Irish Media Campaigns on European Reform Treaties: Communication Strategies, Effects and Explanations

1. European Treaties and the Irish

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the people of Ireland have regularly attracted the attention of the European public when it came to the ratification of treaties with the aim of reforming the European Union. Due to an Irish Supreme Court decision in 1987, the Irish people always have to give their consent in a referendum when EU treaties are to be changed significantly. Ireland has regularly been in the position where it depended entirely or at least to a great extent on the people's vote on whether or not the planned changes for the EU would come into force. The Irish rejected both the treaties of Nice and Lisbon in the first referenda: The Treaty of Nice was rejected by 53.9% of the Irish voters on 7 June 2001, while 46.1% were in favour of the treaty. The turnout was 35%. In the second referendum, held on 19 October 2002, 62.89% accepted the proposal, while 37.11% were against it. This time, voter turnout was 34.79%. The Treaty of Lisbon then was rejected on 12 June 2008: 53.4% of the Irish electorate voted against the treaty, 46.6% in favour of it. The turnout was 53.1%. In the second referendum on October 2 2009, 67.13% voted in favour of the treaty, 32.87% against it, and the turnout was 59%. The Fiscal Compact or Austerity Treaty was accepted by the Irish electorate in the first referendum on 31 May 2012: 60.3% of voters were in favour, 39.7% rejected it with an overall turnout of 50.6%.

2. Communication and Culture: Theoretical Background

Prior to holding the aforementioned referenda there were Irish media campaigns for and against acceptance of the treaties. Because of their significance for Europe's future, Irish discourses on the treaties received a lot of media attention not only in Ireland, but across all of Europe. It seems worthwhile to take a closer look at these media campaigns: This promises a better understanding of how communication shapes our realities and how it can be used effectively in political contexts to accomplish one's goals. Carey (2009, 19) defines communication as "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed." He distinguishes between two views on communication: 1. The transmission view and 2. The ritual view. He claims that the transmission view of communication is the most widespread in industrial cultures: "It is defined by terms such as "imparting," "sending," "transmitting," or "giving information to others." It is formed from a metaphor of geography or transportation" (ibid., 12). Typically, the transmission view of communication can be summarized as "the extension of messages across geography for the purpose of control" (ibid., 15). The ritual view, in contrast, sees communication as "the sacred ceremony that draws persons together in fellowship and commonality" (Carey 2009, 15, 33).
Thus, according to the ritual view, communication is not so much about transmitting information but rather "a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed" (Carey 2009, 16). While Carey ascribes the goal to control people's views and actions only to the transmission view of communication, I think it equally applies to the ritual view. Either way, people want to convince other people of their interpretations of their social environments. The representation of an environment is always characterized by a "reduction of information." We could thus say that communication provides "maps" of environments: It does not contain all the complexities of events, but merely rough outlines. People can produce very different maps of environments in their communication, i.e. "bring the same environment alive in different ways" and, thereby, "produce quite different realities" (Carey 2009, 22). The ritual view of communication framework draws our attention exactly to such particular world views that are developed in the "representation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone" (ibid., 17). This does not exclude a transmission perspective on communication, but merely emphasizes "that one cannot understand these processes [information transmission and attitude change] aright" if one does not view them in the light of "an essentially ritualistic view of communication and social order" (ibid., 17). Carey later subscribes to a view of culture as, above all, "a set of practices, a mode of human activity, a process whereby reality is created, maintained, and transformed" (ibid., 50). If we compare this definition of culture to the definition of communication above ("a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed"), communication would be an essential, embedded major part of culture. In this study we aim to look at the specific constructions of Irish realities that are communicated in the context of European reform plans. What kind of meaning or significance do people attribute to the political agendas and in what way do they make meaning (cf. Carey 2009, 34, 35)? How effective is the communication, i.e., the media campaigns of different groups, and why? "Socially shaped and culturally given resource[s] for making meaning" are so-called "modes:" "Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack are examples of modes used in representation and communication" (Kress 2009, 54). Thus, in this study, multimodal forms of representation and communication, as well as their functions, will be analysed as they are regarded as constitutive in the construction of realities. Such a multimodal approach "understand[s] communication and representation to be more than about language, and […] attend[s] to the full range of communicational forms people use [e.g. the above mentioned-modes] – and the relationships between them" (Jewitt 2009, 14). Hence, Carey's view of communication as a symbolic process only is extended to a view of communication as a signifying process, i.e., a process that could involve iconic, indexical and symbolic processes in reality constructions or meaning making.

Carey notes that "communication research attains precision or persuasiveness only when it is placed within history and culture; within, that is, the historical experience of particular peoples" (2009, 50) and:

The analysis of mass communication will have to examine the several cultural worlds in which people simultaneously exist – the tension, often radical tension, between them, the patterns of mood and motivation distinctive to each, and the interpenetration among them. (Carey 2009, 51)

The following analysis is set against this background and situated within the sketched theoretical framework, aiming to do just that: to reveal the "several cultural
I worlds” in which the Irish live and show how these cultural worlds have been constructed through communicative acts.

3. The Media Campaigns – Irish Realities in the Context of European Reforms

The following sections contain summaries and evaluations of the media campaigns in the contexts of the Treaty of Nice and the Fiscal Compact Treaty as well as an in-depth analysis of the campaigns preceding the Treaty of Lisbon referendum. Similarities and differences between the campaigns will be demonstrated. Furthermore, the effectiveness of different strategies will be evaluated.

3.1 The "Treaty of Nice" Campaigns

The Treaty of Nice contained constitutional and institutional reforms that were designed to prepare for the enlargement of the EU which would then include 27 members (cf., e.g., Miller 2001, 1). After the first Irish referendum on the treaty in 2001, in which more than half of the third of Ireland’s electorate that participated said "no,” The Economist published the headline "Critics of the EU treaty ran a strong campaign, its backers a lousy one” (Anon 2001b). On 9 May 2001, i.e. not even a month before the referendum, the Irish government began their "yes" campaign. Major arguments brought forward in favour of the treaty were that

- Ireland could “pay back the generosity shown by the EU;”
- it would stabilize the European continent;
- the result of the treaty would not be a “two-tier Europe, a European army or a super-state;”
- Ireland would still be sovereign with regard to key policies like taxation;
- a "no" vote would humiliate Ireland and would, in addition, be "mean" with regard to those states that wanted to join the EU with the aim of benefiting economically like Ireland had done in the past. (The Irish Times, 10 April 2001 and 10 May 2001, cited in Miller 2001, 13)

Three of these five major arguments are defensive in that they negate fears people could have with regard to the consequences of the treaty: After opinion polls had shown that support for the treaty had weakened, the "yes" campaigners concentrated on responding to the "no" campaigners' arguments, trying to disarm them. The main criticism brought forward later against the unsuccessful "yes" campaigners was that they believed the "yes" vote to be a foregone conclusion and that they did not rally enough support behind them and against the "no" campaigners (Miller 2001, 14; Anon 2001b). Moreover, they began very late with their campaign. This supports the view taken of them as being convinced of the fact that the majority of the Irish people would share their positive attitude towards the treaty. Despite the fact that the government distributed summaries of the treaty to every household, many voters said they did not know what the treaty was about or why it should matter to them (Anon 2001b). De Breadun, an Irish Times correspondent, interpreted the widespread lack of interest in the Treaty of Nice in Ireland (just over one third of the electorate participated in the first referendum) as follows: "The complexity of the issues and the near-impenetrable jargon of Brussels-speak have a lot to do with it" (The Irish Times, 26 May 2001, cited in Miller 2001, 12).
The successful "no" campaign, in contrast, was evaluated later as being "well-organised" and as having concentrated "on emotive subjects" such as

- "the encroachment of Brussels and the loss of national sovereignty;"
- "the threat to Ireland's military neutrality;"
- Ireland's "diminishing influence in EU decision-making processes;"
- the government rushing through the referendum without "real and honest debate;"
- the threat to Irish traditions and moral values (especially with regard to divorce and abortion);

Two key slogans against the Treaty of Nice read: "You will lose – power, money, freedom – Vote No to the Nice Treaty" (see also *The Economist*, 31 May 2001a) and "No to NATO, No to Nice." They were to be found on posters showing a wounded soldier being carried away from a battlefield (Miller 2001, 14). In one leaflet, the treaty was said to bring about a "Soviet-style government" and a "European super-state" *(The Independent, 7 June 2001, cited in Miller 2001, 15).* This illustrates the emotive tone of the "no" campaign, addressing and exploiting people's worries (cf. also Collins 2012).

The "yes" campaign which preceded the second, then positive referendum in 2002, was improved. It communicated that a "yes" vote would improve Ireland's economic prospects because of better access to new markets in a larger EU. It also managed to appeal to people's emotions better than the previous campaign did: "Campaign posters showed wide-eyed, innocent Irish children whose future job prospects required a Yes vote" (Gilland 2002, 4). Besides, this time the "yes" campaign was better and more vigorously organized and EUR 1.68 million were spent on it. The "no" campaign merely spent EUR 170,500 and adhered to the key messages they had been communicating before, such as the slogan "You still lose! Power. Money. Freedom." *(Gilland 2002, 4, 5).* Gilland draws the following conclusion from her analysis of the Treaty of Nice referendum:

The No camp clearly has a small but keen vote base that it does not have to work very hard to activate, while the Yes camp has a much larger, but also much more complacent, voter base. The Irish political establishment got away with it this time, but the lesson they take from the Nice experience must be that they have to earn their referendum victories and cannot simply take them for granted. *(Gilland 2002, 5)*

Had the "yes" camp learned their lesson, then? This was to be seen almost six years later when the first referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon was about to take place.

### 3.2 The "Treaty of Lisbon" Campaigns

The focus of the following analysis is specifically on the communication context and the multimodal communication forms of the media campaigns before the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. The overall situation paralleled the one in the wake of the first referendum on the Treaty of Nice. Lasswell's (1964, 37) formula for the analysis of processes of mass communication will be used as a frame for the empirical analysis: Who communicates what to whom in which channel and with what effect? To this, Stolt (1984, 165) has added the question of "how" this communication occurs. All of these questions will be addressed in the following.
3.2.1 Proponents and Opponents

All three Irish government parties and all opposition parties with representatives in the Irish parliament (oireachtas) supported the Lisbon Treaty, with the exception of Sinn Féin who opposed it (as it had previously opposed the Treaty of Nice and later would oppose the Fiscal Compact Treaty) and the Green Party, who did not officially take a stand on it. Most trade unions and business organisations in Ireland also supported the "yes" campaign. Hence, there was a broad support for the Treaty of Lisbon from powerful institutions in Ireland. Who were those opposing the treaty? The largest and most influential group were Sinn Féin, the Socialist Party, a lobby group called Libertas, the People Before Profit Alliance and the Cóir Lisbon Treaty No Campaign. Political parties dominated the "yes" camp and lobby groups the "no" camp. The "yes" camp had people behind it who were politically more powerful and for a long time the media presented a positive outcome of the referendum as a foregone conclusion. However, the actual outcome of the referendum then showed that the "no" camp had won. The "yes" camp had made the same mistakes again, just like the ones made during the run-up to the first referendum on the Treaty of Nice: It underestimated the vote and did not manage to rally enough support.

3.2.2 The Media Used

The campaigners used a variety of media in order to bring their message across: booklets, leaflets, press advertisements, posters, radio and TV, and the Internet. There, you were able to visit their homepages, participate in discussion forums, write and read blogs, subscribe to mailing lists, watch videos, download brochures and posters, read articles and short summaries on the Lisbon treaty, what it was about and what it would mean for the people once it came into effect. The campaigns were ubiquitous – you could not escape from them.

3.2.3 The Effects

The communicative effect of the media campaigns is illustrated by the results of a survey: Between 13 and 15 June 2008, a Flash Eurobarometer poll was conducted by Gallup, involving 2,000 randomly selected citizens. Asked about whether they considered the "yes" or the "no" campaign to be more convincing, 81% of the "no" voters chose the "no" campaign, while only 4% chose the "yes" campaign. Even among the "yes" voters, 57% stated that the "no" campaign was more convincing. 29% opted for the "yes" campaign. All in all, 68% of the voters participating in the survey found the "no" campaign more convincing. Only 15% said the same about the "yes" campaign. This brings us to the main point of our investigation: What made the "no" campaign's communication more effective than the "yes" campaign's?

How effective a discourse is depends on how well it serves its purpose. This can be judged by means of its functions. A discourse always has several functions, one of which is usually dominant. According to Jakobson's model of communication, several main functions can be distinguished: Discourses can primarily serve a self-expressive purpose, i.e. express the feelings and opinions of the producer. They can be mainly focused on the receiver, if s/he is to be convinced of something or induced to act in a certain way. In this case, the discourse principally serves a rhetorical function. If the main focus lies on information, the discourse is referential. If the focal point is the form of the discourse itself, its look, sound, or structure, the function is poetic. The
function of the discourse is phatic if it is mainly used to establish, sustain or break off contact with the receiver. Finally, a discourse is metalinguistic or metadiscoursive if it focuses on language or on the discourse itself (cf. Jakobson 1960, 353, 357; Johnstone 2008, 255).

Which functions are at the core of the media discourses about the Lisbon Treaty? This question will be addressed by analysing some selected typical examples of the "no" vote campaign before the first referendum. The analysis will also include answers to the questions of "what" is communicated – the content – and "how" – the form of presentation or communication style.

3.2.4 The Content and Form – The Example of Cóir’s Internet Campaign

Cóir, which describes itself as a "voluntary non-profit organisation," was founded in 2003 after the second referendum on the Treaty of Nice. The group was very active as part of the "no" camp in the Lisbon Treaty referendum and launched a very catchy internet campaign which is the subject of the following detailed multimodal discourse analysis.

![Figure 1: Cóir's Website 2008](http://example.com/figure1)

3.2.4.1 Text, Text Design and Image

On its website, the anti-Lisbon Treaty group Cóir calls itself "Lisbon Treaty Information Campaign," a decidedly neutral name suggesting a focus on the referential discourse function. The main focus of its internet discourse – the macroproposition – is on the vote in the referendum. In this case, the discourse illocution is a directive, i.e. the addressee is supposed to vote in a certain way, and the result of the referendum is to be accepted. This discourse illocution is realised through two main statements:

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the imperatives "Vote no" and "Respect the vote." Both appeals on Cóir's website immediately catch the visitor's eye: They are written in the largest possible font, in bold print and the phrase "Respect the vote" is highlighted by using the signal colour red.

The coherence of the discourse, its semantic macrostructure, is ensured through the macroproposition, and supported by (micro-)propositions. The micropropositions on the Cóir website focus on giving reasons for a "no" vote. These discourses are constructed multimodally: through written language – the texts on the website; typography – larger, smaller, bold fonts; spoken language – a link to a video clip that can be accessed via the site; and through the use of colours and images.

The first thing that captures your attention when you visit the homepage is a poster showing three chimpanzees and the slogan: "The New EU won't see you, won't hear you, won't speak for you. Vote No." The chimpanzees are anthropomorphisms of the new European Union, the Union after the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force. Text and image support each other – the chimpanzee covering its eyes with its hands symbolizes the message "won't see you," the one with its hands over its ears "won't hear you" and the third chimpanzee with its hands over its mouth symbolizes the message "won't speak for you." The EU being represented by a chimpanzee, a monkey, is attributed with all the unfavourable associations people usually have with a monkey: It is not serious, does what it wants, is not reliable, makes fun of you, and plays tricks on you. "Monkey" has negative connotations that are also expressed in phrases such as "no monkey business," "there's some monkey business going on" or "monkey-tricks." In Buddhism the three apes symbolize "not seeing anything bad, not hearing anything bad and not saying anything bad." In the Western world they often simply symbolize ignorance. These are all very unfavourable associations and even more so when they are linked to a political institution like the EU. In terms of the argument, this strategy can be called argumentum ad institutionem: The overall goal of the monkey image is to discredit the institution of the European Union.

The written text of the poster is not complete, it is elliptical. Some logical links are missing. It implies a causal relation that is not explicitly expressed. To make the text complete you would have to say: "BECAUSE the new EU won't see you, won't hear you, won't speak for you – vote no." Text and images converge and support each other. The reader of the message is directly addressed via "you" and the contracted and elided forms "won't" add an informal, everyday language touch to the message, implying: "you, the individual, ordinary, average EU citizen don't count – it does not matter what you do, say or want – the new EU does not represent you and does not act on your behalf. Because of this, there is no use in voting for the Lisbon Treaty, you'd vote against your own best interests." The direct address is supported by the images: the chimpanzees are depicted frontally, they are facing the viewer. Text and images can both be seen as a list, and, thereby, as serial arguments. The text features a parallel construction of verb phrases, each starting with the negation "won't." Visually, the parallel construction is apparent in the text as well as in the images: the three arguments, "won't see you, won't hear you, won't listen to you," are realised in the same font size, colour and boldness, while on the image level, the monkeys are repeated with minor variations. The poster culminates in the appeal "vote no" – the size and bold font emphasize the message.

The text on the left-hand side of the poster reads: "There's a lot more to this referendum than you've been led to believe. This is not just another treaty – it's a whole new Constitution for Europe." Again, the language use is rather informal: Cóir
presents itself as being very close to ordinary people. The text is not complete: It says that "there's a lot more to the referendum than you've been led to believe" – but by whom? Who is the agent of the transmission of this belief? The insinuation is obvious: "Of course the EU has led you to believe that this is a simple treaty among others, a matter of minor importance, but in fact it is a whole new constitution for Europe." The implication is that the treaty will change the face of Europe completely and irrecoverably. The scope of the treaty appears much more substantial than what the EU had suggested it would be. By substituting "constitution" for "treaty," Cóir is interdiscursively alluding to the failed attempt to introduce a European Constitution in 2005 and insinuates that the EU is now trying to covertly pass a European Constitution after all. This again supports the message of the monkeys on the poster: The EU has "played tricks on you, it has deceived you and is unreliable."

After having read these accusations, the visitor on Cóir's site is then informed as follows: "This website offers factual information to assist you in understanding what the Lisbon Treaty means for you and for Ireland." Here, the antithesis to the statement above is established: "While the EU has not given you the facts but distorted them, we are reliable, we act in your best interest – in contrast to the EU – we don't play tricks on you: We give you the facts. We are neutral and objective. Our interests are not selfish, we act in your best interest: We want to assist you and help you to understand what the treaty means for you personally and for your mother country, Ireland." This could also be interpreted as an accusation against the European Union for not having succeeded in communicating to the Irish people the consequences which the treaty would have for them personally and for the individual member countries. Cóir's integrity and trustworthiness is furthermore underlined by its name and its logo, which is displayed prominently on its website: In Irish-Gaelic, "coir" means "fair, just." The name is written in green letters on white ground. The "I" is represented by a red torch with two yellow flames and a red one. The slogan below reads: "Justice. Sovereignty. Integrity." The green letters are to show that this is a national Irish organization fighting for Ireland. The torch is the torch of freedom which symbolizes the fact that the organization carries it on and fights peacefully for a free Ireland. The flame of the torch must never be extinguished, so Cóir will never cease. In addition, it contains the positive associations of the Olympic spirit: fairness and perseverance.

The website's main page ends with an explicit demand – written in capital letters in large font, white letters on red ground: "Respect the vote" and the addition: "the treaty is dead." This urgent appeal addresses EU officials: They should come to terms with the result of the Irish referendum and accept that the Treaty of Lisbon will not come into force if the Irish vote "no," since ratification by all member states is required. It can also be read as a threat when considering the developments and the concrete plans for a second referendum in Ireland at the time: "Don't you get up to mischief and think about having a second referendum and ignoring the vote. If you don't respect the no vote, then … you'll see what happens." A second referendum is seen as an insult to the Irish people as their opinion is not valued and simply overruled by a second referendum. The Irish people has not been seen and heard and the EU does not speak for the Irish any more. This again relates to the message of the poster.

The Cóir homepage thus multimodally constructs the classic opposition of "Us vs. Them." Cóir ("we") presents itself as a fair and trustworthy organisation that is opposed to the EU ("them"), which is portrayed as being untrustworthy and keen on
depriving the Irish of their rights. Cóir's own status is thereby enhanced, the opponent's diminished.

3.2.4.2 The Video

Cóir's "no" campaign on the Internet culminates in a humorous video supporting the "no" vote. In this video, the decision for or against the treaty is placed in the context of well-known "yes" decisions which proved to be fatally wrong. Analogies are used here for the construction of meaning. The video bears the title "When NO is the better option." It starts with the following voice-over: "Have you ever said yes and regretted it later? Well, you're not alone, when faced with a big decision." Then a man and a woman in old-fashioned clothes are shown in front of the ship Titanic and he asks her (voice-over): "Darling, how about we take the boat today?" At the same time, you can hear the flushing of a toilet and the voice-over: "You can be left with a – sinking feeling. What can seem like a positive choice at the time (you see Michael Jackson asking a surgeon "Can you make me look like Liz Taylor?") (voice-over goes on) can cut off your nose, despite your face." The analogy here is that the Irish will be robbed of their identity if they say "yes" to the treaty of Lisbon. A few scenes later, the voice-over can be heard "A yes can be short-sighted. And stupid. The things we value the most can be lost forever with a yes."

3 "When NO is the better Option." video accessible on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgrLs4_1Kd0>.
over then continues: "A yes without considering the consequences can topple a nation from the inside." You see a Trojan Horse and hear Odysseus saying "Is it all right if I bring me horse in?" The EU is personified by a sly Odysseus who tries to bring a Trojan horse – i.e. the Treaty of Lisbon – to Ireland. The voice-over then adds: "And even if it was a long time ago, what can seem like a harmless yes can break the unbreakable." You see Bertie Ahern, the former Irish prime minister, accepting money from a businessman. Ahern had to resign on 6 May 2008 as his reputation was damaged when he was accused of taking bribes. The video ends with the text: "On 12 June you'll be asked to vote on the Lisbon Treaty and shift the balance of power away from Ireland forever. To find out why no is the only positive choice for Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty check out lisbonvote.com." After that, the Cóir logo, which you can also find on the website, is shown. It thus explicitly establishes the coherence of the discourses.

3.2.5 Which Discourse Functions are Primarily Used in Cóir's Campaign?

The rhetorical function is clearly apparent in Cóir's campaign: It can be seen in the frequent use of direct addresses and the use of imperatives such as "Vote no" or "Respect the vote." The main goal is to convince the Irish electorate to vote "no." The phatic function is realized as well, with the greeting "Welcome" and the links "Donate," "Get involved" and "Contact." The poetic function is achieved by the Cóir symbol, the images, the typography, the use of colours etc. A referential function, however, only appears to be realized: Cóir itself claims that they want to "inform" the public, but the factuality of this statement is questionable. In any case, the referential function is not the focus of the discourse. Since we find out much about Cóir, implicitly and explicitly, we can assume the expressive function at work. The receiver's impression of the organization is only partly deliberately controlled. The metalingual function is only realized once, with the use of the term "constitution" instead of "treaty." In summary, Cóir's strategy is very much focused on the addressee: The message is made up to look appealing. Due to its typographic design, its use of images and various modes, the homepage, ultimately, is amusing and entertaining. Its message becomes emotionalized, and meaning is constructed through the affective-connotative use of different modes. We can summarize that the rhetorical and poetic discourse functions are in the foreground. This leads to various questions such as the following: Is Cóir's strategy typical of the media campaigns against the Lisbon Treaty? And: Are there central differences between the "yes" campaigns and the "no" campaigns?

3.2.6 Comparison of the Pro and Con Lisbon Treaty Media Discourses

In order to answer these questions, two corpora were compiled. They contain the written texts on the Lisbon Treaty Referendum taken from the homepages of the main Irish proponents and opponents of the treaty mentioned above. Let us begin with the question of whether or not Cóir's strategy is typical of the "no" campaigns. At least with regard to one core issue, this question can definitely be answered in the affirmative: When taking a look at the general make-up or design of the homepages, it is obvious that most of the "no" campaigns manage to catch the viewer's attention and retain it. They do this because of the way they present their topics – by focusing on "how" they communicate. The "yes" campaigns tend to differ from the "no" cam-
campaigns in this respect. They focus more on the referential function of the discourse, while the rhetorical and poetic functions tend to play a minor role. Consequently, their campaigns are more level-headed and neutral in their portrayal of issues and tend to lack emotional attention catchers as the following examples show in figure 3.

![Reasons to Vote Yes](image_url)

1. Europe Has Been Good For Ireland

Ireland has been a beneficiary of European funds since our accession to the EEC in 1973. Receipts from the EU budget during that period amount to a staggering €8,225.6 billion in total, or 3.3% of our GDP. We have received billions of euros in structural funds, which have poured into roads and railways all over the country. Our farmers have also benefited significantly from the payments that were made available through direct payments and various other schemes under the Common Agricultural Policy. While there have been frustrations, dealing with the bureaucracy and strict requirements of the EU system, overall it has benefited our country immensely.

2. More Democracy

For the first time a mechanism is being put in place so that National Parliament will be able to signal that they are unhappy with a particular proposal from Brussels. There will be a possibility of referring such a case to the European Court of Justice if the Commission is seen to be overstepping the mark.

The concept of EU citizenship is affirmed and developed in the Treaty, and the right of citizens to approach the European Court of Justice is broadened. This new Citizen’s Initiative will allow at least one million signatures from a significant number of Member States to ask the Commission to take a specific initiative. This direct action will strengthen the role of the Irish people in European decision-making and will allow for a greater sense of ownership and involvement.

3. Faster Decision Making

The idea of striving to achieve unanimous decision making in most policy areas, with 27 member states...
Figure 3: Fine Gael and IBEC\(^4\) websites (2008)

### 3.2.6.1 Quantitative Analysis

The two text corpora taken from the websites of key pro and con organizations will form the basis of the following analysis. The first thing you notice is that there is twice as much text on the opponents’ websites as on the proponents’ – the “no” corpus comprises 347,022 characters, the “yes” corpus 171,737. However, are the discourses fundamentally different in terms of their content, or do they basically discuss the same topics? In order to answer this question, a word frequency list was created in addition to the qualitative analysis and a word cluster analysis was run: the frequency of certain words can indicate the thematic focus. The most frequent lemmata in each corpus were arranged according to word fields and the respective frequencies in the “yes” and “no” corpus were contrasted. The frequencies are already adjusted to the relative size of the corpora, i.e. the frequencies of the “yes” corpus were multiplied by two. The results are as follows:

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\(^4\) IBEC = Irish Business and Employers Confederation, \(<http://www.ibec.ie/>\).
Table 1: Most frequent lemmata in the "no" and "yes" corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lemma</th>
<th>Frequency &quot;no&quot; corpus</th>
<th>Frequency &quot;yes&quot; corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>military</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defence</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>160</td>
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<tr>
<td>neutrality</td>
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<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>trade</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>business</td>
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<tr>
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<td>134</td>
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<td>160</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.6.2 Discussion

This gives an indication as to which propositions and arguments predominate in each of the media discourses: The "no" campaign primarily focuses on the rejection of an increased militarisation of the EU and on the protection of Irish neutrality, while the "yes" campaign concentrates on military security, as well as on securing jobs and workers' rights. The latter is also the second most common proposition of the treaty's opponents, although they use it to the contrary purpose. Taxation is more frequently mentioned in the "yes" corpus but it also occurs quite often in the "no" corpus. While the "no" campaigners argue that Ireland would lose control over taxation, the "yes" campaigners do not support this view. In both campaigns, democracy and freedom constitute central propositions. However, it is noticeable that the "yes" campaign is 4.5 times more likely to try and influence the voters by giving them "guarantees." All in all, "yes" and "no" campaigns basically discuss the same topics while differing to some extent in the frequency of their propositions. Be that as it may, the results obtained from the quantitative analysis do not indicate that the choice of topics or the frequencies of certain propositions have significantly contributed to the greater success of the "no" campaign. Instead, the reason for this can be attributed to their way of presenting and communicating the topics.

3.2.7 Explanations for the Failure of the First Referendum

3.2.7.1 Political, Cultural and Economic Reasons

The reasons for the Irish "no" vote in the first Treaty of Lisbon referendum are numerous. I will now briefly sketch major political, cultural and economic reasons and then concentrate on the influence of the media campaigns.

Politically one can state that the referendum was held not even a month after the Irish Prime Minister (Taoiseach), Bertie Ahern, resigned on 6 May 2008. His reputation was damaged after he had been accused of bribery. Hence, the general
political climate in Ireland at the time was one that was characterized by a loss of trust in politicians. This might have extended to EU politicians (cf. also Curtin/Ryan 2008).

A cultural explanation for Ireland's resistance to the Lisbon Treaty, first of all, could be its traditionally strong roots in Catholicism. Moral subjects like abortion were raised and exploited by the "no" campaigners. Another indicator can also be found in Hofstede's cultural dimensions (cf. Hofstede 2001, 2010): Ireland scores exceptionally low with regard to power distance in comparison to other European countries. This implies that the Irish usually do not have problems questioning authorities, like in this case their government and the EU: The Irish rating for power distance is 28, the European average is 40. The Irish score high on the dimension of individualism (70:55) and exceptionally low with regard to uncertainty avoidance (35:74). This implies that they tend not to be afraid to face an unknown future and to accept the unknown consequences of their "swimming against the tide" with a "no" vote. In addition, the United States, Britain and Ireland are traditionally said to be particularly freedom-loving. Consequently, the Irish people will not vote for something that seems to be threatening to their freedom. The corpus analysis has also shown that freedom is one of the central issues of the campaigns. Likewise, the discourse on freedom is essential in the "Lisbon Treaty Song" (e.g. on YouTube), a folk song against the treaty. Here, a historical dimension is added to the issue of freedom: There are eight references to the ancestors' struggle for Ireland's freedom which are reinforced by images.

Economic reasons for the "no" vote could have been rising unemployment and a slow-down of the Irish economy at the time of the first referendum. Therefore, the vote could also be read as a protest against the Irish government. This argument can be deduced from the fact that more supporters of the government parties voted "yes" and that opposition party voters were more likely to vote "no" – despite the fact that the opposition parties (Sinn Féin excluded) supported the "yes" camp (cf. Curtin/Ryan 2008). Another reason might have been that many Irish people were afraid that they would no longer profit from the EU as much as they had done in the past. They feared that their interests would not be taken into account any longer by a more centralized EU, again a fear that was exploited in the "no" campaign. Another hypothesis is that, so far, the Irish had been quite satisfied with the EU as it had been: They had profited substantially from their EU membership and the Irish economy had prospered immensely. Hence, they might have thought that things could only get worse for them in the light of the changes that the Lisbon Treaty would bring about.

3.2.7.2 The Factor "Communication"

What influence did the factor "communication" have on the outcome of the referendum? First of all, the nature of the Treaty of Lisbon itself can be blamed for the "no" vote. As Curtin/Ryan put it: "[…] it [the Treaty of Lisbon] is complex and immune to simple explanation" and "undeniably, uninteresting." People "are unlikely to vote for something they do not understand" (Curtin/Ryan 2008). Joe Hennon, spokesperson for the EU, acknowledged that the EU puts a lot of information "out there, but […] in a language that people can't understand" (Anon 2009). In the "Lisbon Treaty Song" the lyrics characterize the treaty as "muddy" and "unreadable, like they don't want us to see." In the video to the song you can see a muddy boot that accompanies these lines.

5 Accessible on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPrl4SXQA7w>.
Hence, a lack of reader- or addressee-orientation concerning EU communications in general and with regard to the Lisbon Treaty in particular is yet again criticized in a multimodal manner.

That the "yes" camp's communication campaign lacked in addressee-orientation and did not manage to bring its message across is further highlighted by the number one reason people gave for their "no" vote: In a *Flash Eurobarometer* survey after the first referendum, most people said that they voted "no" because they were not sure what they would be voting for. The following table renders the major reasons people gave for their "no" vote:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for rejecting the Lisbon Treaty</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because I do not know enough about the Treaty and would not want to vote for something I am not familiar with</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect Irish identity</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To safeguard Irish neutrality in security and defence matters</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not trust our politicians</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will lose our right to have an Irish Commissioner in every Commission</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect our tax system</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am against the idea of a unified Europe</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protest against the government's policies</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid that the EU speaks with one voice on global issues</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because large Member States decide on EU matters</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To protect the influence of small states</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would allow the introduction of European legislation in Ireland, such as gay marriage, abortion, euthanasia</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid an influx of immigrants</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EU does not need any fixing, it works fine</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/not applicable</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Reasons for the Rejection of the Lisbon Treaty (*Flash Eurobarometer* 245)

The information or, better, communication deficit (to also include the form of presentation, as there was certainly a lot of information 'out there' about the treaty, but it obviously was not presented in a way that helped people make sense of what it meant) was clearly the major reason for the "no" vote. This was also the outcome of another poll that was published by *The Irish Times* on 6 June 2008 (Anon 2008a) and of a research paper for Members of Parliament (see below).

Also, the "no" camp's overall strategy of polarization and emotionalization seems to have triumphed over the factual style of the "yes" campaign. Palmer puts it as follows: [...] the populist "no" campaigners are confident that they can continue to exploit the fears of people who have read little or nothing of the treaty but who are increasingly sceptical about politicians as a whole and their governments" (2008).

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6 2,000 people who had voted "no" in the referendum were asked about their reasons for doing so in the *Flash Eurobarometer* conducted by Gallup between 13 and 15 June 2008 (Anon 2008b).
Reasons for rejecting the Lisbon Treaty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't understand /not familiar</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Irish identity</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't trust politicians/Government policies</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect neutrality</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep commissioner</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect tax system</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Reasons for the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty (Irish Times Survey)

Reasons for rejecting the Lisbon Treaty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information about the Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The composition of the European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate tax rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military neutrality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger voters, lower socio-economic groups and women were the most opposed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Reasons for the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty (House of Commons Research Paper 09/75, Miller (2009, 4; 5))

3.3 Lessons Learned?

In November 2008, the Irish parliament’s sub-committee on Ireland's future in the EU published a report with the title "Ireland's Future in the European Union: Challenges, Issues and Options." It identifies "serious gaps in communication on Europe in Ireland." It says, for example:

The EU has failed to grasp that information about the Union is not understood where the ordinary citizen does not understand the context behind the information. Simply explaining how things happen is inadequate if there is no explanation of why things happen also. (Anon 2009)

A conclusion the EU has drawn from the insights gained from the referendum in Ireland is that it wants to increase its efforts in the pursuit of its "Communicating Europe in Partnership" strategy. The goal of this strategy, which was first outlined by the European Commission in October 2007, is to improve communication concerning Europe in the member states. It aims to encourage cooperation among EU institutions and member states in communicating about Europe (Anon 2009, Com (2007) 568 final). One of the major goals mentioned in this strategic paper is coherent and integrated communication. This objective was obviously not reached ahead of both the first Nice and the Lisbon Treaty referenda.

All in all, the Lisbon Treaty "yes" camp had not learned a lesson from the Treaty of Nice referendum experience. Palmer (2008) states that the “no” campaigners had profited from a “slovenly and complacent ‘yes’ campaign” and Curtin/Ryan (2008) speak of a “lacklustre information campaign.” Therefore, basically the same mistakes had been made here, similar to the ones that occurred during the first Treaty of Nice campaign.
Later, the "yes" campaign improved substantially before the second – positive – referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon. In a research report compiled for the members of Parliament, this is stated as follows:

The Government's campaign was highly organised in comparison with its 2008 efforts. Emphasising the new concessions, jobs and investment, and the damage a no-vote could do to the economy and Ireland's standing in Europe […]. (Miller 2009, 29)

Thus, the "yes" camp focused on the communication of the positive consequences the Treaty of Lisbon would have for people and stimulated their fears concerning the results of a "no" vote. In addition, the rejection of the Treaty of Lisbon ultimately paid off for the Irish as did the rejection of the Treaty of Nice in the first referendum, since concessions were made to Ireland in both cases. This final aspect is likely to also have contributed to the "yes" votes in the second referendum.

3.4 The "Fiscal Compact Treaty" Campaigns

The campaigns preceding the referendum on the Fiscal Compact Treaty in Ireland were centred around the slogans "The Stability Treaty – It's your choice" ("yes" camp, government), "Vote No to the Austerity Treaty" (Sinn Féin). The government had to stay neutral in their campaign and were not allowed to give a recommendation for the vote. Hence, they changed their original appeal "Vote yes" to a neutral "It's your choice" – however, their message remained clear. This time the "yes" campaign was immediately successful. They mainly argued that the treaty would avoid another economic and banking crisis and that it was essential for the Irish economy (cf. Anon 2012a, 13): Jobs, investments and economic growth would depend on it, as well as a stable Euro that would be particularly important for a small economy such as Ireland's. In addition, they made clear that Ireland would only receive financial assistance from the European rescue fund if they ratified the treaty. They also emphasized that Ireland would still be sovereign in central policy areas like taxation. After the referendum, supporters of the "no" camp under Sinn Féin's leadership came to the conclusion that people had obviously believed the government's message that only a "yes" vote could secure economic growth and stability in Ireland. Furthermore, they accused the government of having created an "atmosphere of fear" ["Atmosphäre der Angst"] (Anon. 2012b, 1). Two things are remarkable about this statement: First of all, it attributes an "atmosphere" to the "yes" campaign. Just recently, Metten (2012, 33-65) published an article on "atmospheres in discourses" ["Atmosphären in Diskursen"]. The concept of atmosphere in the context of discourse studies does not relate to cognitive perception but to emotions, i.e., in our context to what you feel when you see and/or hear instances of (multimodal) communication (cf. Böhme 1995, 15; Metten 2012, 36). Metten argues for an integration of the emotive dimension into communication processes and argues that emotions influence our perceptions, judgements and value systems (cf. Metten 2012, 38). Mass media discourses often go beyond the transmission of information: They form opinions and activate emotions (cf. Schwarz-Friesel 2007, 213;

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7 See <http://www.stabilitytreaty.ie/> and the video "The Stability Treaty" on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NyqHTJ3h90U; an anti-Fiscal Compact Treaty video in the form of the original with a different voice-over can be found here as well: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3HAw43IEyI>.

8 See the video "Vote no to more austerity" on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mieYEBNdU.
This is true particularly for political communication and, even more so, for political communication relating to reforms and thus change for people. Therefore, apart from an illocution we could also ascribe what I would like to call *elocution* to discourses: The elocution of a discourse refers to its general atmosphere or emotional tone. It can, for example, communicate fear, anger, disgust, shame, pity, joy or gratitude. After the referendum on the Fiscal Compact, the "no" camp criticized the fact that the "yes" camp had won because it managed to create an elocution of fear in their campaign. Prior to the referendum, Donnelly warned the "yes" camp of an overuse of that strategy:

Instilling a sense of fear into voters of the consequences of a No vote can be a useful, if cynical, way to convert minds, if not hearts, to their side. Yet the Yes campaign will have to be careful not to push the "fear factor" too far, so that voters feel like they are being pushed into a corner or disrespected. Campaigners will have to stress equally and articulate tangibly the positive consequences that will flow from approving the referendum. (Donnelly 2012)

As the outcome of the referendum shows, the "yes" campaign obviously managed to "frighten" the voters just intensely enough. They also succeeded in maintaining a good balance between the "fear" strategy and the "treat" strategy. My analysis of the Anti-Lisbon Treaty campaign also provides evidence that the "fear" strategy works.

4. The Power of Communication

The discussion concerning the media campaigns relating to the referenda on the Treaties of Nice, Lisbon and on the Fiscal Compact has shown that communication is a key factor of success. Less successful campaigns paid too much attention on the communication as transmission view and neglected the communication as ritual approach. This went along with an overemphasis on the referential discourse function and the neglect of the rhetorical, poetic and emotional function or elocution of communication. Successful campaigns were coherent, intense and penetrating and managed to create atmospheres or elocutions favouring the targeted vote. In the case of the Irish media campaigns on the European reform treaties, it was, above all, atmospheres of fear that were created, enforced, and exploited. Reform always means change and when people are forced to deal with something new, a common first reaction is resistance due to fear of the unknown. This general cultural atmosphere of fear was taken up in the successful campaigns and they were more appealing and successful than the factual, unemotional (or at least less emotional) and, in the end, boring and thus hardly noticed and memorized campaigns. All in all, this study thus indicates that the success of media campaigns depends crucially on the atmospheres or elocutions that they create. If these correspond to the addressees' atmospheres or even manage to change them, they are successful. An effective elocution, however, can only be created if the rhetoric and poetic functions are adequately realized. Addressee orientation in terms of good readability or comprehensibility of a discourse is required, as well as a message style that is appealing both in terms of aesthetics and entertainment as well as in attention-grabbing qualities. Part of the addressee orientation is also to take into account their overall mood. The actual propositions thus were of less importance in the campaigns than the focus on certain discourse functions and illocutions, as well as elocutions and their multimodal representation and communication. As Johnstone puts it: "A dis-
course that looks better and sounds [and we should add here "feels" (!)] better can be more persuasive, better memorable and in the end more effective” (2008, 254).

Works Cited


