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Argumentative patterns in discourse

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ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the ways in which argumentative discourse prototypically manifests itself. As a consequence of the institutional preconditions applying to the strategic manoeuvring taking place in specific communicative activity types, certain context-dependent argumentative patterns of standpoints, argument schemes and argumentation structures can be observed. Because of their interest in the extent to which argumentative discourse is context-dependent, pragma-dialecticians are out to discover such specific patterns. As a case in point, the authors discuss some institutionally motivated argumentative patterns in parliamentary debate in the European Parliament.

KEYWORDS: argumentative pattern, communicative activity type, strategic manoeuvring, pragma-dialectics, European Parliament

1. FROM IDEAL MODEL TO ARGUMENTATIVE REALITY

When observing the way in which the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation has developed over the past four decades it can be noted that the theorizing has progressed gradually and systematically from the abstract level of an ideal model to the concrete reality of situated argumentative discourse. After the introduction of the ideal model of a critical discussion and the rules for conducting a critical discussion in the early 1980s (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 2004) more and more properties of argumentative reality have been taken into account in the theory.

In accordance with van Eemeren and Grootendorst's "master plan," first the 'problem-validity' of the rules for critical discussion was demonstrated by showing that the fallacies that are traditionally distinguished do not occur if the rules are complied with (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992). Next, analytical research was

undertaken to develop theoretical tools for the reconstruction of an ‘analytic overview’ of argumentative discourse in terms of a critical discussion (van Eemeren et al., 1993). At about the same time, experimental empirical research was carried out to investigate to what extent the moves which are according to the model of a critical discussion pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits are in argumentative reality recognized by ordinary arguers (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Meuffels, 1989). This research was followed by qualitative empirical research into the ways in which the various kinds of indicators of argumentative moves manifest themselves in argumentative discourse (van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans, 2007) and extensive experimental testing of the intersubjective acceptability of the rules for critical discussion to ordinary arguers – a precondition for establishing their ‘conventional validity’ (van Eemeren, Garssen & Meuffels, 2009). Thus, the pragma-dialectical theory was step by step enriched with the necessary tools for dealing adequately with the complexities of argumentative reality.

The step that eventually immersed the pragma-dialectical theory fully in the nitty-gritty of argumentative reality was taken in the late 1990s, when van Eemeren and Houtlosser set about taking the “strategic design” of argumentative discourse into account in the theorizing (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002). The aim of this inclusion was to extend the tools provided by the pragma-dialectical ‘standard theory’ in such a way that an analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse can be given that is at the same time more profound and realistic and more securely accounted for.¹ In 2010, van Eemeren expounded the ‘extended theory’ in his monograph *Strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse*.

In dealing with the strategic design of argumentative discourse van Eemeren and Houtlosser took as their starting point that, next to the reasonableness dimension covered in the pragma-dialectical standard theory, real-life argumentation always also has a dimension of effectiveness. In making argumentative moves, arguers are not just out to be reasonable and resolve a difference of opinion on the merits, but also, and often perhaps primarily, to be effective in resolving a difference of opinion in favour of their position by convincing the audience of the acceptability of their standpoint. According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser, the tension involved in pursuing these two aims simultaneously must be controlled to remain within the boundaries of reasonableness as defined by the rules for critical discussion. The “argumentative predicament” of having to keep the balance between aiming for effectiveness and maintaining reasonableness in every argumentative move requires continual ‘strategic manoeuvring’ on the part of the arguers. Because taking account of the strategic manoeuvring going on in argumentative discourse involves the incorporation of the pursuit of effectiveness in the theorizing, the extension proposed by van Eemeren and Houtlosser adds a rhetorical dimension to the pragma-dialectical theory.

¹ In addition, including an account of strategic considerations in the pragma-dialectical theorizing should also be instrumental in developing more sophisticated methods for improving the quality of the production of oral and written argumentative discourse.

2. THE CONVENTIONALIZATION OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITY TYPES

Strategic manoeuvring does not take part in an idealized critical discussion but in the multi-varied communicative practices that have developed in empirical reality. In the extended pragma-dialectical theory the institutional conventionalization of these communicative practices is therefore duly taken into account (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 129-162).² This means that the *communicative activity types* are examined which have established themselves in the various communicative domains that constitute the institutional macro-contexts in which argumentative discourse manifests itself in argumentative reality. These activity types can be formally conventionalized, as is by and large the case in the legal domain, but they may also be less formally conventionalized, as is the usual thing in the political domain, or only informally conventionalized, as is customary in the personal domain. The 'institutional point' of a communicative activity type, which defines its rationale, reflects the institutional exigency in response to which the activity type and its conventionalization have come into being.

Communicative activity types are designed to realize their institutional point through the use of the appropriate genres of communicative activity. In the strictly conventionalized communicative activity types of the legal domain, for instance, adjudication is used to maintain justice by preparing legal verdicts; in the less strictly conventionalized communicative activity types of the political domain deliberation³ is used to keep the political system going by considering policy decisions;⁴ in the inter-subjectively conventionalized communicative activity types of the academic domain disputation is used to bring about intellectual progress by testing scientific claims; and in the informally conventionalized communicative activity types of the interpersonal domain communion-seeking is used to confirm interpersonal relationships by establishing shared opinions. A great many communicative activity types are *hybrids* in the sense that their conventionalization involves the use of a combination of several genres of communicative activity. In the political domain a case in point are political interviews, which prototypically stimulate opinion-forming by combining the dissemination of information with deliberation.

The communicative activity types which have come into being in the various domains of communicative activity manifest themselves empirically in concrete speech events.⁵ Because communicative activity types are instantiated in

² We use the terms *institutional* and *institutionalized* in a broad sense, pertaining to all socially and culturally established communicative practices that are in any way formally or informally conventionalized.

³ The term *deliberation* is here used in the broad meaning given to this concept by Habermas (1994, p. 8; 1996, pp. 307-308) and other protagonists of 'deliberative democracy.'

⁴ In the communicative activity type of Prime Minister's Question Time in British parliament, for instance, the specific institutional point of holding the Prime Minister to account for the government's views and policies is conventionally pursued by deliberation by means of questions and answers, regulated by a tradition partially laid down in the parliamentary rules of order, House of Commons Rulings from the Chair, and Standing Orders.

⁵ Unlike Hymes (1972), who uses the term *speech event* for communicative activity types as well as

argumentative reality in such spatio-temporally determined historical events, they are not on a par with theoretical constructs such as a critical discussion.⁶ A critical discussion represents an analytically motivated ideal model at the meta-level of normative theorizing, which does not have any empirical manifestations at the object-level of argumentative reality.⁷

Communicative activity types are defined by the goals that are pursued in realizing their institutional point, their conventionalization, and the main properties of their format. If a communicative activity type is inherently, essentially, or predominantly argumentative, or incidentally argumentative, it is worthwhile to give an argumentative characterization of this communicative activity type with the help of the model of a critical discussion, so that the distinctive features of the communicative activity type are made explicit.⁸ Due to the different institutional requirements they have to meet and their different institutional points, in the various communicative activity types the argumentative dimension is substantiated in different ways. Taking a critical discussion as the point of departure, in the resolution process involved in the argumentative discourse taking place in a specific communicative activity type four focal points can be distinguished: the *initial situation* when the discourse takes off, the *starting points* shared by the participants, the *argumentative means and criticisms* utilized in the discourse, and the possible kind of *outcome*. Starting from these empirical counterparts of the four stages of a critical discussion, it can be made clear in an argumentative characterization how the consecutive stages of the resolution process are realized in a particular communicative activity type.

3. THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL PRECONDITIONS FOR STRATEGIC MANOEUVRING

The incorporation of the macro-contextual dimension of the communicative activity types in the theorizing following on from the inclusion of strategic manoeuvring has strengthened the connection between the pragma-dialectical theory and argumentative reality considerably. In the first decade of the 21st century it has led to the application of pragma-dialectical insights to the analysis and evaluation of a great many argumentative practices. The research carried out at the University of

their actual manifestations, we restrict our use of this term to the latter.

⁶ As van Eemeren et al. (2010) explain communicative activity types share some common ground with Walton and Krabbe's (1995) 'dialogue types.' It is not clear however whether dialogue types are distinguished on the basis of analytical considerations or on the basis of empirical analysis, and whether their status is consequently normative or descriptive. Walton (1998, p. 30) maintains that each dialogue type constitutes a separate normative model of argumentation, but in describing dialogue types he continually refers to empirical observations.

⁷ Instead, an ideal model such as a critical discussion may have approximations in argumentative reality.

⁸ Using a critical discussion as the general point of reference in the argumentative characterization of all communicative activity types leads to consistent and coherent characterizations and creates possibilities for a systematic comparison between communicative activity types.

Amsterdam has concentrated on four communicative domains: the legal, the political, the medical, and the academic domain.⁹ The primary aim was in all cases to find out in what ways the possibilities for strategic manoeuvring are in these domains determined by extrinsic institutional constraints.

The extrinsic constraints concentrated upon are – as is explicitly indicated by the term *extrinsic* – not inherent in all argumentative discourse but relate to specific institutional macro-contextual requirements and apply only to argumentative discourse taking place in a specific communicative activity type or cluster of communicative activity types. These extrinsic constraints are imposed on the discourse by the way in which a communicative activity type is conventionalized to make it instrumental in realizing the institutional point of the activity type and reaching its associated institutional aims. The extrinsic constraints ensuing from the conventionalization of a communicative activity type constitute *institutional preconditions* for strategic manoeuvring in the argumentative practice concerned. In the analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse the institutional preconditions pertaining to strategic manoeuvring in the communicative activity type concerned must therefore always be taken into account.

Due to the specific institutional requirements captured in the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring in a particular communicative activity type, certain modes of strategic manoeuvring will be suitable – or, as the case may be, unsuitable – to realizing the institutional point of the communicative activity type. Since the argumentative characterization of a communicative activity type points out how the argumentative discourse taking place in this activity type is affected by its institutionalization, such a characterization provides the proper point of departure for determining the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring. As a comparison between the argumentative characterizations of different communicative activity types makes clear, in some communicative activity types the definition of the initial situation leaves more room for being shaped by the participants than in others. Similar differences between the various communicative activity types can be observed with regard to the establishment of procedural and material starting points, the use of argumentative means and criticisms, and the determination of possible outcomes of the argumentative exchange. In principle, all three aspects of strategic manoeuvring can be affected by the institutional preconditions imposed on the discourse: There may be extrinsic constraints on the topical choices that can be made, the adaptation to audience demand that is allowed, and the presentational devices that are available (van Eemeren, 2010, pp. 93-127).

At the beginning of the 21st century a comprehensive research project concerning the influence of institutional constraints on confrontational strategic manoeuvring in the political domain was carried out by van Eemeren and Houtlosser together with van Laar, Mohammed, Andone, and Tonnard.¹⁰ In a related

⁹ In addition, a fruitful collaboration was realized with researchers of the University of Lugano who concentrate on argumentation in mediation, financial communication, the media, and health communication.

¹⁰ An overview of some of the main results is published in van Eemeren (Ed, 2009). See also Andone (2010), van Eemeren (2010), van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), van Laar (2008), Mohammed

research project Lewinski (2010) focused on how the contextual conditions of political discussion forums on the Internet affect the way in which the participants react critically to each other's contributions. In a more recent project devoted to the influence of institutional preconditions in the political domain van Eemeren and Garssen (2010, 2011) concentrate their explorations on strategic manoeuvring in plenary debates in the European Parliament. Meanwhile Feteris (2009) has conducted research into the institutional preconditions affecting strategic manoeuvring in strongly conventionalized legal communicative activity types. Van Poppel (2011) focuses on strategic manoeuvring by means of pragmatic argumentation in 'health brochures' to comply with institutional conventions in the medical domain. A first effort to adapt the theoretical instruments of extended pragma-dialectics for implementation in the analysis of academic argumentation is made by Wagemans (2011).

4. ARGUMENTATIVE PATTERNS DETERMINED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL MACRO-CONTEXT

In a great many communicative activity types the initial situation described in an argumentative characterization is in actual practice often characterized by the immanence of a *specific kind of difference of opinion* in which a *specific type of standpoint* is at issue. The communicative activity types instrumental in complying with the exigencies of the various kinds of communicative macro-contexts revolve around different kinds of differences of opinion, varying from well-delineated differences of opinion in the academic domain and formally defined disputes in the legal domain to broadly defined disagreements in the political domain and largely implicit conflicts of opinion in the interpersonal domain. The types of standpoints at issue may vary from a descriptive scientific claim in the academic domain to an evaluative juridical verdict in the legal domain, a prescriptive policy statement in the political domain or a hybrid personal opinion in the interpersonal domain.

In combination with the specific starting points immanent in particular communicative activity types or clusters of communicative activity types, the specific characteristics of the initial situation will lead to the development of particular kinds of argumentative exchanges in the empirical counterpart of the argumentation stage of a critical discussion. In its turn the kind of argumentative exchange that develops in a certain communicative activity type may be to some extent dependent on the specific institutional macro-context in which it takes place. The kind of argumentative exchange that will develop in a legal activity type, for instance, is likely to differ considerably from the kind of argumentative exchanges developing in political, academic or interpersonal activity types. The differences are not only caused by the differences between the types of standpoints at issue and the kind of differences of opinion in which they occur, or the procedural and material starting points of the exchange, but also by the specific requirements the argumentation and criticisms need to fulfil to lead to an outcome allowed by the

(2009), and Tonnard (2011).

institutional requirements of the communicative activity type or cluster of communicative activity types in which the argumentative exchange takes part.

Viewed against the background of the specific communicative activity type in which an argumentative exchange takes place, and taking account of the kind of difference of opinion to be resolved, the type of standpoint at issue, and the specific procedural and material starting points the parties need to act upon, different types of argumentation can be instrumental in reaching the kind of outcome aimed for in the one case than in the other. Just as 'causal' argumentation might be instrumental in establishing the truth of a scientific claim in an argumentative exchange taking place in an academic communicative activity type, 'analogy' argumentation may be suitable in reaching a juridical verdict in a legal communicative activity type, while 'pragmatic' argumentation may be suitable in supporting a policy statement in a political communicative activity type, and 'symptomatic' argumentation in getting a personal opinion accepted in an interpersonal communicative activity type. If these estimates are realistic, and a certain estimate does indeed apply to a particular case, specific kinds of critical reactions may be expected to be raised in that case and are therefore likely to be anticipated in the argumentative moves that are made.

In argumentative discourse conducted in a particular communicative activity type certain specific institutional requirements are to be met, so that certain types of argumentation can be instrumental. This means that certain critical reactions are to be anticipated in the institutional macro-context concerned because they are pertinent since they represent critical questions that pertain to the argument schemes that are used.¹¹ Taking account of these conditions will result in the creation of a specific *argumentative pattern* in the discourse. Such an argumentative pattern will consist of a particular constellation of argumentative moves in which in a particular kind of argumentation structure¹² a particular combination of argument schemes is exploited in defence of a particular type of standpoint.¹³

Although argumentative patterns may well be incidental or dependent on other factors, they can also be typical of the way in which in a specific communicative activity type argumentative discourse is generally conducted. The latter is the case if the argumentative pattern concerned is immediately connected with the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring pertaining to the communicative activity type in which the pattern occurs. It is these *stereotypical argumentative patterns*, whose composition can be explained by the institutional

¹¹ The critical questions associated with the use of a particular type of argument scheme need to be asked in the specification pertinent to the implementation of this argument scheme in the context of the communicative activity type in which the argumentation is put forward.

¹² If an argument used in defence of a standpoint is not accepted or may be expected to meet with critical doubt, more complex argumentation will come into being, which leads to a more complicated argumentation structure.

¹³ In principle, protagonists may be assumed to aim for making the strongest case in the communicative context concerned by trying to articulate those combinations of reasons that will leave no critical doubts of the antagonist unanswered. In the process they may be expected to exploit the argument schemes they consider most effective in the situation at hand and to use all multiple, coordinative, and subordinative argumentation necessary to respond to critical reactions the antagonist may come up with.

preconditions prevailing in the communicative activity types in which they occur, that pragma-dialectical researchers are currently particularly interested in.¹⁴ This interest stems from the present focus of their research program on determining the context-dependency of argumentative discourse.

The primary aim of current pragma-dialectical research into strategic manoeuvring in the various kinds of argumentative practices in the legal, political, medical, and academic domains is to detect regular patterns of standpoints, argument schemes and argumentation structures that are stereotypically activated to realize the institutional point of a communicative activity type in agreement with its institutional conventionalisation. The research concentrates on identifying and explaining argumentative patterns coming about in the strategic manoeuvring taking place in specific communicative activity types (or in speech events instantiating them) as a result of the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring. In their qualitative empirical research to uncover which argumentative patterns can be found in argumentative reality, the researchers make use of all theoretical tools that have been developed for this purpose in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, including the typologies of differences of opinion and standpoints, argument schemes and argumentation structures. They describe the various argumentative patterns that manifest themselves in the discourse in specific constellations of argumentative moves in terms of the categories distinguished in these typologies.

By documenting the institutional diversification of argumentative practices systematically in this way, insight is provided in the existing proliferation of argumentative reality. In addition, the way is paved for the next step in the pragma-dialectical research program in which this insight will be used to give a more precise account of the way in which in argumentation theory the relationship between general theorizing and the treatment of institutional context-dependency is to be envisaged. The study of this relationship will be the topic of a future monograph the two of us are going to co-author with Corina Andone, Eveline Feteris, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, and Jean Wagemans.

5. STEREOTYPICAL ARGUMENTATIVE PATTERNS IN PLENARY DEBATE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In this paper we can only give a few examples to illustrate what we mean by stereotypical argumentative patterns. Our examples, which will be discussed more elaborately in our future monograph, are taken from the political domain: They all stem from the communicative activity type of plenary debate in the European Parliament.¹⁵ We will make clear how the occurrence of certain specific

¹⁴ Stereotypical argumentative patterns result from the use of certain modes of strategic manoeuvring related to the institutional point and conventionalization of the communicative activity type and responding to the institutional demands the communicative activity type is to serve to fulfil the requirements of the domain.

¹⁵ Other types of meetings of the European Parliament include question time and one minute speeches.

argumentative patterns in this communicative activity type can be explained by taking account of the institutional preconditions for strategic manoeuvring applying to the plenary debate, considering also the institutional point of such a debate, its conventionalisation, and the extrinsic constraints which are as a consequence of these macro-contextual conditions imposed on the argumentative discourse taking place in such a debate.

The proceedings of the parliamentary debate determine to a great extent the types of argumentation that will be used in this debate and the kind of argumentative patterns that develop. Some of these debates are on new legislation (first reading and second reading), other debates concern oral questions to the European commission or the council, still others are, for instance, on human rights in non-European countries or on other issues relevant to the European Parliament.

In legislation or regulative debates the ‘rapporteur,’ who does not play an active role in the debate, normally gives a brief description of the report that was made to present the proposal for legislation. In this way the rapporteur presents the proposal or, in case of a second reading, the amended proposal. In many cases the rapporteur also includes some information about the process that leads to the report: It took long, a great many parties had to be satisfied, etc. In this description the rapporteur may also refer to amendments that had to be made on earlier versions of the legislation.

Normally the rapporteur will also provide some – usually brief – argumentation supporting the standpoint that the proposed legislation is acceptable. This argumentation will contain the main arguments for the standpoint. In case the rapporteur does not provide such argumentation for adopting the proposal, it will be presented later in the debate by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are in favour of the proposal. In a legislative debate the rapporteur relies in almost all cases on pragmatic argumentation in which the proposal statement is defended by mentioning the positive results of implementing the proposal. A case in point is the debate on food labelling on 5 July 2011 in which rapporteur Renate Sommers presents at the opening the main arguments for food labelling:

Example (1)

This regulation is intended to give consumers more and better information about food, in order to allow them to make informed purchasing decisions. That is not all, however. It should also benefit the European food industry by providing more legal certainty, less red tape and better lawmaking.

It is striking that in this example multiple effects are mentioned: The legislation discussed will be beneficial not only for consumers but also for the food industry. The arguer relies in this case on a series of pragmatic arguments which are connected with each other in a coordinative argumentation structure. Although pragmatic arguments can also consist of pointing to just one favourable consequence, in argumentation in the European Parliament quite often more than just one consequence is mentioned.

From the perspective of strategic manoeuvring, the choice that is made here is quite understandable. The author of the report has to take several parties with different interests into account and maximizes in this way his adaption to audience demand. In this case, no further argumentation is provided. Apparently when putting forward this pragmatic argument it was already understood that all involved are in favour of informed purchasing decisions, more legal certainty, less red tape, and better law-making.

In other cases the rapporteur not only mentions the intended results of the proposal but also tries to make clear that the intended effects are indeed desirable. If it is necessary to argue for the desirability of the intended effects, straightforward pragmatic argumentation for the proposal is not enough because this argument scheme presupposes that the audience is in agreement with the desirability of the effects of the proposal. Since this precondition is not always fulfilled, the rapporteur may need to address the question of desirability. This happens in the following opening speech by Debora Serracchiani, rapporteur of the report on “a single railway area” (14 November, 2011):

Example (2)

The objective of the railway recast is to achieve a single European railway market. It is an ambitious objective because the rail system is the most outdated transport system, which has not managed to catch up with other modes of transport. For example, the average percentage for rail freight in European countries is stationary at around 6-7%, while only 11-12% of passengers travel by rail.

Therefore, it is clear that rules need to be harmonised, and that new systems and new elements need to be added and strengthened to ensure that railways can develop properly, particularly where they cross borders, which is the most problematic part for European integration.

The creation of a single European market is therefore necessary, just as it was for the air transport sector. The creation of a single market will mean that citizens can use trains that can run throughout Europe, with better fares and a service on a par with that of other modes of transport. Currently, few trains can travel outside national borders. Now the aim is that they can compete with each other throughout the whole of Europe, something which – as I have said – is not the case today.

The package of legislation defended in this report is sustained by pointing at a specific consequence of a single European railway market: harmonization of the rules of the different member states. Apparently the authors of the report considered it not entirely clear to all concerned that harmonization of railway rules is necessary. That is why the argumentation is complemented by argumentation for the desirability of the result that is aimed for: Citizens can use trains that can run throughout Europe, etc. This will lead to an increase of the number of passengers travelling by rail. Supporting the pragmatic argumentation that is presented in this

way by the argument that the consequence mentioned is indeed desirable, results in an argumentative pattern that involves pragmatic argumentation (a single European railway market will lead to harmonization) embedded in an argumentation structure of both coordinative and subordinate argumentation in which the complementary argument (harmonization of railway regulation is desirable) is defended by subordinative argumentation (harmonization will lead to an increase of train-travelling).

After the opening by the rapporteur the actual debate develops. Legislative debates consist of a series of reactions to the report as it is presented by the rapporteur.¹⁶ Generally speaking, three types of reactions can be distinguished. First, the MEP concerned is in favour of the proposal and puts forward arguments in support of it.¹⁷ Second, the MEP is partly in favour of the proposal and provides argumentation for amendments. Third, the MEP is against the proposal and advances arguments against it.

All pro and contra arguments put forward during the debate relate directly to the pragmatic argumentation (or the more complex argumentation pattern described earlier) that is presented by the rapporteur at the beginning of the debate. This means that the debate focuses on specific parts of the original pragmatic argumentation at the beginning of the debate: the causal claim that the proposed measure will lead to the desirable consequences and the desirability or necessity of these consequences itself.

Interestingly, in most cases the advocates of the proposal stress the desirability of the consequences, while in their argumentation the opponents tend to express doubt on the effectiveness of the claim or point to undesirable side effects of the measure. In their reactions MEPs in support of the proposal typically provide additional argumentation for the necessity of the proposed legislation. Peter Liese, for one, mentions extra reasons for supporting the proposal concerning food labelling (5 July, 2011):

Example (3)

I have been following the legislative process right from the beginning and it is true that it was very difficult and involved very diverse positions and interests. However, I believe that we have achieved a good result. We will be providing consumers with better and clearer information, but we will not be patronising them or telling them what they can and cannot eat.

I would like to highlight the agreement on imitation foods in particular. It was always very important to us in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) that food should not give the impression that it consisted of a certain basic ingredient

¹⁶ Because all these reactions are prepared beforehand, the MEPs hardly ever react to each other. However, the new Blue Card procedure has opened the possibility to react directly to debate contributions.

¹⁷ In some cases MEPs do not provide argumentation but show their enthusiasm for a proposal by expressing regret for the fact that it took so long before it could be presented in Parliament.

when in fact it did not. In other words, cheese must be made of milk. If it contains other vegetable fats, for example, this must be clearly stated on the label in future. It was not easy to find the right solution in this area. The Council argued that the prescribed term 'food imitation' would result in the relevant companies claiming that their food was not an imitation, but an innovative product. However, if an ingredient is specified which the food normally does not contain, this represents a significant improvement, in my opinion. Consumers will no longer be deceived by food imitations and this could also help dairy farmers, for example, to get better prices for their products. Other very important points are that in future we will no longer need a magnifying glass to identify the ingredients, that legibility is a mandatory requirement and that we have kept our sense of proportion with regard to small and medium-sized businesses. We have always borne in mind Nestlé, Ferrero and other large organisations, but small bakers, local restaurants and farm shops must also be able to cope with the regulation and we have also found a good solution for them.

The argumentative pattern displayed here consists of a series of coordinative structured pragmatic arguments which are additional to the original pragmatic argument that was presented by the rapporteur.

MEPs in support of a proposal often try to underline the seriousness of the problem (and therefore of the desirability of the results the proposal will bring about) by using arguments from example which are structured coordinatively. In a debate about clear labels for fruit juices sold in Europe (13 December, 2012), Carl Schlyter, for instance, defended a proposal for clearer labelling of fruit juices in the following way:

Example (4)

During the negotiations, I brought these juice cartons with me and I am still bringing them with me right to the bitter end. Here is one example of juice packaging: high quality, full of lovely cranberries. The problem is that cranberries are not the main ingredient of the juice – it is apple. However, I do not see apple mentioned on the packaging or in the name. This is a product from France. Here I have a product from Sweden/Finland. It is called raspberry/blueberry and there are raspberries and blueberries on the packaging. Hidden behind an enormous blueberry there is a very tiny apple. This is misleading, because this juice consists mostly of apple – it contains 10 times as much apple as raspberry and blueberry. Here is another fruit drink that is also sold on the European market. It has lovely strawberries and passion fruit on the packaging, but what do you think is the dominant fruit? It is apple, of course. Here is another one that is sold in six other countries in Europe. It states strawberry here, but do you think it contains any strawberries? Yes, it contains a very small

amount of strawberries, but as usual it is mostly apple, and the apple on this packaging is hidden behind a symbol so that you can barely see it. This is misleading and fraudulent, and we are at last doing something about it. This is what I have been fighting for, and I am very pleased that this was the end result

As pointed out before, opponents focus on the causal claim in the initial pragmatic argumentation. They do that, for instance by pointing to negative side effects of the proposed legislation or attack the effectiveness of the proposed measure. Claims about the possible counter effects or side effects are then defended by reference to striking examples of countries, areas or groups in Europe.

Quite stereotypical negative reactions to proposals are the use of pragmatic argumentation in combination with argumentation by example in which the MEP concerned warns Parliament against the negative consequences that the new legislative measures will have for particular countries, as a rule including the MEP's own country. Such reactions were voiced, for instance, when on 19 May, 2008, in a European parliamentary debate a proposal was discussed to "continue deducting 5% of the tobacco aid granted for the calendar years 2008 and 2009 and to use those funds to continue financing the Community Tobacco Fund, whose sole purpose is to finance information initiatives for improving European citizens' awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco consumption." A Greek MEP, Diamanto Manolakou, reacted as follows:

Example (5)

[...] tobacco growers are being cruelly persecuted, as the anti-smoking campaign is tantamount to an anti-tobacco policy. [...] Tobacco growing in Greece has declined by 73%. Ever-increasing numbers of tobacco growers are unemployed. Whole areas are being abandoned because no alternative crops are grown there [...].

Opponents also regularly present coordinative argumentation in which consequences are mentioned that are contrary to the proclaimed objective of the proposal. An example is João Ferreira's argumentation against measures that should strengthen the bargaining power of dairy farmers (14 February, 2012):

Example (6)

[...] this proposal for a regulation does not resolve the fundamental problems in the dairy sector. It is a further step down the path of excusing the unacceptable and disastrous decision to abolish milk quotas in 2015 and that alone makes it already unacceptable. The rest is a fantasy that those preparing to approve this proposal have been selling to milk producers, whose situation is deteriorating by the day. It is fantasy that it is possible to guarantee producers fair prices in the free and deregulated market that they advocate. It is fantasy that the right of every country to produce as much as it needs can be guaranteed without instruments for regulating production. It is

complete fantasy. This path will boost the power of big business; of the major retailers and processing companies. It will further concentrate production with a few producers and countries, destroying it in other countries, where many producers will be ruined. It will continue to facilitate dumping between Member States and the flooding of national markets with imported milk. It will continue to promote intensive, export-orientated production that jeopardises food security and quality and environmental sustainability. For all these reasons, what is actually needed is to reconsider reviewing the abolition of dairy quotas and their adaptation to the needs of each country and to the relative level of development of its productive capacity. It is important to have market regulation and intervention instruments that guarantee producers fair prices, taking production costs and retail prices into consideration, so that value added is distributed fairly along the sector's value chain.

The argumentative pattern that comes into being in Ferreira's argumentation consists of a combination of pragmatic argumentation and a coordinative argumentation structure. Just as in the other examples we presented, this combination of a particular argumentation structure and a particular argument scheme constitutes a recurring, and therefore stereotypical, argumentative pattern in legislative debate in the European Parliament.

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