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**BETWEEN INNOVATION AND REGULATION:
MEPS' DISCOURSES ON THE EU'S
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ACT**

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Roosa Korhonen: Tasapainottelua innovaation ja sääntelyn välillä: Euroopan parlamentin jäsenten tuottamia diskursseja tekoälystä Euroopan unionin tekoälyasetukseen liittyvässä täysistunnossa

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Tässä opinnäytetyössä tutkin Euroopan parlamentin jäsenten tuottamia diskursseja tekoälystä. Keskityn siihen, millaisia puhetapoja europarlamentaarikot tuottavat tekoälystä Euroopan unionin tekoälyasetukseen liittyvässä täysistunnossa 13. kesäkuuta 2023.

Tekoälyn nopea kehittyminen on jättänyt tyhjiön sääntelyjen puuttumisilla ja täten se on luonut monia eettisiä haasteita. Etenkin kansalaisten turvallisuuden sekä yksityisyydensuojan näkökulmat ovat olleet suuri huolenaihe. Euroopan Unioni on vastannut näihin haasteisiin luomalla tekoälyasetuksen, jonka on sanottu luovan standardeja tekoälyyn liittyvien sääntelyjen luomiseen koko maailmassa. Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastelen tekoälyasetuksen pitkän luomisprosessiin liittyvän keskustelun yhtä vaihetta, joka kuvaa tekoälyyn liittyvän poliittisen keskustelun luonnetta sekä siitä kumpuavia diskursseja tietynä tärkeänä historiallisena hetkenä.

Sosiaaliseen konstruktionismiin pohjautuvan aineistolähtöisen diskurssianalyysin kautta kiinnitän huomion siihen, miten kielenkäyttö toimii sosiaalisen todellisuuden rakentajana ja miten europarlamentaarikot rakentavat tekoälyn konseptia puheenvuoroissaan. Tutkimuskysymykseni on: Miten europarlamentaarikot keskustelivat tekoälystä ja millaisia diskursseja keskustelussa luotiin? Tarkastelen, millaisia puhetapoja europarlamentaarikot tuottavat tekoälystä, miten se kehystetään sekä koetaanko tekoäly pääasiassa uhkana vai mahdollisuutena. Tavoitteenani on lisäksi hahmottaa keskustelussa esille tulleita asenteita, retorisia strategioita sekä taustaoletuksia.

Puheenvuoroissa on useita tekoälyä koskevia diskursseja, sillä europarlamentaarikot keskustelevat tekoälyn mahdollisuuksista ja uhkista sekä käyttävät retorisia strategioita ja kulttuurista kehystämistä. Tuloksissani olen tunnistanut viisi päädiskurssia: tekoäly mahdollisuutena, tekoäly uhkana, tasapainottelu innovaation ja sääntelyn välillä, EU:n globaali johtajuusasema sekä yhteistyö ja ihmiskeskeinen tekoäly. Retorisia keinoja tarkastellessa puheenvuoroista nousee esiin etenkin tunteisiin vetoaminen EU:n kansalaisten turvallisuudesta ja eurooppalaisista demokraattisista arvoista. Monet puheenvuorot keskittyvät innovaation ja sääntelyn väliseen tasapainotteluun ja siihen, kuinka sääntelyn tekemisessä tarvitaan tasapainoinen lähestymistapa, jolla samanaikaisesti tuetaan innovaatiota kansalaisten perusoikeuksia ja eettisiä näkökulmia unohtamatta. Tapa kehystää tekoälyä maailmaa muuttavana mahdollisuutena, mutta samanaikaisesti todennäköisenä uhkana osoittaa kyseisen teknologian sääntelyn kompleksisuuden.

Kokonaisuudessaan tutkielma tarjoaa laadullisen katsauksen siihen, miten tekoälyyn suhtaudutaan Euroopan Unionin lainsäädännöllisessä keskustelussa ja kuinka tekoälyä koskeva lainsäädäntökehys on muotoutunut. Lisäksi tutkielma antaa hyvän lähtökohdan aiheen jatkotutkimukselle ja siihen, miten päätöksentekijöiden diskurssit vaikuttavat laajemmin tekoälyn sääntelyyn sekä kehitykseen.

Avainsanat: tekoäly, Euroopan unioni, diskurssianalyysi, sääntely

Opinnäytteessäni käytetyt tekoälytyökalut ja niiden käyttötarkoitukset on kuvailtu alla:

ChatGTP version 4

Tutkimuksen suunnittelun ideointi
Ideapaperin ja käsikirjoituksen rakenteen jäsentelyehdotuksien esittäminen

ChatGTP version 4o

Metologisen näkökulman tarkastelu
Käsikirjoituksen rakenteen ja järjestyksen hahmotteluideointi
Kappaleiden sisäisen järjestyksen hahmottelu
Lähdeluettelon pohjan luominen ja lähdeviittausten strukturointi APA – viittaustekniikan mukaiseksi
Kielentarkistus

Tekoälytyökaluja käyttäessäni olen noudattanut hyvää tieteellistä käytäntöä. Olen tietoinen siitä, että olen täysin vastuussa koko opinnäytteeni sisällöstä, mukaan lukien tekoälyllä tuotetut osat, ja hyväksyn vastuun mahdollisista eettisten ohjeiden rikkomuksista.

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1 Introduction

The development and deployment of technology related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the world, and the inventions and creations have been suggested to bring solutions to many crucial problems that the Earth is facing, such as bringing solutions all the way to tackling the climate crisis and better healthcare, and even as far as finding solutions to end the world hunger. However, the rapid development and lack of regulations and policies present various ethical, technical, and social challenges. Especially the safety and privacy of the citizens has been a major concern.

The European Union has responded to these challenges by creating the Artificial Intelligence Act, the first regulation on artificial Intelligence to establish a global standard (European Parliament, 2023). Approved in March 2024, this Act aims to ensure AI systems are safe, transparent, traceable, non-discriminatory, and environmentally friendly. (European Parliament, 2024)

This paper aims to analyze the discourse during a key legislative event—a plenary session held on 13th June 2023—where Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) discussed the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act. This session was an important juncture in the policymaking process, affecting the future direction of AI in the EU as on the 14th of June, the MEPs voted to accept the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, which is the first of its kind globally (European Parliament, 2024).

By examining this session, my aim is to understand how MEPs and other stakeholders perceive and frame AI. The attitudes and perceptions and the way AI is framed in the discourse of the decision-makers has a huge influence on how the regulations are shaped up into, and what kind of reality the discourse creates about what Artificial Intelligence is. By looking into the midst of the legislation process, it can help to navigate to discover how the discourses and attitudes shaped around the artificial intelligence shape the discursive reality.

The research question guiding this paper is: How did MEPs and policymakers discuss about Artificial intelligence during the plenary session on 13th June 2023, and what discourses were present?

To be more precise, I am interested in understanding in what way are the decision-makers in the European Union are discussing about artificial Intelligence, their perception, and do they discuss about it as an potential threat or as a opportunity. My interest lays in within how are MEP's framing and understanding artificial Intelligence. I aim to investigate the underlying attitudes which underlie these discourses in a broader sense. I intend to examine the discourses surrounding artificial Intelligence in the European Union and how those discourses influenced the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act, how decision-makers understand it versus what it is, and the discourse surrounding the topic within the EU and in the European Parliament.

1.1.1 Terms used

In this thesis, when I use the terms "stakeholders" and "decision-makers," I am referring to Members of the European Parliament, shortened MEPs. When I use the term "AI," I am referring to artificial intelligence.

2 European Union, Artificial Intelligence, and legislation

2.1.1 2.2 AI as a Concept in the EU

According to the European Parliament, " 'AI' is often used as a 'blanket term' for various computer applications based on different techniques, which exhibit capabilities commonly and currently associated with human intelligence" (European Parliament, 2021). Another commonly known definition, especially from the machine learning point of view, is that Artificial Intelligence is a branch of science under machine learning. When we examine AI from a sociological standpoint, it is important to recognize that the definition differs across a variety of contexts, and that drawing definitional boundaries itself is a deeply interpretative, political, and fundamentally social process (Joyce et. al. 2021; Forsythe 2001; Hoffman 2015). My focus in this

thesis, therefore, is not to define the concept itself, but rather to examine how the MEP's frame AI and what kind of reality do they create by their discourse. In this way, I will not create any presumptions on what the MEPs mean by AI and are more open to the data I am examining. My aim is that I do not create any preconceived assumptions about what decision-makers mean by the term and I can focus more openly and thus more comprehensively on examining AI from a sociological point of view.

2.1.2 EU's aims with the EU Artificial intelligence act

To understand the background, I will shortly examine and explain important background factors regarding the plenary session and what are EU's aims with the EU AI Act.

The legislative progress of the Resolution on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age: Opportunities and Risks of AI Technologies for the Digital Single Market, also known as the European Union's AI Act, has been a long and complex journey (2023/0236). The proposal for the AI act was submitted by the Commission in April 2021, and finally adopted by the commission in March 2024, marking it as the first Act to regulate AI in the world. The estimation is that the legislative act will come into force in June 2024. (European Council press release, 2024). According to EU, the purpose of the EU AI Act is to *"create a legal framework across the EU to regulate different risk levels of AI systems and to ensure that Artificial Intelligence used in the European market meets the requirements of being safe and trustworthy and ensure the respect for citizens fundamental rights."* (European Council press release, 2024)

The AI Act follows a four level "risk-based" approach, meaning that the rules are stricter depending on how high the risk is to cause harm to the society. The different category risk levels for minimal-to-no risk AI systems, face no restrictions for example, whereas high-risk AI systems are regulated significantly. The scale also has unacceptable risk AI systems that ban systems that manipulate peoples free will (European Council press release, 2024).

Overall, the European Union's AI Act represents a significant regulatory step that aims to shape the future use and governance of AI within the EU. This legislation addresses critical issues such as economic implications, citizen safety, and the ethical use of AI technologies,

including social scoring systems, facial recognition, and AI applications in law enforcement and military contexts (Floridi et al., 2018; European Commission, 2021).

Despite the transformative potential that the EU AI act has been said to have, it has gotten its share of criticism as well as controversy. One of the key criticisms is related to its implementation and enforcement: the worry is that without Act's provisions are overly broad and lack specificity, with a potential to stop innovation. Another aspect concerns the ethical and societal implications, with concerns that AI Act does not go far enough when it comes to addressing the risks of AI, such as such as bias, discrimination, and privacy violations (Whittlestone et al., 2019; Euronews, 2024). A third concern is that there is not enough knowledge about AI among the policy makers. AI technologies should take into account not only the technical aspects but also the social, intellectual, political, and legal aspects, but there is a widespread lack of knowledge among policy makers, legislators and citizens about the ethics of AI, making it hard to create suitable frameworks (Khan, 2022).

2.1.3 Plenary session 13th of June 2023

Attitudes and perceptions and the way AI is framed in decision-makers' discourse can have a significant impact on how regulations are shaped and what kind of reality the discourse creates about what Artificial Intelligence is. On 13th June 2023, a fundamental plenary session took place, gathering Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to discuss and debate about the proposed Artificial Intelligence Act, *Resolution on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age: Opportunities and Risks of AI Technologies for the Digital Single Market (2023/0236)*. This session was an important moment in the policymaking process, affecting the future direction of AI in the EU as on the 14th of June, the MEPs voted on behalf of adopting the Act. ¹(TA-9-2023-0236)

I intend to analyze this legislative discussion on AI focusing on a key legislative event that was held a day before parliament approved the edited version of AI act. I am investigating a part

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0236_EN.html

of a conversation during this long process, which can showcase us a certain political conversation and topic in a certain historical moment.

2.1.4 3.4 MEP's and rapporteurs

MEPs play a key role in regulation and shaping EU policies. In addition to plenary sessions, MEPs participate in committees and political groups, as well as participate in the drafting and improvement of various proposals. One role a MEP can take is being a rapporteur, whose task it is to manage the legislative proposal drawn up by the European Commission. (European Parliament, 2015) The rapporteur consults political groups and experts, organizes hearings, and prepares a report containing the amendments resulting from these consultations. They oversee negotiations with the other EU institutions and chairs debates in Parliament's committees and plenary sessions. The report is then submitted to a committee vote before going to a final vote by the European Parliament as a whole. This role ensures that the European Parliament's position on legislative matters is clear and well-structured. (European Parliament, 2015)

Overall, rapporteurs hold an influential political position in these discussions as they are creating the basis for the discussion and have been preparing the AI Act. The words of the rapporteurs especially have a significant meaning to the discourse created in the plenary session, as they have even a stronger legitimacy in the eye of other MEPs as they have been the ones responsible for constructing and preparing the EU AI Act; they have the most expertise when it comes to the knowledge what's specifically in the act.

3 Literature review

My next part will discuss important literature related to this process of research. I will talk about research in discourse analysis relevant to the topic of Artificial Intelligence, decision-makers and the European Union. The purpose of my literature review will be to examine discourse analysis from the perspective of social constructionism and how it can be applied to

the European Union, Parliaments, and their role within it.

Despite AI's promising advantages, concerns have been raised that the complex and opaque systems might cause more harm than good. (Khan et. al, 2022). Consequently, there has been an increased interest in sociology concerning artificial intelligence in recent years. An article published by a group of researchers titled *"Toward a Sociology of Artificial Intelligence: Research on Inequalities and Structural Change"* presents a research agenda for the sociology of artificial intelligence. The researchers highlight that sociology is concerned with meaning making by recognizing the socially situated and multiple nature of objects and interactions. As such, sociologists have the ability to identify social inequalities and therefore identify opportunities for structural change when examining the AI field (Joyce et. al., 2021). The authors also argue that social shaping of AI in practice is a crucial issue and that *"creating AI sociotechnical systems is not simply a matter of technological design, but also about power and social order"* (Joyce et. al., 2021). Consequently, discourse analysis is an ideal tool for sociologists to examine these sociotechnical systems better.

3.1.1 Research surrounded Artificial Intelligence and discourses

Although there is a lot of research and discourse analysis about European union and about the discourses of the members of European parliament, I could not find research conducted in on exactly about what kind of discourses MEPs have regarding artificial intelligence during plenary sessions, which this thesis aims to investigate and fill some gaps regarding this.

However, there is some research from the discourses on AI and regulation in the national level. For example, a Finnish study by Lepinkäinen and Malik conducted a critical discourse analysis of some of the central statements given afterwards the initial regulatory suggestion about AI. The results of their analysis show that *"at despite Finland's constitutional tradition combining both social and liberal values, three out of five discourses prevailing in the statements adhere strongly to a liberal logic of efficiency and optimist accounts of artificial intelligence transformation."* Their main argument is that *"the prevailing optimism about artificial intelligence and concomitant support for limited state regulation of its use reflect the broader challenges of*

desynchronization in accelerated societies and might shape the future of the Finnish welfare state.” (Lepinkäinen, Malik, 2022).

Also, a group of researchers conducted an empirical study on the views of practitioners and lawmakers about Artificial Intelligence solutions and technologies. In the study, a survey was conducted for ninety-nine randomly selected representative AI practitioners and lawmakers from 20 countries in five different continents. The authors state that to their knowledge it was the first empirical study that aimed to unveil the perceptions of different type of experts. The results of the study indicate that the most critical AI ethics principles are transparency, accountability, as well as privacy. (Khan et al. 2022)

3.1.2 Artificial Intelligence and public awareness

The AI Act has gained significant attention as the topic of AI has become central in media and societal discussions. Researchers at UC Berkeley highlight especially after the release of advanced language model ChatGPT in November 2023, the public awareness and discourse around AI technologies in the media and among decision-makers has significantly increased (UC Berkeley, 2022.) Although the technology itself is not viewed as a major technological breakthrough by the AI science field, it has offered an opportunity to engage the public in discussions about AI's potential role in society moving forward (UC Berkeley, 2022).

Consequently, the release of ChatGPT can be seen as a significant milestone in raising public awareness about current AI capabilities, which has also impacted AI's presence and importance in the legislative field. Among numerous ongoing legislative processes in the EU, the attention this topic has received has indeed influenced policymakers to prioritize AI regulation, reflecting the growing public and governmental recognition of AI's potential impact on various aspects of life, especially related to economic activities, citizen safety, and ethical considerations (European Commission, QANDA/21/1683, 2023).

While much of the focus of citizens and the media has been on language models, these are just one part of this technology. AI encompasses a wide range of technologies that impact various aspects of society, from economic activities to citizen safety and regulatory frameworks (UC Berkeley, 2022; Khan et al., 2022).

Despite the recent focus on AI because of language models, AI is nothing new and discourses around it have been present in the media for decades. For example, a critical discourse analysis of 253 newspaper and magazine articles published from 1956 to 2021 in Denmark demonstrates how public AI imaginaries have evolved over time, often mixing futuristic human-machine relationships with human-centered principles of intelligence amplification (Hansen, 2021). This research demonstrates how the public debate is dominated by constant confusion about what the capabilities and nature of AI technology is in reality. At the same time, the promising benefits of AI technology have been met with concerns that complex and obscure systems may bring more societal harms than benefits (Khan et al., 2022; Whittlestone et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to take a look at what kind of discourses the decision-makers have around AI.

4 Theoretical Framework: Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis

Understanding political processes within the European Union (EU) requires a nuanced approach that considers the complexities of language and interaction. Social constructionism offers this kind of an approach, emphasizing how reality is mediated through interaction and language use (Jokinen, 2016). Discourse analysis is integral to this framework, focusing on how language constructs social reality. My main sources include Lynggaard's "Discourse Analysis and European Union Politics" (2019) and Jokinen, Suoninen, and Juhila's "Discourse Analysis: Theory, Basic Concepts, and Usage" (2016).

4.1.1 Theoretical Framework: Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis

Jokinen, Suoninen, and Juhila (2016) describe discourse analysis not as a clearly defined research method but as a flexible theoretical approach. It views language as a socially constructed system that organizes and transforms reality, making social reality both the subject and product of analysis (Jokinen, 2016; Dant, 1991, p. 228). It provides discourse as a framework that accommodates a variety of analytical techniques, recognizing language as a socially constructed system that both organizes and transforms the reality in which we live in. This perspective is central for interpreting policy debates and legislative processes in the EU. Consequently, discourse analysis provides an insightful lens to not only interpret but also deconstruct the complexities surrounding policy debates and legislative processes in the European Union. (Lynggaard, 2019)

Central to social constructionism is the idea that language shapes our understanding of the world, establishing, reinforcing, and changing social constructs (Jokinen, 2016). This aligns with Jokinen's claim that political speech can be seen as political action, as linguistic "battles" can produce extensive social effects (Jokinen, 2016; Fairclough, 1989; Fowler, 1985). Therefore, analysing how MEPs speak about artificial intelligence provides insight into how they construct the perceived benefits and risks of AI, and how their rhetoric influences public perception and policy.

4.1.2 Discourse Analysis in the EU Context:

Jokinen argues that repertoires and discourses can coexist and even compete as meaning systems as discourses do not emerge from nothing but are transformations of existing discursive formations (Jokinen, 2016). Similarly, Lynggaard argue that "*discourses do not pop up out of nowhere; they are transformations or mergers of previous discursive formations.*" (Lynggaard, 2019) Consequently, discourse analysis does not investigate them in isolation but rather explores how they actualize within different social practices. Therefore, analysing the speeches during the European Parliament plenary session can shed a light on the different meaning systems and repertoires that are interconnected to the ongoing cultural discussion of the topic during that time.

Language use plays a significant role in producing and maintaining power relations, as well as in changing them (Jokinen, 2016; Fairclough 1989, 1; Fowler 1985, 61-68). Thus, the battles at the level of the discourses and rhetoric in politics can have significant social effects and implications on citizens, and the rationalization and legitimization of debates can justify both satisfactory and unsatisfactory things for different groups of people. Consequently, what, and how the Artificial Intelligence is being discussed about creates certain discourses, that then take a part on shaping the legitimization process, and the future of the European citizens.

4.1.3 Application to Political Discourse in the EU

The European Union's multilayered political system has many of actors and interests. The work "*Discourse Analysis and European Union Politics*," suggests that discourse analysis in this setting requires accounting for these complexities, particularly the institutional context in which these discourses take place (Lynggaard, 2019). The MEPs participate in plenary sessions where only certain chosen people have the right to speak, which has a significant influence on public perception and decision-making. Consequently, as politicians inherently hold a position of institutional authority, this political discourse, as explained by Jokinen, tends to contain unique rhetorical strategies (Jokinen, 2016) Therefore, the speeches inherently hold institutional power and are not produced in isolation but rather in relation to the broader discursive climate of their time (Lynggaard, 2019; Jokinen, 2016).

In the chapter 'Politicians' speeches on the scales,' Jokinen argues that the notion of political genre suggests that speech has precise terms of delivery that govern it. Jokinen brings up on how on the municipality level the discussions during plenary sessions are usually spontaneous, however the genre for the EU Parliament compared to national politics differs a bit (Jokinen, 2016; Lynggaard, 2019). In comparison, the speeches in the European Parliament plenary sessions are often carefully scripted, and their rhetorical strategies aim to justify the speaker's position, align the audience with their stance, and discredit competing views (Lynggaard, 2019). In other words, spontaneous discussions are not the common norm at the EU parliamentary session this level of conversation. Instead, the speeches held in the Parliament is

characterized by specific production rules and are often carefully scripted rather than spontaneous. As Lynggaard argues *“discourse is not just internalised meaning systems adhered to without much further thought, political actors also use discourse strategically for political purposes.”* (Lynggaard, 2019).

Furthermore, researchers must carefully consider which actors are involved in articulating meaning systems and how their data can represent the conflicts or coalitions within the discourse (Lynggaard, 2019). However, it is important to highlight that my interest in this research lies on general discourses rather than the specific political realities of different parties. While European parties have varied stances and opinions, my aim is to uncover the dominant discourses and the underlying meaning system in the parliament in general without focusing on the political parties further as my lens is through a social constructionism eye instead of purely political scientific one. Leaving the parties out of the analysis is a limiting factor that needs to be addressed as the intention of this study is not to identify what the parties say, but what the decision-makers say in general. This allows me to focus more on the overall institutional discourse and its implications for EU policymaking and public perception.

In addition, I will focus on the argumentation positions taken by MEPs and examine the rhetorical ways MEPs use to support their stance regarding the AI. Michael Billig's concept of positions (argumentation Billig, 1987, 1991) provides a useful lens to interpret the expressed arguments, opinions, and attitudes as context-bound stances taken in public discourse. Argumentation positions always relate to competing perspectives, and rhetorical strategies serve to defend them while undermining opposing stances.

5 Research methodology

As the interest of this paper is to gain a deeper understanding of the framing and semantics of language related to AI, I intend to conduct a discourse analysis to examine how Parliamentarians and other stakeholders discussed artificial Intelligence during 13.6.2023. plenary session about the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, and what kind of discourses can be found.

5.1.1 Discourse analysis

The choice of employing a discourse analysis approach lies within the interest in how MEPs use language and rhetoric; not only what is said, but how it is said, aka how the decision-makers use framing techniques. What they choose to say and what words they use is vital in creating the legal framework and shows the attitudes of what they think about the topic. A discourse analysis approach has the advantage of examining the complexity of different discourses in a multidimensional manner (Jokinen, 2016). Therefore, the methodology allows to examine the content as well as the rhetorical structure. By analyzing these frames, we can essentially dive into the underlying principles, values, or emotions that the MEPs are appealing to in their discourse.

In my choice of methodology, I consider the fact that discourse analysis can emphasize either situational or cultural aspects. According to Jokinen and Juhila, this can be outlined by the situational and cultural strands. In situational analysis, meanings are constructed at the specific moment of the event, while in cultural analysis, the material is thought to be part of a cultural continuum that is connected to a wider context without being thought of as an independent situation (Jokinen & Juhila 2016, 269-270, 273, 276). Since in my thesis, I study the speeches of decision-makers during one plenary session, which is part of a broader cultural discourse, the focus of the study lies between the two. I focus mainly on the meanings constructed in the plenary session, but I am aware that the data are part of a broader temporal and cultural discourse on AI in the European Union, which makes it possible to understand the research findings in terms of a broader discourse of time. On the other hand, it is therefore useful to consider how this discourse informs the broader cultural context, as these discourses are not created in a vacuum and are part of the discourse of the time and a large part of the making of the whole regulation and thus attitudes towards AI.

Among the trends in discourse analysis, I am using analytical discourse analysis. The starting point of analytical discourse analysis is that the researcher tries to remain as open as possible

to the discourses found in the data. This differs from critical discourse analysis in that the researcher may already have certain expectations about the subordinate relations that may be found in the data before the analysis, which guides the direction of the analysis; analytical discourse analysis aims to remain as data centered as possible, which helps to avoid preconceived assumptions (Jokinen & Juhila 2016, 240-241).

Limitations

As discussed in the earlier chapter, it is important to note these are political speeches that tend to be scripted. When analyzing the discourses of MEPs it is important to note that the speeches of MEPs are more of declarations often the speeches represent the whole euro party or a coalition, rather than spontaneous debating. When it comes to euro parties usually in this stage the decisions in their group or stands have already been made internally yet with some room for negotiations. However, this does not remove the fact that these discourses are part of creating a certain type of discourse about AI and how it is discussed about has an importance to the legislation process and the whole society.

5.1.2 Data presentation

In this chapter, I will present extracts from the plenary session and provide other relevant information and findings relevant to the research question and topic.

I am working with natural data that is readily available to everyone. The primary data source is the transcripts of the European Parliament's plenary session dated 13.6.2023, the discussions related to the Artificial Intelligence Act. As the material is public there is not major ethical concerns with the data used in the analysis.

The plenary session is video recorded, but since the speeches are often scripted and read from paper instead of being spontaneous, the video recording will not be the focus in my analysis, as it does not add significant value to this discourse-focused study. I will focus on the words and transcripts, excluding tone of voice and body language. I have decided to leave the name

of the MEPs out as my focus is to identify the overall nature of the discourse without party limits, and the names are therefore not relevant to the analysis.

For the data collection, I first listened to the whole plenary session several times while simultaneous interpretation was being provided in English for turns that were in other official EU languages so that I could get a sense of what MEPs outside of English speak, as well as to note the relevant content in speeches kept in other languages as background information.²³ European Parliament interprets all the plenary sessions to all the official EU languages to “*facilitate communication amongst the participants in the meeting*”; however, the simultaneous interpretation of debates does not form an official translation (Europarl, 2023). As this plenary session does not have an official translation, I saw a chance of misinterpretation and chose to use data from a language I fully understand, where I can grasp the nuances without interpreting or translating.

5.1.3 Analysis method

As my next step I chose sixteen speeches that are in English related to the Artificial Intelligence Legislation Act. All of the speeches are made by Members of European parliament, four of them being rapporteurs with one of them speaking twice as an opening and ending turn. On focusing on small number of speeches I can take a closer look on what is said. After going through the speeches, I identified different discourse categories that were present from the speeches. To create categories, I focused on techniques for the analysis of qualitative techniques, including categorizing recurring themes and frames and creating five major discourses. -To make my analysis more coherent and multidimensional, I also used some quantitative ways, such as counting specific terms or frames to form the discourse categories. I also categorized every speech of either being positively, negatively, or in between.

Some of the sentences in the material are abbreviated, which I have marked with two dotted

² Verbatim report of proceedings https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2023-06-13-ITM-008_EN.html

³ Plenary session <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/fi/vod.html?mode=chapter&vodLanguage=EN&playerStartTime=20230613-12:40:32&playerEndTime=20230613-14:33:19#>

lines. In addition, the quotations from the material are in italics in the text and in the quotations, I have bolded the important parts for the argumentation.

Research Question and Objectives

The research question guiding this paper is: How did MEPs and policymakers discuss AI during the plenary session on 13th June 2023, and what discourses were present?

1. What discursive strategies do MEPs employ in their speeches about artificial intelligence?
2. How do attitudes towards AI manifest in the discourse?

I aim to understand how decision-makers in the European Union discuss Artificial Intelligence, their perceptions, and whether they view it as a potential threat or an opportunity. My interest lies in how MEPs frame and understand AI. I intend to investigate the underlying attitudes within these discourses broadly. Furthermore, I will examine how these discourses influenced the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act and how decision-makers understand and discuss the topic within the EU and the European Parliament.

6 Analysis

The main keywords and themes seemed to be innovation, ethics and trust, surveillance and privacy, global influence as well as safety and rights. Surrounding these themes, I identified five main discourse categories: 1. AI as an opportunity 2. AI as a threat 3. Balancing between innovation and regulation 4. EU's Global Leadership and Cooperation 5. Human Centric AI.

AI as an Opportunity discourse is emphasized as a tool for innovation, economic growth, and societal benefits. AI as a Threat – discourse is centered around the concerns about privacy and surveillance of the EU citizens as well as discrimination, and ethical risks. Balancing Innovation and Regulation is another central theme across speeches, emphasizing that ethical guidelines and regulatory framework around AI technologies are essential yet without forgetting the economic benefits these technologies might bring. Global Leadership and Cooperation discourse

pointed out the importance of the EU leading AI regulation globally and collaborating with international partners. Finally, the Human-Centric AI – discourse centered around AI that protects and respects fundamental rights.

One of my research interests is centered to the question do the decision-makers in the European union see Artificial Intelligence more as an opportunity or as a threat. During the analysis it seems that the case is both. The results indicate that most of the MEPs, 13 out of 15 highlight opportunities more than threats, however nearly all of them address the threats and frame it in a sense that the threats are manageable with regulations. From the chosen speeches only one could be identified only framing AI as a threat without raising up positive sides.

Next, I will examine the discourse categories more deeply as well as the framing, rhetorical strategies and assumptions surrounding them.

6.1.1 AI as an opportunity - discourse

Artificial intelligence seen as an opportunity was framed to be something that benefits the EU citizens and member states, and that AI is a great tool to be used for different kinds of innovations and societal benefits. Opportunity-oriented discourse was framed in a way AI is a driver of economic growth, innovation, and democratic enhancement and that AI has capacities that change the entire world. The turn shows the assumption that AI will certainly bring economic good and make societies better.

“AI has the capacity to solve the most pressing issues, including climate change or serious illness. And we want to lay the foundations for doing this here in the European Union.”

*“And underpinning all of this is an ambitious regime to **support innovation in Europe**. Our proposals on sandbox will help ensure that they are developed in a safe, responsible manner in areas that offer the most value and ingenuity in the EU.”*

*“But also I think it is important that **we put value to our effort to strengthen innovation, to support start-ups** with the work on the sandboxes.”*

*“We are providing thorough texts developed in parliaments, start-ups and SMEs in Europe with **a strong network of sandboxes so they can innovate**, they can grow and develop technology in accordance with European values and in respect of fundamental rights, increasing the trust in their products as well as their competitiveness.”*

In the AI as an opportunity discourse, MEPs also framed AI as a tool for doing these things, making these opportunities possible. It was framed as a technological tool that offers opportunities for the future, that companies and decision-makers will use these technologies, however, at the end of the day, it is a tool that humans use.

*“Madam President, Madam Commissioner, **AI is a tool that will help millions of Europeans live better lives. It will help us cure cancer. It will help us solve problems quicker. And yes, it can help us fight crime like terrorism.** I do not think AI is a risk, but a chance: a chance for a better future. **It is true that AI is a tool that can be used for good or misused, but it is just a tool.** Just because I can hit my finger with a hammer does not mean we should ban all of them and stop building houses. Just because I can hit my finger with a hammer doesn’t mean that we should stop developing better and safer tools in the future. ”*

*“I agree: **we need guidelines to make sure we use this tool wisely.** But banning innovation goes far too far. No technology is without risk. We never would have developed electricity, cars or aeroplanes if we did not take a risk. ”*

Not all the speeches focus on AI as an opportunity but refer to it as if it were a self-evident and invisible assumption, which in itself creates a discourse that AI is an opportunity.

*“I don’t think anybody also today in the debate, **nobody has denied the benefits and the potential of artificial intelligence** to make our societies more prosperous and our economies more efficient.”*

No one specifically defines what AI itself is, and the framing of AI seems to mostly be that AI can be seen as an opportunity that can be transformative to the whole world, but also at the same time a potential threat with no turning point. The results show that innovation as well as the economic benefits that AI brings are brought up frequently in the speeches of the MEPs as a positive instead of being a negative aspect.

Many MEPs appeal to reason and preparation and use historical framing in the AI as an opportunity discourse. These rhetorical strategies centered around on appealing to innovation and progress; emphasizing AI's role in driving technological advancements and economic growth was used to paint a picture of a bright future enabled by AI.

*“...we are making history. **We are writing history. We are shaping the global development of AI** in the right direction with humankind and human interests at the very centre.”*

AI was also conceptualized as an instrument that can be used when citizens need protection from bad entities and scenarios. By using emotional appeals, about concerns regarding the safety of citizens as well as missing children, the point was made that AI technologies, in fact, could be a tool for protecting citizens when disasters occur, as well as in fighting criminals when these “tragedies” occur.

*“But we should not only discuss how to protect our citizens from AI, **we also need to make sure we can use AI to protect our citizens. When a child goes missing, every second counts.** Seventy-six per cent of abducted children that tragically do not survive the abduction die within the first three hours of their disappearance. Every second counts. And **we need to make use of all the instruments at our disposal to prevent such tragedies from happening.** -- And this is also reflected in our amendment that we*

have tabled as the EPP to allow the use of technology in very targeted situations to find missing children, to prevent terrorist attacks and to fight heavy criminals.”

*“AI is a tool that will help millions of Europeans live better lives. -- And yes, **it can help us fight crime like terrorism.**”*

6.1.2 AI as a threat - discourse

Many MEPs acknowledged the dual nature of AI, recognizing its potential for both positive and negative impacts. When discussing AI as a threat, the discourse often centered around threats to humans, particularly EU citizens, however with little mention of the potential risks to animals or nature.

As far as human impact is concerned, MEPs frequently emphasized the risks associated with artificial intelligence in citizen surveillance, highlighting the threat to individual freedoms and privacy. A significant concern was the potential for AI systems to result in racially biased and discriminatory outcomes, and MEPs painted a frightening picture of the unfairness of AI systems by using real-life examples, pointing out how it can lead to even greater inequality.

“It’s not a question of whether the AI systems have the potential to result in racially biased and discriminatory outcomes. We actually know for sure that this is the case. We see confirmation of this in the data provided of multiple NGOs. We keep seeing it during the LIBE mission to Washington DC, and we have heard it even from the EU High Commissioner for Human Rights. ”

“I’m fundamentally opposed to the use of AI systems and remote biometric facial recognition. In mass surveillance, **there have already been too many cases of mistaken identity, there have already been too many cases of abuses of the system** ”

Also, the threat of government control and spying citizens emerged from the discourse. AI was framed as a technological tool that is a threat of the future, that companies and decision-

makers would use these technologies to take away people's freedoms in the future. Rhetorically this was framed that AI will not provide opportunities of the scale that has been currently praised for but instead will only provide a path towards greater control. The discourse especially portrayed AI as a tool for future with a constant surveillance of the citizens, with the fear of AI being misused by those in power.

“Like so much before us, AI will be used for surveillance and control. It won’t give us a four-day working week or longer summer holidays. It won’t solve the climate crisis or redistribute wealth. It won’t make public services better or policing more effective. It will be just more of the same, but faster and probably much worse. ”

“Let me also speak about spying on citizens. We do not want governments to be able to identify everyone in every moment, to record where we walk, which places we visit, or who we talk to in the streets. Imagine your favourite example of the worst politician in your country. Now, would you want them to have a remote control to such spying? I don’t.”

“Colleagues from EPP will try to make the case how these systems could be used to catch criminals. But one thing is very clear to me: those who want to hide from AI systems will always find a way to do so, and always the innocent will suffer. -- And no, AI is not dangerous only when used by autocratic governments – when a technology is flawed, it’s flawed no matter who uses it for what purposes. ”

AI as a threat - discourse also highlights the mistrust in the current implementations of AI technologies from the MEPS and skepticism about whether AI will deliver on its promises or if it will be trustworthy. A number of real-life examples were used to illustrate the dangers associated with AI technologies, and how they have failed in the past or have been used for surveillance and control.

“ -- That judicial systems around the world are exploring using AI in judicial decision-making should scare the hell out of us. That Ukraine has been held up as a living lab for

AI warfare is frightening. We should be approaching this subject cautiously like every new technology. Instead, we're far too quick to follow industry. Governments across Europe are chomping at the bit to use facial recognition, to hell with people's rights. The Irish Government, who have MEPs who were in that, coming in here saying they disagree with it, but they're moving legislation before a possible EU ban. The EPP should be ashamed of themselves for renegeing on the hard hours of negotiation at committee."

" -- I have to raise some concerns because some colleagues from the EPP, they already tabled some amendments concerning biometric identity that are almost watering down all that we agreed in the IMCO/LIBE committee meeting and negotiating to a point which make all those bans meaningless. And I'll give you this story. -- We all remember this Pentagon project, I believe, that used AI systems to detect and identify humans. And out of eight troops, nobody was detected. -- The AI could not detect them because it was never trained of data of people doing so, and it does not possess the creative intelligence of a human being. "

6.1.3 Balancing between innovation and regulation – discourse

Innovation and regulation - discourse highlighted the importance of developing regulations and ethical principles related to the application of artificial intelligence. In other words, this discourse can see as a balancing act between threats and benefits, with ethical considerations at the forefront. Especially stressed is that a balanced approach should be found between implementing safe safeguards to protect society and advancing technological advancements at the same time.

*"I also believe that **we are on the verge of adopting legislation that will find this thin balance between the protection of fundamental rights, protecting the rule of law and promoting innovations.**"*

*“ Mr President, dear colleagues, kære Margrethe, we made it: over a year of negotiations, the AI Act has finally reached plenary. The outcome is a careful balance. **It is a text that promotes innovation, that protects fundamental rights and fosters trustworthy AI.** And these three aims were key to our work in the Legal Affairs Committee.”*

*“**AIDA special committee and data strategy have been paving the way for balanced regulation** and two years of work in Parliament improved already good Commission proposal.”*

The threat aspects were seen, however, as something that can be managed and controlled through regulation, making innovation possible. As such, this discourse framed Artificial Intelligence as something that MEPs and the European Union can control by establishing a regulatory framework. There was a lot of discussion regarding the AI Act, and how EU can influence what the future holds for AI in the EU.

*“**The act strives** to achieve an important balance, encouraging investment, digitalization and technological progress whilst regulating via a risk-based approach, respecting our European values and fundamental rights.”*

*“We worked on rules that allow technology to flourish and develop while ensuring that the models potentially used by millions of smaller companies and start-ups, as well as by hundreds of millions of individual users, **that they are safe.**”*

*“We are among the first to tackle the **fast-moving and evolving technology** with a concrete legislative proposal on how to address those powerful foundation models to build trust and provide transparency and oversight of these systems.”*

“The outcome is a careful balance. It is a text that promotes innovation, that protects fundamental rights and fosters trustworthy AI. And these three aims were key to our

work in the Legal Affairs Committee. -- We voted to guarantee that open source developers who are driving the AI revolution would have space to experiment without being buried in paperwork”

“But also I think it is important that we put value to our effort to strengthen innovation, to support start-ups with the work on the sandboxes. I think we did a thorough job on this, and I think it is important to clarify that, as was said earlier by the Commissioner, that when the worst happens, we can act. This is something we all agree on and we know that with this text, we the text that came out of the committee with the usage of non-real time, biometric identification in cases that are to pursue crimes that have been already committed and, with the control of a judge, we can pursue this balance.”

The assumptions the decision-makers have about AI is another crucial factor when we look at the speeches. Overall, there is a broad consensus that regulation and legislation is truly needed in order to mitigate the risks of AI as well as harness the benefits that AI might bring to the world. Most of the speeches create a discourse where AI is going to change the world, but it needs effective guardrails and principles around it. Emphasis was also placed on how regulation affects how AI is used. Speeches also pointed out that societies are built around rules and that AI would also be something that could be controlled by rules. AI is thus framed something that the EU can control with rules if the correct social orders and legislation are in place.

*“And I want to start by thanking the Commission for having the foresight already some years ago to start **preparing these rules and put them forward.**”*

*“We must establish **ethical guidelines and rules** to ensure that AI is used as a tool for the benefit of all citizens and society and not just for profit or propriety”*

*“As we vote to **negotiate these rules**, we must look also outward and invest politically in the effort of a global framework for addressing the benefits and risks of AI. The Brussels effect is one thing, and **our rules will inevitably be a model for other jurisdictions**”*

“This AI Act will boost AI usage, but not forget that societies are built on rules. Rules are there for safety, health, democracy, rule of law, privacy and environment. But now we hear police globally that do something as people start to see solutions in our lives. AIDA special committee and data strategy have been paving the way for balanced regulation and two years of work in Parliament improved already good Commission proposal. ”

To emphasize that the AI Act is a collective effort and a unit, as well as how much work has already been done by the EU, MEPs used emotional appeals. One interesting rhetorical strategy to gain trust that the decision-makers know what they are doing was by many MEPs who supported the AI Act that created a strong positive discourse about the work behind the AI Act. Their speeches were full of thanks to the working groups, the commission, and everyone in the EU who have been through the long process and how this regulation is needed, but it has made to balance innovation and regulation. This kind of framing highlights the aspect that this AI act is not just quickly put together, but more of a framework that has the expertise and thought progress behind it.

“And I want to start by thanking the Commission for having the foresight already some years ago to start preparing these rules and put them forward. I want to thank the leadership of all political groups and the leadership of this House for having the foresight to establish a Special committee on Artificial Intelligence, because we are now better prepared as lawmakers and I think we have ever been, to actually tackle these rules.”

“Thank you very much to the two rapporteurs, to all of the shadows and to the Commission for the excellent work on this directive. ”

“I am grateful for the ambitions of Parliament on this very important file. It has been an impressive debate. It is no exaggeration that the world is following this work. I want to thank you very much for taking the lead. -- and I really thank the rapporteurs and

all the shadows, everybody who worked on this, for their diligent work, because we need a European approach and we need a human-centred approach.”

6.1.4 Global leadership and Cooperation - discourse

Global leadership and cooperation emerged as the fourth main discourse from the speeches. In this seemingly EU centric discourse the decision-makers highlighted how important it is that EU leads AI regulation globally, and highlighted how important it is to be collaborating with international partners when it comes to the AI legislation. The legal framework for the AI Act showcases the EU as a leader in AI regulation, aiming for a leadership position while fostering global cooperation. There is also a very EU-centric and pro-EU emphasis on this discourse, with the EU seen as a pioneer that has started the process of regulating AI in advance, even when critics questioned whether this act was necessary and whether it was necessary to regulate innovation.

*“This law could become the de facto global approach to regulating AI and especially new types of AI like foundation models. **We cannot do this entirely on our own, but we should be leaders** in ensuring that this technology is developed and used in a responsible ethical manner, while also supporting innovation and economic growth.”*

*“But it is also about working with **our** partners. **It is about working with international partners to shape a global governance framework** -- It is about the future of **our** democracy.”*

The EU is discussed in terms of AI being something that they can control, something they can shape if they take the correct steps. There was a strong emphasis how the EU plays a significant role in global leadership and cooperation. Speakers highlighted the EU as an innovator in setting a legislative framework artificial intelligence. Discourses thus found indicated that the EU is, or at least should be, a pioneering and leading leader in global development, and can serve as an example for other countries about how artificial intelligence should be regulated.

"We have worked hard to provide a definition of AI that is not only agreed by all political groups in this House, but also aligned with that of the OECD and other partners such as the US. This gives the democratic world a starting point for developing a common terminology when discussing AI."

"Thank you for all the work and for the efforts to put this chamber, this Parliament, at the centre of the effort to build a human-centric AI, not just for us but for the whole world."

"As we vote to negotiate these rules, we must look also outward and invest politically in the effort of a global framework for addressing the benefits and risks of AI."

"It is the right time because of the profound impact the AI has... We are shaping the global development of AI in the right direction with humankind and human interests at the very centre."

"I believe AI, like other technologies, will make the future better, and I want it to develop in Europe."

Likewise, the discourse emphasized the EU's leadership in AI regulation while acknowledging the need to work with global partners on the topic. Moreover, some speeches highlighted how the rest of the world pays close attention to what the EU does, in the belief that if AI is enhanced in Europe, the rest of the world will benefit from specifically from the European approach, implying that European way is the way for the whole world to go.

"Today's vote places Europe at the forefront of becoming a global hub for cutting-edge innovation, channelling the potential of fair, accessible, transparent and trustworthy AI for our citizens."

"We are taking a historical step and the whole world is interested in what will happen here."

Furthermore, the MEPs also compared how the EU is different from other countries and legal entities when it comes to banning certain aspects of AI. During the debate, comparisons are made to authoritarian states such as China to compare how well and fairly the European Union is dealing with or intends to deal with artificial intelligence dilemmas and risks. In the framing, thus, there is a sense of us-versus-them rhetoric.

*"We do not want a predictive policing that you most probably are a criminal nor scoring citizens by pointing systems. And no, and it is good that the EPP position would also ban this also by private entities. Do you want to emotion recognition to be used at your children's school or at the workplace? Parliament don't. - "Last week **I spent in Washington the most common sentence I heard was we are lagging so much behind EU.** So the global interest and I am a strong believer of the Brussels effect."*

*"Ten or even five years down the line it is this governance structure that will give Europe the ability to deal with the rapid evolution of AI and to reap the most benefits from it. And we have worked first and foremost to ensure our citizens' rights and freedoms are not just respected but protected and strengthened. **We don't want mass surveillance. We don't want social scoring. We don't want predictive policing in the European Union, full stop. That's what China does, not us.** We want all public authorities, whether they distribute benefits or whether they enforce the law to be accountable, transparent and focused on our rights with strict democratic oversight."*

6.1.5 Human centric AI – discourse

Human centric AI – discourse which was identified from the material had an emphasis on AI that respects and protects fundamental rights not only in Europe but also across the globe. European approach that was done by the legislative efforts in the EU was therefore framed by the MEPs being something that safeguards the citizens and ensures that the privacy and safety are taken into account and protect humanity, not only in Europe but also globally. European approach and Eurocentric approach were often centered around being human-centered.

*"And in order to reach that potential, **we need to make sure that AI is safe, reliable and trustworthy.** It needs to be developed and used in an ethically and morally correct way, and the fundamental rights of our citizens must be protected."*

*"**We have worked first and foremost to ensure our citizens' rights and freedoms are not just respected but protected and strengthened.**"*

"We ensure that citizens have a right to recourse because decisions made by AI should never be final."

*" - **we need a European approach, and we need a human-centered approach.** -- But we should not only discuss how to protect our citizens from AI, we also need to make sure we can use AI to protect our citizens."*

Moreover, human-centric AI was framed as something which decision-makers have the capability to control, and which decision-makers can choose whether the AI technologies are human-centered or not, as it is the MEPs who are responsible for the AI legislation. Therefore, AI Act can be framed as a tool to enable decision-makers to control AI. It is framed as something that the decision-makers have been building for a while, and AI is what needs to be built to make the AI more humane and safer. AI Act itself is framed as a set of tools to make AI more humane and safer.

*" -- AI is a tool that will help millions of Euro-peans live better lives. - **It is true that AI is a tool that can be used for good or misused, but it is just a tool.** Just because I can hit my finger with a hammer does not mean we should ban all of them and stop building houses. Just because I can hit my finger with a hammer doesn't mean that we should stop developing better and safer tools in the future.*

But tomorrow, when we vote, we still have some decisions to make. We need to ban biometric mass— surveillance. The police already have efficient tools without infringing

*on our fundamental rights. We need to prevent intrusive pseudo—scientific behavioural recognition. We need to stop heartless automated migration decision—making. So I urge colleagues: **vote to ban these dangerous practices. Vote for trustworthy AI that respects our fundamental rights.***

*“This AI act we’re discussing today is a very important piece of legislation, and I really thank the rapporteurs and all the shadows, everybody who worked on this, for their diligent work, **because we need a European approach and we need a human-centred approach.** And I don’t think anybody also today in the debate, nobody has denied the benefits and the potential of artificial intelligence to make our societies more prosperous and our economies more efficient. And in order to reach that potential, we need to make sure that AI is safe, reliable and trustworthy. It needs to be developed and used in an ethically and morally correct way, and the fundamental rights of our citizens must be protected”*

*‘We all use big words. We said change the world. Transformative impact. Turning points for humankind. Oftentimes we use these words as political exaggerations, but with AI, these are right on point. We are facing a turning point in history. Many may not see it yet. And we needed a small demonstration provided by a powerful chatbot over the past months to alert leaders and policymakers around the world. **But we, here in the EU, we are doing something about it. We are taking up our responsibility as lawmakers to protect our society from potential harm and give our economies a clear direction as to how AI can be used for good, of that we can all be proud.** ’*

*" I think it’s important to clarify that the existing text is already very advanced and clear, and that is also why I think **we should keep the text that we voted in the committee.** We are ready to work for the upcoming trilogues. Thank you for all the work and for the efforts to put this chamber, **this Parliament, at the centre of the effort to build a human-centric AI, not just for us but for the whole world.**"*

The subject of human-centered AI also included a discussion of how Artificial Intelligence is created and controlled by humans, and how it is ultimately a technology that human’s control

and develop. Some MEPs pointed out that it is the humans who need to be held accountable at the end of the day and create legislation and guidelines to ensure AI does not pose a threat to society or humanity.

“The AI could not detect them because it was never trained of data of people doing so, and it does not possess the creative intelligence of a human being.”

*‘The absolute minimum that we need to offer here is transparency. It must be clear that this content has not been made by human. And **we also go one step further and ask developers of these large models to be more transparent** and share their information with providers and how these systems were trained and how they were developed’*

*“ -- as the godfather of AI, Geoffrey Hinton has said, AI also presents an existential threat to humanity, or in the vivid words of Yuval Noah Harari, it has the potential to hack the operating system of our civilization. **However, let's not forget that AI did not create nuclear weapons, did not create genocide, did not create hate speech.** Left to our own devices, **we are more than capable of moral collapse**, and that is why it is important that the legislation focuses on the intended use of the technology and not on the technology itself. ”*

7 Conclusions

In this thesis, I have examined one phase of the long debate surrounding the creation of the AI regulation in the EU, to illustrate the nature of the political debate on AI and the discourses that emerged from it at a particular moment in history. Through a data-driven discourse analysis based on social constructionism, I have focused on how the use of language functions as a constructor of social reality and how MEPs construct the concept of AI in their speeches. My research question was: How did MEPs discuss AI, and what kind of discourses were created in the debate? I have examined what kind of discourses MEPs produce about AI, how it is framed, and whether AI is perceived mainly as a threat or an opportunity. I have

also aimed to outline the attitudes, rhetorical strategies, and background assumptions that emerged in the debate.

In my results, I have identified several discourses on AI in the debates. As MEPs discuss the opportunities and threats of AI, they use rhetorical strategies and cultural framing. I have identified five main discourses: AI as an opportunity, AI as a threat, balancing between innovation and regulation, the EU's global leadership, and collaboration and human-centered AI.

Discourses

In my research, I have focused on the question of whether European decision-makers view Artificial Intelligence as an opportunity or as a threat. During the analysis, it seems that the case is both, as the results indicate that most of the MEPs, 13 out of 15, emphasize opportunities more than threats. The general discourse surrounding the topic leans towards the opportunities, but with consideration that the threats must be regulated and controlled by the EU.

Nearly all MEPs address the threats and frame them in a sense that regulations can manage them. Among the selected speeches, one was only framed as a threat without pointing out its positive aspects. This framing of AI as a world-changing opportunity but at the same time a likely threat shows the complexity of regulating this technology.

The way MEPs frame AI as a world changing opportunity or a potential threat shows that the regulation of a technology that can be transformative and powerful is complex. MEPs discuss about an essential need for a balanced approach which simultaneously supports innovation but also ensures that the fundamental rights of the citizens as well as the ethical usage of AI is taken into account.

Supportive speeches generally praise the legislation machinery of the EU for their extensive and persistent work, highlighting the amount of trust and gratitude towards the legislative process and the actors who have been working with this file. In contrast, critical speeches

focus on issues of privacy and citizenship rights that still need to be addressed before the voting.

Furthermore, there are comparisons between the EU and other countries, emphasizing the role and responsibility of the EU being a democratic actor with a responsibility to protect its citizens and develop industry guidelines, with the hope that this work inspires other entities globally to follow the same path, and see EU as a leader in this field.

Rhetorical Strategies and Framing

Overall, the decision-makers used several rhetorical strategies in their political speeches. Emotional appeals regarding the safety of the citizens of the EU and European democratic values come before anything else when regulating AI. Strategies also include references to different international standards and cooperation internationally. When MEPs are more negative towards AI, they focus more on personal anecdotes to add legitimacy to their arguments. Historical contexts and references to the future are brought up regularly. The historical context is more often used to argue AI as a threat, while framing AI as a positive development involves more futuristic scenarios about potential positive possibilities.

Cultural Framing

"Us the European Union versus them the rest of the world" is a common way of discussing how well EU is doing and how advanced it is in regulation and protecting citizens, unlike the rest of the world. This showcases an Eurocentric worldview of the MEPs and their discourse in the parliament.

Implications and Future Research

This analysis showcases the discourses that are used when discussed about AI. However, it is crucial to note that the nature of the analysis does not go deep enough to draw comprehensive conclusions about the decision-makers' level of expertise regarding AI. The speeches are short and often scripted, making it difficult to grasp the MEPs' actual understanding of AI

and whether they have a deeper understanding of different AI technologies or if their reality is confined to legislative rhetoric.

In future research, it would be interesting to conduct interviews with MEPs, allowing for a deeper investigation into their understanding of AI and their underlying assumptions. Additionally, analyzing speeches in other languages could reveal different perspectives and mentions of other nations, which were not captured in the English-language analysis.

In conclusion, the debates on AI regulation within the EU Parliament reflect a complex interplay of opportunities and threats. The rhetorical strategies and cultural framings used by MEPs highlight the need for a balanced approach to AI regulation. Future research should aim to deepen our understanding of these discourses and their implications. The attitudes and perceptions of decision-makers, and the way AI is framed in their discourse, significantly influence the shaping of regulations and the social reality constructed around AI. Maintaining a dialogue about the power and social order surrounding AI and examining the decision-makers' views can help navigate the legislative process and understand how AI discourses shape our reality.

Ultimately, as one of the MEPs brought up, AI did not create nuclear weapons, genocide, or hate speech, but humans are capable of moral collapse without AI technologies. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain a dialogue about the power and social order surrounding AI and related technologies and continue examining the decision-makers views. By looking into the legislative process, we can discover how the discourses and attitudes around AI shape the discursive reality.

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