DIGITAL ENQUIRIES: NARRATIVISATION OF SOURCES IN EUROPEAN INTEGRATION HISTORY

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1. Introduction

According to Hayden White, "narrativisation" refers to the transformation of a set of historical materials into a representation endowed with the structure of a story, i.e. with a certain "coherence" and "moralising" meaning. It implies:

- real "events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning, that they do not possess as mere sequence." (White, 1987:5)
- a "demand for closure" that "in the historical story is a demand […] for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama." (p. 21)
- "a discourse that narrativizes" (as different from "a historical discourse that narrates" and "openly adopts a perspective that looks out on the world and reports it), i.e. "a discourse that feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story" (p. 2).

The present proposal addresses the question of narrativisation in a digital, online environment dedicated to the history of European integration (www.cvce.eu). The enquiry focuses on structured and contextualised collections assembling different types of multilingual sources, as well as synopses, bio-bibliographical information and interactive materials, intended to convey knowledge on the European integration process.

2. Narrativisation of historical sources in a digital collection

The study deals with the CVCE's "Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)" which chronologically presents the landmarks of European integration from the end of the Second World War to the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. The collection (7413 texts, 2051 images, 644 videos, 225 audios, 75 maps and diagrams, 58 short biographies) contains:

- official publications,
- documents from public and private archives,
- extracts from the memoirs of witnesses,
- press articles,
- opinion polls,
- photographs,
- film recordings,
- audiovisual archives,
- cartoons,
- graphs and statistical data,
- original interviews conducted by the CVCE.

It is organized as a tree-like structure accessible via sidebar navigation. For each selected unit, a double-faced content area is proposed for exploration. The "Context" side displays a synopsis while the "Resources" allows the discovery of the sources related to the events (Fig. 1).

Europe in ruins in the aftermat...

ww.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3

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Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)

Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War

Context   Resources (12)

Introduction

Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War

∨ 1945–1949 The pioneering phase

∨ Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War
· The human consequences
> The economic and social consequences
> The political consequences

> The beginning of the Cold War

· The Marshall Plan and the establishment of the OEEC

> The European idea

The toll of the Second World War in terms of both human and material resources was the heaviest that mankind had ever known. Although the conflict had a global dimension that was even more pronounced than the 1914–1918 War, it was Europe that was the principal victim of this confrontation. The total number of victims is estimated at almost 40 million, more than half of whom were civilians. Following all the deportations and expulsions, there were, in 1945, nearly 20 million displaced persons awaiting repatriation. The unprecedented racial, religious and political persecutions and the mass deportations into labour or extermination camps had stirred up hatred among the peoples of Europe. The discovery of mass graves in the concentration camps appeared to shake the very spiritual and moral foundations of Western civilisation. The Germans were overwhelmed by a feeling of guilt, which fuelled an intense ethical debate and only added to the disarray of the defeated nation.

Feedback

Introduction

∨ 1945–1949 The pioneering phase

∨ Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War
· The human consequences
> The economic and social consequences
> The political consequences

> The beginning of the Cold War

· The Marshall Plan and the establishment of the OEEC

> The European idea

> Political cooperation

> Economic cooperation

> Military cooperation

· Scientific cooperation

> 1950–1956 The formation of the community of Europe

> 1957–1968 Successes and crises

> 1969–1979 Crises and revival

Items per page   25 ▾

Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War

Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War
🔍 Consult
📄 Text
👤 Share

Germany's surrender

Link-up of Russian and US troops in Torgau (25 April 1945)
🔍 Consult
🖼 Image
👤 Share
On 25 April 1945, American and Soviet troops link up at Torgau on the Elbe, north-east of Leipzig.

THE STARS AND STRIPES
NAZI ARMIES IN ITALY SURRENDER

'Nazi armies in Italy surrender' from the front page of *The Stars and Stripes*
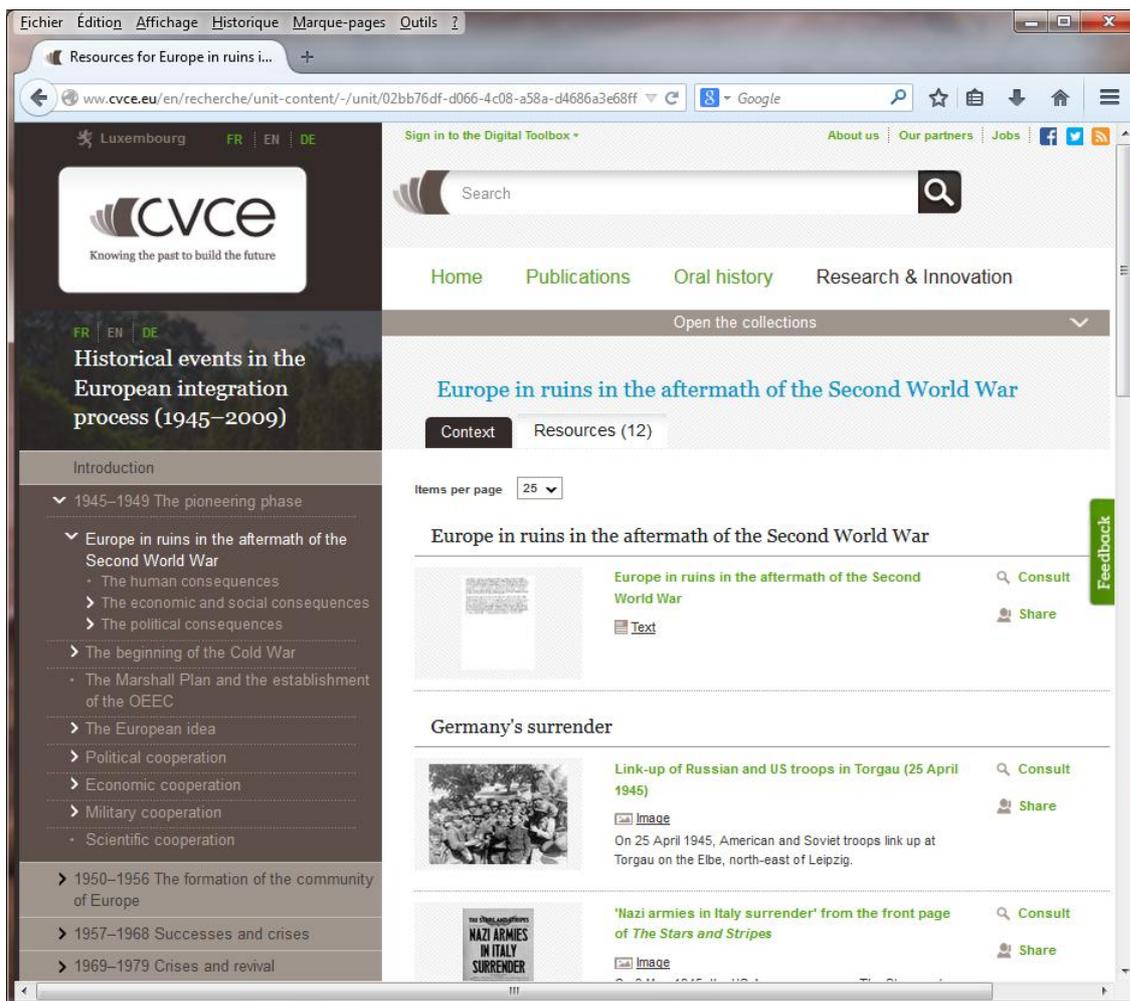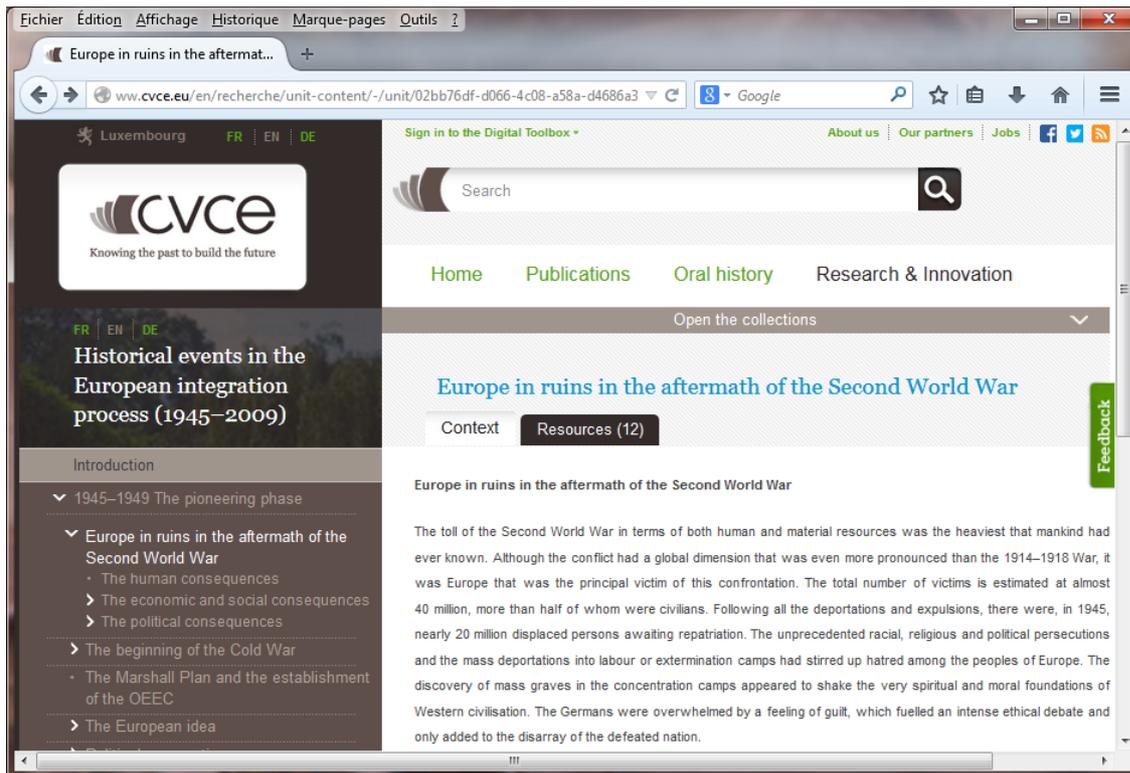🔍 Consult
🖼 Image
👤 Share

Feedback

Fig. 1. Collection navigation : Sidebar, Context, Resources

The layout of the digital collection allows the reader to explore the narrativized space through a triple-facetted access: to the structure, contextualisation/explanation and resources. Similarly to White's assumption of a "structure" and "order of meaning" imposed over a series of events as a prerequisite for narrativisation, Ricœur draws attention to the "episodic" and "configurative" dimensions[1] of the "emplotment act"[2] in a historical account (Ricœur, 1983:128-129). Articulated through a chronological and thematic perspective, the "Historical events" collection is organised in several layers. The first includes a general introduction and 7 expandable sections, each corresponding to a time period and a theme (*1945–1949 The pioneering phase, 1950–1956 The formation of the community of Europe, 1957–1968 Successes and crises*, *1969–1979 Crises and revival,* etc.). Each section branches on the deeper levels into subsections chronologically ordered with topic-related titles (*Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War, The beginning of the Cold War, The Marshall Plan and the establishment of the OEEC, The European idea*, etc.).

While the vertical axis (Fig. 2) guides the reader towards structural enquiry, the horizontal one gives access to content for each selected unit. In the "Context" area, the historian proposes synopses in order to contextualize and explain the considered events. As Ricœur points out, a historical narrative implies a structure but also the "selection" of "significant" events (Ricœur 1983:264). Moreover, the historian is supposed to explain these events by narrating, in a way that requires "conceptualisation", "objectivity" and "critical reflection"[3] (p. 312-314).
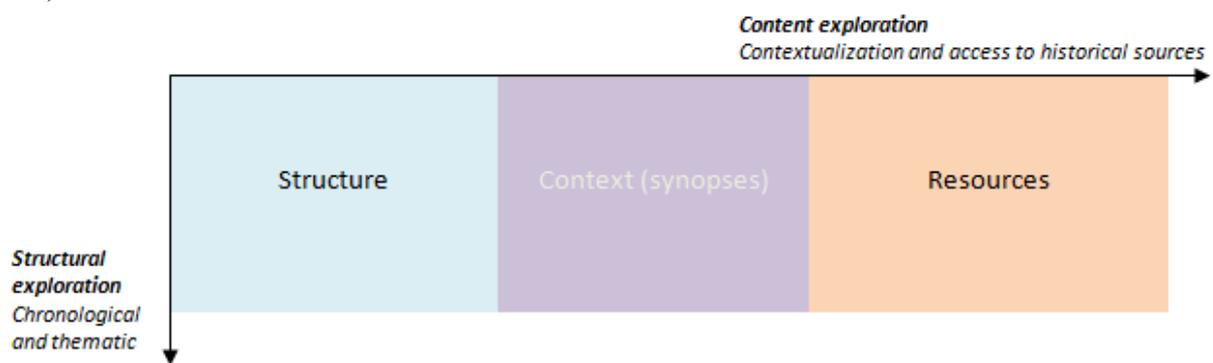

Fig. 2. Structure-content exploration space

The synopses of the "Historical events" collection play the role of such a narrative, both individually, by referring to particular events corresponding to a chronological-thematic unit, and globally, contributing to the narrative as a whole. The excerpt below (Fig. 3) shows how the explanatory and anticipatory functions converge to provide insight into the events and to convey to the "story" that "moral meaning" evoked by White (1987:21) and rephrased by Ricœur (1983:298) as the "moral and intellectual conclusion" of the narrative.

Europe was in ruins and reduced to total confusion: factories and transport links destroyed, traditional trade dislocated, livestock wiped out and shortages in raw materials and foodstuffs prevalent. The war was being prolonged by purges and the settling of old scores, which were once again tearing apart the liberated countries. Reconciliation seemed extremely difficult. It was impossible to imagine that, one day, yesterday's enemies might join together to form a common organisation. There were three basic questions for the peoples of Europe exhausted by the conflict. The first was economic: how could material damage be repaired and economic activity revived on the old continent? The second was political: how could the return of a conflict which had set Europe and the whole world ablaze be prevented? The third was cultural: how could the survival and renaissance of European civilisation be ensured in the face of the increasing threats, which seemed to be embodied in the ideological schism and confrontation between the victorious American and Soviet blocs?

Fig. 3. Excerpt from Europe in ruins in the aftermath of the Second World War unit, *Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)* CVCE's collection

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[1] *Fr.* dimension épisodique, dimension configurante.

[2] *Fr.* l'acte de mise en intrigue.

[3] *Fr.* conceptualisation, objectivité, réflexivité critique.

Another characteristic of the synopses is the absence of an "I" of the narrator, which may align with White's depiction of a discourse that "narrativizes" by feigning to "make the world speak itself and speak itself as a story" (White, 1987:2). Or, in Barthes's terms, that creates a "referential illusion"[4] as a discourse from which the historian "means to absent himself"[5] by "claiming to allow the referent to speak all on its own."[6] (Barthes, 1984:168). The "referential illusion" is furthermore supported by the "Resources" feature of the collection, providing a so-called "online mimesis" (Hacken, 2013:307), i.e. access to "digital copies of original documents" or to replicas of what Ricœur calls "trace", "document", "testimony"[7] (Ricœur, 1983:179-180), and thus allowing the reader to build his/her own "story". Figure 4 presents a sample of historical resources (texts, video interviews, images) from *The Hague Summit, 1969–1979 Crises and revival* unit.

Interview with Étienne Davignon: the issues involved in the Hague Summit (Brussels, 11 December 2007)
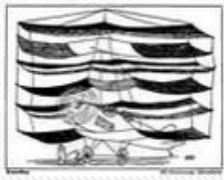
Video

In this interview, Étienne Davignon, former Director-General for Policy in the Belgian Foreign Ministry, outlines the issues involved in the Hague Summit, held on 1 and 2 December 1969 in the Dutch capital and attended by the the Heads of State or Government of the six Member States of the European Communities.

Consult
Share

Reactions

Cartoon by Murschetz on the Hague Summit (2 December 1969)

Image

'Aerobatics'. On 2 December 1969, commenting on the opening of the European summit in the Hague, the German cartoonist, Murschetz, speculates about the ability of the Six to get the European unification process under way.

Consult
Share

Statement by Willy Brandt to the Bundestag on the European summit at The Hague (3 December 1969)

Text

On 3 December 1969, in a speech to the Bundestag, German Chancellor Willy Brandt gives an initial overview of the decisions adopted by the Six the previous day at the end of the Hague European Summit.

Consult
Share

Fig. 4. Sample from *Resources,* The Hague Summit unit, *Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)* CVCE's collection

3. Narrativisation and text analysis

Apart from a study through the "narrativisation lens", computational text analysis was performed on a selection of synopses from the collection (Fig. 5). The goal was to experiment with a sort of "distant" (Moretti,

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[4] *Fr.* illusion référentielle.
[5] *Fr.* l'énonciateur entend 's'absenter' de son discours.
[6] *Fr.* l'histoire semble se raconter toute seule.
[7] *Fr.* trace, document, témoignage.

2013) and close reading on the selected text in terms of: networks and most influential words/contexts, specificities and main "actors". Synopses from three units corresponding to different periods, beginning, middle, end (1945–1949, 1969–1979, 1998–2009) were considered for analysis.
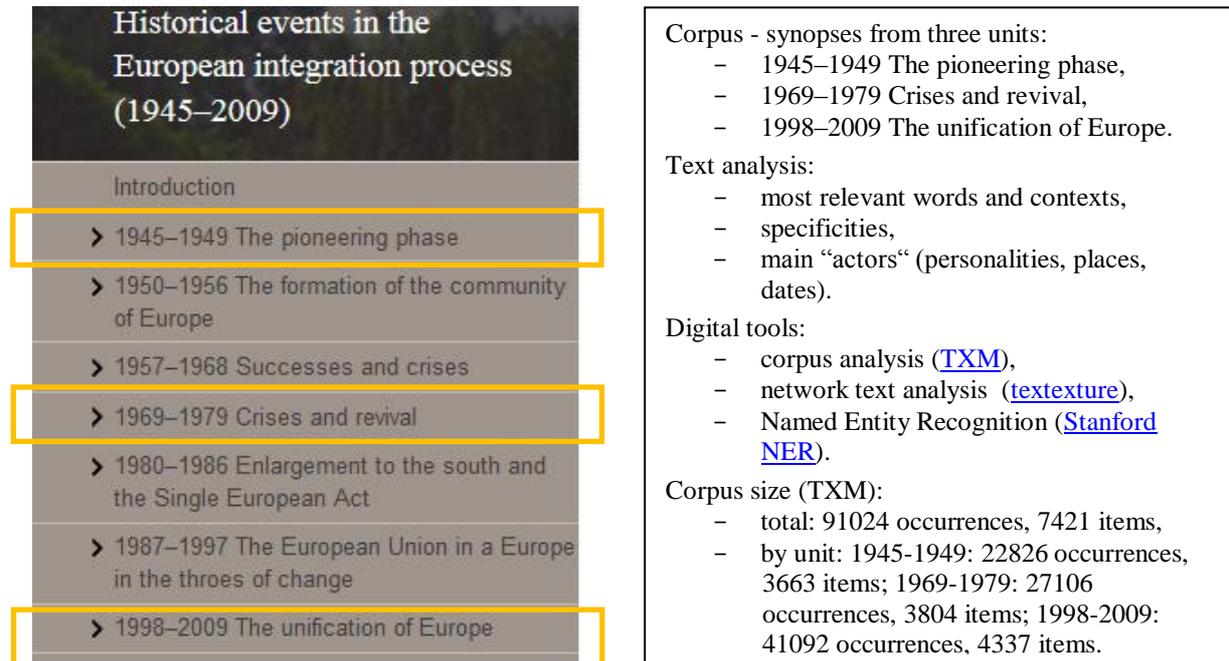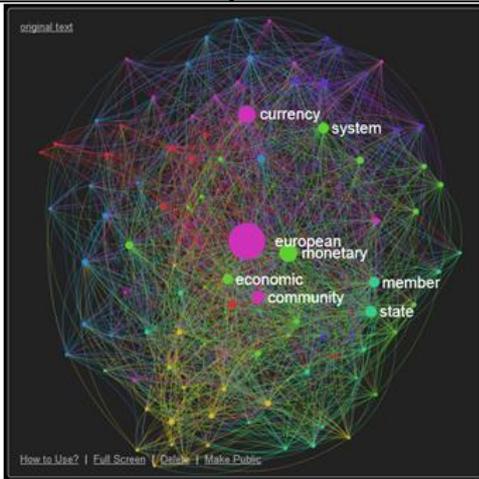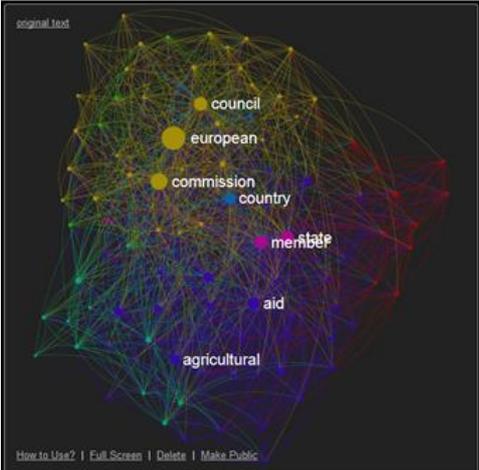

Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)	Corpus - synopses from three units:
Introduction	– 1945–1949 The pioneering phase,
> 1945–1949 The pioneering phase	– 1969–1979 Crises and revival,
> 1950–1956 The formation of the community of Europe	– 1998–2009 The unification of Europe.

Corpus - synopses from three units:
- – 1945–1949 The pioneering phase,
- – 1969–1979 Crises and revival,
- – 1998–2009 The unification of Europe.

Text analysis:
- – most relevant words and contexts,
- – specificities,
- – main "actors" (personalities, places, dates).

Digital tools:
- – corpus analysis (TXM),
- – network text analysis (textexture),
- – Named Entity Recognition (Stanford NER).

Corpus size (TXM):
- – total: 91024 occurrences, 7421 items,
- – by unit: 1945-1949: 22826 occurrences, 3663 items; 1969-1979: 27106 occurrences, 3804 items; 1998-2009: 41092 occurrences, 4337 items.

Fig.5. Overview of the corpus sample for text analysis

3.1. Networks, keywords and contexts

Three files were created, corresponding to the cumulated synopses for the three periods. Each file was analysed via *textexture*, a text network analysis online service providing a network representation of text based on the concept of "betweenness centrality". This measure indicates "how often a node appears on the shortest path between any two random nodes in the network" and highlights the most influential nodes that functions as a "junction for communication within the network" (Paranyushkin, 2011). The tool provides text normalization, by removing stop words, stemming and converting capital letters to lowercase, as well as transformation from textual to graph representation with words (nodes) connected based on their proximity and connection weighting according to how frequently the given combination of words occurs in the text. Table 1 summarizes the results for the selected units sample.

Table 1. Network text analysis by period (textexture)

Period/Sub corpus	Network Text Analysis	Keywords and contexts
1945–1949 The pioneering phase		**Most influential keywords in this text:** europe soviet war european **Most influential contexts in this text:** #0: europe german western people #1: soviet union agreement territory #2: war world political end #3: european country economic international

Period/Sub corpus	Network Text Analysis	Keywords and contexts
1969–1979 Crises and revival		**Most influential keywords in this text:** european currency monetary community **Most influential contexts in this text:** #0: european currency community commission #1: monetary economic france political #2: state member decided december #3: policy time market country
1998–2009 The unification of Europe		**Most influential keywords in this text:** european commission council state **Most influential contexts in this text:** #0: european commission council adopted #1: state member accession #2: aid agricultural community policy #3: country part europe bank

Not surprisingly, the first graph hints at a circulation of meaning through nodes evoking the war and the subsequent polarization along with the East/West axis, with an emphasis on the Soviet/German poles. The second section, dedicated to the efforts to create an "European economic and monetary union", shows a dominance of terms like "currency", "monetary", "market", "economic". While sharing most of its influential words with the 2 other sections ("European", "country", "commission", members", "state"), unit 3 distinguishes itself by three concepts "accession", "aid", "agricultural" which seems to align with the themes of this section based on ideas such as the "common agricultural policy (CAP)", "direct aid to the new Member States" and "accession to the EU".

3.2. Specificities

Another type of analysis applied to the selected sample was by means of a corpus analysis software (TXM). Starting from a probabilistic model (Lafon, 1980), the software allows the user to create partitions from a given corpus and to compute positive and negative specificity scores standing for most specific words, either overused or in deficit, for each division of the partition. All the synopses from the 3 units were gathered into a single text file and converted to XML-TEI P5 via OxGarage online service. Then, three "div" sections were created, corresponding to the three periods of time. The corpus was imported into TXM, lemmatised via TreeTagger and transformed to lowercase by a XSLT stylesheet. TXM allowed to create a partition featuring the three time intervals and to compute the specificity scores for each of them. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Specificities by lemma (lowercase) and time period (TXM)

Units \ Period	1945 - 1949	1969 - 1979	1998 - 2009
Specificities score > +12	war, europe, communist, soviet, western, europe	eec, monetary, currency, snake, report, nine	would, european_union, accession, commission, eu, treaty, state, eur, vote
Specificities score < -10	accession, community, commission, european_union, eec, vote, treaty	turkey	war, european, monetary, party, eec, international, united_states, ussr, soviet, communist, american, british

6

The first row shows the overused words (score > 12.00), for a TXM banality score, indicating basic, not specific forms, of +/- 2.00. The second row contains the "deficit" specificities (going from sparse use to absence) for each interval. One can observe an opposition of the first and last period considered, the first displaying a high positive specificity for the group "war", "communist", "Soviet", "Western", the last focusing on words like "accession", "European Union", "EU", "treaty". The synopses of the two units seem therefore to position themselves in antithesis, some of the positive specificities of one unit appearing as negative specificities for the other. This may be interpreted in light of the overall meaning conveyed by the narrative as a whole, i.e. a history lesson of deep conflict and reconciliation with a first part focusing on an Europe torn apart by the war and its consequences, and the last one on the image of a reconciled and unified Europe reinforced by the accession of new member states and the amendment of the two treaties forming the legal bases of the European Union by the Treaty of Lisbon. The specificities for the second unit shows a dominance of the financial theme with a higher score for the "European Economic Community" (EEC) and a surprising appearance of the word "snake" on the forth position. A closer insight into the context reveals the use of the term with a particular meaning as the "European currency snake" (Fig. 6).
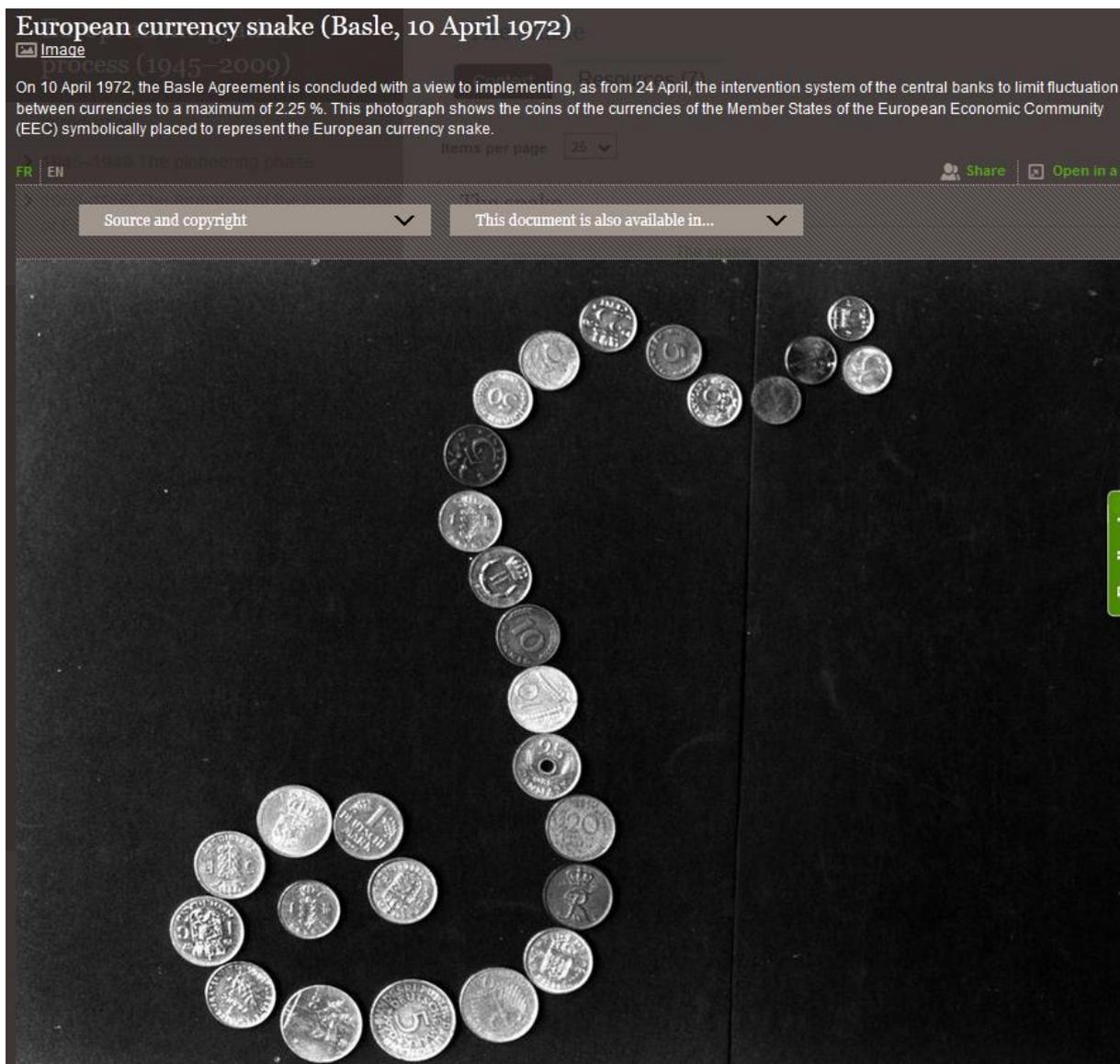

Fig. 6. European currency snake, *Historical events in the European integration process (1945–2009)*
CVCE's collection

The occurence of Turkey with a negative specificity score for unit 2 is less clear. A possible interpretation can be related to the fact that Turkey is not mentioned at all in this unit. By contrast, it appears with a slightly positive specificity score in the first unit, for instance, in contexts citing the members of the European Coal Organisation (ECO) or the signatories of the Marshall Plan, and with a higher score in the third unit, apparently due to its frequent citation in contexts referring to the accession question (see also Section 3.3).

3.3. Main "actors"

By analogy with narrative categories, Ricœur applies to "scholarly history"[8] terms like "quasi-event", "quasi-plot", "quasi-characters"[9] (Ricœur, 1983:403) in order to take into account the "indirect filiation form" between "historiography" and "narrative intelligence"[10]. According to him, like in Aristotle's formal theory of emplotment, in an historical text, an event may represent a factor of change corresponding to a "change of fortune"[11] (p. 396) which contributes to the plot unfolding. Moreover, the plot may not be unique but subsume other "sub-plots" (p. 379) and its characters can involve historiographical entities like "nations", "societies", "civilisations", "social classes" and "mentalities"[12] (p. 314, 321).

In the study of the digital collection, we have used a specialized software for Named Entity Recognition (Stanford NER) to detect so called "main actors" or "quasi-characters", "quasi-events" of the "plot": names of people, countries/continents and dates. Table 3 shows the top 5 lists for each category and time interval considered. The text annotated with Stanford NER Named Entities and transformed to XML-TEI P5 was imported to TXM and frequency counts were computed for each of the three sub-corpora. The shift from frequency statistics to concordances, cooccurrences and full text view allowed a closer look to the contexts in which these entities actually occurred.

Table 3. Top Lists of entities (persons, places, dates) by period (TXM)

Person Names – Top 5 List		
1945-1949	**1969-1979**	**1998-2009**
(Joseph) Stalin (16)	(Georges) Pompidou (15)	(Jacques/Mr) Chirac (21)
(Winston) Churchill (13)	(Willy) Brandt (8)	(Jacques) Santer (10)
(Konrad/K.) Adenauer (10)	(Leo) Tindemans (8)	Gerhard Schröder (10)
(Altiero) Spinelli (6)	Edward Heath (5)	Romano Prodi (8)
Robert/R. Schuman (5)	Karl/Mr Schiller (5)	Tony Blair (5)
Places – Top 5 List		
1945-1949	**1969-1979**	**1998-2009**
Europe/Western/Eastern/Central and Eastern/ Central/Northern/ Southern/New/Socialist/United Europe (168)	United Kingdom/Great Britain/Britain/England (70)	Europe/Eastern/Northern Europe (87)
Germany/FRG/Federal Republic of Germany/GDR/West Germany/ German Democratic Republic/Nazi Germany (79)	Europe/Western/Eastern/United/ Socialist Europe (47)	France (72)
USSR/Soviet Union/Russia (64)	France (42)	Turkey (58)
United States/US/USA (63)	Denmark (31)	Germany/East Germany (57)
France (50)	Norway (31)	United Kingdom/Britain/ UK/Great Britain (43)
Dates – Top 5 List		
1945-1949	**1969-1979**	**1998-2009**
1949 (40)	1972 (38)	2004 (67)
1947 (36)	1969 (32)	2006 (46)
1948 (36)	1971 (29)	1999 (42)
1945 (30)	1973 (28)	2003 (42)
1946 (23)	1970 (27)	2000 (40)
First most cited dates outside the interval: 1944 (10), 1950 (14).	First most cited dates outside the interval: 1968 (11), 1967 (10), 1980 (9).	First most cited dates outside the interval: 1997 (32), 1995 (21), 1996 (19), 1998 (19), 1994 (14), 2013 (10).

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[8] *Fr.* histoire savante.
[9] *Fr.* quasi-événements, quasi-intrigue, quasi-personnages.
[10] *Fr.* [...] pour respecter la forme très indirecte de filiation par quoi l'historiographie la moins narrative dans son style d'écriture reste tributaire de l'intelligence narrative.
[11] *Fr.* changement de fortune.
[12] *Fr.* nations, sociétés, civilisations, classes sociales, mentalités.

The group of personalities features Stalin, Pompidou and Chirac for the three intervals. A few examples of TXM concordances are presented below:

[...] first summit meeting between Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and Franklin D. Roosevelt. It set out the major guidelines [...]
[...] but the Western Powers were obliged to accept Stalin's role in the territories liberated by Soviet tanks. Central [...] *(1945-1949)*

[...] late April, the French President, Georges Pompidou, suggested that a Summit Conference of the Six be held in [...]
[...] and other issues. Unlike his predecessor, Pompidou was not in principle against Great Britain's joining the EEC. [...] *(1969-1979)*

[...] a bilateral agreement was concluded between President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder, who had been re-elected. The German Chancellor [...]
[...] of the new Member States, but Jacques Chirac, President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, presenting the [...] *(1998-2009)*

While the first group emphasizes the role played by prominent leaders and their involvement in particular actions, the second one focuses on places of interest, i.e. different countries and Europe as "quasi-characters" of the European integration narrative. Europe appears with top frequency in all the three units followed by Germany and USSR in the first section dedicated to the conflict consequences, the Cold War and the first steps towards the unification, and by France and Turkey in the last part dealing with a unified Europe and the accession of new member states. The high frequency observed for Turkey may be explained by the fact that, according to the historian, it "represents a special case in the process of European Union enlargement [...]", and an entire sub-unit, "The case of Turkey" is dedicated to it in "The enlargements of the European Union" section of the 1998-2009 unit. Cooccurences of "Turkey", with higher cofrequency counts, with words like "accession", "candidate", "negotiation" have also been observed within this part. The second unit describing the crises and revival of the European Economic Community (EEC) shows higher frequencies for countries like UK, France, Norway and Denmark. This may be related to the initiative of France for EEC's revival, defined by President George Pompidou in terms of three key priorities "completion, deepening, enlargement", as well as to the accession process of UK, Norway and Denmark to the EEC.

The third group in Table 3 displays the lists of important dates for each considered period. For instance, the study of concordances illustrates year 1949 as referring to events like the devaluation of the pound sterling in Great Britain, the proclamation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or the entry into force of the North Atlantic Treaty. Similarly, 1972 is related to the creation of the European currency snake by the six Member States or to the signature of the Accession Treaty by the United Kingdom, while 2004 features events like the publication of the report on Turkey's progress towards accession or the signature of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. It could be also interesting to examine events cited outside each analysed time interval and the episodic/configurative dimension they entail. A closer look to the context where these elements appear may call to mind Ricœur's definition of the "narrative phrases" describing a previous event by means of a future one, and including the enunciation moment as implicit to the description, which can be considered a "miniature plot"[13] in itself (Ricœur, 1983:260-264). The sample below illustrates this usage in the 1969-1979 unit.

"On 21 December 1968, Sicco Mansholt, European Commissioner for Agriculture, sent a memorandum to the Council of Ministers concerning agricultural reform in the European Community. This long-term plan, also known as the '1980 Agricultural Programme' or the 'Report of the Gaichel Group', named after the village in Luxembourg where it had been quietly prepared, laid the foundations for a new social and structural policy for European agriculture."

4. Conclusion and future work

The article deals with combined analysis methods related to White's concept of "narrativisation" and applied to a digital collection in European integration history. First, the analysis implied the use of concepts like "narrativisation", "emplotment", "referential illusion" proposed by theorists like White, Ricœur and Barthes for the study of historical texts. In the second part, elements of computational text analysis (networks and influential keywords and contexts, discourse specificities, named entity recognition) were performed to test the theoretical assumptions formulated in the previous sections. The analysis is not exhaustive, the intended goal was to try out combined traditional/digital methodological issues, and the reader is invited to explore the collection in order to investigate by himself/herself the proposed hypotheses.

 Future work may imply further study in digital narrative theory and tools (Herman et al., 2005: 108-114) and their potential application to the analysis of digitised historical collections. This kind of collections presents the benefit of a machine-readable format and a more transparent layout allowing insight into the structuration and contextualisation/explanation aspects, as well as direct access to the historical sources involved in the "narrativisation" process.

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[13] *Fr.* phrases narratives, intrigue en miniature.

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— TXM, Textométrie project.

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