



## Framing in European space policy

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### 1. Introduction

Framing theory has become more and more popular in recent European studies. This article is an attempt to apply framing theory to space policy analysis and show its usefulness for arriving at a better understanding of European space policy in particular. With its roots in discourse theory framing theory could be characterised as being adaptable to different fields of public policy and at the same time sufficiently sutured, as Laclau and Mouffe would put it (2001). Peter Hall described the utility of framing in this way.

... politicians, officials, the spokesmen of social interests, and policy experts all operate within the terms of political discourse that are current in the nation at a given time, and the terms of political discourse generally have a specific configuration that lends representative legitimacy to some social interests more than others, delineates the accepted boundaries of state action, associates contemporary political developments with particular interpretations of national history, and defines the context in which many issues will be understood [19]: 289)

The fundamental contributions to framing theory come from the development of paradigms as in Refs. [19–21]; belief systems as developed by Ref. [54] [55]; 1999 [38];: 514) and to a less important extent from *référentiels*, as in Ref. [34]. The seminal work of Mark [7] on the genesis of fundamental changes in our societies may also be mentioned here as a source of defining framing theory.

Beyond these references, framing offers new insights into the often still vague politicking of the EU, not least in the space sector, to the extent that one might assume the theory was designed to explain the inner workings of the EU, where many frames are created to create policy constituency and where several of such frames coexist at the same time. Often they come from different world views, e.g. Neo-liberalism vs. Keynesianism in the 1970 [18,19,62]: 497, Rein, Schön, 1991: 264). In the space sector, a good example is the French advocacy for independence in space technologies, leading for example to the development of the Ariane launcher, while Britain was mainly concerned with budgetary constraints and the quick commercialisation of space services, such as telecommunication satellites. At the same time, during the foundation period of the European space agency (ESA), Germany expressed a heightened interest in fundamental space research and exploration with a concrete commitment to the then Spacelab [27]. These three frames had to be taken into consideration at the creation of ESA. Sures stresses that "... cognitive and normative

frames not only construct 'Mental maps' but also determine practices and behaviours." [62]: 498). More simply, "A frame analysis helps to explain why actors want what they want [46]: 175). The example of different national preferences at the creation of ESA show this nicely in the space sector. The main body of this article will be dedicated to the analysis of framing in the space sector, but examples from two other fields of public policy may serve as proof that framing can be applied more widely and therefore can be used as a theoretical approach for the whole of European Studies. The following examples of framing theory in public policy also serve to complete the theoretical underpinning of this article.

#### 1.1. Examples of framing – energy & environment

Nilsson et al. apply framing theory to European energy policy (Nilsson, 2009: 4456). Innovative concepts such as "Guarantee of Origin" (Nilsson, 2009: 4454) of energy and the Emissions Trading System (ETS) (Nilsson, 2009: 4455) were introduced as frames in the bargaining for a European energy policy. As [39] pointed out, the internal market frame has been widely accepted and therefore establishes a claim to extending it to the energy sector ((Nilsson, 2009: 4456). Universality of the Common Internal Market does not suffer lightly the exception energy still poses. The 1996 Directive on the Internal Market for Electricity [9] and the 1997 White Paper which aimed for the creation of a single market for electricity [10]:15) show this drive for integrating energy into the normal functioning of the Common Market. The disputes over gas supplies from Russia to Ukraine and Europe added the frame of security of supply (Nilsson, 2009: 4460). Ecological modernisation added the potential of industrial renewal in Europe through renewable energies to the canon in favour of making energy, too, part of the Common Market ((Nilsson, 2009: 4460).

This leads over to environmental frames which have become more prominent in recent years. Because of this recent prominence more studies have been conducted in this field, including the application of the application of framing theory to environmental matters in 'environmental frames' [41]. Authors in this field show nicely that where the Commission failed to establish a common energy policy they were successful in establishing a common environmental policy and through that changing of frames the integration of the energy market as seen since the late 1990s became possible [3,24,49,53]. Particularly in the environmental frames space technologies, such as earth observation have become more important. The introduction of satellite data in the Common Agricultural Policy has allowed for the supervision of

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environmental standards, but also for the deliberate modernisation of the European agricultural industry [1].

### 1.2. Examples of framing - European foreign policy

Another example where framing theory has been used is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which Michael Smith argues has become a post-modern and an extra-national policy, establishing a new reference system [60]: 558, 560). The connection between CFSP and space can be seen in the inclusion of extra-European partners, such as Russia into European space programmes, such as in the neighbourhood policies [60]: 563). European frames have been exported, have been accepted by external partners and have given sense to the concrete activities of the EU, such as in the space sector. Smith calls this a post-modern and post-sovereign European foreign policy, adding another dimension to still existing national foreign policies [60]: 569, 570). This becomes particularly clear in the defence industry. The “restructuring of the European defence industry and the creation of a European defence equipment market” [46]: 174) has been a recent initiative of the Commission despite the fact that the defence industry is explicitly excluded from the Treaty (Article 223, Treaty of Rome). But as in the energy sector the widely accepted frame of a comprehensive common market in combination with growing security and foreign policy needs on the European level, lends credence to the reframing of even the most national domains, such as defence and foreign affairs [46]: 174, 179). The standardisation of European defence equipment through the establishment of a European defence industry would be one objective – the Commission would use security and market frames to push that agenda [46]: 180). The European Defence Agency (EDA) was consequently founded in 2004 for the purpose of creating a common defence procurement market [46]: 180, [51]. The EDA is still an intergovernmental institution, but it has the objective of the integration of European defence industries, arguably for the purpose of providing security tools for a common European foreign policy. Naturally, companies selling space technologies in the EU are concerned, not least because of the almost universal dual-use nature of their products, e.g. Galileo.

### 1.3. Space

Could this relatively new and innovative research approach be used for arriving at a better understanding of European space policy and what analytical tools can it offer in order to arrive at this objective? What are frames? How are they structured and which new research dynamic can they produce, particularly in European space policy? The following two sections will go deeper in order to advance our theoretical understanding of framing theory. The section on European Space Policy, after that, will apply these insights to the European space sector.

## 2. Definition of frames

Surel equates in his writing ‘cognitive and normative frames’ with what was before called paradigms [33]: 239, as quoted in Ref. [62]: 499). In some instances frames also seem to border on ideologies, when they are attributed the capacity to make sense of the world, establish interaction in society and define the limits of social action [62]: 500). One could also call that identity creation as happens in the European integration process, although it is clear that even the definition of ‘Europe’ still varies greatly in Europe [62]: 507, Hoerber 2006, [25]. In an EU context, “(...) the move towards organized action is about an identity-seeking process.” [46]: 175). The connection to neo-institutionalism which tries to understand the functioning of organisations, e.g. European political institutions, not least ESA, is directly made [44]. The link to rational choice theories is also interesting – although Mörth asserts that they are too simplistic (2000: 174) – in that framing theory assumes that individual actors make rational choices in what

they can actively influence, i.e. concrete decision in their lives, but these decisions are based on pre-existing belief-systems [55]: 109 [2,5,12]; 4–5) of what would be a good or a bad decision in such a situation. Daviter nuances it in this way: “When the focus of attention shifts, some facets of a problem are emphasised or deemphasised, some aspects of a decision are revealed and others ignored. As the representation of the issue changes, so does the perception of what is at stake, and the preferred solutions vary in response.” [12]: 6) One can call this an underpinning ideology, a social paradigm or in more recent European Studies literature, this is called frames. In the process of the definition and reformation of frames their ordering structures, are reshaped, e.g. hierarchical rankings of values and norms or the resetting of interconnections between actors, institutions or policies [62]: 508 [60]; 557, 571) [43]. called it ‘sense making’, but one can also see ideas as a defining factor in this process as Goldstein and Keohane put it very aptly.

By ordering the world, ideas may shape agendas, which can profoundly shape outcomes. Insofar as ideas put blinders on people, reducing the number of conceivable options, they serve as invisible switchmen, not only by turning action onto certain tracks rather than others (...) but also by obscuring the other tracks from the agent's view [17]: 12)

The example given by Dudley and Richardson are the ideas behind the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) as a vision for Europe, but also the self-interest of particularly French actors such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman of controlling German war-important industries [13]: 226). The critical question must be asked at this point, though, whether one needs framing theory in order to grasp that. In concordance with Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, they rightly argue, however, that in order to make obvious the development of ideas, one needs to consider their evolution over a long period of time [13]: 244 [32]; 6 [48,57,64]; 4456). For them ideas and advocacy coalitions are equated with policy ‘frames’ [13]: 246 [65]; 117 [12]; 2). Frame formation can also be seen as a classical part of the definition of what political science does, i.e. a focus on the process rather than exclusively the result [11]: 655 [65]; 98). In this process, agency or rather supporters and opponents take, naturally different positions, which leads to the formulation of policy [65]: 656). This process is inclusive for all participants which is where framing theory comes back to its roots in discourse theory which posits the hegemonic struggle over ideas/policies as the key integrative concept in Western liberal democracies [38,40]: 514, 527). This also takes account of asymmetric power relations. The institution charged with decision-making, e.g. the European Parliament (EP) – for the EP framing is not well documented [11]: 660), except for the article by Emmanuel Sigalas' article of the EP's role in European space policy (2016) – or the Commission [45], will proceed according to their rules, while opposing actors will try to challenge the rules as well as the institutions in order to establish their desired policy input [4]: 1044-5). New ideas can be positioned, policies can be reinforced or reformed and institutions can be strengthened or cast into doubt. “Thus, frames concern power – the power to define and conceptualise.” [46]: 174) Importantly, however, this is constructive power which rather avoids conflict through displacement. Framing theory postulates that it is better to change the frame rather than to carry out the conflict within a previous frame. Taking a different perspective and adding new aspects to the discourse are seen as a constructive way forward in the political contest [12]: 7). The creation of the European dimension in addition to national European politics can be seen as an example, to which future generations have been bound after its introduction. This is aptly shown in path-dependency by Craig [50]; i.e. earlier frames delimit the choice available in later frames [38]: 515). This is also the process of policy formulation in which frames compartmentalise politics so that this complex reality becomes manageable. Daviter calls this ‘Policy venues’ but this is really the classical political science definition of ‘policy’ and thus ‘frame’ becomes synonymous

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