

HABILITATION THESIS REVIEWER'S REPORT

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Social Studies
Procedure field	Political Science
Applicant	Mgr. Monika Brusenbauch Meislová, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	Brexit Means Brexit Means What? Discursive Constructions of Brexit in the United Kingdom
Reviewer	Dr DESCHAUX-DUTARD Delphine, Associate professor in political science, PhD in political science
Reviewer's home unit, institution	University Grenoble Alpes (France)

Mrs Brusenbauch Meislova's habilitation thesis deals with the discursive constructions of Brexit. Formally the document encompasses 160 pages, composed of an introduction, five published works (called "studies" in the document) and a conclusion. The document is very neat in form and content, and the style clear and very pleasant to read, showing genuine pedagogical and research capacities.

The habilitation thesis of Mrs Brusenbauch Meislova proposes a thorough and stimulating analysis of Brexit and by extension of the UK/EU relationship using a discursive analytical perspective. All the studies presented here rely on a common theoretical framework: the Discourse Historical Approach, relying on qualitative analysis and related to a constructivist perspective in political science. This analytical framework assumes that discourses are central in the political arena and are not only constructed, but are also tools constructing political reality (and here Brexit). The interest of the different studies presented here is that they cover all the phases of Brexit: the pre-Brexit campaign, the referendum moment, and the post-referendum phase until the effective application of the withdrawal process according to Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union. It is also interesting that the different studies cover different sort of political actors and cover a variety of discourses deployed by these political and social actors to create meaning around Brexit. All the studies rely on an actor-oriented research strategy clearly explained in the introduction.

The conclusion helps making sense of the added-value of the thesis and open different venues for future research. Some limits are also taken into account, which is much appreciated. Overall this habilitation thesis is a very rich research piece presenting very interesting findings on the way Brexit is not only constructed in the political discourses of British political elite, but also how it is also a tool used for reshaping political identities in the UK. Thus this thesis contributes fully to the emerging scientific literature on the impact of Brexit on British politics, and on the UK/EU relationship and its framing.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence

Yet a number of questions come to mind by reading this very good work. The questions are listed below.

1. Methodologically, though the introduction and each study entails methodological developments, they fall a bit short to explain concretely how the researcher proceeded to study the discourses. For instance, if we know a little how the speeches have been chosen to constitute the data, we have no indication about the concrete handling of the analysis. Was any software used ? If so, what kind and for what purposes ? Indeed discourse analysis is a quite popular analytical approach in political science, and many methodological reflexions on how to proceed concretely are available. This point should be given more attention in the thesis.
2. Theoretically speaking, it is striking to talk about discursive analysis without mentioning one of the major trends in political science in the lastest decades: discursive institutionalism. Following the fundamentals of discursive institutionalism defined by Vivien Schmidt (2006; 2010), ideas and discourses are not only communication tools, but also construct politics and public action, and allow a (re)definition of actors' interests. The main idea here revolves around the performative function of speeches, which is also what appears in the thesis. These speeches are embedded in an institutional context that permeates the capacity of actors to deploy their discourses. V. Schmidt even identifies different types of discourses fulfilling different functions in the political sphere. Such a theoretical trend could have been very interesting here. Therefore my question would be to position the thesis towards discursive institutionalism and to explain why this theoretical framework has not been considered for the analysis.
3. The Study V about the affective polarization impulse by Brexit in the British political landscape is particularly stimulating but lacks some important references, which could help better understand how British identity interfered with the EU even before Brexit:
 - MARCUSSEN, Martin, RISSE, Thomas, ENGELMANN-MARTIN, Daniela, *et al.* Constructing Europe? The evolution of French, British and German nation state identities. *Journal of European public policy*, 1999, vol. 6, no 4, p. 614-633.
 - RISSE, Thomas. 11. A European Identity? Europeanization and the Evolution of Nation-State Identities. In : *Transforming Europe*. Cornell University Press, 2018. p. 198-216.

Exploring these references may be of interest for future research on how Brexit ingteracts with the way British political actors tend to frame their relationship towards the EU.

4. As it is mentioned in the conclusion, one of the caveats of the thesis is to focus on a specific level of political speeches -the level of the elite. It might be very interesting for future research to complete the findings presented here by a micro-level analysis relying on multiple qualitative interviews with British citizen to determine the way the frame Brexit and how this may have an impact on the xay they envisage the EU/UK relationship. For instance, it might be very interesting to investigate Brexit's discursive construction among British students, who are a population very affected by Brexit concerning their mobility opportunities within the EU for instance.

These questions are only meant to be constructive and help deepen the analysis for the future. They do not question the high quality of the habilitation thesis of Mrs Brusenbauch Meislova, who should be encouraged to carry on here research on Brexit and its discursive construction in the future.

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis entitled “Brexit Means Brexit Means What? Discursive Constructions of Brexit in the United Kingdom” by Mgr. Monika Brusenbauch Meislová, Ph.D. fulfils requirements expected of a habilitation thesis in the field of Political Science.

Date:
14/12/2021

Signature:

