

Codebook for the analysis of policy communication and emotions

Studying Emotions in Policy Narratives

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Climate, Inequality & Democratic Action:
The Force of Political Emotions



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CIDAPE

Climate, Inequality, and Democratic Action: The Force of Political Emotions

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Studying Emotions in Policy Narratives

Deliverable 2.2

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Executive Summary¹

Emotions are increasingly recognised to be at the centre of politics and public policy. They are especially important within political communication and policy narratives: The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) stresses that “affect-imbued stories” (Jones et al., 2022, p. 139) are key for how individuals make sense of the world, and policy actors employ emotions in narrative strategies to influence policy processes. Yet only recently, NPF scholars have started to investigate emotions more thoroughly (Habelitz et al., 2024; Pierce, 2021, 2022). One key method for studying policy narratives is quantitative and qualitative content analysis, using standardised NPF codebooks (see Jones et al., 2022). With this working paper, we contribute to these efforts of systematically studying emotions in policy narratives. The paper first briefly recaptures the theoretical and methodological foundations of the NPF, and approaches that have been proposed to capture emotions therein (in particular: emotion dictionaries, appraisal theory). In a second part, we present a codebook for empirically investigating emotions in policy narratives. As a methodological framework, the codebook offers researchers interested in the role of emotions in policy narratives a basis to select and further refine codes that contribute to answering their specific research questions and methodological approaches (e.g., ranging from quantitative to qualitative approaches, and from dictionary-based approaches to more interpretive approaches).

1 Introduction

This codebook is designed as a methodological framework for tracing emotions in policy narratives using an approach informed by the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) and its systematic study of policy narratives through a structured approach, often employing quantitative and qualitative content analysis with standardised codebooks (Jones et al., 2022; Shanahan et al., 2018). In the next section, we will briefly summarise this theoretical foundation of the NPF (see also Habelitz et al., 2024, the Deliverable D2.1 for details on studying emotions in the NPF).

The codebook presented here intends to offer researchers interested in the role of emotions in policy narratives a basis to select and further refine codes that contribute to answering their specific research questions and methodological approaches (e.g., ranging from quantitative to qualitative approaches, and from dictionary-based approaches to more interpretive approaches). With other words, we do not envisage that all codes would always be necessarily included.

Based on our previous conceptual work on how to study emotions in policy narratives and particularly in the NPF (for details: Habelitz et al., 2024), we particularly build on psychological appraisal theory and emotion dictionary-based analysis, as well as Emotion Discourse Analysis (see below). The primary aim is to provide systematic coding rules that enable researchers to analyse how discrete emotions are embedded within policy narratives, how emotion’s appraisal components interact with narrative and rhetorical structures, and how emotional mechanisms are constructed. Firstly, we will shortly sketch out the theoretical foundations for this codebook, including analytical strategies when analysing emotions in public policy texts. Second, we will sketch how the codebook might be applied across a range of different research designs and between cases.

1.1 Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for the Codebook

In the following sections, we briefly summarise some theoretical and methodological foundations for the codebook.² Importantly, we understand **emotions as context-based, discursively constructed phenomena which have different dynamics in varying contexts** (Durnová, 2015; Fullerton et al., 2023). According

¹ For helpful discussions and feedback in developing this framework codebook, our thanks go to Johanna Kuhlmann, Fabienne Lind, Raili Marling, and Susanna Soosaar.

² This codebook builds on our conceptual considerations which are presented in more detail in Habelitz et al. (2024; Deliverable 2.1). For readers not yet familiar with the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), the emotion-dictionary based analysis such as in Emotion Belief Analysis, or with appraisal theory, we recommend the readings that are quoted in the following sections.



to Koschut (2022) there are four types of emotional expressions: Emotion-terms/words, emotion-connotations, metaphors and analogy/comparison. These can be explicit or implicit, which also means that different approaches to studying emotional expressions in language may have certain strength/limitations in detecting these explicit or implicit uses.³

1.1.1 The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)

The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is one of the theories of the policy process, next to others as the Advocacy Coalition Framework or the Multiple Streams Framework (see Weible, 2023). The NPF stipulates that narratives play an important role in the policy process, because it is in the form of stories, that people communicate and process information (Jones et al., 2023, p. 162). A ‘policy narrative’ refers to a “communicative portrayal of a sequence of actions and/or events in a simplified way, which reflects a certain construction of a policy problem and/or policy solution” (Blum & Kuhlmann, 2023, p. 1). The NPF stipulates that policy narratives have certain structural elements (namely: setting, characters, plot, and moral), which can be generalized across contexts, while narrative content (such as beliefs) is story-specific. Narratives are used at all stages of the policy process and serve “to influence others, to attract attention, persuade or manipulate” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 161). While affect and emotions play an important role for policy narratives, their role is only beginning to be conceptualised (cf., Habelitz et al., 2024).

1.1.2 Emotion Dictionaries

A dictionary-based approach identifies “words that represent the construct under investigation” (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). Emotion dictionaries, such as the one developed for the public policy context by Yordy et al. (2024), allow to trace discrete emotions within their context of meaning-making. Their emotion thesaurus constructed the following emotion categories inductively: anger, carelessness, dismay, fear, affinity, confidence/trust, content, and compassion (adapted from Yordy et al., 2024; Fullerton et al., 2023; Fullerton & Weible, 2024). The number and composition of these emotion categories may vary.⁴

The emotion-dictionary approach can be useful for tracing emotions in policy narratives regarding emotional intensity of texts and for identifying discrete emotions: A higher frequency of emotion words can indicate a higher emotional intensity of a text, meaning affect as the diffuse ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ emotionality (Klinger et al., 2023). Further it allows to trace discrete emotions across a larger scale of texts and can point towards sequences of emotions or variations.

1.1.3 Appraisal Theory

Another approach that goes more into *how* emotions are evoked in policy narratives, can build on appraisal theory from psychology (for details: Habelitz et al., 2024). Appraisal theory’s main idea is that “emotions are elicited by evaluations (appraisals) of events and situations” (Roseman et al., 2001, p. 3). Emotions are here understood in a procedural way (Moors et al., 2013, p. 119), stressing the crucial role of actors and their perceptions, since it is “interpretations of events, rather than events themselves, that cause emotions” (Roseman et al., 2001, p. 6). Appraisal theory posits that there are distinct emotions, and that “each distinct emotion is elicited by a distinctive pattern of appraisal” (ibid 2001, p. 6). We argue that by linking the different components of the emotion process in appraisal theory to the different narrative elements in the NPF, we can detect the emotional mechanism of a narrative, i.e. how it seeks to evoke distinct emotions (see Habelitz et al., 2024; figure 1).

³ Emotional expressions, especially when implicit, are more difficult to identify than emotion words. They can be better detected in qualitative or interpretive research designs, where human coders carefully consider the context.

⁴ The emotion categories developed by Yordy et al. (2024) are specifically developed for the public policy context, and may (partly) vary from other contexts, yet also variations between policy areas, or other contexts (e.g. between countries) are possible, which should be considered in empirical applications.



1.2 Analysing emotions in public policy data

The codebook – as other NPF codebooks – can be applied to various types of public policy data, including policy documents (such as parliamentary notes, press releases, legal texts), traditional media articles, social media entries, and others. Also multimodal data (e.g. pictures, videos) can be included, yet this is more challenging, as the codebooks are most refined for textual analysis. Boler et al. (2024) point towards the importance of ‘genre’, meaning different types of texts, which can influence a text’s emotionality.

1.3 Applying the Codebook across different research designs

This methodological framework aims to be applicable across a range of research designs, from large-N quantitative analysis of emotional intensity in policy narratives to qualitative and interpretivist designs, focusing on contextual and specific aspects. The codebook is developed within the CIDAPE project. Here, it will be applied and tested in different cultural contexts in Europe (Germany, Estonia, Italy), a range of policy fields around climate policies and inequalities (energy transition, transport/mobility), and using different data types. We develop the codebook in English but design it aiming to accommodate multilingual data sources. The codebook thus has to be specified and adapted considering the context of its application, research questions and research design (see Figure 1.1).

1.3.1 Quantitative research and mixed-methods design

Codebooks in quantitative text analysis may serve different purposes. Employing manual content analysis, it can be the instrument that human coders use to assign codes to classes of categories. When deciding for a computational text analysis, codebooks are often also used by human coders to manually code parts of the data; the result is used to assess the computational approach (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). One such computational method is a dictionary method. A dictionary can be applied to texts attempting to quantify the salient or pre-defined concepts in the content. Given the multilingual nature of our text data, both, dictionaries in multiple languages accounting for more linguistic nuances or dictionaries in one language keeping the measuring tool constant, can be considered (Licht & Lind, 2023). The use of emotion dictionaries (cf. 1.1.2) allows to trace emotional intensity of policy narratives and its variation across cases. Emotion dictionary analysis also helps to detect the use of discrete emotion within language. It may thus reveal which emotions are prevalent and allow building hypotheses e.g. on emotion sequences or prevalence of emotions, which may then be further analysed qualitatively.

1.3.2 Qualitative and interpretivist research designs

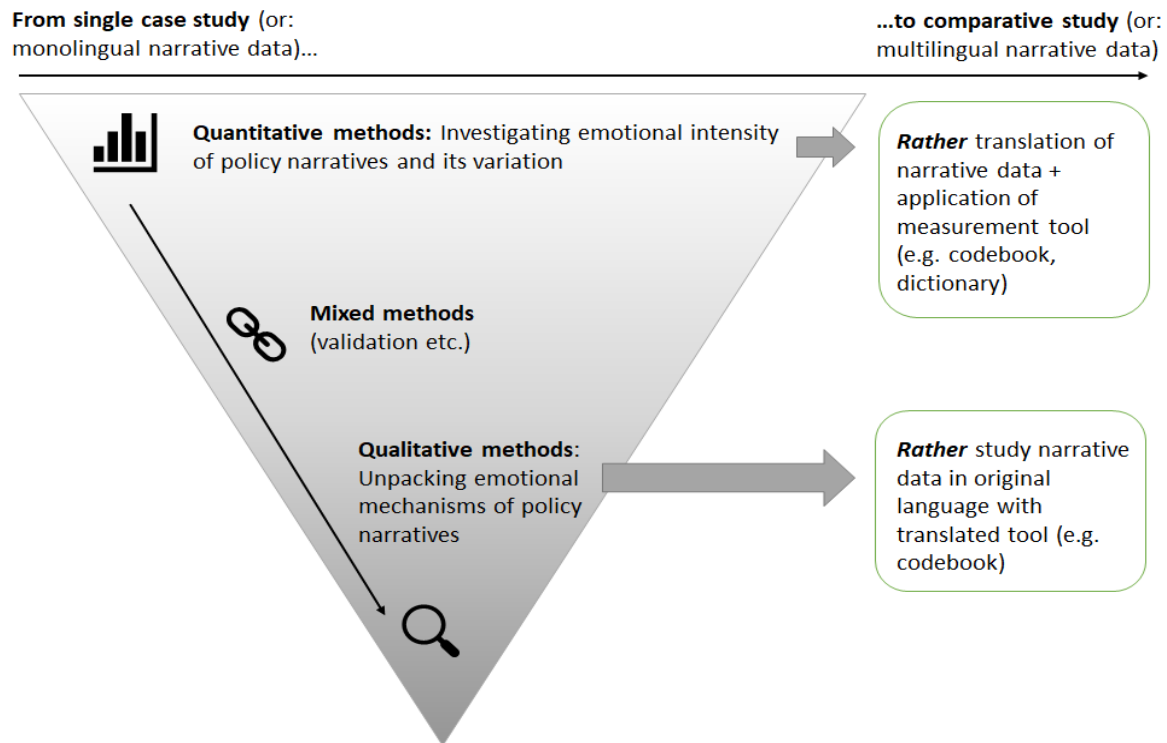
Qualitative approaches allow to go more in-depth. If the aim is to unpack the emotional mechanisms of policy narratives, and accounting for context, this speaks for coding in the original language. Also translated texts can be used for comparative purposes, where they are compared with the original language. This dual approach ensures cultural and linguistic nuances are preserved. Qualitative coding involves focussing on emotional mechanisms and how they unfold within narratives. Here, and in Habelitz et al. (2024), we propose to apply the appraisal dimensions (e.g., novelty, valence, goal relevance) to interpret the discrete emotions within their context of meaning-making, that is together with and in relation to narrative and rhetorical elements.

For further refining appraisal-theory-based, or other analyses of emotions in policy narratives, we can also draw on works which have developed analytical strategies, such as Koschut’s (2022) approach for tracing emotions in foreign policy discourse.⁵

⁵ Koschut (2022) outlines a three-step approach. First, appropriate texts and different text types should be selected to trace the phenomenon under study (‘landmark texts’). Second is to map emotional expressions and analyse the emotional potential of texts. This involves looking at explicit emotional terms, which can be compared to a dictionary-based approach. In addition, Koschut considers emotional connotations, metaphors, comparisons and analogies. Thirdly, the emotionalization effects of texts are interpreted and contextualized, considering their political effects.



Figure 1.1 ANALYZING EMOTIONS IN DIFFERENT RESEARCH DESIGNS



Source: own figure



2 Codebook. Coding Emotions in Policy Narratives

In the following table, we present the codebook, which as outlined above **extends standard NPF codebooks** (Jones et al., 2022; Shanahan et al., 2018) **by codes for analysing emotions in policy narratives**. Sub-codes are in italics.

Anchor examples are drawn from a dataset collected in the CIDAPE project on social media communication during the European Elections 2024 on Instagram.⁶ Below the table, there are some practical notes for applying the codebook, or parts of it.

TABLE 1A: CODEBOOK POLICY NARRATIVE

Code and Sub-codes	Definition, Indicators, Coding rules	Anchor examples
Meta data	Collect meta data about the policy narrative, which may e.g. include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date • Data type (e.g. parliamentary note, social media entry, etc.) • Policy actor type (e.g. minister, member of parliament, interest group representative, etc.) 	Date: 6 June 2024 Data type: Instagram Post Policy actor type: MEP
Policy Narrative	A policy narrative contains at least one character and a policy reference to the policy of interest. Other generalizable structural elements such as setting, plot, narrator, moral may be featured in a policy narrative (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 343).	<p>“while president emmanuel macron is in favour of sending nato soldiers to ukraine, imports of russian lng in france continue to rise. in fact, france imported more russian lng in the first three months of this year than any other eu member. the next largest eu buyers of russian lng are belgium, spain and the netherlands. we call on the german government to finally end the nonsensical energy sanctions against russia and resume an energy policy that is in our interests.” (Alliance Sahra Wagenknecht, Pos. 7, Post Nr. 12980)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy reference = “nonsensical energy sanctions” - narrative character = e.g. “Emmanuel macron” and “german government” as villains

⁶ N = 7,104 Posts collected from specific political actors between 1 April and 9 June 2025 were translated from original language (German and Italian) to English using the DeepL API Pro and the python library deepl. More information is available from the authors upon request.



Policy reference	“A policy narrative must also refer to the public policy of interest.” This can be a reference to a policy solution, the policy field, “policy related behavior, a potential consequence, or references to contested science in the policy setting” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 337).	“for an industrially highly developed and densely populated continent like europe, #energy policy is of central importance (..)” (Alliance Germany, Pos. 4, Post Nr. 5229)
Character	Characters are the protagonists of a policy narrative, as “entities who act or are acted upon” (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 336). They can be human and non-human actors, such as the environment.	Anchor examples for subcodes
<i>Hero</i>	A hero is the potential fixer of the policy issue. “Those who take action with purpose to achieve or oppose a policy solution” (ibid, p. 343). Coding rule: If there is a hero presented, indicate who.	“environmental protection has been in forza italia's programme since 1994. a position that is in our history and that calls for reasonableness (..)” (Strength of Italy, Pos. 9, Post Nr. 1124)
<i>Villain</i>	Villains cause policy problems, create a “harm, or inflict damage or pain upon a victim or, in other cases opposes the aims of the hero” (ibid, p. 343). Coding rule: If there is a villain presented, indicate who.	“(..)the ideologically motivated #nuclear phase-out is one of the main reasons why your electricity bill is so high. the #ampel parties and the #cdu are responsible for this historic mistake! (..)” (Alternative for Germany, Pos. 5, Post Nr. 8083)
<i>Victim</i>	Victims “are harmed by a particular action or inaction” (ibid, p. 343), mostly by villains. Coding rule: If there is a victim presented, indicate who.	“why is your electricity bill so high? thanks to #habeck and the #eu! (..)” (Alternative for Germany, Pos. 7, Post Nr. 8083)
<i>Beneficiary</i>	“A beneficiary is an individual or collective that is actually or potentially the receiver of the action by a hero, but is not being hurt or in a position of distress” (Weible et al., 2016, p. 423) Coding rule: If there is a beneficiary presented, indicate who.	“for an industrially highly developed and densely populated continent like europe, #energy policy is of central importance (..)” (Alliance Germany, Pos. 4, Post Nr. 5229)
Setting	The space where the action of the story takes place over time. This can refer as well to socio-political and geographical contexts, but also to the policy problem (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 336). Coding rule: Indicate what is presented as the setting. (= inductive sub-codes)	“we say yes to nuclear power, against energy subjugation. energy autonomy is the fundamental condition for securing a chance for a future and development for italy and europe: we understood this definitively after the russian invasion of ukraine (..)” (Lara Bisin, Action, Pos. 7-8, Post Nr. 3940)
Narrator	The person telling a policy narrative (cf. Lybecker et al., 2021). The narrator can be distinct from or the same as the narrative character(s).	Example Narrator = same as hero character:



	Coding rule: Indicate who the narrator is and if there is a correspondence to characters. (= inductive sub-codes)	“we say yes to nuclear power, against energy subjugation(..)” (Lara Bisin, Action, Pos. 7-8, Post Nr. 3940)
Moral	Moral is typically the policy solution in the policy narrative, frequently culminating in a call to action (Shanahan et al., 2018, p. 337). Coding rule: Indicate what is presented as the moral. (= inductive sub-codes)	“(..)investing in the development of cross-border infrastructures to facilitate the exchange of energy between member countries is key to improving the efficiency and security of energy supply. on 8 and 9 june, cross the symbol and write tajani for a decisive italy in europe.” (Strength of Italy, Pos. 7-8, Post Nr. 1898)
Plot	The plot is the narrative arc of action that connects the different narrative elements There are different plot types. Sub-codes can e.g. follow categorisations by Shanahan et. al (2018, p. 343f.; Stone, 2012) or by Kuhlmann and Blum (2021), who developed a typology of NPF plots for regulatory, distributive and redistributive policies.	Anchor examples for sub-codes (plottypes)
Narrative Strategies	Narrative Strategies are “repeated patterns of narrative elements and the effects of those patterns” (Shanahan et. al 2018, 5-6). Policy actors are assumed to apply different narrative strategies, such as scope of conflict, devil-angel shift or causal mechanisms, which can form sub-codes.	Anchor examples for su-bcodes (different narrative strategies)

TABLE 1B: CODEBOOK EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN POLICY NARRATIVES

Code and Sub-codes	Definition, Indicators, Coding rules	Anchor examples
Explicit emotional expression	Emotion-words or emotion-terms are either explicit emotion-words, such as “sad” etc. or are words identified to be representative of an discrete emotion category (as in the case of emotion dictionaries) (Yordy et al., 2024; Fullerton, Weible, et al., 2024)	e.g. sad -> sadness to attack -> anger etc. cf. Emotion Dictionary



Implicit Emotional expression	<p>Linguistic and rhetorical cues which can be conveyed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotion connotations: “(W)ords (...) affectively loaded in the sense that their semantic utterance can be linked to emotional meaning” (Koschut, 2022, p. 172). • Metaphors: “(..)a metaphor is supposed to illustrate an emotional state” and is “usually employed to express emotions that are difficult to articulate otherwise” (Koschut, 2022, p. 173). • Comparisons/analogies: “Emotional comparisons and analogies construct comparative categories by either employing historical references that are widely known and shared and thus evoke similar emotional responses” (Koschut, 2022, p. 173). <p>Coding rule: Mark the whole phrase(s), that indicates emotional language. Indicate, which discrete emotion applies.</p>	<p>Emotion connotation: e.g. the term eco-cide or climate catastrophe.</p> <p>Metaphor: “(..)our #electricity bills are exploding - because the established parties have been pursuing an #energy policy of increasing prices for years(..)” (Alternative for Germany, Pos. 7, Post Nr. 8083)</p> <p>Comparison: “(..)we cannot lose our competitiveness by shifting from dependence on russian gas, as in previous years, to dependence on critical raw materials extracted from other non-european countries (..)” (Adolfo Urso, Brothers of Italy, Pos. 7, Post Nr. 14243)</p>
Emotional intensity	<p>Emotional intensity (meaning affect beyond discrete emotions) measured based on the quantity of emotion-words in text (Klinger et al., 2023). A diffuse emotion measure can be created, that groups all negative and positive emotions together (Fullerton, Gabehart, et al., 2024, p. 8). Thus the ‘emotional negativity’ and emotional ‘positivity’ of a policy narrative, a text or a sequence of texts can be analysed.</p> <p>Coding rule: Can be applied automatically with machine-based analysis tools as R, MaxDictio in MaxQDA etc.</p>	No anchor example.
Emotional mechanism and emotion process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mark the whole phrase(s), that indicates emotional language. 2. Identity how and which emotional appraisal elicitors are met (and with which words this is achieved) (cf. Habelitz et al., 2024) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Novelty: Is the event presented as novel? • Valence: Does the protagonist render the event pleasant or unpleasant? • Goal relevance: Is the interpreted event personally relevant to the protagonists’ goals? • Blame attribution: Is someone to blame for the event? • Control/ agency: Can the protagonists do something about the event? • Norms and values: Does the event evoke moral or normative evaluations? (i.e. perception of unfairness) 	<p>Example post for appraisal elicitors of ‘anger’:</p> <p>“(..)exactly one year ago today, a disastrous mistake by the #ampel government was finalised: with the shutdown of the bavarian #nuclear power plant isar 2, the ideologically motivated phase-out of #nuclear energy was finalised. the security of our energy supply, the affordability of our energy and an important life-line for our industry have been sacrificed on the altar of stubborn green #ideology. responsible for this: #cdu and the traffic light government. the #afd is the only party that has always taken a stand against the</p>



3. When an appraisal pattern fulfils the elicitor characteristics associated with a discrete emotion category, code the subsequent emotion category.

nuclear phase-out and made it clear that this destructive policy is not based on scientific facts(..)”
(Alternative for Germany, Pos. 5-8, Post Nr. 13353)

- Novelty & negative valence is expressed
- Event (“shutdown of power plant”) is portrayed as going against actor’s goals
- Clear blame attribution towards villain (“ampel/ traffic light government and cdu”)
- Control: “afd is the only party that has taken a stance against”
- Violation of norms and values expressed by expressions such as “ideologically motivated”, “have been sacrificed on the altar of stubborn green #ideology”

Emotion-object

What is the expressed emotion about?

- a) policy reference
- b) narrative element: indicate, which one (i.e. hero character, setting, plot etc.)
- c) other

a/b) emotion expressed (anger) is about policy reference and the narrative character of the villain:

(..)”exactly one year ago today, a disastrous mistake by the #ampel government was finalised: with the shutdown of the bavarian #nuclear power plant isar 2, the ideologically motivated phase-out of #nuclear energy was finalised.(..)”
(Alternative for Germany, Pos. 6, Post Nr. 13353)

Initial notes for application of (parts of) the codebook

- **Analyse emotions together with their emotion-objects:** We consider emotional expressions as context-dependent and part of discourses. It is therefore important to identify to what the emotion expression refers, its referent (emotion-term, rhetorical figure, etc.) – that is to say, the emotion-object (Fullerton, Gabehart, et al., 2024, p. 6; Weible et al., 2016). When coming to policy narratives, the explicit and implicit emotional expressions can be analysed in relation to the narrative elements. Emotional expression can be linked to the character (e.g. sympathy for a victim), but also to other narrative elements (e.g. the policy moral or setting).



- **Overlapping emotions within one policy narrative:** Sometimes various emotional expressions, linked to different discrete emotions may be present within one policy narrative or seem to be overlapping. Here we suggest to focus on each emotional expression at a time, firstly concentrating on clearly identifiable emotions (i.e. through emotion terms). According to appraisal theory, each emotion can be distinguished by a unique appraisal process or Core Relational Theme (cf. Bonansinga, 2022; Lazarus, 2006). If there is rather a sequence of different emotions within a text document, this should be captured and noted, also regarding the shift considering the emotion-objects and narrative elements.
- There are certainly many other aspects important for application of (parts of) the codebook. We hope that these can be collected and discussed through collaborative efforts in the future.



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