become persuaded, but rather because they become caught by their own arguments, which cannot be recalled in public without a loss of reputation. Thus, the public as a third standard brings about an argumentative dynamic. However, this line of reasoning presupposes that the public appreciates arguing of their representatives more than bargaining. This implicit assumption, however, might not be generally valid, because in some situations the public might expect their representatives to push through the ‚national interest' or the preferences of organised interests through bargaining. Additionally, the concept of argumentative self-entrapment is not based on unitary assumptions about the level of strategic rationality. On the one hand, it presupposes perfectly strategic actors, calculating their reputational costs. At the same time, however, it is implicitly assumed that the actors are hardly rational regarding the selection of their speech acts, since they would otherwise anticipate the argumentative trap and eventually avoid the use of arguments at all. Because of these shortcomings, it can not generally be upheld that transparency allows the public to operate as a third standard which automatically favours arguing.

Contrary lines of reasoning are based on the strategic logic of action and take into consideration that in camera settings free the actors from the public pressure of interest representation.[54] According to this argumentation, in camera settings allow for processes of persuasion taking place, because public constraints on changes of interests and preferences can be side-stepped by pretending bargaining dynamics and restraints. The discrepancy of both assessments is grounded in the communicative and the strategic logic of action, which are mutually exclusive because they are based on different conceptions of rationality. The

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[52] Thomas Saretzki, 'Wie unterscheiden sich Argumentieren und Verhandeln? Definitionsprobleme, Funktionale Bezüge und Strukturelle Differenzen von zwei verschiedenen Kommunikationsmodi', in V. v. Prittwitz (eds.) *Verhandeln und Argumentieren. Dialog, Interessen und Macht in der Umweltpolitik*, (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1996), pp. 19-33.

[53] Thomas Risse, 'International Norms and Domestic Change: Arguing and Communicative Behavior in the Human Rights Area', *Politics and Society* 4 (1999), pp. 529-559, Thomas Risse, '"Let's Argue!": Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 1 (2000), pp. 1-39. Thomas Risse, 'Konstruktivismus, Rationalismus und die Theorie Internationaler Beziehungen - Warum empirisch nichts so heiß gegessen wird, wie es theoretisch gekocht wurde', in G. Hellmann, K. D. Wolf and M. Zürn (eds.) *Forschungsstand und Perspektiven der Internationalen Beziehungen in Deutschland*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003).

[54] Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change', *International Organization* 3 (2001), pp. 553-588: 563

debate on the influence of transparency is not restricted to the theoretical level, since for both positions empirical evidence is provided. The systemic approach on interaction, which abstracts from one-sided action theoretical assumptions, comes to a different assessment. Since transparency is not in itself conducive to the reference of one of the standards for the evaluation of ideas, this variable has no influence on the likelihood of the evolution of either arguing or bargaining as structures of interaction. In public as well as in in-camera settings, actors can equally refer to all three standards.[55]

Whereas the degree of transparency of an issue has no effect on the likelihood of the evolution of either one of the structures of interaction, the degree of institutionalisation, defined as the norm-density, influences the dynamics of interactions. In the latest stage of pre-agreement interactions, norms are defined in content and scope, and bargaining is likely to evolve as the structure of interaction, when norm hierarchies have to be established. The more norms already exist within an arena of interaction, the higher the likelihood that norm conflicts arise. Thus, a high density of norms furthers the development of bargaining as the structure of interaction at the later stages. Hence, the systemic approach on interactions comes to a different proposition in regard to the density of norms than the communicative action approach, which is biased towards communicative action. The latter considers a high norm-density as an expression of a common life world, which fosters communicative action and thus the conscious preparedness of actors to become persuaded. Because of the action-theoretical bias, not only the problem of norm hierarchies but also the possibility that existing norms could be established through bargaining and are expressions of compromises rather than of normative consensus is overlooked.

Interactions within the working groups of the Council, the COREPER, the Council of Ministers, and within IGCs take place in the 'shadow of the vote'. This is central for explanations of outcomes in rationalist approaches, such as intergovernmentalism, since the distribution of votes influences the bargaining power of the member-states, which in turn is reflected in the composition of the outcome. Given different voting modalities on the European level (varying between unanimity and weighted votes) and the varying length of the shadow of votes on different levels of interactions (i.e. from workings groups, through the

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[55] One could argue that the politicization of issues favours the use of rightness and appropriateness as standards for the evaluation of ideas, to the disadvantage of truth. This line of argumentation would lead to the hypotheses that public settings favour the development of bargaining as the structure of interaction. This argument, however, requires two additional assumptions. Actors must act in a strategically rational manner, since they wouldn't be sensitive for concerns of the electorate otherwise. Since politicization increases public attention, it would additionally be necessary that the public always expects their representatives fighting for their interests with bargaining strategies. While this might be true in some settings, it is certainly not valid for all cases, especially not when the interested and mobilised public opposes the governmental action-plans.

COREPER to the level of ministers), it is an interesting question whether the prospects for either one of the structures of interactions to evolve varies with the stage of interaction and the arena of interactions. The interactionist approach suggests that early stages of interactions (which most often take place on lower levels such as the bureaucratic level in the case of IGCs and the working groups, especially in the second and third pillar of the EU) foster the establishment of arguing as the structure of interaction for two reasons. Firstly, aspects of truth are important for the concrete definition of a situation in early phases of interactions, and secondly, institutional differentiation through hierarchical levels of interactions, is conducive to a higher level of expertise among the actors on the lower levels, which, in turn, increases the probability that they share evaluative standards.[56] Later stages of interactions do not automatically foster a structural change towards bargaining, only because the shadow of votes is shrinking. Rather, the risk of dissent (and hence decision-making via voting or via authoritative means) is constant during different stages of interaction, regardless of whether argumentative or bargaining dynamics existed. Voting modalities are irrelevant for the evolution of one of the structures of interaction, because they do neither affect the possibility of dissent in arguing or bargaining, nor is there a logical connection between different voting procedures and the existence of evaluative standards for speech acts of arguing or bargaining.

VI.   Conclusion: The Added Value of A Systemic Approach on Interactions

Rationalist and constructivist theories attribute different ranges of influence to the European Commission as a weak actor. Whereas the former state in a generalising manner that the Commission can exert only efficiency-increasing influence in the bargaining process after the stage of initiation, constructivist approaches provide theoretical accounts for substantial influence through argumentative strategies for all of the arenas of interaction, to which the Commission has access. Given the empirical variance of the Commission's influence[57] and the empirical finding that speech acts of arguing and bargaining coexist in interactions on the European level,[58] bridging the gap between constructivist and rationalist approaches becomes

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[56] A common professional background increases the likelihood for reflexive learning (see Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Social Construction and Integration', *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (1999), pp. 545-560: 549).

[57] compare i.e. Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe. Social Purpose & State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca und New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).Pages, Wayne Sandholtz, *High-Tech Europe: The Politics of International Cooperation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).Pages, Wayne Sandholtz, and John Zysman, '1992: Recasting the European Bargain', *World Politics* 1 (1989), pp. 95-128.

[58] Ole Elgström, and Christer Jönsson, 'Negotiating in the European Union: Bargaining or Problem-Solving?' *Journal of European Public Policy* 5 (2000), pp. 684-704; Harald Müller, and Thomas Risse. 2001. Arguing

a crucial task.[59] In order to resolve the contradictions and assign ideal scopes to rationalist and constructivist theories, this paper developed a systemic approach on interactions, which permeates the incompatible action theoretical premises of rationalist and constructivist approaches that are responsible for the focus on either instrumental or reflexive collective learning. This approach offers an unbiased account for the varying impact of communicated ideas between instrumental and reflexive collective learning.

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and Persuasion in Multilateral Negotiations. Grant Proposals to the Volkswagen Foundation. Schwerpunkt 'Globale Strukturen und ihre Steuerung'; Fassung August 2001.

[59] Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Bridging the Rational-Choice/ Constructivist Gap? Theorizing Social Interaction in European Institutions', *ARENA Working Papers*(2000), pp. 1-14, Antje Wiener, 'Constructivism: The Limits of Bridging the Gaps', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3 (2003), pp. 252-275.

Table 3   *The Pattern of Influence of the European Commission*

	Definition of the situation	Co-ordination of action plans	Final definition of norms
Likely structures of interaction	Arguing **or** No structure of interaction (dissent)[60]	Arguing (regulative issues, low level of hierarchy, and not for distributive/ re-distributive issues or at high levels of hierarchy) **or** Bargaining (especially for distributive and re-distributive issues, high level of hierarchy) **or** No structure of interaction (dissent)	Bargaining (necessity of norm hierarchies) **or** No structure of interaction (dissent)
Expected influence of the Commission	Substantial **or** No influence	Substantial **or** Efficiency-increasing **or** No influence	Efficiency-increasing **or** No influence

Conventional bridge building approaches hypothesized that highly institutionalized arenas, and settings with high transparency are better theorized by constructivist approaches. This assessment is due to a pro-constructivist bias. The systemic approach on interaction, on the other hand, suggests that both variables have no influence at all on the evolution of either one of the structures of interaction. Also, different voting procedures do not influence the dynamic of interaction towards either bargaining or arguing. According to the interactionist bridge building approach, constructivist approaches are ideally applied at the beginning of interactions (as suggested by conventional bridge-building approaches) and middle phases of

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[60] Bargaining as the structure of interaction is not likely to evolve at this stage of interactions. Without a common definition of a situation, a dissent of what constitutes bargaining power is most likely among the actors within the EU. This is because alternative options for state action (such as alternative coalitions or unilateral action) are an important source for bargaining power, but can only be developed and instrumentalised when a common construction of the situation exists. Moreover, lacking a common definition of a situation, it is unclear which formal procedures will be applied (e.g. which issue area and which pillar is affected) and, thus, how the formal distribution of votes looks like.

interactions, when they deal with regulative issues on low levels of hierarchy. Given that actors attribute credibility mutually and share a conception of the sources of bargaining power, rationalist approaches are better suited to provide hypotheses for late stages of interaction (when a hierarchy of norms has to be established) and middle phases of interactions, especially if distributive and re-distributive issues are at hand, and if interactions take place with little institutional differentiation.

Constructivism challenged the formerly dominating rationalist paradigm and led to the production of alternative hypotheses. Especially through gap-bridging approaches, a rich and fruitful dialogue between both camps was initiated. So far, however, the bridges were fragile, because they were built on uneven fundaments. As discussed in this paper, the action theoretical recurrence introduces one-sided biases. When the logic of communicative action is considered as being prior to the logic of strategic action, hypotheses on scope conditions are biased in favour of constructivism and vice versa.

As pointed out, the systemic approach on interactions circumvents one-sided ontological assumptions and the debate on the better micro-foundation (which cannot be resolved). It does not rely on one-sided action theoretical assumptions but on a broad behavioural assumption. This allows for an alternative focus on dynamics of interaction, namely the conceptualisation of two different types of collective learning as systemic effects in interactions.

The added value of the systemic approach is threefold. (1) On the meta-theoretical level, the systemic approach on interactions offers a bridge between rationalism and constructivism, since it serves as an overarching frame based on which ideal scopes of rationalist and of constructivist approaches with similar substantial foci can be deduced. As already argued, such ideal scopes are essential, since the alternative would be the complete dismissal of competing hypotheses (if both can refer to empirical evidence). (2) On the level of substantive theories, the systemic approach on interactions allows for the adequate conceptualisation of varying pattern of influence of actors lacking formal bargaining power, such as the European Commission, secretariats or NGOs. (3) Finally, the systemic approach has implications for the conduct of empirical research on interactions. The emphasis of the systemic approach is less on the transport of ideas and not at all on actor's motivations for the selection of speech acts of arguing or bargaining. Rather, the analysis concentrates on the contextual preconditions for assessments of the quality of communicated ideas, which allow for processes of collective learning. Hence empirical studies, which are concerned with

politics and concrete outputs, should focus on the examination of whether the preconditions for either one of the structures of interactions (shared standards of reference/ shared conception of what constitutes bargaining power, mutual attribution of credibility) are given in particular interactions and engage in questions if how policy (type of issue) and polity (horizontal and vertical institutional differentiation, institutional actors) shape the dynamics of interactions. When the systemic approach on interaction is used as a heuristic yardstick for the determination of the ideal scopes of already existing competing hypotheses, more adequate accounts of the complex reality of social interactions are possible.

Appendix:

Graph 1: System of Interaction
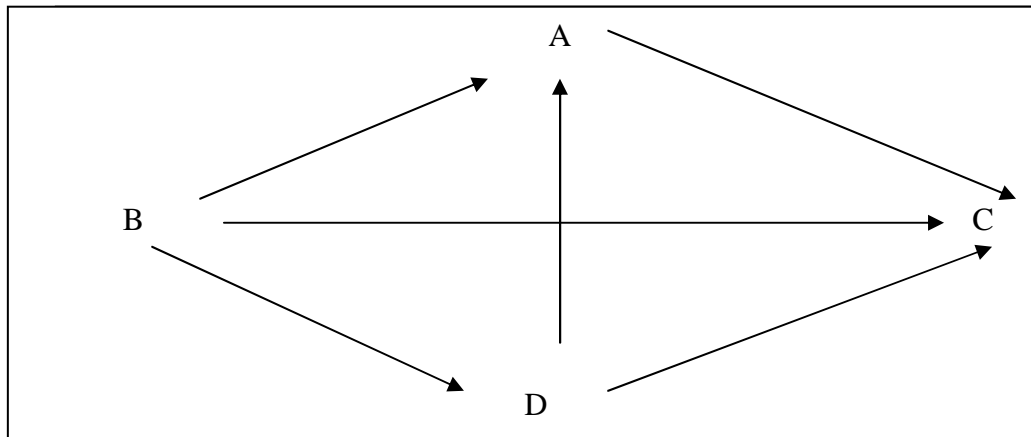
Graph 2: Structures of Interaction
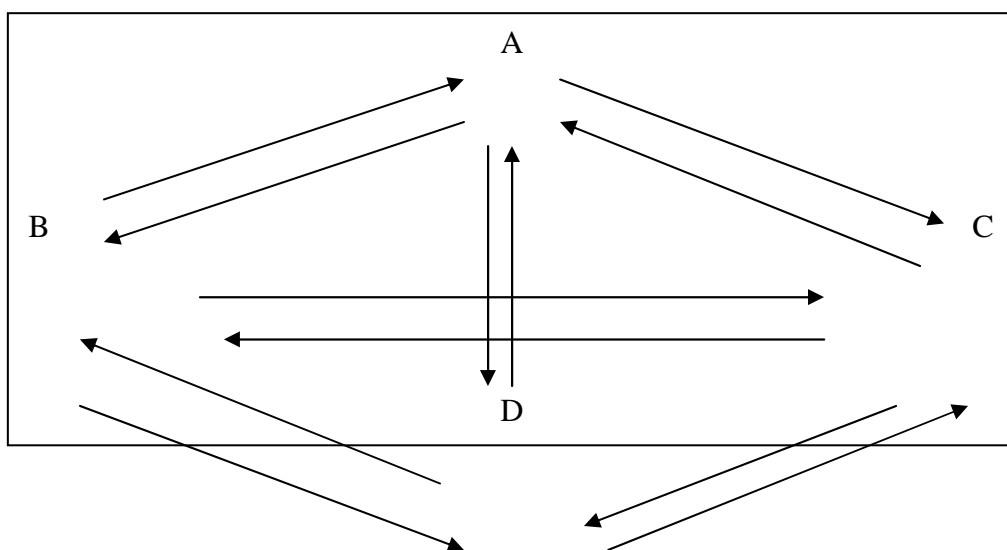
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