SMOOTHIES, PIZZAS AND SPONGE CAKES: FOOD METAPHORS IN BREXIT NEWS EXPLAINERS

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Abstract

The multiplicity and fragmentation of news streams online have given rise to a range of peripheral texts that accompany mainstream news reports. This paper investigates news explainers, a particular type of non-mainstream journalistic texts, and their role in rendering news more accessible to lay readers and viewers. Drawing on Musolff's model (2006) of metaphor scenarios, it analyses a series of video explainers circulated by BBC news online during the week leading to the Brexit referendum (June 2016). The analysis reveals the prevalence of particular metaphors in mediatized explanations of the EU as a politico-economic union and discusses the ideological standpoints embedded in the evaluative and attitudinal elements of metaphor scenarios related to cooking and food.

Keywords : metaphor, news explainer, news discourse, Brexit, mediatization

Introduction

On 23rd June 2016 British people were called to the polling stations in order to decide about the fate of the United Kingdom as a member of the European Union. The EU membership referendum – also known as the Brexit referendum - put the question to the people as to whether the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union. The following morning the results showed a majority of votes (51.89%) in favour of leaving the European Union and the United Kingdom started the long and unknown journey of Brexit, i.e. the process of exiting the politico-economic union that they joined in 1975.

The period leading to the referendum was marked by heated political and media debates where supporters from each camp were making various claims about the role of the EU in the British economy and society. Such claims often included dubious financial statements such as the one that appeared on the iconic red bus supporting the Vote Leave campaign: 'We send the EU £350 million a week let's fund our NHS instead'. In this context, talk associated with economics and politics was no longer limited to politicians and experts; neither was it subjected to expert practices of fact checking and accountability. This erosion of boundaries between expert and lay discourse cannot be viewed in isolation from recent developments in media and journalism.

In order to explore the role of media and, particularly, of alternative digital news formats in rendering politics and economics more accessible to laypeople, the study draws on the notion of 'mediatization' which is defined, here, as 'a facet of socio-cultural change that is specifically tied to the expansion and differentiation of communication media' (Androutsopoulos 2014: 12). Mediatization research is placing media as central to the study of language in contemporary contexts. More importantly, it frames media not as an external force that influences language use but as an integral part of current sociolinguistic processes.

The predominant focus of mediatization research has been on traditional media and journalistic discourse in newspaper articles, TV or radio programmes. With the advent of social media, research interest has shifted towards user-generated content (Deschrijver 2018), on the one hand, and the organization and multimodal composition of news on the screen (Johansson 2014), on the other. The potential to reengage with informalization processes of news discourse through the proliferation of paratexts accompanying the main text (e.g. news report) has largely been overlooked. This chapter is addressing this gap by investigating the discourse of online video explainers and the role of such mediatized explanations in rendering the workings of politico-economic institutions more accessible to ordinary people.

1. News Discourse and Metaphors

Compared to other domains of social life, expert topics related to finance and economy have received scant attention among researchers on news

discourse. Nevertheless, one of the early studies sets the tone nicely for subsequent research in the area: Rae & Drury (1993) examine media argumentation and rhetoric about the UK 1990 economic recession, as documented in news articles from two broadsheet newspapers (Guardian and Financial Times). The analysis of rhetorical strategies foregrounds a range of metaphors as key rhetorical tropes for depicting the recession either as an uncontrollable agent or as a controllable thing, with both cases, though, reifying the economy as a 'thing' separate from society.

The centrality of metaphorical language in findings of previous research on financial, as well as other news, is striking. Nevertheless, it is not surprising since metaphors can 'represent the unknown, unresolved or problematic in terms of something more familiar and more easily imaginable' (El Refaie 2003: 84). As Lakoff & Johnson (1980) point out, metaphors consist of an abstract, vague and complex concept or 'target' (e.g. the Maastricht treaty) and a more concrete domain, vehicle or 'source' to which the abstract concept is metaphorically compared (e.g. The Maastricht treaty is a 'ratatouille') and, thus, rendered more accessible. Considering that economic terms often refer to very abstract and complex concepts, metaphors represent a prime resource for talking about technical terms and abstract theories not only among expert academics (Ohlsson 2012) but also among journalists (The Guardian 2011). While metaphors are resources for rendering an abstract idea more concrete and familiar, they also have potential for embedding particular representations and ideological standpoints. Critical approaches to metaphor have repeatedly pointed out the representational and ideological work of such devices, since 'the concrete source domain […] simplifies its understanding, highlights, or hides certain aspects of the target domain and has a big impact on how the abstract domain is conceived' (Bickes et al. 2014: 428).

Although a range of newspaper type and national press is represented in previous studies of financial news, the recurrence of similar metaphorical tropes across publications is striking: the ECONOMY is represented as a living ORGANISM, through related metaphors of birth (Semino 2002), marriage (Koller 2002), journey (Semino 2002), disease (Arrese 2015), war (Koller 2002), death (Williams et al 2011), evolutionary struggle (Koller 2005), as well as metaphors of natural disaster (Bounegru & Forceville 2011; Charteris-Black & Ennis 2001; Charteris-Black & Musolff 2003; Tseronis 2015). Comparative

studies of such metaphors across news outlets and across different countries also point to relative uniformity in the range of metaphors used, as well as in how economy is understood and interpreted through metaphorical language (Wang et al 2013). For example, metaphorical frames like the financial crisis is a 'disease' or 'natural disaster' foreground a perspective to the crisis as something beyond human control and, thus, not attributable to the agency of certain social actors such as governments, bankers or citizens (Bickes et al. 2014: 441; Bounegru & Forceville 2011: 220).

According to Arrese & Vara-Miguel (2016), the uniformity of metaphors and associated interpretations is due to the circularity and reflexivity of financial journalism according to which news is primarily targeted at the expert audiences of financial advisors, corporations, and institutions. News articles represent a case of 'elite-to-elite communication' with journalists acting as mediators between decision makers in the inter-related financial and political domains (Kunelius & Reunanen 2012). As a result, similar interpretations of the financial crisis arise from the global capitalist and neoliberal economic discourse circulated and recycled within these networks of elite-to-elite communication (Arrese & Vara-Miguel 2016: 138). If this is the case for traditional journalistic genres (such as the news article), it remains to explore the extent to which similar metaphors and interpretations are offered in new formats of online journalism that explicitly target assumed lay audiences, i.e. in news explainers.

2. Metaphors in Online News Explainers: Data & Methodology

According to the Oxford Dictionaries, the word 'explainer' can refer to 'a statement, article, or video that provides an explanation of a concept, topic, situation, etc.'. As put by Norris (2015), 'if news content focuses on the "Who, What, When, and Where", explainer journalism looks to inform the reader of the "How and Why".' In other words, explainers summarize 'quickly' background information about the news story for the 'confused' lay audiences. Based on Jay Rosen's (2008) early blogs about explainers, this new journalistic format arguably captures and responds to key socio-cultural processes of social mediatization, especially as played out in the domain of news discourse. First, they arise in response to the widely attested fragmentation and diversity of information amplified through constant streams of news updates, tweets, and

comments (Androutsopoulos 2014: 290). Second, they are added to the increasing share of 'paratexts, i.e. side texts, which accompany the main text [news story] in an inviting, describing, orientating, commenting or subsidiary way' (Schmitz 2014: 290). Third, video explainers, in particular, attest to the increasing multimodal composition of media products (Androutsopoulos 2014: 290). And, fourth, they seem to challenge the formats of elite-to-elite communication associated with traditional practices of financial journalism, as argued by previous literature (Kunelius & Reunanen 2012) and as evident in Rosen's (2008) quote about the columnist who 'typically assumes too much knowledge […] or has too little space, or is bored with the elementary task of explanation and prefers that more sophisticated work appear under his byline'.

In order to explore these alternative news formats and the metaphors deployed in the context of media debate about Brexit in the UK, I will focus on one of the largest UK mainstream news outlet: *BBC News*. *BBC News* consists primarily of feature news articles, with explainers having a subsidiary function to explain and accompany the main news story. *BBC News* explainers can take the form of commentary articles, short videos, and maps with smart graphics ('infographics'). Out of the range of explainer formats, the short video explainers are arguably the ones that exploit a significant range of social media affordances. On the one hand, they are highly multimodal as they combine text (spoken or written), moving image and sound/music and, on the other, they are very portable as they are often reused and recycled within and across social media platforms.

In this chapter, I will analyse four video explainers that were circulated during the week leading to the referendum and while the topic was dominating global news. On 17 June 2016 *BBC News* online publishes a series of video explainers under the general title 'EU referendum'. The aim of the videos is to explain the EU's organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities, as well as its key institutions and treaties. The referendum explainers are rather short, just over a minute, and there is no voice-over as commonly found in video explainers. The explanation is primarily communicated through written text, accompanying visuals, and background music/sounds. The transcripts, provided in the analysis, are organized in two columns: the first one records the written text and the second column describes the visuals accompanying the text in the video. Due to copyright issues, screenshots from the explainers are not included.

The following analysis will focus on each of the four explainers and will investigate the metaphorical language employed. Rather than 'conceptual metaphors' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), this study analyses source scenarios of economic and other metaphors in news explainers. Musolff (2006) defines a 'source scenario' as :

> a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about "typical" aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the "dramatic" storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc. (Musolff 2006: 28).

After identifying metaphorical expressions conveyed through either verbal or visual (or both) means, metaphor scenarios are analysed in terms of their argumentative uses; that is, the ways in which they shape public debates and conceptualizations of the EU as a politico-economic institution "by *framing* the attitudinal and evaluative preferences in the respective discourse communities" (Musolff, 2006: 28). Although news explainers arguably have a meta-function (i.e., explaining news and their associated framings), they also have the potential to offer similar or alternative framings of politico-economic institutions through recontextualisations of mainstream metaphors. The analysis aims to shed light on how metaphor scenarios and domains associated with news articles are recontextualised in news explainers (cf. Semino *et al.* 2013).

3. Analysis

3.1. The EU budget smoothie

Even before clicking on the video explainer, the reader is exposed to a short introductory text placed under the video. The text reads as 'Imagine each country's contribution as an ingredient in a fruit smoothie'. Through the use of cognitive verbs ('imagine') that function as signaling devices for metaphorical language (Goatly 1997), a metaphor scenario is explicitly set up by the explainer producers. Viewers are directly addressed through imperative forms and are invited to (re)conceptualise the monetary union of European countries in terms of a more familiar concept (a fruit smoothie) and scenario (preparing a smoothie). The target public domain of political and fiscal unions is

reinterpreted in terms of the workings of private and everyday life, such as food and cooking.

1. today…	((four glasses of smoothie))
2. the EU budget smoothie	((foregrounded glass of smoothie)
3. you will need	((clean table surface)
4. carrots grapes a grapefruit garlic	((subsequent shots of each ingredient))
5. and the EU treasury bowl (this thing)	((bowl surrounded by previous ingredients))
6. carrots: UK money (the following are fruit	((four carrots on table))
7. and veg approximates)	
8. UK gives one	((hand placing one carrot amidst all ingredients))
9. UK gets half	((hand taking half carrot & returning to others))
10. grapes: German money	((handful of grapes on table)
11. Germany gives 6	((hands placing six grapes with half carrot))
12. Germany gets 2	((hand taking two & returning to the rest))
13. grapefruit: Polish money	((grapefruit on table))
14. Poland gives a quarter	((hands placing grapefruit piece with carrot & grapes))
15. Poland gets half	((hands placing half grapefruit next to remaining ¾))
16. garlic: Latvia	((garlic on table))
17. Latvia gives 1	((hand placing one clove with other ingredients))
18. Latvia gets 4	((hand placing four cloves next to remaining garlic))
19. add rest of the countries	((hand placing selected and other ingredients in bowl))
20. and blend for 45 seconds	((ingredients in bowl))
21. in the meantime… play with a carrot!	((hand rolling a carrot))
22. enough	((grated fruit & vegetables))
23. and where does the smoothie go?	((hand picking up bowl with smoothie))
24. agriculture	((4 different shape glasses; pouring smoothie in largest)
25. agriculture regional aid	((pouring smoothie in smaller glass))
26. agriculture regional aid foreign aid	((pouring smoothie in smaller glass))
27. agriculture regional aid foreign aid	((pouring smoothie in the smallest glass)
28. administration	
29. got it?	((empty bowl of smoothie))

The initial scenario is further elaborated in the video, presenting the complicated process of EU budget as the everyday activity of preparing a smoothie. In the COOKING scenario of producing the EU budget smoothie, the FOOD ingredients (carrots, grapes, etc) represent the currencies of individual countries (UK money, German money, etc) and the CONTAINERS (bowl and glass) stand for the EU fiscal institutions (treasury) and domains (agriculture, regional aid, etc). These metaphorical associations are established explicitly through the text appearing on the video (l. 6 'carrots: UK money'), with the visuals further supporting the scenario. Once the scenario is established, we notice that the two modes work complementarily: the target domain appears in one mode, while the source domain in another. For example, in ll. 24-28 the target domain is conveyed verbally (agriculture, regional aid, etc) and the source

domain visually (four glasses on the screen). While the main metaphorical frame, as explicitly introduced in the opening of the explainer and sustained through both verbal and visual modes, is COOKING, it draws, nevertheless, on the CONTAINER metaphor that is a common strategy to talk about the economy and the market in economics textbooks (Alejo 2010). News explainers, thus, recontextualise mainstream economic metaphors in the more familiar genre of cooking recipes.

3.2. The Maastricht ratatouille

Similarly to the previous extract, the video explainer is accompanied by a text that addresses the viewers/readers as follows: 'You might choose to see it [i.e. the EU] as a ratatouille'. What follows is an explanation of the Maastricht treaty with visuals that allude to the iconic French dish of mixed vegetable stew.

1. today… the Maastricht ratatouille	((vegetables))
2. you will need	((clean table surface)
3. tomatoes yellow chilli onion courgette	((subsequent shots of each ingredient))
4. aubergine green chilli red chilli garlic	
5. for large chunks Europe has been at war	((chopping vegetables))
6. but the second world war left the	((chopped vegetables))
7. continent so scarred… its leaders decided	
8. that was enough	
9. so they created a club of countries	((hand placing vegetables in a tray))
10. first called…	
11. 1951 European steel and coal community	((vegetables in tray)
12. 6 members	
13. 1958 European Economic community	
14. name change	
15. 1970's and 1980's more new joiners	((hand adding vegetables))
16. 1992 European Union (another name!)	((more vegetables in tray))
17. 12 members	
18. the EU now has 28 members the point	((close up of vegetables))
19. of the EU is to make trade easier…	
20. allow its people to move freely…	((hand moving vegetables in tray))
21, people	((arrow pointing to vegetables))
22. and foster cooperation on fields like:	((hand pouring olive oil over vegetables))
23. science education and the arts	((close up of olive oil poured over vegetables))
24. to be a member of the EU countries	((little plate with spoon & salt))
25. need to pay taxes	((arrow pointing to salt))
26. but not all European countries are part	((close up of vegetables))
27. of the EU	
28. some don't want to be	((hand holding piece of cheese over vegetables in tray))
29. others have yet to be accepted	((hand holding carrot over vegetables in tray))
30. got it?	((baked vegetables in tray))

Unlike the previous Extract where the cooking scenario was set up primarily through verbal means, with visuals primarily illustrating the text, we notice that this is the case only for this explainer's opening (ll. 1-4). From l. 5 onwards, viewers capture the metaphor only if they pay attention to the verbal and visual modes at the same time: the verbal mode conveys the target domain, i.e. the inner workings of the EU, and the visual mode the source domain, the ratatouille dish. By combining the two modes, further specifics of the metaphor scenario become apparent: countries are the VEGETABLES in the ratatouille and the European Union is the COOK whose hand is visible in the video. The visually depicted cooking activities of placing, mixing, and pouring olive oil over vegetables in tray are metaphorically linked with EU institutional acts of accepting countries in the union (l. 15), allowing people movement (l. 20), and fostering collaboration (l. 22), accordingly. The cooking scenario with the EU in the role of the cook represents a simple and easy metaphor that assists viewers in understanding the roles and responsibilities of the EU. At the same time, though, it puts forward a particular interpretation of the relationship between the EU and its member states: it depicts the EU as the sole and overpowering agent who, as the cook, unilaterally decides over the fate of the vegetables/country-members. Such a depiction may be easy to grasp but it represents an interpretation that could feed well into the rhetoric of those who argued that the EU threatens UK sovereignty.

3.3. The Brussels sponge cake

The text that accompanies this explainer reads as: 'You might choose to think of it [i.e. Brussels] as a giant sponge cake'. Again, a cooking metaphor scenario is established through the video's caption and the explainer opening (ll. 1-5) that lists the ingredients needed for producing the Brussels sponge cake.

1. today… Brussels sponge cake	((close up of cake))
2. you will need	((clean table surface))
3. whipped cream icing marshmallows	((subsequent shots of ingredients))
4. toppings chocolate whatever this is	
5. 1 2 3 sponges	((three sponges))
6. first layer: the European parliament	((hand spreading layer of cream))
7. MEPS: Members of the European	((close up of layer sponge cake))
8. parliament	
9. Germany: 96 MEPS UK: 73 MEPS	((hand sprinkling coloured icing sugar over cream))
10. Malta: 6 MEPS the rest: 576 MEPS	

11. MEPS vote on:	((close up of sponge layer))
12. – laws – the budget	((hand placing icings with law and euro symbol))
13. second layer: the European commission	((close up of sponge layer))
14. the commission is formed by 28	((hand spreading cream))
15. commissioners one for each country	
16. it drafts laws	((hand placing icing; text 'law'))
17. and runs day-to-day business	((hand pouring cream))
18. third layer: the council	((close up of sponge layer))
19. the council is formed by…	((close up of cherries))
20. heads of government or ministers	((arrow pointing to cherries))
21. from each EU country	((cherries placed on top of layer of cream))
22. they set the political agenda	((close up of cherries on cake))
23. that's why they are at the top	((hand placing cherries and sprinkling with chocolate))
24. got it?	((close up of sponge cake))

From l. 6 onwards the metaphor scenario is elaborated further. The main EU bodies – the European Parliament, Commission, and Council – are the three key sponge layers of the cake, as we are informed by the text and accompanying visuals (ll. 6, 13, 18). The member state representatives that form these institutions are the other ingredients in the cake. In order to establish the metaphorical associations between country representatives and ingredients, viewers need to combine the text with the visual acts of cooking. Although country representatives appear as agents in the text (e.g. voting, drafting laws and setting the political agenda), their visual depiction in the cooking scenario is fairly passive as they appear to be placed there by an invisible cook (metonymically represented through the depicted cooking hand). It is unclear who may be hidden behind the hand but the European Union is the most likely candidate for the role of the invisible cook and orchestrator of the specific institutions.

3.4. The Schengen pizza

The final explainer in the series aims to clarify the difference between Schengen and the EU and addresses one of the key topics of the Brexit debate; that is, free movement of people. The video's caption takes the form of a dialogue: 'Are you baffled by the difference between Schengan [sic] and the EU? Believe it or not, pizza holds the answer (sort of)…'. The video is introduced similarly to the previous example, by establishing a metaphor scenario whereby Europe is a pizza base.

1. today…   ((table surface covered in flour))
2. the Schengen pizza   ((hands holding ball of pizza dough))
3. imagine Europe   ((hands rolling pizza dough on table surface))
4. is a pizza base…   ((close up of flat pizza dough))
5.   ((map of Europe overlaid on flat pizza dough))
6. some countries in Europe belong to the EU   ((EU flag over flat pizza dough))
7.   ((hand cutting a small piece from the dough))
8. others don't   ((small piece of dough separated from the rest))
9. like Switzerland and Norway   ((Swiss and Norwegian flags over the small piece of
                                                             dough, separated from the rest EU flag dough))
10. there's another area   ((flat pizza dough, with a small piece separated))
11. called Schengen   ((hand covering dough with tomato sauce))
12. (the tomato sauce)   ((pizza base covered with tomato sauce except for a small
                                                             area))
13. some countries belong to Schengen   ((EU flag covering the pizza base; Swiss and Norwegian
14. but not to the EU   flags covering the small separated piece of dough))
15. and others belong to the EU   ((pizza base covered with tomato sauce except for a small
16. but not to Schengen   area covered by Irish and British flags))
17. within Schengen   ((pizza based covered with tomato sauce))
18. there are no borders   ((hand sprinkling grated cheese over pizza base))
19. so… people (the grated cheese)   ((pizza base topped with tomato sauce and grated cheese))
20. are free to move around   ((hand sprinkling cheese over pizza base, including the
                                                             small separated piece of dough))
21. for UK and Ireland though…   ((pizza base topped with tomato sauce and grated cheese,
22. a passport is needed   except for small area covered by Irish and British flags))
23. what about the migrant crisis?   ((pizza base topped with tomato sauce and grated cheese,
                                                             except for small area topped only by grated cheese))
24. (peas: non EU migrants)   ((hand bringing a small bowl of green peas))
25. if they are asylum seekers   ((pizza base topped with tomato sauce and grated cheese,
26. they should register   with small bowl of green peas on the side))
27. in the 1st country of arrival
28.   ((hand putting a handful of green peas at one edge of the
                                                            pizza base))
29. but the rule isn't working   ((hand putting one or two peas over the separated piece of
                                                            dough and the small area not covered by tomato sauce))
30. leading some Schengen countries   ((hand placing a line of olives next to the peas))
31. to close their borders   ((hand placing a second line of olives to separate peas))
32.   ((arrows suggesting movement of peas from the edge to the centre
                                                            of pizza base))
33. and even add quota systems   ((close up of olives and peas on pizza base))
33. yes   ((arrow pointing from yes to one pea))
34. yes   ((arrow pointing from another yes to a second pea))
35. no   ((arrow pointing from no to a third pea)
36. got it?   ((baked pizza with peas in lots of peas in one area, a mixture of
                                                            peas and olives in the centre, only cheese in one area and only
                                                            tomato in a separated piece))

Following the recipe genre, the explainer metaphorically associates the pizza INGREDIENTS with areas and people: pizza base is Europe, tomato sauce is Schengen, grated cheese is the EU population, and peas are the non-EU migrants. The key characters in the metaphor scenario are established both

verbally and visually (ll. 3-4, 11-12, 19 and 24). The metaphor scenario is further elaborated by drawing primarily on the visual mode, while the text provides the target domain, i.e. the processes that are in need of explanation. In the explanation of people movement and the migrant crisis, we note that people's agency is represented differently in the two modes. While the verbal mode attributes agency to the people, the mobilization of the recipe genre in the visual mode transfers the agency to the cooking hand that moves the ingredients on the table. In the context of the specific series of explainers, the EU is arguably a likely candidate for taking on the role of the cook and, thus, responsible for the pizza mess. Although this representation may be less negative for the migrants that are often vilified in UK news discourse, it is nevertheless disempowering for the people involved, as it objectifies them (grated cheese, peas) and presents them as agentless.

Conclusion

This chapter has approached the process of mediatization through the lens of wider shifts in journalistic practice, particularly the turn towards explainer journalism in the context of digital environments. The fragmentation and heterogeneity of information circulated through constant updates in various media (and social media) platforms gives rise to alternative news formats and genres that accompany the main news story. News explainers, in other words, should be viewed as part of the wider cycle of 'iterativity' and 'traceable recursivity' of news story (re)telling in multiple platforms and for multiple audiences in the contemporary mediascape (Cotter 2015). Their role is to (re)tell the hows and whys of the story for the confused reader and, in doing so, they reframe certain online news spaces more explicitly as 'elite-to-lay' communication.

In this type of 'elite-to-lay' news discourse, metaphorical language appears as one of the key stylistic resources for communicating and explaining complex politico-economic institutions to the lay public. Unlike news articles where metaphors are often embedded in the text argumentation, metaphors appear here as the overarching discourse frame for news explainers. They structure the discourse by explicitly setting up the metaphorical scenario in the introduction and returning to it repeatedly in middle and ending parts of the explainer.

Metaphorical frames are also established through the close interplay of verbal and visual semiotic resources: the enactment of cooking on screen reinforces and sustains the main metaphorical frame, even when the text reverts to more detailed descriptions of the processes and institutions explained.

In terms of the source domains of the explainers' metaphors, the prevailing framings depart from common conceptualisations of the economy as 'living organism' or migrants as 'animals'. Although metaphors related to economy as 'container' are found, they are recontextualised in news explainers within an overarching metaphorical scenario that draws on concepts related to the everyday activity of cooking and food. From a more critical perspective, we notice that news explainers reify the economy as a controllable thing, that is, a food ingredient or item that is chopped, spread, sprinkled and cooked in front of the layperson's eyes. In the referendum explainers, the EU appears as the main actor, while other parties who may play a role in the current situation (such as individual countries, banks and other fiscal organisations) are left out of the picture. In line with the rise of Eurosceptic and nationalist discourses during the Brexit debate, such framings appear to be conveniently helpful in attributing blame to the European Union, losing sight of the wider picture and complexities in inter-state relations and the global migrant crisis. In other words, the innocuous recasting of EU processes as everyday familiar activities in news explainers is not void of ideological content and positioning.

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