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‘Closer to the Market’: EU Research Governance and Symbolic Power

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Abstract

Adding to vital debates in EU Studies about the executive power of European governance, this article analyses the influence of EU research funding in the social sciences. The standardization and enforcement of norms, principles, and language codes, we argue, play a crucial role in EU governance. Applying a mixed-method approach, we show that mastery of the ‘EU language game’ does more than help scholars obtain EU funding; it also generates individual and disciplinary frictions, since it requires a subtle re-orientation of social-scientific research towards political goals. Our study sheds light on strategies used by scientists who find themselves enmeshed in this language game, from euphoric adaptation to reluctant lip service. Since these academic strategies play out in the relative autonomy of liberal EU governance, the explicit focus on market integration is accompanied by a less explicit interest in matters of political representation and identity formation.

Keywords: EU governance; research governance; symbolic power; EU jargon; European studies; soft power

Introduction

There have been vital debates in EU Studies about the efficacy and actual executive power of European governance. While some authors claim that European norms and standards can influence domestic affairs in EU member states and point to a far-reaching ‘Europeanization’ of local structures (Börzel and Risse, 2003; Münch, 2010), others have taken a more skeptical stance towards the governability of European policymaking (Fligstein, 2008). Compliance research has shown, for instance, that domestic actors deviate from European legislation even in the most regulated areas of European policymaking (Falkner and Treib, 2008). Moreover, proponents of the multi-level governance approach convincingly argue that European governance is not a unidirectional process driven by top-down policymaking, but rather involves strongly interwoven levels of government and deliberations across multiple political settings (Marks and Hooghe, 2002). Notwithstanding these differing views on the influence and efficacy of EU governance, however, scholars generally agree that EU policymaking has a certain performative influence in terms of agenda-setting, institutions, and instruments (Eberlein and Kerwer, 2004; Bernhard, 2011; Izsak *et al.*, 2015).

In the pages below we look at the power and efficacy of European governance, examining its performativity from a new angle. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 2014), we emphasize the strong symbolic dimension of European governance and the effort that goes into EU actors’ attempts to standardize and enforce EU norms, principles, and language codes in order to implement European policy goals.

On these grounds, we argue that the EU has acquired its own ‘power of naming’ (Bourdieu, 1994), and that this cultural force constitutes a major element of the symbolic power of European governance.

Taking up Bourdieu’s assumption that academic practices are subject to a certain symbolic power, we can metaphorically view (Martin, 2003, pp. 30–34) social scientists as ‘particles’ [...] that are under the sway of the forces of attraction, of repulsion and so on, as in a magnetic field’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 106). While other sources of such ‘magnetism’ – disciplinary and national academic distinctions and career trajectories that structure academic practices, for example – are far more established and exert stronger effects on social scientists, scholars still experience a genuinely European force of attraction or repulsion of certain topics. Hence, the increasing symbolic weight of Europeanization in academia also adds to the plurality of structuring factors in social scientific practice (Baier and Gengnagel, 2018, p. 70). Metaphorically speaking, the EU is developing a ‘gravitational pull’ of its own – understood here as an authority that calls for particular usage and performance of research interests, concepts, vocabularies, and practices.

Using the example of EU funding in the social sciences, we ask how researchers engage with this ‘gravitational pull’ of European research policy. In our analyses, we demonstrate that knowing the ‘EU language game’ not only affects one’s eligibility for EU funds; it also creates friction and drives social scientists to ‘perform’ Europe in broadly divergent ways. As we discuss below, these frictions relate to the tensions between market integration and social integration (Scharpf, 1998, 2002), and, more specifically, to the EU’s conception of a market-integrating social policy (for example ‘social inclusion’, ‘social innovation’).

Based (a) on a quantitative text analysis of journal article abstracts from EU-funded and non-EU-funded research and (b) on qualitative interviews with researchers and specialized administrative personnel in Spain and Germany, we work out how the ‘gravitational pull’ of the EU affects researchers’ grant application and publication strategies. While most social scientists who apply for and work with EU funding acknowledge the need to produce research that is ‘closer to the market’ (interviewee E14: 84–85), their respective strategies differ. Some simply ‘learn the buzzwords’ (interviewee D5: 33) and adjust their research agendas in creative ways; others internalize EU policy concepts and ‘produce [a social scientific] reading of the concept’ (interviewee E4: 91).

Exploring this symbolic dimension of Europeanization, we first give a brief overview of symbolic power in the context of EU governance, and then apply this theoretical perspective to the area of research funding. After introducing methods and design, we present our empirical analyses and discuss the various strategies that social scientists use in their grant applications and publications. Finally, we conclude with a reflection of our findings.

I. The Symbolic Power of EU Governance

In the past decade, the writings of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu on politics and the state have gained salience among scholars of European Studies and International Relations (Bigo, 2011; Leander, 2011; Adler-Nissen, 2012). Researchers have applied Bourdieu’s conceptions across a range of contexts, from the analysis of major political actors and

institutions of EU governance – like the European Commission (Georgakakis, 2017) the European Parliament (Kauppi, 2018), and the European Court (Vauchez, 2015) – to more holistic reflections on the 'Eurocracy' (Georgakakis and Rowell, 2013) and the broader transnational spread of EU affairs and EU affairs professionals (Büttner *et al.*, 2019). One strength of these post-Bourdieuian approaches is their portrayal of the European project's limited statehood that has developed a 'gravitational pull' of its own, despite its relatively weak social fields (Vauchez, 2011). Even in areas where the EU has only limited competences, the European Commission has gained increasing power of naming by introducing new modes of governance such as the OMC (Eberlein and Kerwer, 2004; Radaelli, 2008), the pooling of 'EU-related expertise' (Büttner *et al.*, 2019, p. 176), or the provision of policy-specific 'informational capital' (Bernhard, 2011, p. 434).¹

For Bourdieu, symbolic power constitutes the cultural embodiment of a long history of domination, driven by increasingly sublime displays of physical force. As the most fundamental and far-reaching form of power, derived from the concentration of specific types of capital (physical, economic, cultural, juridical, and so on), symbolic power constitutes a sort of 'meta-capital' that gives its bearer overarching definitional power (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 4). Extending Weber's definition of the state's monopoly of power, the symbolic power of naming enables the state and its authorities to shape and define the rules of play in numerous fields of society (Adler-Nissen, 2012, p. 90). Thus, it is a very strong and fundamental cultural force, one that entails 'the capacity to impose classifications and meanings as legitimate', organizes the 'practical taken-for granted understandings' of social actors, their 'embodied disposition' (*habitus*), and their 'sense of place' in the social world (Swartz, 2013, p. 38). As a subtle but fundamental form of power it mainly operates through bureaucratic procedures, such as standardization of education, CVs, or evaluation reports, and establishes predominating classification systems, linguistic codes, official interpretations of history, cultural identity and so forth.

However, as 'the language of authority never governs without the collaboration of those it governs' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 116), the EU's power of naming becomes even more visible when we turn our attention towards the enormous effort that compliance with EU policies requires. Across Europe, policymakers, public administrations, courts, private firms, and civil society actors seek to understand EU law, interpret EU statistics, make sense of EU funding calls, participate in European exchange, and analyse EU documents, and thus take part in authorizing the Union: 'The symbolic efficacy of words is exercised only in so far as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorised to do so, or, what amounts to the same thing, only in so far as he fails to realize that, in submitting to it, he himself has contributed, through his recognition, to its establishment' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 116). Hence the question: how do the subjects of these language games structurally acknowledge the authority and promises of the European project – thereby both responding to and helping to establish the EU's 'gravitational pull'?² As we will discuss in the sections that follow, the symbolic efficacy of words

¹Even if the European Union has neither replaced the national monopolies of physical force, nor the national monopolies of naming, the rise of European governance and the increasing shift of competence to European authorities can be interpreted as a challenge to national monopolies (Armholtz and Hammerslev, 2013, p. 60).

²Here, Bourdieu's concepts serve to remind us of the relational legitimization of Europe as a societal order that successfully exerts its symbolic power precisely when academics, driven by their relatively autonomous research interests, subject themselves to European ways of naming.

and language becomes highly visible in the academic practices of social scientists who are influenced – but not directly regulated – by EU policymaking.

II. Language and Symbolic Power in EU Research Funding

EU funding policy certainly represents an integral element of the EU's struggle to achieve and maintain its symbolic power. Since the early 1980s, and even more since the introduction of Cohesion Policy in the 1990s, the European Union has provided funding to support the implementation of distinctly European policy initiatives in all EU member states (Büttner, 2012; Büttner and Leopold, 2016). In this context, the standardization of rules, regulations (Zimmermann, 2016), and even language – a particular type of 'EU jargon' – plays an important role (Loos, 2000).

Apart from funding regional policy initiatives, a significant amount of EU funding goes to promoting research and innovation, since 'culture and science are at the core of the European project [...] to continue our narrative, to continue writing the book on the present and the future of the EU' (Barroso, 2014, p. 26). The EU's broader ambition is to provide an overarching 'telos, a renewed sense of purpose to European integration' (Barroso, 2014, p. 24). To strengthen its position in higher education and research, the EU aims to establish an increasingly integrated and globally competitive 'European Research Area' (ERA). As the scope and reach of EU funding schemes grows, 'European institutions have, in return, also shaped the development of SSH [Social Sciences and Humanities] disciplines in Europe' (Heilbron *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). Initially focused on a narrow set of technological expertise areas and on the applied sciences, EU Framework Programmes (FPs) are increasingly also targeting the applied research in the SSH (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2013): From evaluating policies since the 4th FP (1994–98; Schögler and König, 2017) to legitimizing overarching EU policy concepts by fostering the overall 'growth, employment and competitiveness in a knowledge society' (European Commission, 2008) and 'inclusive, innovative and reflective societies' (European Commission, 2017), the EU has widened its scope. Ultimately, since the 7th FP (Kania *et al.*, 2018, pp. 4, 95), it has included fundamental (or basic) research under the umbrella of the European Research Council (ERC). It is in this context that the EU's claim to exert symbolic power becomes most evident – as Commissioner Moedas (2017) put it when speaking to ERC-funded grantees: 'You should not only be the storytellers of Science, but the storytellers of Europe'.

Thanks to this development, the EU increasingly engages basic research and the social sciences. In this context, we can observe a more general shift towards 'academic capitalism' at the national and even more so at the supranational level, namely the implementation of new public management, performance-based competition, and the prioritization of science as a productive factor in a knowledge economy (Münch, 2014). This is by far not limited to EU politics (for a comparison to the US, Slaughter and Cantwell, 2012; for UK, Wieczorek and Schubert, 2020; for France, Musselin, 2021); however, in the absence of classical funding schemes and administrative procedures, the experimentation with new modes of governance and public management has been particularly vital at the EU-level (Radaelli, 2008; Büttner and Leopold, 2016).

The EU's path towards market integration – which also extends into social policy –, has engaged science under the umbrella of economic integration: Active inclusion, social

investment, social innovation and other EU social policy concepts are framed as productive approaches that 'replace the conflict between market integration and social integration' (Bernhard, 2010, p. 176). It is this productive dimension of social policy – which stands in contrast to 'traditional' market-correcting approaches towards decommodification and redistribution – that the EU-funded social sciences are expected to address in terms of 'social impact'.

In problematizing social scientific issues from this angle, therefore, the EU promotes a narrative of opportunity and growth. This 'storytelling of Europe' goes beyond a direct regulative effort but seeks to establish language games and incentives that develop their own 'gravitational pull' within a relatively sovereign social scientific language (Gengnagel, 2021). Most academics are familiar with the practice of adapting their wording to fit with a particular call or a journal (Ioannidis *et al.*, 2014; Pearce and Evans, 2018) – a practice rooted in the performativity of the power of naming. Only to the extent that researchers actively engage with EU language and appropriate the political epistemology of related EU policies, do they acknowledge the EU as a centre of gravity and contribute to its legitimacy. In a Weberian sense, this raises the issue of social scientific loyalty to the European Union. As our analysis will show, social scientists regularly encounter frictions between their established academic practices and the political and scholarly implications of EU jargon.

III. Methods

Our study draws on (1) a quantitative text analysis of publication abstracts, and (2) a qualitative content analysis of interview data. For the text analysis, we use 5,780 abstracts from scientific papers in the categories 'sociology' and 'political science' from the Web of Science (Clarivate, 2021) between 2000 and 2019. All papers are listed as coming from EU-based institutions, and 823 report to have received EU-funding (from the ERC, European Commission, European Social Fund, FPs, Horizon2020, Marie Curie, and so on); the other 4,957 abstracts have received funding from other relatively large funding bodies (for example National Research Councils, Research Foundations, Ministries, and so on). For all abstracts, a cosine similarity analysis was performed that measured their linguistic similarity with two contrast texts that stand out as prime examples for the 'EU research funding world': an extract from the introduction to the SSH 2013 work programme (see Figure 1), and the SSH's general website presentation in FP7 (European Commission, 2021). The cosine similarity defines similarity by relating the number of co-occurring words in two texts to the number of possible words in the overall corpus, delivering results in a value between 0 (independence) and 1 (congruence) for each abstract (further details in the Appendix).

For our qualitative analysis, we use a subset of interviews conducted in the project 'EU Professionalism' (for an overview on this project, see Büttner *et al.*, 2019), comprised of 20 interviews with SSH researchers (mostly sociologists and political scientists) and people responsible for supporting researchers with respect to EU funding (such as EU offices at universities) in Spain and Germany. We focus on these two countries due to their widely divergent traditions with regard to both EU funding and research funding. While German research funding relies heavily on domestic structural policy and national funding, Spain has been strongly influenced by EU funding since the end of 1980s. All

Figure 1: EU Jargon in Research Funding

Political landscape: Against the backdrop of the current economic situation and increased global competition, the Union has defined a Europe 2020 strategy to support growth and job creation. The Innovation Union Flagship initiative supports this strategy through specific commitments. Research and innovation are key drivers of competitiveness, jobs, sustainable growth and social progress. The work programme 2013 aligns with, and contributes towards, the objectives of Europe 2020, the Innovation Union Flagship, and other EU policies. There is a reinforced focus on fostering new ideas, supporting world class teams tackling significant societal challenges, and ensuring that the fruits of our investments can be properly exploited. In this way the work programme provides for a smooth transition towards Horizon 2020, which is the new research and innovation programme for 2014-20.

Expected impact: The work programme will contribute to the goal of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities are an important cornerstone in this respect. Such growth cannot be achieved unless EU citizens have a sound, shared understanding of the key challenges facing their society, the factors, actors and trends leading to convergence or divergence in European societies, as well as between Europe and other key actors on the global scene. In particular, the work programme will support the development of the Innovation Union Flagship, including some of its key initiatives such as reinforcing social innovation. The work programme will also help to strengthen the EU's external policies, and should enhance efforts to ensure peace, stability, human rights, mutual understanding, cultural exchanges and economic development. The work programme will therefore encourage research which directly supports European, national or regional policy-making by providing a comparative knowledge base and evidence.

Source: European Commission, 2012, pp. 5, 7

interviews were conducted in 2016 and 2017; for a full list of used interviews, see Appendix. Interviewees were recruited to cover major research institutes and universities in the countries. The questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews included – among others – questions about the interviewees' involvement in EU funding, their support from in-house and external infrastructures, the role of language and administrative tasks in EU funding, and their perceptions of a 'successful project'.

Following qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2019), we analysed the interviews with MaxQDA 2018. The interviews were coded by two researchers, who independently analysed the relevant sections. The coding strategy followed a deductive-inductive approach, where we first identified relevant sections of the interviews, and then coded different aspects of the interviewee's positions towards EU-funding, the markers for their acceptance or rejection of the EU's and domestic/disciplinary authority, and their statements about EU jargon. Finally, we inductively identified criteria for the interviewees' different strategies to respond and/or adapt to the EU jargon.

IV. Empirical Analysis

The following section presents the results of our quantitative text analysis (for the publication abstracts) and qualitative content analysis (for the interviews). We start with a short overview of the jargon specific to European research funding, go on to examine how this funding is used in academic output, and finally discuss researchers' strategies vis-à-vis the EU's symbolic power.

The Jargon of EU Research Funding

Above, we argue that the EU's symbolic power constitutes a particular kind of 'gravitational pull' central to EU governance, one that can be traced within social scientific practices as well. As expressions of this symbolic power, four different facets of EU jargon stand out in EU research funding: (1) project management vocabulary, (2) acronyms, (3) European policy concepts and (4) promotional rhetoric. All four can be found in various types of documents related to EU research funding.³

(1) *Project management vocabulary*: EU funding is usually granted in the form of project funding, characterized by highly formalized bureaucratic procedures, managerial practices and standards of control (Büttner and Leopold, 2016; Fred and Mukhtar-Landgren, 2019). Hence, those who engage with the 'project world of EU funding' (Büttner and Leopold, 2016) become fluent with specific concepts and ideas about project management, entailing not only managerial norms and technical standards (for example 'LEAR – Legal Entity Appointed Representative', 'mid-term report') but also the EU's output-orientated approach of project funding ('deliverables', 'milestones', 'progress evaluation', and so on).

(2) *Acronyms*: the excessive use of programme- and project acronyms is a well-known feature of the project world of EU funding. While at first glance acronyms seek to make projects identifiable, many of the 'abbreviations, acronyms and sobriquets [that] have crept into everyday use over recent years [...] have almost become a language in themselves' (Fraser, 2004, p. v). In particular, they seek to emphasize the entrepreneurial character of project funding in light of the EU's overall growth paradigm. Apart from seeing researchers 'going NUTS' (Becker *et al.*, 2010), acronyms like ESPRIT (European Strategic Program on Research in Information Technology) or PROMISE (Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement) – sometimes playfully, sometimes (involuntarily) ironically – show obedience to EU 'projectification'.

(3) *EU policy concepts*: Key terms of EU policy concepts (for example 'social innovation' or 'social resilience') are directly subsumed under the overall strategies (for example 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'). While the coining of such fixed terms is partly fuelled by the often non-native use of language in the EU that results in a strong standardization of terms and wording (Born and Schütte, 1995), it is of course also an intended part of symbolic governance – one that is nearly ubiquitous in EU documents and EU research funding programmes. The continual reference to these policy concepts in EU research funding documents serves to bring research funding under the conceptual umbrella of the current EU growth paradigm, while leaving just enough leeway for social scientists to appropriate this terminology in ways that enable its autonomous inclusion in the vocabulary of their respective disciplines.

(4) *Promotional rhetoric*: Researchers as 'storytellers of Europe' (see above; Moedas, 2017) not only help to performatively construct Europe as a general frame of reference; they also tell a particular story of market integration. The protagonists of such EU-funded research are 'important', 'innovative', 'cutting-edge', 'world class', a 'key driver', and have economically 'exploitable' results (EU *passim*).

³As EU research governance is only a specific expression of global academic capitalism (Münch, 2014), this jargon (especially project management vocabulary and promotional rhetoric) can also be found beyond the EU.

Using an example from an FP7 Work Programme in the SSH, Figure 1 shows usage for policy concepts (underlined) and the promotional rhetoric (highlighted in grey).

This sequence calls into evidence both the symbolic power of the EU and its ‘gravitational pull’. About 2,700 research consortia sat together to write and submit proposals to this SSH Work Programme.⁴ During that process, they likely consulted the call repeatedly since ‘grant proposals have a great deal in common with the two promotional genres [...], sales letters and job applications’ (Connor and Mauranen, 1999, p. 48). From these c.2,700 proposals, 253 were accepted and received their share of the €579 million in the SSH Work Programme (European Commission, 2015, p. 51).

The applicants not only sat together to write a proposal, the successful ones also became part of the output machinery of EU funding. For the above mentioned SSH funding line in FP7, the evaluation reports states that ‘[a]lmost 80% of FP7-Cooperation-SSH projects have published articles in peer reviewed journals, on average 16 articles per project. 72% of the articles are published by one third of the projects, indicating the existence of a group of highly productive research teams’ (European Commission, 2015, p. 36).

While the attempt to tailor a proposal closely to a specific call might be read as a direct response to EU governance instruments, this is of course not the case for scholarly publications. Even if the research on which the publications are based was conducted in the context of an EU-funded project, the publications themselves are not subject to a direct EU regulation. While these projects gravitate around EU project calls, the question remains whether the symbolic power of the Union is also present in their scientific output. This question will be addressed in the following section.

EU Jargon in Scientific Output: EU- and Non-EU-Funded Publications

To gain a clearer picture of how the EU’s symbolic power works in areas relatively removed from direct regulation, we first turn to the scientific output of researchers: namely, publications in academic journals. Using the example of the FP7 call in Figure 1, we explore whether the publications written in an EU-funded project might also lean towards EU jargon. For this, we first compared the abstracts of EU-funded social scientific publications to two EU texts (the text in Figure 1 and one other EU-text; see above). We applied a method that uses cosine similarity to measure linguistic correspondence based on the co-occurrence of words, on scale of 0 to 1. We added a control group of non-EU-funded publications in order to see whether they differ from the EU-funded texts.

Our results show that EU-funded and non-EU-funded titles indeed differ in their language. Statistical comparisons of the cosine similarity revealed that the EU-funded titles were more similar to our two baseline EU texts than the non-EU-funded ones – although only with a small effect (Cohen’s $d = 0.209$).⁵ We also tested how EU-funding programmes that allow applicants greater academic freedom in that they fund basic research (like the ERC and the Marie Curie programme) relate to the applied research programmes, in which the SSH are explicitly asked to serve the EU’s overarching strategies (see above)⁶: When we compare the non-EU-funded abstracts with the subgroup of abstracts from EU applied research funding, we find a small to medium significant effect (Cohen’s $d = 0.297$).

⁴Number estimated from European Commission (2015, p. 107).

⁵Results of all statistical tests in Appendix.

⁶This was only possible for those publications that provided detailed information on the funding line.

Publications from EU applied research funding hence seem to be most similar to the baseline EU documents. These statistical effects already suggest that the EU's symbolic power carries greater weight in EU-funded research than in non-EU-funded research.

A more solid starting point for addressing the question on what ground the similarities might substantially rest is to look at the topics addressed in the abstracts under study. Table 1 lists the titles of the 10 abstracts with the highest and lowest levels of similarity to our EU texts. Among the 10 'most similar' abstracts, 30 per cent had been granted EU funding (ranks 2, 4 and 5) – clearly a high number, given that only 14.2 per cent of all titles in our sample were EU-funded.⁷

The comparison shows that publications with high levels of cosine similarity tend to address social and economic challenges and their governance: social innovation (a concept of the EU's productive social policy approach) appears in several titles; entrepreneurship, fiscal consolidation and growth, the public sector and knowledge production are dominant foci.⁸ The regional emphasis is strongly – but not exclusively – on Europe (title 9 refers to African countries and discusses issues related to the implementation of agricultural policies).

On the other end of the spectrum, we find a much more varied collection of topics, ranging from gender, media and hunger to ethnicity. Remarkably, here we find a focus on different facets of political representation (like the Ombudsman, electoral reforms, candidate ethnicity or majoritarianism), which stands in a clear contrast to the policy orientation of the highest ranked abstracts. Among the 50 highest-ranked titles, only three deal with political representation in a broader sense, while 19 of the 50 lowest-ranked titles do. Here, rank 5,775 with the title 'In Defence of Politics' almost seems programmatic for approaches in the lower-ranked publications that focus more on competing political projects than on policy application within the current project.

Reflecting the two poles of social science discourse, the cosine similarity to the EU documents was strongest in texts that addressed EU and European institutions from a macro- and policy-oriented perspective, which seems very close to the perspective of these institutions themselves. On the other end of the discursive spectrum, we find an emphasis on politics and political representation, and a variety of classical themes more strongly focused on specific social groups (for example students, voters, young offenders). In short: the higher the ranking, the more EU-funded titles seem to reflect an EU-internal perspective, in contrast to the broader and more political approach of non-EU-funded research titles.

However, this does not mean that the EU's symbolic power fiercely attracts all those who get funded, with no escape from EU-jargon and a policy-oriented perspective. Rather, it is likely the case that researchers whose topics naturally fit better with the EU's perspective apply for EU funding more often than others. Second, not all EU-funded titles are highly similar to the EU texts, and not all non-EU-funded titles cluster at the dissimilarity pole. This means that also titles related to politics receive EU funding, and titles without EU funding might adopt an EU-internal policy focus. Hence, the 'gravitational pull' of EU governance does not simply pull those closer that are

⁷In the quartile with the 1,445 titles with lowest similarity, only 162 titles were EU-funded (11.2 per cent). In the quartile with the 1,445 titles with highest similarity, it was 285 abstracts (19.7 per cent).

⁸This pattern also spreads across the entire sample: several of these policy concepts appear more frequently in the EU-funded abstracts than in the non EU-funded ones; see Appendix for examples.

Table 1: Titles of Publications with Highest and Lowest Levels of Cosine Similarity (* = EU-Funded)

HIGHEST LEVELS OF SIMILARITY TO EU TEXTS		LOWEST LEVELS OF SIMILARITY TO EU TEXTS	
RANK	Title of publication	Title of publication	Rank
1	Geographical Distribution of the European Knowledge Base Through the Lens of a Synthetic Index	Putting the Ombudsman into Constitutional Context	5771
2*	Connecting entrepreneurship with policy experimentation? The EU framework for social innovation	Changing the scale and changing the result: Evaluating the impact of an electoral reform on the 2000 and 2004 US Presidential elections	5772
3	Identifying social innovations in European local rural development initiatives	Threats and Coercive Diplomacy: An Ethical Analysis	5773
4*	An inductive classification of types of social innovation	Fish Rescue us from Hunger: the Contribution of Aquatic Resources to Household Food Security on the Rufiji River Floodplain, Tanzania, East Africa	5774
5*	Innovation in the public sector: a systematic review and future research agenda	In Defence of Politics	5775
6	Innovation, public policy and public services delivery in the UK. The word that would be king?	Candidate Ethnicity and Vote Choice in Britain	5776
7	Facing the challenges of research-informed knowledge mobilization: 'Practising what we preach'?	Fiscal policy, macroeconomic stability and finite horizons	5777
8	United in diversity? The convergence of cultural values among EU member states and candidates	The Decline of Majoritarianism in the UK and the Fixed-term Parliaments Act	5778
9	Searching for Exits from the Great Recession: Coordination of Fiscal Consolidation and Growth Enhancing Innovation Policies in Central and Eastern Europe	News Consumption and Anti-Western Narratives in Russia: A Case Study of University Students	5779
10	A comparative analysis of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems in Kenya and Ghana: sustainable agricultural intensification in the rural-urban interface	Performing Hypermasculinity: Experiences with Confined Young Offenders	5780

Source: Web of Science data.

already within its reach conceptually, nor does it necessarily repel all those that are oppositely polarized.

While acknowledging the EU as a centre of gravity means actively engaging with EU jargon and appropriating the political epistemology of EU policies, such active engagement obviously comes in many different shades. Whether and to what extent EU-funded researchers really tried to engage with EU jargon is something our quantitative perspective on linguistic similarity cannot unravel. Nuances of engagement, adaptational performance, or frictions in the appropriation process all fall outside the scope of our output-focused analysis of scientific articles. With that in mind, we turn to a more in-depth qualitative perspective on social scientists' engagement with the symbolic power of the EU.

'Pointless Buzzwords' and 'Magic Mantras'? Dealing with the Requirements of EU Research Funding

The abstracts discussed above might be considered as part of an endpoint in the process of scientific knowledge production. However, the very non-linearity of academic writing means that any publication partially 'misrepresents the processes of thought that

accompanied or gave rise to the work' (Medawar, 1963, p. 377). These processes of thought particularly take place during proposal writing – when subjective reflections on the 'gravitational pull' might be most pronounced and frictions and adaptational endeavours most openly visible, as researchers must explicitly engage with the EU via call documents. Consequently, we now turn our empirical focus to this earlier phase of scientific knowledge production.

Our qualitative analysis of 20 interviews with social scientists from Spain and Germany shows that scholars deal differently with the regulations and symbolic requirements imposed by EU research funding. Some researchers, whose topics fit more naturally to the parameters of the calls and to the political epistemology of EU policies, acted like 'fish in water' (a). By contrast, others did not feel as at home in the EU project world. Some of them made a great deal of effort to engage with the EU's concepts and master the EU's language (b), while others solely paid lip service to the EU perspective, sprinkling their proposals with the right buzzwords and policy concepts without attempting to engage with the concepts at a deeper level (c). To understand how and to what extent these different strategies contribute to legitimizing the EU's authority, we will now discuss the different forms of engagement with EU research funding that we found in our empirical sample.

(a): A prime representative for those who feel like 'fish in water' in the EU project world was interviewee E14, a researcher in the field of security studies involved in several EU projects with partners from the security industry. As his described understanding of a successful project shows, engaging with the paradigms of impact- and output-oriented research was somehow natural:

Q [...] What would be a successful EU project for you?

A: [...] it would be a project where the result, or the assets that have been created, are assets that can be put into the market [...]. I think, basic research is very important, but we should try to focus on these kinds of projects which are closer to the market. (E14: 84–85)

For E14, the social sciences serve overarching strategies to foment economic growth; for him, proposals must necessarily address policy concepts like social innovation if they are to get funded and create marketable results.

Similarly to E14 (but slightly more reflective), D6 – an interviewee from a large German science institute (researcher and EU-funding expert at his institute) – described the social sciences as having a certain societal function:

[...] we also need these social innovations and not only technical innovations. Of course we need economic growth, but you cannot solve the global problems humankind is facing only through technological innovations. (D6: 31)

Consequently, he believed that policy concepts must be included in EU project proposals and are essential to their success:

When you write proposals you need to know the policy objectives. You need to include this. Particularly in the impact part, you need to know all the policies. Energy Union, Innovation Union, what else ... cultural policy. (D6: 37)

Whether to produce marketable goods or to solve the global problems of humankind, 'adding concepts' to a proposal is for both E14 and D6 simply 'part of the game' in EU project funding. Hence, they do not question the EU's authority; rather, they help

establish, acknowledge and reinforce the EU's symbolic power in a relatively effortless way, by adopting EU policy concepts and an orientation geared towards impact and competitiveness – and, most probably, also by reproducing these concepts in their own writings.

(b): By contrast, researcher E4 – a social psychologist – had a harder time engaging with the EU's gravitational pull. She was well aware of the need to adopt EU jargon in order to obtain funding, but also of a certain tension between the EU requirements and her own work:

[...] when you produce a project, it's not only the scientific part that counts. It's also the way to present it, even having good ideas about impact and so, and in this sense, I'm not sure I am particularly good at it [...]. (E4: 26).

In fact, this European research is always research on demand. You do not prepare ... let us say you do not really have the ideas of what has to be researched but in fact it is rather a European interest. (E4: 40)

She appeared much more rooted in her disciplinary discourses and structures, which for her seemed to work quite differently from those promoted by EU funding. She even mentioned feeling forced to work with certain concepts:

[...] we have the example of the 'resilience concept' in our project. It comes directly from the EU. I do not know who proposed that concept but it has forced us to work under that concept in poverty, or let us say poverty issues, and that has had consequences in our work in the sense that we have had to produce let us say a sociological reading of the concept. (E4: 91)

For D5, a sociologist at the postdoc level, the situation was similar – he also clearly felt the EU's 'gravitational pull', describing how he felt compelled to incorporate EU policy concepts into his research:

I did not have to do with EU-projects before, so I had to learn the buzzwords to a certain extent. For instance 'active inclusion': someone who is into the EU world knows this term, but I only knew 'activation', as a scientific term. And then I learned pretty fast that I better say 'active inclusion', 'social cohesion' and so on. Terms that appear in the current EU-initiatives. (D5: 33)

E4, D5 and other researchers in our sample who expressed similar positions were well aware of the strong symbolic power of the EU. Although they criticized it to some extent and struggled with the frictions it created in relation to their academic discourses, they nevertheless actively engaged with the EU jargon:

There are words and meanings that somehow at first escape from your understanding but as social scientists, we are quite used to getting very different concepts and meanings and finally we get by with that. (E4: 87)

This 'digestion of policy concepts' is likely a very effective way to reinforce and feed the EU's symbolic power. In this way, policy concepts – and, with them, the EU's political epistemology – are not only repeated and disseminated, but also appropriated by scholars, whose engagement brings these concepts ultimately into broader disciplinary discourses, beyond the context of EU funding.

In addition to the 'natural engagement' with the EU policy concepts (a), and the more demanding work of 'digesting' them (b), our data revealed a third strategy: the lip service paid by disciplinarily well-settled academics vis-à-vis the EU funding world (c). This is well illustrated by the case of interviewee E2, a social anthropologist who works at a large university with a resourceful EU office. He was obviously well aware of the need to include relevant EU policy concepts in his project proposals. However, unlike E4 and D5, he did not seem to bother with 'digesting' them:

For example, we included social cohesion in the title. Are we actually interested in social cohesion? Maybe in the long run but if you do not have social cohesion in your main title ... this is what I refer to. You have to adjust to what they want, but we do not work with social cohesion. It is like a side plate to what we are doing. (E2: 34)

Interestingly, this strategic usage of the EU policy concepts is strongly backed by the well-resourced EU-funding support office at his university. The professionals in the office proposed a clear division of labour when it comes to the grant writing process, noting that researchers 'know a lot about science, but they don't know about writing proposals' (E3). In this context, they viewed themselves as 'facilitators' or 'translators' responsible for translating EU jargon for the researchers, and translating the researchers' ideas into EU jargon. For this, a thorough knowledge of the political concepts in the calls is needed:

As I told you, you need to read between the lines. You have to understand why the commission is asking for this particular thing. [...] having this knowledge is very important to guide the research groups through the work to get their proposal shaped for this particular topic. (E3: 98)

We even found that universities provided funding to outsource the entire process of writing to external freelancers. In this case, the researchers only provided the scientific ideas, while the freelancers (so-called 'writers') wrote and shaped the proposals (E7: 70–76). While such a far-reaching outsourcing strategy was not widespread in our sample, professional EU offices usually provided glossaries (E7: 212) or went through proposals to 'translate everything into deliverables, milestones' (E2: 20).

For their part, most researchers requested these services and agreed to the outsourcing. As with the policy concepts, they were fully aware of the need to adapt their proposal language to the managerial jargon – and to the 'impact and competitiveness vocabulary':

[...] mantra words we call them. Q: For example? A: 'High risk, high gain'. 'Timely'. We always have to say that, it's very timely to fund this research now [...] 'Ground breaking', it has to be ground breaking. But it has to be 'visible' as well. (E1: 275–277)

While the outsourcing strategy and the conscious spreading of 'mantra words' is surely slightly subversive from a perspective of the researchers, in no way does it imply that the 'symbolic efficacy of words' (Bourdieu, 1994) is absent from these practices. When EU professionals in EU offices engage with the concepts, they acknowledge the EU as a centre of gravity, and the mere existence of these offices and their translation services affirms and reinforces the EU's authority. Ultimately, this also holds true for EU-funded researchers who distance their established academic practices from the EU's political epistemology by framing the latter as 'side plates' made of 'mantra words'. By paying 'lip service', they still manage to symbolize social scientific loyalty to the EU.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we set out to analyse the symbolic dimension of European research governance. Drawing on Bourdieu's reflections on symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1994), we argued that mastery of the 'EU language game' not only helps scholars gain EU funding; it also creates individual and disciplinary frictions and underpins the range of different ways in which social scientists affirm and legitimate the authority of the EU. Through quantitative text analysis of abstracts from EU-funded and non-EU-funded academic journal articles, we identified two poles of social scientific discourse. One pole, around which EU-funded articles tend to cluster, leans towards a macro- and policy-oriented perspective similar to the EU's own institutional and administrative perspective. The other pole, correlated mostly with non-EU-funded titles, displays a broader approach that is more invested in politics and issues of political and social integration.

As our qualitative analysis shows, this tension is indicative of the practical challenges in EU grant application processes and requires 'channeling', 'buffering' and 'filtering' strategies (Gornitzka, 2013; Young *et al.*, 2017). Social scientists actively develop coping mechanisms that allow them to adapt their research to the EU's agenda, with varying degrees of explicit engagement with the EU's symbolic power. Some researchers in our sample, whose research presented a 'natural fit' with the political epistemology of EU policies and funding calls, did not even sense the need to adapt at all; instead, they swam self-confidently through the sea of EU funding like 'fish in water'. Others, however, felt clearly challenged. Within this group, some of the interviewees consciously redirected their research focus towards the EU, while others oscillated strongly between the 'gravitational pull' of the EU and other symbolic powers, especially if they are already established domestically or in specific disciplines. A more in-depth analysis of this interaction between interdisciplinarity and heteronomy is beyond the scope of our data, but it clearly deserves more attention: while interdisciplinarity is observed to play 'a more important role in generating high impact knowledge' (Chen *et al.*, 2015, p. 1034), some authors argue in 'defense of disciplines' (Jacobs, 2013), as 'high levels of autonomy map onto scientific, symbolic and academic capital' and oppose 'applied, routine and heteronomous interdisciplinarity' (Garforth and Kerr, 2011, p. 672).

The data from both the quantitative text analysis of journal abstracts and the qualitative interviews with EU grantees suggest the visibility of the EU's 'gravitational pull' towards social scientists in different stages of the knowledge production process – with a more pronounced effect in the grant application stage, as expected, and a more nuanced but still existing one in the publication stage. What is more, a qualitative assessment of both datasets points towards the existence of different orientations within social scientific knowledge production: Directly addressing the EU's most pressing policy matters, such as entrepreneurship, fiscal consolidation, growth policies and productive social policies, the first orientation is well-aligned with the EU governmental epistemology and easily follows the script laid out in EU jargon. This is precisely because the actual academic interest of researchers with this orientation naturally aligns with the currently prevalent policy perspective – the 'Europe of the Market'. On the other hand, there is another kind of social scientific research for which the topics and approaches fit

less comfortably with the contemporary EU narrative. For these scholars, Europe is not an entity primarily defined by the demands and constraints of a single market, but rather a social union. This differentiation is in line with Scharpf's general observation that the EU's governmental logic is geared towards 'negative integration', relying on economic integration and a leveling of market barriers (which includes productive social policy concepts such as social innovation or active inclusion) rather than 'positive integration', which would require redistributive welfare policies (Scharpf, 1998, 2002). Apparently, it is this Europe as a social union that this second kind of social science knowledge production addresses – matters of political representation, inequality and identity formation.

While the narrative of the 'Europe of the Market' is certainly more pronounced than that of 'Europe as a Social Union', our data indicates that there still is room for the latter perspective – even in EU funded research. This shows that the EU's symbolic power neither works as a kind of censoring apparatus nor does it constitute absolute power. Rather, it does leave room – beyond the self-censorship that we observed – for social scientific approaches that seek to conceptualize alternative narratives (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 102). As a liberal symbolic power, soft forms of incentivization like the competition for grants still allow researchers to create a narrative that runs counter to the EU's currently favoured agenda. In this sense, the vision of a European social union is still present wherever the social sciences contribute to 'writing the book on the present and the future of the EU' (Barroso, 2014, p. 26) – even if sometimes only in the form of footnotes.

We do not, by any means, want to overstate the agency of social scientific narratives: Researchers simply offer explanations and epistemological approaches, which may or may not be in demand within the EU. However, what all researchers do – be it via a completely convinced submission to the EU's research agenda, or a strategic rhetorical compliance – is to acknowledge the EU's symbolic power. In a more fundamental Weberian sense, the Union's legitimacy hinges on such relatively autonomous practices in which '[t]he symbolic efficacy of words is exercised' – by researchers who recognize the EU's agenda as an orienting authority, but also by those who contribute by paying lip service to its 'recognition, to its establishment' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 116).

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Data S1. Supporting Information.

Data S2. Supporting Information.

Table S1. Results of Welch tests comparing different funding schemes.

Table S2. Appearance of specific policy concepts and promotional rhetoric in abstracts with high and low cosine similarity (upper vs. lower quartile/Q1 vs. Q4) and in EU-funded and non-EU-funded abstracts (in percentages in relation to the number of documents per group; total numbers are given in brackets).