Methodology of narrative analysis workpackage for **SMART** project

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This white paper provides a self-contained, high-level overview of the methodology of narrative analysis that is the subject of workpackage ???. The goal is to detect and describe most prevalent narratives concerning social and policy issues, especially in relation to EU, as perceived through discourse in leading weekly opinion magazines in various european countries. The analysis will combine modern quantitative approaches (collection of big data from social networks and unsupervised machine learning) with qualitative insights in order to produce in-depth and actionable results.

Narratives can be defined as prevalent ways of thinking and telling about the world, especially in the context of important social and policy issues, which have a broad but not necessarily unequivocal social support. As such, they have a power to shape public opinion and decision making. They can be used to mobilize social support both for good and bad. This seems to be especially important in this historical moment when the new media landscape has fundamentally reshaped our collective means of communication facilitating local and global cooperation but also providing entirely new tools of propaganda and misinformation, which are often popularly referred to as *fake news*. Also it is quite apparent that many European societies are rapidly changing and entangled in often heated and very polarizing public debates and conflicts. This social rupture seems to be at least partially resulting from a significant decrease of the pool of shared societal norms and values, and this in turn can be thought of as a result of coexistence of competitvie and outrightly incompatible narratives concerning very foundations of social and political life. Hence, understanding of what are the narratives that are shaping our current historical moment in Europe seems to be of crucial importance. Such a knowledge would help identify not only the points of the most ferocious discoursive conflicts but also and perhaps more importantly the remaining issues and values that are still common for everyone.

The aim of this research is to develop and apply an empirical method of measuring and describing social narratives. The main objective is to describe the current most prevalent narratives that shape social lifes in various European countries as well as identify most conflictual and shared regions of discoursive space.

Due to preliminary and pioneering character of the project a scope of the analysis had to be carefuly chosen and somewhat limited. Only narratives as presented in the discourse of leading weekly opinion magazines will be considered. This approach is favourable as it can provide a clear-cut definition and enumeration of data sources. At the same time opinion magazines are important actors that both influence and reflect the state of important public debates and as such can be considered good proxies for estimating general public narrative dynamics.