

Foreword

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A fundamental feature of democratic governance is a well functioning public sphere. Many authors argue that the European Union's democratic deficit will not find redress as long as no European wide public sphere is emerging. A rich body of theoretical writing supports this view but empirical research is still scarce and research findings are hidden in country by country case studies and often scattered across disciplines such as communication science, political sociology, comparative politics, and political theory.

It is the very purpose of CONNEX ("Connecting Excellence on EU governance") to contribute to the integration of knowledge and, by bringing together experts from different research communities, to improve our understanding of efficient and democratic governance in the multi-level system of the European Union¹. With this publication CONNEX presents the findings of one of the activities of Research Group 3 directed by Michael Marsh, Jacques Thomassen and Hermann Schmitt. The research group focusses on the different dimensions of legitimacy in the EU. Research has addressed topics such as citizenship and identity, political representation and accountability, or the performance of political authorities. In addition the group has investigated the interrelationship between civil society actors, mass

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media and mass publics at the European level.

We are grateful to the editors that they convened an outstanding group of experts to take stock of existing research and contribute with new empirical findings to the scientific debate. They organized a conference gathering some 25 academics from all over Europe in Amsterdam in December 2005 on "A European Public Sphere: How much of it do we have and how much do we need?". Whereas the conference demonstrated a remarkable variety of definitions and concepts, and thus of approaches and research strategies in search of the European public sphere, the contributions to this volume add nicely in challenging some conventional wisdoms. Above all, the message is that a European public sphere is not impossible. Rather, the individual contributions draw attention to its partial existence and demonstrate its expansion with the growing contestation over the future shape of the EU polity.

We are convinced that this book, which is published as volume N°2 of the CONNEX Report Series, will make a valuable contribution to the current debate, not only in academia but also in a wider political public. This is why the entire volume, or each chapter separately, can be downloaded for free from the project website (www.connex-network.org).

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Introduction

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The CONNEX/ASCoR conference held in December 2005 was entitled ‘A European public sphere: How much of it do we have and how much do we need?’ When studying the public sphere the media are an inevitable component as they can be seen as a market place of ideas, statements and images of Europe, nations in Europe and the process of European integration. Research on the emergence and nature of a European public sphere is accumulating and diverse. The underlying assumption of this research is that a shared European space, a European public sphere, may contribute to the (public) legitimacy of the EU polity, in much the same ways as has been suggested for national public spheres (Habermas, 1964).

Over the past two decades it has been possible to observe a development in the literature from a focus, with regards to European politics, on a ‘public sphere heavy’ notion of a single, pan-European public sphere, to a focus on a ‘public sphere light’ notion of co-existing national public spheres. Several models and criteria have been suggested. The by now largely rejected notion of a single pan-European public sphere was conceptualized as a communicative space requiring a common language, a shared identity and a transnational media system (Kielmansegg, 1996; Grimm, 2004).

However, the notion of a monolithic, singular and pan-European public sphere has been largely discarded in the light of the evidence in this area, where attempts to create pan-European media (including, for example, the newspaper *The European*) have failed. Other media, such as *Euronews*, have relied on heavy subsidies and those few commercial news outlets with a global outreach and a significant European audience, such as the *Financial Times* have, at the end of the day, a limited, elite readership that makes it hard to speak of a *public* sphere (De Vreese 2002, 2003; Koopmans (forthcoming)).

Other research has distinguished *segmented transnational public spheres* which have been conceptualized as issue-specific communicative spaces, largely dominated by political and economic elites (Eder 2000). Another model of Europeanized national public spheres has proposed a distinction between *vertical* and *horizontal Europeanization* (Koopmans & Erbe, 2003). Vertical Europeanization refers to national actors addressing European actors, national actors making claims on European issues or European actors partaking in national debates on European issues. Horizontal Europeanization is referred to as national media covering issues in other EU member states and national actors addressing issues or actors in another EU member state.

The notion of Europeanized national public spheres has found most resonance in large scale comparative studies of the media's coverage of European integration. The media coverage of European affairs is not constant and is best described as cyclical, with occasional peaks and long periods of little news (De Vreese 2002; De Vreese et al., 2001; Peter & de Vreese, 2004). Key events, such as national referendums and EU summits, can take up a substantial part of the news (Van der Brug, Semetko & Valkenburg, 2007; De Vreese & Semetko, 2004; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006), but most of the news is seen through the prism of the nation state.

There is no consensus in the literature about the nature and scope of a European public sphere or the extent of Europeanization of national public spheres. Much of the difference in conclusions can be traced back to different criteria, operationalizations and foci in the studies. The Amsterdam

conference was explicitly conceived to bring together researchers working on these themes, but often applying a variety of definitions and operationalizations. One of the goals was to take stock of the state of on-going research and identify future questions and avenues for research.

The papers presented (and included in these proceedings) confirm that conventional wisdom, holding that a European public sphere is close to impossible due to communication barriers imposed by, for instance, the different languages, seems to belong to the past. Following the developments sketched above most papers instead seek to demonstrate – in their various ways – that Europeanized public spheres do exist. These might be ‘imperfect’ compared to the (theoretical) benchmark, but – very importantly – the contours of a European public sphere can be sketched. This development is perhaps taking place as a result of the growing contestation over the shaping of the EU polity (as evidenced in the constitutional process) and its growing policy reach and scope (as evidenced by the proportion of EU law that is ratified by national legislatures).

Some 25 academics from all over Europe convened in Amsterdam in December 2005. The conference included a number of presentations. Only full papers are included in these proceedings.

Hermann Schmitt elaborates on the notion of European issues. European issues arguably are the raw material of a European public sphere. It is about them that EU citizens are required to resonate and participate in relevant decision making. Contrary to many, this paper argues that EU issues are not only about (more or less) European integration, but also and even predominantly about EU legislation on such matters as unemployment, the environment, peace and war, etc.

Christoph O. Meyer sets out to show how the literature on the political effects of mediatisation and the empirical findings of public sphere research can be combined to better understand the erosion of the EU consensus

culture over the last ten years. The paper also briefly examines how European governance and representation could be adapted to encourage the positive consequences of mediatisation and minimize its increasingly problematic effects.

Renée van Os and *Nicholas W. Jakowski* elaborate on their understanding of a Europeanized public sphere. According to them, the requirement is that political actors, including citizens, are engaged in communicating about Europe. They go on to discuss the potential of the World Wide Web by reviewing a number of pertinent studies and their research designs. The paper concludes with recommendations for a more thorough empirical investigation of the concept of a European public sphere within an Internet environment.

Paul Statham tries to answer the question of how and to what extent political communication now spreads across the borders of two nation states within Europe and which actors drive such processes. In addition to obvious communalities – political elites are shaping EU political communication in both countries – he finds striking differences between France and Britain in the form and content of political communication over Europe and explains them as being the result of a path dependency of duration of membership and central/ peripheral location and orientation.

Juan Diez Medrano explores the validity of the claim that legitimacy crises since the 1990s have something to do with a purported democratic deficit. This is done by analyzing both ordinary peoples' and journalists' frames on European integration and the European Union. Preliminary results suggest that a perceived democratic deficit – rather than an actual one – may indeed be among the factors that are responsible for this legitimacy crisis.

Marcel Machill, *Markus Beiler* and *Corinna Fischer* present a meta-analysis of 17 studies that analyze media content data from several European countries. All of the studies investigated compare the volume of European topics being

reported in the different countries. Prior to the 2004 Eastern enlargement of the EU the overall trend points towards the increasing importance of those topics. However, EU topics still account for an extremely small proportion of reporting, and EU players only feature in minor roles.

Ruud Koopmans and *Ann Zimmermann* analyze the structure of online public spheres with regard to two leading questions: (1) whether the Internet is an egalitarian arena that offers chances to less resourceful actors to get their message across to the audience; and (2) whether the Internet is a more transnational space for political communication. The most remarkable finding of the study is the great similarity of findings. Both with regard to the type of actors who achieve highest visibility, and with regard to the prominence of (own) national actors as compared to foreign and supranational actors, it does not make much difference whether the content of off-line newspapers or that of websites is investigated.

Claes de Vreese, *Hajo Boomgaarden*, *Susan Banducci* and *Holli Semetko* present a detailed examination of the Europeanness of media contents across the 25 EU member states in order to better assess the possible role the media can play in enhancing EU democracy and shaping public opinion. The paper presents the findings of an EU-wide study of the news media's coverage of the 2004 EP elections. Special attention is paid to the question of the extent to which national news media represent the elections as a national or as a European event.

John Erik Fossum and *Hans-Jörg Trenz* start out from the observation of a significant re-politicisation of the EU integration process. They elaborate on a research design for the study of the dynamic interrelation between the emerging European polity and its social constituency. In empirical terms, they suggest looking at the structure of public communication and claims making in the EU and its member states.

Anders Esmark argues that a European public sphere does exist as a “transnational resonance” of the EU polity, its policies and politics. Transnational polity resonance is event driven and is both more vibrant and more frequent than that in national systems. Policy resonance is well developed but varies from one policy area to the next. The central problem seems to be the resonance of politics which is, however, arguably not EU specific.

Donatella Della Porta and *Manuela Cainai* draw a picture of a European public sphere that can only emerge from processes of contestation over a variety of policies and over the very concept of “Europe” itself. They report on a study of new social movement groups and NGOs which has shown that the EU became the target of political claims and protest. And this is how it should be: the evolution of European integration necessarily involves “pressures from below”

Barbara Pfetsch assesses the role of the national press with respect to the emerging Europeanized public sphere. Within the framework of the *Europub* project, the paper focuses on the role and voice of the press by looking at the claims that are made in editorials. The overall picture that emerges from her findings is that the level of Europeanization of national media depends on the salience of Europeanized issues in public debate, while the support for European integration varies between the countries under study.

As can be seen from the outlines above, several perspectives, findings and conclusions were presented. Future research in this field should acknowledge the need to include multiple data sources, such as mass surveys, content analyses of news media, and party manifestos. In addition, further explication of the different models of public spheres in Europe and conceptual and empirical clarifications of the notion of Europeanization are essential.

It was a pleasure to organize the conference and we would like to thank The Amsterdam School of Communication ASCoR at the University of Amsterdam and CONNEX for making the conference possible. We hope moreover that readers will enjoy the collection of papers and find them as stimulating and rewarding as we did.

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Chapter 1

The Nature of European Issues: Conceptual Clarifications and Some Empirical Evidence

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1. A European Public Sphere?

A lot of writing and research is being done on the European public sphere. The prevalent view is that if the European Union ever aspired to become a democratic political entity, it would certainly need a common public sphere (e.g. Scharpf 1999). Why should that be the case? Because the democratic quality of a political system (any political system) requires that every citizen who wants to participate in a political discourse, be it actively or passively, must be able to do so (Neidhardt 1994). If this cannot be assured, one may not call a political system democratic.

For people who like to address these questions in empirical terms this leads immediately, of course, to a follow-up question. What exactly does it mean to be able to participate in a political discourse, and how can this, in all likelihood relative, ability be measured? There are two broad dimensions that we think can be helpful in structuring an answer to this question as regards operationalisations. Both look at requirements, one at the systemic and the other at the individual level.

On the systemic side, one must decide whether one integrated public sphere is required, or whether a number of inter-connected public spheres could fulfill the same function. The traditional model, which draws its references from democracies organizing the political process within European nation-states, suggests that one (and only one) public sphere enables citizens to participate. However, as Neidhardt et al. (2000) and Fuchs (2000) have argued, there have always been exceptions to this rule. In modern European history, Belgium and Switzerland come to mind as democracies in which several public spheres or sub-spheres (language communities) exist. India, the world's largest democracy (1.2 billion citizens in 2005), is an even more striking example. In this federation of 28 states (plus seven union territories), 21 official languages are recognized. Separated by their inability to speak the language of (and thus communicate with) some or even most of their fellow citizens, public sub-spheres (language communities) in these countries are tied together at the elite level, where the members of the political class typically speak enough of the relevant languages (German and French in Switzerland, French and Dutch in Belgium, English and Hindi in India) to be able to communicate across the language-defined sub-spheres. Political communication in these political communities is probably best conceived of as being a two-level process, with citizens-elite communication at level one (in one's first language) and elite-elite communication at level two (in whatever language works best).

The functioning of these democratic political communities over decades (Belgium and India) and centuries (Switzerland) raises doubts about whether an all-embracing public sphere is a principal requirement in a democracy. Multi-level systems of governance (Hooghe & Marks 2001) are flourishing at the end of the second and the beginning of the third millennium, in Europe and beyond, and the attributes demanded from a 'model public sphere' probably need to be adapted accordingly. The same goes for the intermediaries between citizens and government, for political parties in particular, but also for the media and special interest groups. The

“nation-state frame” that has served as a role model for democratic governance during much of the 19th and 20th century is in need of replacement.

2. European Issues

The necessity of a European public sphere (of whatever sort) originates in the normative-democratic requirement that all EU citizens must be able to participate – actively or passively as they may wish – in the European political discourse (Dahl 1998). A public discourse is about issues, and it is arguable that European public discourses are about European issues. But what are European issues? Following up earlier work, we distinguish two domains of those European issues and two types of them, which involve different mechanisms to establish a link between issue preference and political behaviour (Schmitt 2001).

Two Domains of European Issues

There are two domains, or classes, of European issues. One of them is “normal issues”, the other “constitutional issues”. Normal issues are those that are dealt with at multiple levels of the European multi-level political system. There is nothing particularly “European” about them except that the institutions of the European Union are, or want to be, also involved in aspects of the political decision-making on those issues (in addition to institutions at the national and/or sub-national political arena in the various member-countries). Examples are the fight against unemployment, the protection of the environment, fighting crime and so on.

Constitutional issues are different. These issues are genuinely, but usually not exclusively “European” (in the sense that no other political arena would deal with them). The major projects of the Union over the past few decades may serve as examples here. The common currency is one of them,

the Eastern enlargement of 2004 is another, the process that may lead to the membership of Turkey is a third, and the Constitutional Treaty that was ratified by (almost) every member-country of the Union but two (it was turned down in referendums in France and the Netherlands) comes last but certainly not least.

Two Types of European Issue

In Europe as everywhere else, issues come in two types. One is called position issues, the other valence issues. This distinction was originally introduced by Donald Stokes (1966) in a critique of the “economic” theory of democracy as it was proposed by Anthony Downs (1957). *Position issues* are those that involve policy continuums, like more or less state impact on the economy, or pro-life vs. pro-choice in the abortion debate. People are more on one or the other side of the scale, and evaluate their political and electoral preferences according to the position of relevant choice options (that is: political parties and/or their candidates) relative to their own. The option that is perceived to be closest to one’s own position or, alternatively, to represent one’s own views most convincingly (Rabinowitz and McDonald 1989) is then the most preferred.

The other type of issues is called *valence issues*. Valence issues are not about positions, but about values and the perceived competence of political actors to realize those values. A valence issue is typically one that nobody likes to oppose. Examples are obvious. Who could legitimately be “against” the protection of a clean environment? Or who could be “for” unemployment? What matters for political behavior here is not the position that actors take on the issue, but the importance or salience that they attribute to it, and the competence to solve the problem that they attribute to political parties or alternative governments. In a way, valence issues are low cost issues. In order to determine their political preference, citizens need to have neither detailed policy positions of their own nor a knowledge of the positions of competing political actors on those policies. A general evaluation of the appropriateness

of political actors issue emphases and of their credibility to take action effectively on the most important ones is enough for an informed and “rational” preference formation.

If we cross-classify these distinctions, we arrive at a fourfold table of European issues (Table 1). The types of issues in the four cells of the table differ systematically with regard to the amount of information they require for citizens to become sensibly involved. These information requirements are a particularly relevant threshold for political participation with regard to the notoriously nontransparent policy making process at EU level, in which the council, as one of the main players, deliberates and decides in closed session, while the parliament lacks visibility and media attention as a result of the absence of the “normal” government-opposition-antagonism. Normal position issues (welfare policies are given as an example) are perhaps the most difficult and costly in terms of information requirements, and constitutional valence issues (with the general issue of European unification as an example) are arguable the easiest and least costly. Normal valence issues (protection of the environment is given as an example) and constitutional position issues (EU enlargement is given as an example) come somewhere in between.

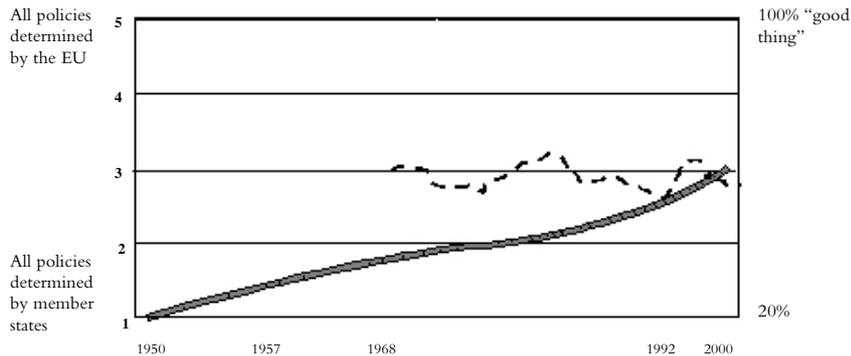
Table 1: A cross-classification of two dimensions of European issues (with examples)

	normal	constitutional
position	(welfare)	(enlargement)
valence	(environment)	(unification)

Normal issues are by far the most numerous in the EU policy process, while constitutional issues – although typically of higher visibility – are dealt

with much less frequently (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2001, Appendix 1). Overall, the policy reach of the European Union has grown exponentially over the past 5 decades (Figure 1). It seems that this did not visibly affect the evaluation of EU membership by the citizenry of the Union.

Figure 1: The Growing Policy Reach of the EU and Proportions of EU Citizens Evaluating Membership as a Good Thing



Note: The trend line indicates the average policy authority of the EU over 28 policy areas drawn from economic, foreign, legal and constitutional, and social policy. Individual authority rankings are based on expert judgements by Lindberg and Scheingold 1970; Schmitter 1994; and Hooghe and Marks 2001; the raw figures are taken from Hooghe and Marks 2001: 187-189. The membership "good thing" proportions are hand-copied from the Eurobarometers.

This seeming disconnection between the growing policy output of the European Union and public evaluations by its membership invites further thought. This aggregate finding could of course be an artifact of subsequent enlargement waves, in that the influx of new sceptical members would have blurred the real reaction (composition effect). Another tentative explanation of this somewhat irritating finding is the argument that EU citizens are probably not really aware of the growing policy reach of the Union and base their evaluations on different criteria (like the perceived benefit to their country from membership, domestic economic development, etc.). In any case, the level of aggregation in these two trend lines is very high and is

probably too high to arrive at convincing conclusions about micro-level processes. This is why we will address those questions which are at the micro level in the following section.

3. The EU as a political arena

In this third section of the paper, we will shed some light on the policy role that EU citizens ascribe to the European level of governance, and on the kind of issues that they entrust the EU with. The information is based on an open-ended agenda question that was asked as part of the European Election Study 1999, and on two follow-up questions establishing the perceived and preferred level of policy-making for the most important political problems cited. The purpose of this final step of analysis is to identify the ‘issue associations’ of the European Union.

It will be helpful to start this endeavor with a brief overview of the national political agendas – the political issues and problems that people felt were most important at the time of the survey – of EU member-countries (Table 2). The question was put openly, and the verbatim answers of respondents were recoded into six broad categories: issues and problems that originate in (a) the economy, (b) the political domain, (c) the welfare system, (d) the social domain, and (e) the environment. A small “other” category was also coded. EU-wide, the economy poses the greatest problems (a prominent example here is “unemployment”), followed by the political domain (e.g. “corruption”), and welfare (e.g. “health care”) and social problems (e.g. “immigration”). The environment and “other” issues and problems occupy only minor ranks. These EU-wide averages, however, cannot tell us much about individual countries. Clearly, there is not a single political agenda in the European Union but rather several agendas. The economy can occupy as much as 84% (Finland) of all responses and as little as 27% (Denmark and Portugal), welfare as much as 55% (Portugal) and as little as 3% (Belgium), and so on. We note in passing that membership of the EU itself is nowhere seen

as a pressing problem (perhaps with the partial exception of Denmark and the UK).

Table 2: Citizens Political Agenda by EU Member-State and EU-wide (figures are percentages)

	B	DK	D	GR	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	P	UK	FIN	S	A	EU
<i>All economic</i>	26	27	71	51	69	73	31		36	19	27	35	84	68	58	58
<i>All welfare</i>	3	13	9	17	4	3	16		36	13	55	15	2	12	4	10
<i>All political</i>	26	35	11	22	12	12	33		9	27	6	31	10	10	29	17
of which: EU		18	0	1	0	2	3			1		10	4	4	5	3
<i>All social</i>	15	14	8	8	9	9	16		9	29	12	9	3	2	5	10
<i>All environmental</i>	25	11	1	3	2	2	1		9	8	0	2		7	3	3
<i>Other</i>	4	1		1	2	0	3			4	1	8	1	1	0	2
Weighted N	334	155	2915	385	1373	1928	122		10	467	355	1784	140	258	268	10494

Source: European Election Study 1999. *Note:* The original coding of the open-ended agenda question has been recoded in such a way that five categories of issue – economic, welfare, political, social, and environmental – can be distinguished. The data are weighted in such a way that the population sizes of the different member-countries as well as the EP election result 1999 (according to turnout and party strength) are adequately represented. The agenda information is not available in the Italian survey. Cramér's $V=.25$, $p=.000$.

We can determine citizens' views about the policy-making role of the European Union by comparing perceived and preferred competences for the most important political problems. Three political arenas are considered: the regional level of political decision-making, the national level, and the EU level. The most important political problem differs of course from one respondent to the next. What we compare in this first approach is the arena that is perceived to be responsible as compared to the arena that respondents would prefer to be responsible (Table 3).

Table 3: Most Important Problem: Perceived and Preferred Level of Government (figures are percentages)

Perceived level of problem solution	Preferred level of problem solution			
	Region	Nation	Europe	all
Region	10	7	6	23
Nation	10	28	12	50
EU	5	6	16	27
All	25	41	34	100

Source: *European Election Study 1999* post-election surveys. Data are weighted as described at the bottom of Table 1. Weighted N=10176.

If we only concentrate on the marginal figures, we see that for EU citizens the nation is somewhat mightier (i.e. in charge of more problems) than it should be (50% as compared to 41%), while Europe could well gain some additional policy competences (27% as compared to 34%). It is obvious that many respondents are guessing here rather than reporting their positive knowledge about the policy competences of different layers of the European multi-level system of governance. But this does not devalue the comparison between perceived and preferred levels of government authority. People are revealing preferences rather than reporting facts. And with regard to those preferences, there is a tendency for EU citizens on average to want to decrease the importance of the national political arena somewhat, and to increase the importance of the European political arena accordingly.

What this comparison does not reveal is the nature (or substance) of issues that citizens typically assign to the European political arena. nor does it show those that they want to reserve for the national political arena. We now turn to this.

Table 4: Most Important Problems and Preferred Level of Problem Solution (figures are percentages)

Problem	Preferred level of government			Type of issue	Salience of EU-wide column %
	EU row %	nation row %	region row %		
Kosovo	82	14	4	political	1,7
Peace & war	69	27	4	political	1,5
Environment	54	31	15	environment	2,8
...					
€	35	50	15	economic	1,4
Other political	26	51	23	political	5,0
Other economic	33	52	15	economic	7,9
Taxes	15	52	33	economic	2,3
EU	31	53	16	political	2,6

Source: *European Election Study 1999* post-election surveys. Data are recoded and weighted as described at the bottom of Table 1. Absolute majorities of respondents preferring one level of government are printed in bold, relative majorities are printed in italics.

Table 4 displays the issues that absolute majorities of EU citizens wanted to assign to the European level in 1999 and those that they wanted to reserve for the national level of government. (An absolute majority is one where the proportion of validly expressed preferences equals or exceeds 50%). The story that emerges is simple enough. In the eyes of majorities among EU citizens, the European layer of government should be responsible for international security and for the environment. These are policy areas that clearly go beyond the problem solving capacity of single nations. The nation state, on the other hand, should maintain its decisive role in matters concerning the European Union including the common currency (which at the time of the survey was already established), in taxation, and in very specific (“other”) political and economic issues.

4. Some Concluding Remarks

A European public sphere is an “area” in which all citizens who want to participate in political decision-making, be it actively or passively, are able

to do so. We might therefore think of it as a genuinely democratic property of a political system. How this area needs to be structured is a matter of continuing debate. We have tried to present some exemplary evidence that a two-level public sphere is functionally possible. At least this perspective does not *a priori* rule out further democratization at the European Union level of governance.

Political decisions are taken on issues or problems. In that sense, European issues are the “raw material” of a European public sphere. We have argued that different kinds of European issues have different information requirements. This is particularly relevant with regard to the institutional structure of the European Union, which is characterized by its remarkable lack of transparency. Easiest are “constitutional valence issues”; all that citizens need to know here is whether the whole course of European unification is to their liking. Constitutional valence issues were the foundation of what Lindberg and Scheingold (19xx) described as a “permissive consensus” of Europeans who gave their political elites a free hand with regard to the details of EU policy making. This happy state of affairs has long gone, not least due to the exponentially growing policy reach of the Union. More and more “normal position issues” have become part of the legislative activity of the EU, with accompanying conflicts of interest.

Despite the growing policy reach of the Union there is not a single European schedule but rather several. The political “to-do list” differs markedly from one member-country to the next. The role that EU citizens assign to the European level of governance against that background is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, people on average want “Europe” to play a larger role, and the nation-state to transfer some of its competences. On the other hand, however, people have a clear idea of what Europe should be responsible for, and what should remain under national control. Europe, in the eyes of many, should focus on international politics and security, and on the environment, while the nation-state should maintain its competences regarding the core of welfare politics, that is, among other things, taxation.

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Chapter 2

Asymmetric and Asynchronous Mediatisation: How Public Sphere Research Helps to Understand the Erosion of the EU's Consensus Culture

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This paper sets out to show how the literature on the political effects of mediatisation and the empirical findings of public sphere research can be combined to better understand the erosion of the EU's consensus culture over the last ten years. The Europeanization of national media coverage is a reality, albeit one that varies substantially across countries, media types, and policy areas. Studies have also demonstrated that horizontal Europeanization is lagging behind vertical Europeanization. Moreover, the Europeanization of media coverage has been both asynchronous and asymmetrical with problematic repercussions for citizens' trust in and support for EU institutions, national governments, and further integration through Treaty amendments. By linking Europeanization to media effects on politics, one understands better why the Commission has had so many problems with regaining its former role in the integration process, why member states are increasingly finding it difficult to constructively engage in EU-level joint-problem solving, and why it is becoming increasingly more difficult to win citizens support for EU Treaty amendments. The paper will also examine briefly how European governance and representation could be adapted to encourage the positive

consequences of mediatisation and minimise its increasingly problematic effects.

1. Introduction

The past five years witnessed a dramatic surge in studies at different levels of scholarship focusing on the Europeanization of public discourses and public discourses (Hagen 2003, Klein *et al.* 2003, Peters *et al.* forthcoming, Koopmans 2004b, Trenz 2002, Meyer 2002, Steeg 2002). Most of the research was concerned in some way or another with the ‘public sphere deficit thesis’, i.e. whether the economic and political integration has been matched by an increasing interpenetration, synchronisation and possibly convergence of national public discourses; this is considered necessary from the perspective of cross-national identity formation, increasing cross-national trust and allowing for opinion-formation about and scrutiny of European governance. Some of the larger research projects have conducted large-scale quantitative and qualitative coding of media content (Peters *et al.* forthcoming), usually of the press, but some also of television news and the internet (de Vreese *et al.* 2001, Koopmans and Zimmermann 2003).¹

Five years is not a long-time for the findings of these varied research projects to sink in, but given the wealth of the literature and the emergence of sound empirical evidence at least with regard to media content, it is both possible and necessary to pose the question: How does it all matter? What we can learn from results of public sphere and discourse research for better understanding, explaining and possibly also evaluating the way in which the European Union is governed and is evolving?

This article does not present major new empirical findings, but primarily aims to draw on the existing body of knowledge to explore the

¹ It is arguably revealing for cross-national differences in political culture and the role of the media that most of these studies have been conducted by researchers from the Netherlands, Britain or Germany.

implications for theorising the increasing erosion of the political consensus culture in the EU as technocratic politics and functional spill-over are becoming increasingly contested; this phenomenon arguably manifest itself in the declining ability of the Council of Ministers and European Council to reach agreement, the slow-down in political initiatives from the Commission, and the crisis of how to institutionally reform after the negative referenda in France and the Netherlands on the Constitutional Treaty. I will argue in this paper that politicisation can be better understood in its structure and effects if one theoretically links it to the mediatisation literature and empirically to the evidence from public sphere/discourse research. In particular, I will suggest in this paper that these phenomena are linked to the asynchronous and asymmetric mediatisation of European governance, which is empirically reflected in longitudinal data about vertical and horizontal Europeanization of discourses.

2. European Governance and Mediatisation: Outlining an Analytical Framework

Robin Hodess was among the first to criticize that political science has so far largely failed to incorporate the media into its analysis of European integration and governance, despite the media's numerous effects on politics (Hodess 1997: 20-21). One part of the explanation may be that political science has found it difficult to understand, model and operationalize the nature and extent of media effects on policy-outcomes, political processes, and polity-evolution. Media effects, be it on electorates, intermediary actors or political systems, are mostly indirect, interact with other variables and are difficult to prove. However, communication research has shown that even direct media effects on the political system are possible, for instance, in the case of very narrow electoral campaigns, which may be swung either way by sustained media coverage favouring particular political parties (Negrine 1994).

This is because citizens do not usually have the opportunity to develop an opinion about political leaders or governing processes from first hand experience, while media consumption has been generally increasing in Western democracies over the last decades. Public knowledge and beliefs are at least in part a function of news media coverage (McCombs and Shaw 1972: 176-85). Even though the news media may not be very good in shifting public opinion on their own, research has shown that the media can set the agenda for, frame and prime the perception of political issues, influencing the audiences' views about what is important and in what way an issue is important, which has indirect repercussions for the evaluation (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, Bonfadelli 2001). Political news itself is far from objective or neutral, but inevitably the outcome of a complex process of filtering, prioritising, interpreting and evaluating, which is influenced by the logics of a particular medium (note for instance the selection differences between broadcasting vs print journalism) as well as the role of news values, organisation's political stance, and professional norms (Galtung and Ruge 1965, Schulz 1990).

Beyond a narrow definition of such effects in particular instances, such as elections, one can see a growing awareness in political science that mediated communication is moving ever closer to the centre of the political process in Western democracies, gradually altering not only presentational aspects, but also political institutions and policy-output. Saxer (1998) for instance argues not to lose sight of some of the long-term consequences of the increasing interpenetration of media and polity systems. Here the concept of mediatization is helpful. It refers in a rather broad sense to *the process through which the interdependence between political system and the news media system increases in a way, which strengthens the influence of the latter and puts the former under adaptation pressure*. A narrower strand of the mediatization literature argues that the logics, codes, and structures of the political system are increasingly penetrated and transformed by those of the media system, which is seen as undermining the systems ability to take rational, informed and long-term

decisions (some times called 'colonisation' or 'over-steering' of the political system) (Meyer and Hinchman 2002). While accounts of growing media influence on domestic politics are proliferating (sometimes to the extent of overstating their influence), International Relations scholars are also paying increasing attention to the role of the media in international affairs (Nacos *et al.* 2000), positing for instance a key role of the media in building empathy for civilian victims of genocide and persecution abroad and putting pressure on Western governments to intervene militarily as in the case of Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo (Hasenclever 2001, Gilboa 2005)

Broadly speaking, one can distinguish research on the news media according to whether the focus on the media is used to explain outcomes, either as an independent or intervening variable, or whether they are studied as outcomes when they adapt to different kinds of causes. In so far as the news media do influence elites' and publics' attitudes and perceptions about the European Union, its legitimacy, actions, and communication, we would expect the news media to exert some influence, usually in combination with other variables, across all three of the classic dimensions of political science analysis: polity, policy, and politics. Table 1 attempts to provide an overview of how the news media may be relevant to understanding the European Union, how it evolves, works, and what it does. It is worth highlighting that the European Union as conceived here includes the national political systems in so far as they are involved in or affected by the production, institutionalisation and diffusion of legal provisions, norms and goals through the European Union. We can expect that differences in way in which national news media adapt to Europeanization can account for some of the variation in member state's policies vis-à-vis the evolution and working of the EU.

We have seen some cases of research on all three of these dimensions, even if most it was concentrated on the macro-issues relating to the direction of integration and its legitimacy. Particularly in the context of the legitimacy deficit thesis one increasingly finds remarks about the necessity for 'publicity'

(Risse-Kappen 1995: 74) or the demand to close the ‘cognitive gap’ between the EU and its citizens (Sinnot 1997). Anderson and Weymouth study has focused on the issue of newspaper ownership in the UK to explain the dominance of Euroscepticism in the national broadsheets and tabloids, and thereby low levels of public information about and support for the EU (Anderson and Weymouth 1999).

Table 1: Potential Impact of News Media on the European Political System

	Polity Level	Politics Level	Policy Level
Typical Question	How do the news media influence the overall development of the EU, and/or its component parts?	How do the new media influence the interplay of political actors seeking to exercise power in EU decision-making?	How do the news media influence policy outcomes?
Expected Degree of Effects	Weak to Intermediate, depending on national opportunity structures (referenda, Eurosceptic parties, say of parliaments etc).	Weak to Intermediate, depending on national political culture, strengths of domestic actors	Intermediate to High, contingent on case properties and on actors involvement
Research Hypotheses	Increases in media scrutiny put pressures on EU institutions to become engage in reforms, but also gradually undermine the legitimacy of national political systems	Increasing news media attention is putting increasing strains on the effectiveness of EU governance, but increases the say for non-profit interests	Supportive news media coverage is important for the Commission to take decisions against strong national resistance in Anti-Trust and Consumer Cases and make companies seek settlements
Significance for Research on	Outcome of Referenda, Public Support for Integration and Authority Transfer in Particular Areas, Inter-Institutional Balance and Design	Influence of Brussels Press Corps, European Council negotiations, Performance of Governing Modes	Studies of Lobbying, Interest Representation, and Implementation

With regard to the policy dimension, we can find increasing references in Europeanization/ implementation studies to the role of national opportunity structures, including the news media, in influencing the degree to which full and swift implementation is likely (Börzel and Risse 2003). The role of news media is also considered crucial for the performance of so called new modes of governance, which rely on persuasion and peer pressure to achieve outcomes (Meyer and Kunstein forthcoming). Surprisingly, studies of European interest representation and lobbying do hardly ever systematically integrate the news media in their account of processes and outcomes, reflecting the traditional attitude of public affairs firms of the mid-1990s (Van Schendelen 2002).

Finally, the news media coverage can help different political societal actors to become aware of the benefits and costs of new and old EU legal provisions as they affect them, they are alerted to 'misfits' between European and domestic arrangements, and they would have the opportunity to participate in multi-level governance, influencing outcomes or being persuaded of alternative solutions. One sees increasing anecdotal evidence emerging of how Heads of State are sensitive to news media coverage when negotiating in Brussels, how the Commission is anxious to build a public case to prepare its decisions, and how both companies and non-profit interests use different means of communication to influence decision-makers via media coverage.

3. Europeanization of Media Discourses? Reviewing the evidence from public sphere research

The Europeanization of the media does not necessarily lead to a mediatization of EU politics in the same way as quantitative shifts do not necessarily cause qualitative changes. However, if these shifts are of a certain magnitude, they often do signal a qualitative change. In the following I will

draw on evidence from public sphere research to suggest that important changes in media content have occurred, which have implications for the way in which political conflict becomes visible and resolved. In their empirical inquiry, many of the key studies make the distinction between horizontal and vertical Europeanization. Horizontal Europeanization of media discourses refers to an emergence and intensification of cross-national debates about issues of collective concern, whereas vertical Europeanization focuses on debates - be they bottom-up or top-down - which involve EU actors and/or themes in national spheres (Koopmans 2004b, Peters *et al.* forthcoming).

Horizontal Europeanization

How is horizontal Europeanization measured in practice? In the context of the public sphere debate, it is not sufficient that the same topic is discussed at the same time with the same criteria of relevance as Eder and Kantner have argued (Eder and Kantner 2000), but there also needs to be discursive interaction (Steeg 2002) or 'reciprocal resonance structures' (Tobler 2001) between different national debates in order to speak about a Europeanization public discourse. However, without the yardstick of democracy theory, vertical Europeanization could be observed already if there are increasing references to foreign (EU) politicians, interest groups, or news media within national public discourse over time. Yet, the empirical findings from the longitudinal studies mentioned above suggest otherwise. Peters *et al.* (Peters *et al.* forthcoming: 7) have found that '[a]ll five national newspaper demonstrate either no clear pattern or even a slight decline over time in their attention to other European countries.' Koopmans found that horizontal Europeanization trends were weak in the issue fields covered by the study (Koopmans 2004a). Looking at the different issue areas this finding is perhaps not surprising given that many policy areas have been increasingly subject to European level regulations and coordination, so one would expect a degree of trade-off between horizontal and vertical Europeanization as a reflection of real shifts in political power and activity. In other words, the more attention the news

media play to EU politics, the more they less they are interested in national politics of other countries. In acknowledging this redistribution of public attention, the Europub-Group also adopted an aggregate perspective and still found a net-increase in the Europeanization of public discourses as far as political claims are concerned.

Even though one finds little empirical evidence for a significant increase in transnational debates at this aggregate level, case studies of different controversies ranging from tax policy (Tobler 2001), Haider/Austrian elections (Steeg 2004), to the accession of Turkey (Wimmel 2004) indicate the potential for transnational communicative reciprocity and common discursive frames. Of course these are studies of carefully selected single cases, rather than of broad issue areas as in the previous longitudinal studies. Still, they do show that certain questions can become transnationally politicised and debated, especially when national politicians, and not EU-Commissioners, are at the heart of controversies as in the Tobler (Lafontaine) and the van de Steeg studies (Haider). Moreover, in the case of the Stability and Growth Pact my own studies have shown that national politicians are increasingly drawn into the coverage in so far as they are acknowledged as significant EU-actors with conflicting goals (Meyer 2004). This personalisation can be quite problematic from the perspective of discourse ethics because both debates entailed a certain element of demonisation of these foreign national politicians (Haider and Lafontaine), which would have been unacceptable within national discourses. Generally, it seems that cross-national debates are highly episodic and issue-dependent and, if they do occur, they are often very asymmetric in terms of who observes and reacts to whom.

Another, probably less problematic dimension of horizontal Europeanization from the perspective of reform and policy effectiveness, is the moderate increase in cross-national comparisons on the economic performance of other EU countries (Meyer 2005a). This means that national public discourses are increasingly comparing quantitative data and political evaluations of their own policy performance with those of other countries

when debating these particular policies. Even though evidence of real learning across boundaries is still limited, we do see first indications of an emergent discourse in each country centring on its own competitiveness *within* Europe, and to regard its own ranking within Europe as an indicator of successful or failed policies. This is particularly true for those countries, which have a strong European orientation and are doing badly in relative terms such as Germany, Portugal and Italy. The increased availability of data on national policy performance means that opposition parties have found additional and potent ammunition against the government in the battle for public opinion. Of course, there are differences in the degree to which countries frame their policies in this way, but since every country is likely to be worse than the European average in some policy areas, the main phenomenon should not be limited to countries, whose economies are doing badly. The probably most interesting finding stems from research about the media coverage of processes leading to Treaty change. First evidence from the media coverage of the European convention, the IGC, and the national referenda on the Constitutional Treaty indicate, firstly, that the high expectations regarding the visibility of the Convention method have not been met in terms of the quantity and continuity of coverage (Kurpas forthcoming), secondly, that common frames in coverage regarding the evolution of the EU existed in the quality press (Trenz 2005), but that, thirdly, these common frames rapidly collapse once debates start about how to vote in national referenda on the Constitutional Treaty (Kurpas *et al.* 2005).

These comparative studies of the referenda debates reveal that these debates were very self-centred, overarching themes hard to identify, and EU actors were kept deliberately at the side-line on the insistence of national governments (limiting even vertical Europeanization). We are therefore faced with asymmetrical Europeanization in the dual sense that, firstly, the horizontal flow of communication lags behind continuously behind the vertical flow of political opinion formation, and secondly, that national level events with a clear European dimensions are covered completely different

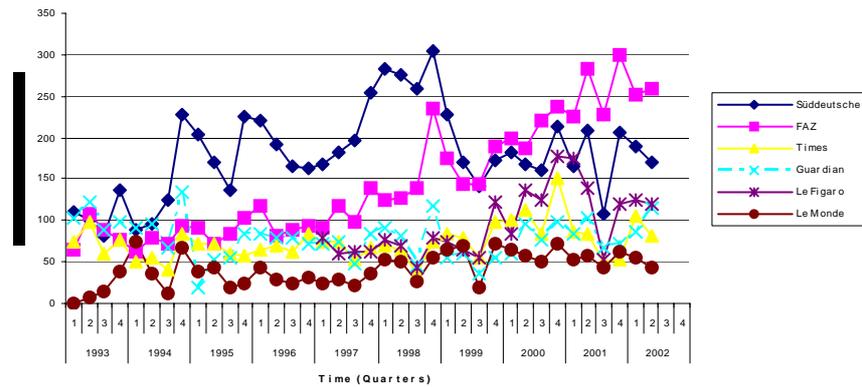
than EU level events with national repercussions.

Vertical Europeanization or EU-ization

One way of investigating the vertical Europeanization phenomenon is to ask whether EU themes are more frequently and prominently covered over time in national media. Here, the findings are moderately positive. My own research indicates that we have seen over the last ten years the emergence of a geographically and socially restricted public discourse in Brussels, revolving around a particular elites, including Brussels-based journalists, who read similar publications and can and do engage in transnational debates, not always, but frequently enough to call it cohesive (Meyer 2002). The number of accredited journalists working for EU 15 based news media has almost doubled between 1990 and 2002, from 333 to 638. It is, however, striking that correspondent figures until about 2000 rose particularly strongly for North European countries (especially Germany, UK and Netherlands), whereas the figure for Southern European countries showed at best a slight increase (particularly for French and Spanish media) (Meyer 2002).

At the aggregate level, however, the evolution of correspondent figures in Brussels testifies to the rising importance of Brussels on the national news agenda. With more resources the focus of EU coverage has changed and become more diverse. The typical Brussels story in the old days provided either very technical information or an anecdotal reflection of single market harmonisation, including the notorious straight bananas and square strawberries story. Today, Brussels is being continuously covered (except for the summer recess) and is making the headlines frequently. This is also reflected in my own longitudinal data based on a keyword-scanning analysis of headlines in quality newspapers in the UK, France and Germany.

Figure 2: Press Coverage with EU/ European Union in Headline since 1993



As figure 2 shows, all of the sampled press products have increased their coverage of the EU as a headline issue between 1993 and 2002, even if fluctuations in attention have been large. The increase was most pronounced for the German Conservative daily, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, but also the German Süddeutsche has substantially expanded its coverage of the EU. In the middle group are the French papers, the conservative Le Figaro and the left of centre Le Monde. Relatively weak increases could be seen in British newspaper coverage of the EU, which had to do with high national salience of the EU in British national politics in 1993, which was due to the divisions in the governing Tory Party over Europe.

More sophisticated data from media content analysis have been generated by two major research projects coordinated in Bremen and Berlin (Koopmans 2004a, Peters *et al.* forthcoming). They confirm and elaborate the general finding that EU-ization has clearly increased over time. The Bremen-Group examined newspaper coverage at various points in 1982, 1989, 1996 and 2004 and concluded that 'we can observe a clear trend of Europeanization, as the percentage of articles referring to European institutions increases up to at least 20 % in four out of five newspapers. Overall, the appearances of the European Union, in general, and of the European Commission increased more than three times from 1982 to 2003,

while the European Parliament remained at a relatively low level since 1989” (Peters et al, forthcoming, p. 9). The Berlin/Europub-Group found in their claims-making study even stronger empirical support for what they call ‘vertical Europeanization’ trends, but noted substantial differences across policy-fields, less so than between countries (Koopmans 2004a: 24). So one can safely assume that media awareness of the EU has increased and with it the scope and depth of public discourses about political issues relating to the EU.

Whether the degree of vertical Europeanization is sufficient or still inadequate if measured against the real importance of what is happening is a moot point, which cannot easily be answered without some objective indicator of what real importance is (it is sometimes argued that at least 50 percent of all national laws today originate from the EU). Peters et al. argue on the basis of their longitudinal data that the coverage of EU politics has increased from 2 percent to 10 percent between the 1980s and 1990s, but remains still less prominent than the overall coverage of international affairs, and is furthermore in no position ‘to challenge the dominance of debates about domestic politics’ (Peters *et al.* forthcoming: 9). More importantly, however, for the purposes of our thesis is that media coverage has been in a catching up mode, namely that due to a number of inertia factors, vertical Europeanization only set in with some delay after the momentous political decisions about the future evolution of the EU had been taken in 1987 and in 1991/2. We are therefore faced with an asynchronous Europeanization of media coverage in terms of quantitative.

4. Exploring Effects of Mediatization on Actors and Processes

The EU-Commission: intensified media scrutiny and structural problems to meet expectations

The first institutional victim of the mediatization of EU news has been the Santer-Commission, which resigned as a collegiate body in the early morning hours of 16 March 1999 amidst cheers from the large crowd of waiting journalists (Meyer 2002). This event marked a watershed in the relations between the European Commission and the news media and is the prime case for demonstrating the effects that mediatization can have on unprepared political institutions. Since the very beginning of European integration, individual journalists had tried to highlight cases of abuses of power and incompetence, which were not less frequent than in national political settings. Journalists interviewed told me about a number of attempts to highlight problems in the use of public money, as for instance relating to the Phare programme or the European year of Tourism of 1990, but before the late 1990s there was not much of a market for such reports, little support from editors at home and little follow up from other colleagues, be it from other fellow national or foreign papers. In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, papers on the centre-left of the political spectrum and audio-visual media found stories with a single-market angle simply boring. Prominent national dailies, like the French *Libération* had no correspondent in Brussels until 1994. Other papers had just one reporter in Brussels, who was supposed to cover not only the EC, but also NATO and Belgium politics. Few editors at the time understood how the EU worked and what it did, providing the small group of long-time Brussels correspondents with an interpretation monopoly.

The result of this constellation was threefold: Firstly, journalists had little incentive to go out and investigate actively on their own. Secondly, the few correspondents present enjoyed a more than privileged position vis-à-vis those with an interest in publicity, leading to a culture of 'spoon-feeding' through sources and collaboration with them. Finally, given the low priority attached to EU news, there was little competition between correspondents of the same nationality, which fostered the creation of dense national networks and relatively homogenous coverage. The national boundedness of scandals made it easy for those accused to either wait and ignore the allegations or

exert pressure on the journalists without having to fear a backlash. In the old days, being a Brussels journalists could be either very comfortable (if one was using the official sources) or very frustrating (if one was trying to write original or investigative stories). All of this changed gradually and with some delay through the commercialisation of EU news. As the value of EU news rose substantially with the increasing competences of the EU in many important policy fields, market forces have been brought to bear on the formerly sheltered circle of Eurofunctionaires and Eurojournalists. First of all, it affected the composition of the press corps, bringing in more, younger, and more critical journalists. This changed the way the Brussels press behaved, intensifying competition for news, strengthening the incentives for more critical coverage, and thus undermining the 'delicate plant syndrome' among European elites, which held that European integration was too fragile and precious a project to be subjected to public criticism. This was sometimes but not always a conscious editorial decision and journalistic brief. Without the personal, financial and legal support from editors or even proprietor, investigative journalism is very difficult to practice and to sustain once the pressure from all sides, including through lawsuits, mounts.

The wake-up call for many editors to support EU-related investigative journalism was the BSE crisis of 1996-1997, which provided all the ingredients for a pan-European headline story, but failed to gather the momentum it could have because of a lack of transnational support. In the second half of 1996, a small number of investigative journalists started their own investigations into the role of the European Commission and EU-comitology in playing-down potential health threats associated with the BSE epidemic in British cattle. However, the group of investigative journalists was very small and working in isolation from each other. The rest of the Brussels press corps adopted a wait-and-see approach, covering the new allegations as they were published but not actively investigating themselves. In the end, the Commission was left off the hook over the cover-up and negligence charge by the European Parliament with a 'conditional vote of censure'.

However, some of the journalists involved in the BSE investigations such as Quatremer from the French *Libération* or Nathe from *Focus*, learned the lesson from the BSE case and joined force when allegations about nepotism (Commissioner Cresson employed a close friend on a dubious EU contract as a scientific advisor) and mismanagement (in the *Echo* programme) surfaced. A small group of investigative journalists joined informally forces, partly out of frustration from the BSE crisis. Journalists from the Belgian *Sud Press* Group, *Focus*, *ARD*-German television), and French *Nouvel Observateur*, the British *Sunday Times* and French *Libération*, the Belgian *Le Soir*, and the British *Guardian* coordinated their coverage and exchanged new findings to provide a steady stream of allegations thereby keeping the issue on the Brussels news agenda. However, the majority within the press corps remained sceptical about the value of the story and alleged anti-European design on the part of the authors. Especially the French media were initially hostile against what was described as the ‘American-style smear stories against a former French Prime Minister’ as the correspondent of *Liberation* recount. Only when Cresson sued *Liberation* and the Commission reacted increasingly aggressively against the allegations, did opinion swing within the press corps.

Contrary to some accounts of the crisis, which attributed to the European Parliament the key role in the events (Lautz 1999), it was the advent of transnational investigative journalism in Brussels that launched and sustained the scandal against the initially overwhelming resistance from within the European Parliament and indeed the press corps itself, not to speak of the Council watching from the side-line. It is also worth emphasising that not the substance of the allegations led to the resignation, but the inability of the EU’s central institution to come to terms with the changes affecting the Brussels press corps as its first public as Baisnée called them (Baisnée 2000). The Committee of Independent experts would later strongly criticise the ‘growing reluctance among the members of the hierarchy to acknowledge their responsibility. It is becoming difficult to find anyone who has even the slightest sense of responsibility (...) It must be demonstrated, first and

foremost, by the Commissioners individually and the Commission as a body' (Committee of Independent Experts 1999).

The legacy of the Santer-Commission's resignation can be felt in Brussels and beyond even today. On the one hand, the European Commission has still not recovered from this blow to its self-confidence and is struggling to find its own voice and sense of direction again after a number of internal reforms to its management, personal policy, but also the way it communicates with the public introduced first by the Prodi-Commission and then steered in a different direction by the Barroso-Commission and its Communication Commissioner Mrs Wallstrom. The dilemma for the Commission is that its own structures and its dependence on member states hinder it still to conduct effective public communication, project a uniform message, and exercise political accountability in way that most journalists expect using the inappropriate benchmarks of the national systems. Thus, the Commission faces today not only a more critical and news-hungry press, where the motivations to report on scandals is no longer limited to British journalists, but also a more critical European Parliament, that has recognised, how it can use the instruments at its proposals to create media pressure on the Commission as a whole and individual Commissioners such as the Italian Candidate Rocco Buttiglioni, who was forced to resign before taking office despite the support from his government. Any attempt to explain the Commission's changing (and indeed weakening) role in the European politics, thus needs to take the mismatch arising from vertical Europeanization of public discourse and deeply ingrained institutional structures into account.

National governments: intensified competition and the reversal of blame-shifting

The main blind spot in the democratisation of EU governance through media scrutiny remains today the Council of Ministers, where national ministers are still not sufficiently held to account for their actions and those of their civil servants. The EU-Commission can be considered overrepresented

as compared to the Council of Ministers as far as their legal remit and competences in the decision-making process are concerned (Meyer 2003, Meyer 2004). This is also reflected in focus group data (OPTeM 2001), which indicates that the Council is by far the least well-known EU institution and that the role of national representatives is frequently misunderstood. Even though the Commission has been a victim of vertical Europeanization at one level, it has also benefited in another way, given that its position as the communication hub of Brussels has been strengthened vis-à-vis the Council and member state delegations. Until the mid-1990s Commission press officers would usually shy away from openly criticising member states over aspects of policy, according to Thierry Daman, the Commission's Deputy Spokesman under the Santer-Commission:

We used to be very cautious in our briefings about member states positions in the Council of Ministers. All these briefings were totally background and off-the-record. Even a couple of years ago we mentioned only "one delegation said this, the other said that" instead of naming the countries. We have changed that quite recently and are more open about criticising, for instance, France or Germany in our briefings (interview, June 1999, Brussels).

Mediatization has also motivated national EU delegations, particularly those of smaller states, to become more active as a way of compensating for their lack of weight in the Council. Until the mid-1990s, national representations focused their active presswork almost exclusively on national journalists. The ministers and their spokesperson have offered substantial assistance to their national press corps in Brussels, taking their needs such as their specific production deadlines, into account. Some national ministers such as Gordon Brown have explicitly demanded that only national journalists attend post-Council briefings and some national delegations have been slow and reluctant to reply to foreign journalists inquiries in contrast to their 'own' journalists. However, this monopolisation of the national press, and this neglect for the non-domestic press is being challenged. As more and more

sources, governmental and non-governmental, seek to influence EU news coverage, the transnational verification and comparison has become easier for journalists, diminishing the scope for national (and European) official spin:

It has become increasingly more difficult to tell journalists stories, because of cross-checking. Especially countries with minority languages were quite successful in packing their journalists, so that they bought the national spin [...] the Greek government under Papandreou practised a lot of official window-dressing, also the Portuguese and the Spanish. Today this is less viable, since other member states are more prepared to attack other national positions, making it easier for journalists to counter-check accounts (interview Council official, November 2003).

Member states are gradually losing their grip on their national contingents, while at the same time encouraging the trend further with the realisation that they need to be more proactive in approaching foreign journalists in order not to lose out at the negotiation table. Particularly smaller countries like the Netherlands, Ireland, or Finland, have discovered the power of the media to increase their influence on decision-making. Press officers increasingly approach foreign journalists to get their national position across on ecological taxes, capital gains tax or regional policy. In some cases such as the Agenda 2000 negotiations, pro-active press work can make a difference as one Dutch press officer said, citing the Netherlands lobbying in favour of zero budgetary growth as an example of how media lobbying paid off in shifting some governments' initial negotiations stances (interview Dutch official, July 1999).

As competition within the Brussels public space sharpens, some countries come under pressure not only to become more open, but also more transnational in approach. National decision-makers increasingly realise that EU news coverage does influence their perception in public, and secondly, that EU news coverage is perceived as an increasingly important factor for influencing decision-making outcomes. France is the prime example of a country, which had to realise that its traditional approach to the non-French

press was proving increasingly detrimental both to French policy interests, as well as to coverage at home. As a result, France decided to hire new and more press officers at the Permanent Representation and adopt a more proactive stance towards the non-French press. In Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder demonstrated his awareness of the potential of EU politics to backfire domestically by urging his Finance Minister to postpone the publication of the budget figures demanded by the EU Stability and Growth Pact for the time after the elections, thus preserving the public image of a prudent financial policy. In Britain, EU politics have assumed high public salience not least since the fall of Margaret Thatcher and John Major's slim majority government, which could be upset by every new Eurosceptic story filed by Brussels reporters. British reporters at the time joked that it would be useful to have key to automatically insert phrases in their copy such as 'in another move certain to enrage Eurosceptic backbenchers, Brussels decided that...' (Cropley 1997). The Blair government learnt that EU news had become too important to be ignored as a British official said:

In the past, the government, both ministers and press officers, didn't give a damn about the non-UK press. Now, Alistair Campbell recognises that a lot of coverage by the UK press both from here [Brussels] and from London is and can be affected from what gets written on the continent. So he is making an effort to speak to non-UK journalists who are less inclined to see things in terms of fourteen to one. From that coverage play it back on to the UK media (interview, July 1999).

Today as the Commission and other actors increasingly reveal and attack member states positions on EU issues as well as on national performance, national governments find themselves badly equipped to deal with such criticism as it spills-over into the national arena. The consequences are two-fold. First governments have started to pay more attention to EU decisions and exercise more control. As decision-making becomes increasingly and increasingly early mediatised, decision-making processes become ever more cumbersome, stop-and-go processes, where the

responsibility for taking a decision is passed up the hierarchies with the effect that European Council summits become overloaded and overpoliticised. Agreements are becoming more difficult to reach and outcomes are increasingly dysfunctional. However, once governments have agreed to a given measure (or were outvoted) and the decisions turns out to unpopular or raise certain problems for somebody (as it inevitably will in the post-Europeanised public debate), governments are tempted to blame outcomes on EU institutions or other actors. This brings two other problems. First, national governments are increasingly seen as powerless by their citizens, lowering trust in and satisfaction with political institutions, and secondly, national governments can no longer expect EU and other national actors not to hit back. Governments are increasingly becoming the victim of other governments and EU actors blame-shifting as scapegoating is turning from a bottom-up to a top-down affairs, as particularly the debate about the Stability and Growth Pact and the Lisbon Agenda demonstrates. Just as the Commission is unable to respond effectively to the expectations expressed via the media, so do national governments particularly in larger member states find it difficult to communicate to their media that their political autonomy has been limited in many policy areas by European integration and that one cannot always prevent undesirable outcomes.

Treaty Referenda: The boomerang effect of asynchronous visibility and national blame-shifting

The history of European integration is replete of crises, false starts, and temporary paralysis after governments' had cast vetoes and negative referenda blocked the ratification of Treaty amendments. However, the clear No votes by both the French and the Dutch indicate that the current crises may be related to qualitative shifts and the maturation of long-term trends, rather than one-off events that could be explained with reference to the peculiarities of each case. While there is clearly a strong case to differentiate between both cases, particularly regarding the intensity with which the debate was

conducted (high in France, little and late in the Netherlands), the post-referendum analysis by the Commission's Eurobarometer series (2005) also suggests that there is an important commonality: Few of the citizens had any particular problems with the constitutional treaty or any of its particular provisions per se, but had a whole host of more general grievances across a range of issue areas that they felt they could express *vis-à-vis their national government* by voting 'No'. Given the findings about the media coverage of the European Convention, the IGC and the referenda debates mentioned in the earlier section, it seems that both asynchronous and asymmetrical Europeanization can account for the increasing problems for governments to gain approval for treaty amendments in referenda.

First of all, the asynchronous element can be seen when citizens use the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction about past Treaty amendments and the way in which they were passed with little visibility and domestic consultation in most member states (except in Britain where the EU has been politicised for a long time). In the Netherlands, many citizens were clearly worried about past decisions to enlarge the European Union by 10 countries and to give Turkey candidate status. In France, some voters were concerned about EU legislation aimed at market liberalisation in the services and energy sector. The delayed visibility of EU decisions coupled with past attempts of government blame-shifting to Brussels has created the deeply ingrained impression among citizens of being constantly presented with a *fait accompli* as far as European politics is concerned. Saying 'No' even to perfectly sensible and empowering treaty amendments appears thus justified in the context of a general impression that public debate about decisions comes too late and is not linked to voting procedures to influence outcomes. Add to this the general findings of mediatisation literature, namely that trust in political institutions has decreased, political leaders at both European and domestic level are increasingly seen as arguing and appear less powerful than ever before. Furthermore, established benchmarks die hard, so it was in retrospect a mistake to call a wide-ranging Treaty amendment and consolidation

negotiated and signed by governments a constitution. The lack of direct electoral procedures at the European levels remains the key reasons why voter dissatisfaction can express itself still through referenda and elections on European issues.

The second problem for pro-Constitution campaigners was the lack of horizontal Europeanization. It hinders citizens from seeing the shortcomings of their own government's performance in terms of negotiated outcomes in a comparative perspective and thus better understand how certain EU decisions and in particular Treaty amendments are compromises and are necessarily not in all respects beneficial to everyone involved (Kurpas *et al.* 2005). As long as national events with a European dimension are covered by the media in this way, national referenda on EU Treaty amendments will become increasingly difficult to win, especially in a European Union of 25 where the most Eurosceptic countries had not even voted on the constitutional treaty. European public sphere research shows that media coverage often follows opportunities to make political choices and that referenda are much more intensely covered than European Parliament elections, because the latter is portrayed (increasingly inaccurately) as not being able to change policy outcomes. Either one changes the way in which citizens can influence the composition of the European Commission or particular policies through voting, or one has to invent new ways of turning national elections into European events. This could be done through synchronisation of the timetables or by conducting a single European-wide referendum on Treaty amendments. Especially the later option would transform the way in which campaigns are conducted and debates are framed as I have argued elsewhere (Meyer 2005b).

5. Conclusion: The Ambiguous Effects of Mediatisation

This paper has attempted to show how the literature on the political effects of mediatisation and the empirical findings of public sphere research can be combined to better understand the erosion of the EU's consensus culture over the last ten years. I have argued that Europeanization has been both asynchronous and asymmetrical with problematic repercussions for citizens' trust in and support for EU institutions, national governments, and further integration through Treaty amendments. Europeanization and mediatisation are thus linked in many ways. They help to explain why the Commission has had so many problems with regaining its former role in the integration process, why member states are increasingly finding it difficult to constructively engage in EU-level joint-problem solving and find it hard to communicate the outcomes, and finally, why it is becoming increasingly more difficult to win citizens support for EU Treaty amendments.

From an optimistic vantage point, it can be argued that mediatization can foster input legitimacy by increasing the opportunities for holding EU institutions accountable for their actions, by widening access and voice opportunity to civil society actors, and by promoting a greater awareness of the EU in the eyes of news media audiences/citizenry. Yet, all of this may have the perverse effect of aggravating the cognitive democratic deficit by highlighting the gap between the increasing political authority wielded in Brussels and the electoral mechanisms available to citizens to directly influence the selection of political personnel or the direction of particular policies. It may be the case that knowledge of the EU is usually associated with more support, but extensive media coverage of the EU does not always bring about more understanding of the EU as the example of Britain demonstrates. Moreover, there has been relatively little research on the extent to which mediatization causes a politicisation of European governance to a degree,

which would hinder an increasingly heterogeneous system to take decisions effectively. The risk is that the EU will enter a vicious circle that demands for the participation of ever more actors will increasingly limit its ability to solve common problems and thereby reduce its output legitimacy. But the more unpopular the EU becomes, the longer will be calls for giving European and national parliaments, citizens groups, the Council of the Regions etc, more say in decision-making.

Mediatization can be thus a double-edged sword, whose short term effects and long term consequences are hardly understood. Substantially more empirical research of a comparative nature will be needed to study the multi-faceted effects of the heightened role of the news media in the EU political system, differentiating effects across various dimensions including types of media and their role in the various national and regional arenas. But it is clear that there can and should be no return to technocratic politics, even if expertise and deliberation will still be needed (Radaelli 1999). The EU central institutions, national governments, and the involved interest groups will need to come to terms with the changed media environment, in which their actions and words will be intensely scrutinised. At the same time, mediatization does not necessarily lead to a loss in problem-solving capacity as long as there is sufficient intra-media competition and scrutiny. The problem here is that horizontal Europeanization (the rise in cross-national debates) is lagging far behind vertical Europeanization (debates between European and national level). Under these conditions mediatization may increase the risk of rising intra-EU polarisation within a political system, which is caught midway on the road from technocracy to a democratic political entity.

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Chapter 3

An online European public sphere? The Web and Europeanization of political communication in the EU¹

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Introduction

This paper begins with an outline of the way in which Europeanization of political communication and ‘European public sphere’ has been described and investigated during the last decade. We elaborate on our interpretation of the Europeanization of the public sphere, emphasizing that political actors, including citizens, are engaged in *communication about Europe*. We review a number of studies related to this interpretation. The first part of the paper ends with a discussion of the potential of the Web to contribute to or enhance a pan-European public space; here we argue that attention should be paid to communication about Europe by political actors as it is found on Web sites. In the second part of the paper, several research projects that focus on the Europeanization of political communication with direct reference to the Internet, specifically the World Wide Web, are presented. The research designs and outcomes of these studies are examined. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations for a more overarching empirical investigation of the concept of European public sphere within an Internet environment.

Europeanization of the public sphere

Against the background of the democratic deficit within the European Union, scholars recognise that the process of European integration must be accompanied by the Europeanization of political communication in order to overcome the lack of legitimacy and of popular involvement by European citizens with the EU (Koopmans & Pfetsch, 2003). The concept of public sphere, initially elaborated by Habermas in *The structural transformations of the public sphere* (1962/1989), has more recently begun to play a central role in discussions about European integration. In the last decade different models regarding the Europeanization of the public sphere have been presented by a variety of scholars, and several of these are outlined in this section. In general, scholars seem to agree that the mass media serve as the main venue for public representation of the Europeanization of the public sphere. The actual process of Europeanization of the public sphere is, however, lagging behind economic and political integration at the European level, according to Gerhards (2000).

Despite the considerable attention being paid to the idea of a European public sphere, it remains uncertain how the notion of 'Europeanization' is to be understood in relation to the concepts of public sphere and political communication. Not only is 'Europeanization' a contested notion – social scientists have been accused of 'concept stretching'² – but in the increasing body of academic literature the term 'Europeanization' has mainly been used for understanding and describing European transformations at the institutional and political level (Olsen, 2002). For example, Howell (2002: 2) conceptualises Europeanization "in its most explicit form as the process of downloading European Union directives, regulations and institutional structures to the domestic level." On the other hand, Howell also recognizes that this conceptualisation has been extended "in terms of up-loading to the EU, shared beliefs, informal and formal rules, discourses, identities and vertical and horizontal policy transfer" (Howell, 2002: 2).

In the context of Howell's second conceptualisation of Europeanization, Delanty and Rumford (2005) view Europeanization from a social constructivist approach, which gives particular weight to the way that the social is constructed under conditions not fixed or reducible to institutional structures. Delanty and Rumford account for the need to apply the theory of social constructivism to the process of 'Europeanization', because "it is simply not possible to explain major European transformation alone by reference to changes in the nature of statehood, such as sovereignty, citizenship and constitutions" (Delanty & Rumford, 2005: 2-3). They refer to Habermas (1987), who differentiates between system integration and social integration, the latter term referring to integration through the mediating of cultural and social structures, specifically through communicative and symbolic forms of integration (Delanty & Rumford, 2005: 10-11). McNeill also describes Europe as a social construction and argues that European integration "is something that operates discursively and symbolically, talked into being by politicians, bureaucrats and ordinary people, rather than being a simple description of the final state of an integration project" (McNeill, 2004: 36). In this context, McNeill, like many others (e.g. Gavin, 2000; Risse, 2003b; Sassatelli, 2002), refers to Europe as an 'imagined community', a notion introduced by Anderson (1991).

It is within this context that the scholarly debate on the (non-)existence of a European public sphere should be situated. As outlined in this section, the key issue seems to be whether one considers Europe and the process of Europeanization to be a social construction or merely an economic, political feature or the outcome of an institutional integration process. Related to this issue is the ongoing discussion about whether a European(ized) public sphere is in some sense separate but comparable to national public spheres. From this perspective, there is a direct link between the European public sphere and the EU institutional structure and decision-making process. As emphasized in Habermas' original definition of the public sphere (Habermas, 1989: 25) this conceptualization is seen as "the space within which the affairs of the state

could be subjected to public scrutiny” (Kunelius & Sparks, 2001: 11).

Early scholars, dealing with the possibility of a public sphere functioning at the European level, such as Gerhards (1993), Grimm (1995), Graham (1992), Kielmansegg (1996) and Schlesinger (1996; 1999), retain the original, Habermasian notion of the public sphere and are willing to consider the possibility of a European public sphere at the supra-national level only on the condition that Brussels becomes more of a political centre in which decisions are taken independently of national governments. These authors, to different degrees, place emphasis on the lack of political actors, such as political parties and interest groups, operating at the European level. They also refer to the lack of European-level mass media, to the diversity of languages across Europe, and to the absence of a collective European identity. Schlesinger, for example, considers the lack of a single European public problematic: “without the broad mass of European media consumers organized transnationally as common audiences or readerships, there is no basis for talking about a single European public for political communications” (Schlesinger, 1999: 276-277).

Other scholars have criticized this view as being excessively strict and based on an idealized notion of an essentially homogeneous national public sphere that is to be replicated at the European level (Eder, Kantner, & Trenz, 2000; Koopmans et al., 2004; Risse, 2002, 2003a; Van de Steeg, 2002, 2004). In this regard, early scholars such as Schlesinger, Gerhards and Grimm “base their conceptualisation on unsubstantiated assumptions concerning the character of the public sphere and its relation to key concepts such as language, the media system and the state’s frontiers” (Van de Steeg, Rauer, Rivet, & Risse, 2003: 2). Instead of considering a pre-existing community that almost automatically translates into a public sphere, Risse and Van de Steeg propose to consider public sphere as a discursive community, that emerges from debates on specific issues (Risse, 2002, 2003a; Risse & Van de Steeg, 2003; Van de Steeg et al., 2003).³ As Risse argues: “A European public sphere does not fall from heaven, and does not pre-exist outside social and

political discourse. Rather, it is being constructed through social and discursive practices creating a common horizon of reference and, at the same time, a transnational community of communication over issues that concern ‘us as Europeans’ rather than British, French, Germans or Dutch” (Risse, 2003a: 2). Similarly, Eder and Kantner place emphasis on the ‘parallelisation’, or transnationalization, of public debates across Europe as indicators of the Europeanization of national public spheres, and the development of a European public sphere (Eder & Kantner, 2000; Eder et al., 2000; see also: Koopmans et al., 2004).

Although it is not the intention here to take a position in this debate about the (non-) existence of a European public sphere – this seems to be essentially a matter of definition – we do agree with Risse and his colleagues that central to the process of the Europeanization of the public sphere, are the communicative interactions on common European issues or events, either directly or indirectly through media or Internet-based representations. Therefore, scholarly research should focus foremost on the extent to which people are engaged in *communication about Europe*.

Communicating about Europe – review of empirical studies

Few empirical studies have been conducted that measure elements of Europeanization of political communication and/or the public sphere. One study by Eder and Kantner does take on this challenge and the authors suggest a valuable point of departure (Eder & Kantner, 2000). For them, the key indicator of a shared public debate and, at the same time, of a European public sphere, is whether similar European issues are being simultaneously addressed in different national media. Eder and Kantner are inspired by Habermas’ notion of the public sphere as “a political public sphere which enables citizens to take positions at the same time on the same topics of the

same relevance” (Habermas, 1996: 190). Gerhards, extending the proposal made by Eder and Kantner, advocates a more normatively demanding stance towards what constitutes Europeanization (Gerhards, 2000). He argues that, in order for a process of Europeanization to take place, it is not only important that actors communicate about a European issue or event; they should also “evaluate it from a perspective that extends beyond one’s country and interest”. This position, formulated succinctly, emphasizes the point that Europeanization involves communication from a European perspective (Gerhards, 2000: 293).

In relation to these differences in interpretation, Risse and Van de Steeg, in a review of recent empirical studies, distinguish two approaches to measuring the Europeanization of political communication (Risse & Van de Steeg, 2003). The first essentially counts how often indicators such as Europe, European institutions and European affairs are mentioned in the mass media (Gerhards, 1993; Groothues, 2004; Hodess, 1997; Kevin, 2001). For example, De Vreese has investigated the extent to which news on European affairs is domestically focused, is focused on the EU level, or has an international, but non-EU focus (De Vreese, 2003).⁴ De Vreese considers indication of the focus of a news story a prerequisite for “any further advances in the discussion about the implications of news for, for example, a European public sphere” (De Vreese, 2003: 81). Similar, Semetko, De Vreese and Peter have investigated the extent to which European issues, problems, events and persons in national news are framed as ‘European’ or ‘domestic’ (Semetko, De Vreese, & Peter, 2000). They conclude that European and Brussels-based news has become more important in the last few years for national news media. European integration and the EU are not only present in news coverage of genuinely European issues, but are also increasingly an integral part of national political and economic coverage. Another example is the empirical investigation conducted by Trenz (2004), who differentiated between (1) European articles – articles that discuss European topics as the dominant issue, (2) Europeanized articles – articles that discuss national topics as the dominant issue with

reference to one or several European sub-issues, and (3) articles with a European referential frame – articles that discuss non-European issues but make different rhetorical references to Europe (Trenz, 2004: 293–294). Trenz concludes, like De Vreese, Risse and Van de Steeg that the issue salience (visibility) of European affairs in the mass media has increased during the last decade.

A second, more qualitative, approach concentrates on analysing media reporting on particular European issues (Eder & Kantner, 2000; Trenz, 2000; Van de Steeg, 2002, 2004). Studies using this approach observe that European issues are being discussed and reported in the various media across Europe at the same time, at similar levels of attention in the issue cycle of media reporting, and in a similar fashion. Risse and Van de Steeg argue that the framing of particular European themes in similar ways across national media lead to similar interpretative schemes and structures of meaning, which they consider an important pre-condition for the emergence of a “transnational community of communication” (Risse & Van de Steeg, 2003: 4). In their empirical research, Risse and Van de Steeg focus on the debate that emerged across Europe in 2000 regarding the rise of a right-wing populist party in Austria, Jörg Haider’s FPÖ, investigating the extent to which newspapers from various countries used similar frames of reference when addressing the so-called Haider issue (Risse & Van de Steeg, 2003; Van de Steeg et al., 2003). Risse and Van de Steeg discovered that similar meaning structures emerged across all 15 newspapers within five EU member states; of the 22 frames identified, six appeared frequently in every newspaper. Two of the frames were directly related to Europe: “Europe as a moral community” and “European legal standards” (Risse & Van de Steeg, 2003: 6–7). Risse and Van de Steeg consider these common collective understandings of what the EU is about a precondition for a viable European public sphere.

Like Risse and Van de Steeg, Trenz speaks of “the specific meanings, expectations and world views that are channelled through/conveyed by debates” as important indicators for the Europeanization of political

communication (Trenz, 2004: 308). He criticizes studies that only measure the visibility of European affairs in the news media, considering this a “minimalist indicator for the emergence of a European public sphere.” He argues that scholars should not only observe what is communicated, but also how and why it is communicated. Gavin makes a similar argument, stating that “we need not to think just about the level of prominence of European news; the way it portrays Europe’s political institutions and processes is also important” (Gavin, 2000: 369). It is, according to Trenz and colleagues (Eder, Kantner, & Trenz, 2002, 2000), the interpretative context, the ‘frame’ in which European topics are discussed in the media, which tells us whether and why an issue is relevant and should therefore be considered “the qualitative criteria for the existence of a European public sphere” (Trenz, 2004: 308-309). Eder, Kantner and Trenz identify three frames, or ‘patterns of interpretation’: whether and to what degree interests, identity and values are shared across European countries within the different national news media (Eder et al., 2000). In an analysis of news coverage of European governance and policy making during the year 2000, 85% of the articles in the sample contained an interests frame, 38% were coded in normative terms (values frame), and only 27% contained an identity frame. Typical issues which were linked to interest negotiations among Europeans were institutional reform, competition policy and the debate on the Euro. Few articles referred to purely normative or identity-based framings; 45% of the articles made use of multiple framings, raising issues in the context of interests and/or values and/or identities. The enlargement of the EU to include countries located in eastern Europe, for example, was predominantly framed in instrumental terms (interests), but was regularly linked to normative questions and questions of collective identity. The relationship between the EU and Turkey was mainly framed in identity-related terms (Trenz, 2004: 309-310).

Trenz also mentions a third analytical element of a (European) public sphere: the *connectivity* of communication within a given, but changeable, communicative context. This aspect corresponds to what others have referred

to as the ‘structure of communication’ (e.g. Koopmans & Erbe, 2004). In this regard, Koopmans and Pfetsch argue that “the spatial reach and boundaries of public communication can be determined by investigating patterns of communicative flows and assessing the relative density of public communication with and between different political spaces” (Koopmans & Pfetsch, 2003: 13).⁵ First, they define three levels of communication: the national public sphere, other national public spaces – which comprise the EU (candidate) member states, and the transnational, European political space – in which the European institutions and common policies are situated. The degree to which public spheres can be deemed national, transnational or European depends, according to Koopmans and colleagues, on the density of communicative linkages within and between these spaces (Koopmans & Pfetsch, 2003: 11–12). Accordingly, they speak of “horizontal Europeanization” when, for example, the German media report on what happens in other national public spaces, and of “vertical Europeanization” when communicative linkages are made between the national and the European public space (Koopmans & Erbe, 2004: 103–104). Second, in order to assess the role of the media as compared to other actors, they recommend moving “beyond the usual article-level types of content analysis to consider individual public claims by different collective actors” as a means to measure communicative linkages (Koopmans & Pfetsch, 2003: 13–14). Thus, their units of analysis are individual acts of political communication, which they term ‘public claims’.⁶ One of the main conclusions of the EUROPUB project was that for all countries included in the study (except the non-EU country Switzerland), the number of claims on European integration is higher in 2002 than in 1990. In the particular interest fields of ‘monetary politics’ and ‘agriculture’ the number of claims with a European scope (claims made by European-level actors – vertical Europeanization) increased from 40% and 36% respectively in 1990 to 78% and 61% in 2002. Within other issue fields only a modest increase in vertical Europeanization could be observed; no clear vertical tendencies could be found within fields in which the EU has very

little power and influence (e.g. education and pension issues). For horizontal Europeanization, they observed a slightly decreasing trend – from 18% across all countries in 1990 to 17% in 2002 (Koopmans et al., 2004).

Public sphere and the Internet

The Internet and, more specifically, the World Wide Web (WWW), are often said to have the potential to provide a public forum where everyone is able to obtain and maintain a virtual presence (e.g. Mitra & Cohen, 1999: 180). Especially for the politically concerned – interests groups, NGOs, political parties and candidates, governments and lay citizens – the Internet potentially serves as a space where information can be shared, issues discussed and where the interested can engage in political action. These elements are often considered important components of the political process and accordingly of the public sphere.⁷ Expectations have, however, lowered considerably since the rise and popularisation of the Internet in the 1990s. Early ‘cyber optimists’ like Rheingold (1993), who claimed that the Internet could fuel the process of democratisation through opportunities for deliberation and direct decision-making, have been succeeded by ‘cyber pessimists’ like Margolis & Resnick (2000), who warned that the Internet would widen the gap between the engaged and the apathetic. Scholars such as Norris (2000; 2001), Foot and Schneider (2002; Schneider & Foot, 2002) and Ward, Gibson and Lusoli (2003) take a more ‘middle ground’ position, suggesting that a balance can and should be found between these two extremes. Foot and Schneider stress the importance of independent political Web sites developed by national and state advocacy groups, civic organizations and mainstream and alternative press. In their research, they concentrate upon the online structure of politically oriented Web sites, and upon the political action such online structure facilitates: information gathering and persuasion, political education, political talk, voter mobilization

and candidate promotion (Foot & Schneider, 2002). Norris mentions the existence of Web sites prepared by minor and fringe parties, and considers these an asset for democracy, enabling citizens to learn more about the range of electoral choices than was previously possible (Norris, 2003). In this context, she speaks of the emergence of a 'virtual political system' (Norris, 2001: 95).

During recent years, more and more Web sites, produced by a variety of political actors, have become available to citizens of European countries for political communication on European issues and events. Especially in the case of European (political) issues and events, it seems important for political actors to maintain Web sites as a means of communication with their supporters and with the electorate at large, since these issues are generally less intensely covered by the mass media than are national political issues (Hix, 2005: 193; Thomassen & Schmitt, 1997). In this paper, it is argued that as with other mass media research, one could investigate the notion of Europeanization of the public sphere by looking at the amount, extent and form of communication about Europe on the Web sites of political actors. Moreover, it is assumed that political actors express particular perspectives when discussing European issues and events on their Web sites, and that, in doing so, these online documents provide indicators for the Europe envisioned. In this manner, 'interpretative reporting' of the mass media is circumvented (see also: Zimmermann & Koopmans, 2003); one can directly investigate the opinions and views of political actors themselves. Each actor type in the public sphere is then treated as an equal participant in the public sphere, including press organizations, who should not only be considered as conveyors of information, or channels of communication through which other political actors communicate with the public, but as political actors who raise their own concerns (Page, 1996; Pfetsch, 2004).

Empirical research: Europeanization of the public sphere and the Web

This section elaborates on empirical research conducted within the online environment of the Web, and is structured around the previously mentioned three analytical elements of the Europeanization of the public sphere: visibility of communication, interpretative context, and connectivity of communication.

Visibility of communication

Zimmermann and Koopmans (2003) investigated the online spheres of political communication found via search engines within six EU member states⁸ and Switzerland. The study analysed the textual information and the prominence of ‘claimants’ on Web sites selected by search engines when searching keywords within six general policy categories⁹ and one ‘European integration’ category. All search strings included ‘2002’ in order to secure material that was recent at the time of the study. For the seven countries included, 64% of the claimants turned out to be state actors; only 7% of the claims found on the Web sites were made by NGOs and social movement actors. Institutionalised interest groups and social and educational groups together made up 20% of the claimants (Zimmermann & Koopmans, 2003: 25).

Secondly, in order to determine the degree of Europeanization of political communication on the Internet, Zimmermann and Koopmans looked at various dimensions of transnationalism at the level of the Web site: (1) language used; (2) external linking to actors from other EU countries or from the EU level; (3) reference to actors and the information provided on the site from other EU countries or from the EU level; (4) reference to sources from other EU countries or from the EU level; (5) actors that become visible as ‘claimants’ on the site and their (European/national) scope; and (6)

the perceived (European/national) scope of the issues they address. For the entire sample,¹⁰ 23% of the cases included a European dimension, either because one of the actor types involved was organised at the European level or because the issue was seen in a European frame of reference. Zimmermann and Koopmans refer to this situation as ‘vertical Europeanization’ (Zimmermann & Koopmans, 2003: 41–42). They distinguished a second form of Europeanization: ‘horizontal Europeanization’, meaning the establishment of horizontal communicative linkages between EU member states. A considerably lower amount of this kind of Europeanization (10%) was found as compared to vertical Europeanization (Zimmermann & Koopmans, 2003: 42).

In contrast to Zimmermann and Koopmans, who investigated online communication with regard to general policy issues, Van Os, Vergeer and Jankowski studied the specific online communication about Europe provided by a variety of political actors on their Web sites in the context of the 2004 EP election (Van Os, Vergeer, & Jankowski, forthcoming 2006). This study focused on nine EU countries, including three new member states.¹¹ For each country, in the two months before the 2004 EP election, coders searched for sites they expected to be involved in the 2004 EP election campaign by consulting search engines, politically-oriented portals and other depositories of potential Web site addresses. Stratified samples of 100 sites were drawn from the collection of identified sites per country within five actor-type categories: candidates, political parties, governmental sites, NGOs & labour unions, and other actors. For each site, four features were coded as contributors to the Europeanization of the public sphere: ‘EP election content on front page’, ‘European content on front page’, ‘European content within the news section’ and ‘European content elsewhere on the site – within two links from the front page’. In this study only 67% of the Web sites within the national samples actually had EP election related content on their front pages at the time of the election. The researchers interpreted this limited referencing of the election as indicating that the election was not considered particularly

important for these political actors (Van Os, Vergeer & Jankowski, forthcoming 2006). NGOs and labour unions, and actors in the category 'other' were especially likely to score low on this feature: respectively 38% and 56%). However, when examining the second feature, 'European content on front page', which included not only EP election-related content, but also more general content on European issues, NGOs and labour unions scored much higher: 46% of the NGOs and labour unions provided this type of content on the front page. For all actor types together, the total was 73%. Apparently some actors considered Europe sufficiently important to note on their Web sites, but not the 2004 EP election. A possible explanation for this difference may be the negative reputation of the European Parliament regarding legitimacy and power in relation to the other EU governmental bodies.

Interpretative context

An exploratory investigation by Van Os (2005a, 2005b) is structured around the three frames or 'patterns of interpretation' identified by Eder, Kantner and Trezn (2000, 2002). Van Os investigated these frames in an online environment, focusing on Web sites maintained by the 11 largest French political parties in the context of the 2004 EP election. She argues, "it is through their Web sites that parties (as any other political actor) offer a particular perspective on European news, issues and events, suggesting whether and why discrete issues broadly concerning Europe are (or should be) socially and politically relevant"(Van Os, 2005a). French parties may raise a European issue in the context of particular interests, identities or values, being nationally oriented, European or existing within other social groups or nation states. Included in the study are online-only texts plus images that accompany the text, produced by the party especially for this outlet, in which they elaborate on their positions regarding Europe. Van Os concludes that most political parties emphasized European interests to some degree in their online communication, usually in combination with an indication of the benefits of

European integration for the French electorate (Van Os, 2005a). Furthermore, only about half of the political parties addressed the 2004 EP election and its issues in affective terminology (e.g., using words such as ‘we’ and ‘our’ when referring to Europe), thereby suggesting a European orientation; others firmly expressed a French, national identity. Universal values, such as democratic principles and governmental transparency, were stressed by almost all parties in relation to the EU.

In a subsequent paper, Van Os (2005b) compared the clusters of French parties along the political spectrum in that country. An additional indicator was included, adapted from work by Eder, Kantner and Trenz, which examined whether Europe is portrayed as advantageous/positive, or merely as disadvantageous/negative by parties in their online communication. This indicator provides a more qualitative measure of whether actors communicate from a Europeanized perspective and reflect a sense of ‘belonging’ to Europe. Variation was observed in emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages of European integration, as expressed by political parties; this may partially be explained by the position of the parties within the French political spectrum. Sovereign parties and the extreme right party *Front National* mainly framed Europe and European issues as disadvantageous, stressing national interests and national identity. Parties at the other end of the political spectrum, the (extreme) left parties, provided a more mixed picture: both positive and negative aspects of Europe were addressed; this was often done in combination with expression of a distinct group identity, such as that of the working class. The three ‘mainstream’ French political parties (including *Parti Socialiste*) generally approved a focus on EU economic development, such as the development of a pan-European internal market; as a result, these parties portrayed Europe mainly in a positive manner in their online communication; yet these parties communicated in a neutral, almost business-like way, about Europe, mainly stressing interests and without affective terminology. Finally, the French Green party site referred frequently to universal values. This party seems to put much emphasis on Europe as a moral community. In a very

general sense, this paper concludes with the suggestion that these findings show a certain degree of ‘feeling of belonging to Europe’ among some of the political parties in the sample, since these parties did communicate from a ‘Europeanized’ perspective (Van Os, 2005b: 15).

Connectivity of communication

In their 2004 report, Zimmermann, Koopmans and Schlecht investigated the EUROPUB conceptualisation of (horizontal versus vertical) Europeanization in an online environment by looking at hyperlink structures among the Web sites of a pre-selected group of social actors already active in the ‘offline’ world, as they related to the issues of agriculture, immigration and European integration in six EU member states and Switzerland.¹² The aim of this study was “to explore the degree to which newly emerged communicative and informative spaces on the Internet may contribute to a Europeanization of European public spheres” (Zimmermann, Koopmans, & Schlecht, 2004: 3). A Web crawler was employed that automatically collected information (hyperlinks) from the selected URLs. Each (outgoing) hyperlink was then examined and coded for country of actor, actor type, party/issue affiliation and organizational scope (local, national, EU, etc.). The results suggest, first of all, that 50% of all hyperlinks were directed to national actors, followed by actors from other countries (19%). European actors received only 14% of the total number of hyperlinks (N = 17,951). Furthermore, 68% of the hyperlinks provided by national actors directed visitors towards actors of the own country; only 11% of the hyperlinks provided by national actors directed visitors towards EU actors. Slightly more often hyperlinks to national actors from other countries (12%) were provided. More than half (54%) of the EU level actors provided hyperlinks to other EU level actors. According to Zimmermann, Koopmans and Schlecht, these figures suggest a low degree of horizontal Europeanization through hyperlinks. Forms of vertical Europeanization through hyperlinks from national actors to European actors were more developed, but strongly concentrated on state actors

(Zimmermann, Koopmans & Schlecht, 2004: 26). The authors also report on the density of the hyperlinked groups of actors. No significant hyperlink relations appeared to exist between the countries in the sample. Significant vertical relationships were, however, observed between the national and EU level, the latter being mainly EU institutions.

A preliminary report about the debate around the European constitution in France in 2005, as played out on the Internet, has been prepared by Ghitalla and Fouetillou (2005). In this study the assumption was made that those sites that address the same topics are the closest to each other in terms of hyperlinks. The objective was to obtain an overview of the political debate on the Web and to comprehend how the online debate on the European constitution was organized in terms of relations between the sites. Between 30 May and 1 June 2005, a Web crawler searched for Web site addresses by following hyperlinks present on other Web sites. The search started from a dozen sites identified by the researchers as addressing the European constitution. Some 12,000 sites were collected, of which more than 6000 were in English and thus excluded from the study. Ultimately, 5000 sites were accessed and 295 of those dealing with the European constitution were selected for further study. These sites were classified as 'YES-sites', 'NO-sites', 'sites that do not take a position', 'sites produced by institutions', and 'sites produced by media corporations'. Two-thirds of the sites were produced by actors taking a position against the European constitution ('NO-sites'). This is, the authors note, in contrast to the debate that emerged on the three largest television channels: in that medium 70% of the speakers claimed to be in favour of the European constitution. Ghitalla and Fouetillou suggest that "the Web has served as a public outlet for those who feel rejected by the mainstream mass media of television."¹³ They conclude that two, almost distinct, "competitive communities' emerged on the Web around the YES and NO camps. The NO camp turned out to be less open than the YES camp: 79% of the links provided on NO-sites were "intra-community", compared to 64% for the YES camp.

Conclusions & suggestions for future research

In this paper, various conceptualisations of, and empirical research about, Europeanization of the public sphere are presented. In our interpretation, we place emphasis on political actors, including citizens, communicating about Europe. There is a growing body of research focusing on the Europeanization of mass mediated communication, which investigates the visibility of European issues in the mass media, the interpretative context in which European issues are addressed and/or the structure of communication about Europe, but almost no research has been conducted to examine online communication / Internet-based representations on European issues.

In the second part of this paper we have reviewed the few studies available on the Europeanization of political communication on the World Wide Web. As far as we know, only two studies have focused on the visibility of European issues on the Web. These studies apply different sampling methods and, as a result, are not comparable. Although network analysis as an approach to analyse the Web is becoming popular, only two studies could be found that use this methodology to investigate communicative interaction across national boundaries within 'virtual' Europe. The focus and conclusions differ substantially: one study reports a concentration of state actors operating within a partially 'Europeanized' network of national and European level actors (Zimmermann, Koopmans & Schlecht, 2004); the other notes two distinct competitive communities of mainly national actors emerging around one particular European issue (Ghitalla & Fouetillou, 2005).

Finally, we report an exploratory investigation, conducted by the first author of this paper, of the interpretative context in which political actors address European issues on their Web sites. Although more research is needed, this study provides a model for further investigation. As previously mentioned, the cross-national appearance of meanings, expectations and worldviews of 'Europe' should be considered indicators of the

Europeanization of the public sphere. We intend to extend this study of the portrayal of Europe on the Web sites of French political parties to include political parties from other European countries. Less institutionalised actors will also be included: NGOs, interest groups and social movement organizations. In a subsequent study, we will focus on these actors in the context of the referendums on the European constitution held in France and the Netherlands (May-June 2005) and will investigate the portrayal of Europe within online communication. Much more research, in other words, is needed in order to assess the potential of the Web to incorporate or enhance a Europeanized public sphere. Research is needed within all three areas discussed in this paper: visibility of communication about Europe on the Web, the interpretative context in which European issues are addressed on Web sites of political actors, and the online structure of communication about Europe.

Notes

¹ A revised version of this paper will appear in "Mediating Europe: New Media, Mass Communications and the European Public Sphere", edited by Jackie Harisson and Bridgette Wessels.

² 'Concept stretching' is referred to by Buller and Gamble as "a practice where scholars choose a strategy of least resistance by adapting existing terms to news situations for which they were not designed or suited" (Buller & Gamble, 2002: 3)

³ Closa (2002) and De Beus (2002) make a similar argument and suggest that the (European) public sphere should be considered a social construction.

⁴ In this research, focus was determined by assessing "where does the story or actions it depicts (mainly) take place, in terms of prominence in the story or length" (De Vreese, 2003: 88).

⁵ Koopmans is co-ordinator of the EUROPUB project, see <http://europub.wz-berlin.de> for more information.

⁶ The EUROPUB project analyses the communication through which political actors make public demands on selected issues. A claim is defined as “an instance of strategic action in the public sphere” (Koopmans & Erbe, 2004: 98). A ‘claimant’ can make a claim on its own Web site, or on a Web site owned by an other actor.

⁷ These components have been considered in other studies; see, e.g., Tsagarousianou (1999), Jankowski and Van Selm (2000) and Van Os & Jankowski (2004).

⁸ The EU member states included in the study were: Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK.

⁹ The six categories were: monetary politics, agriculture, immigration, troops deployment, retirement & pension schemes, education.

¹⁰ Six policy categories are included here, the category ‘European integration’ is excluded.

¹¹ The countries included in this study were: Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and the UK.

¹² This study is also part of the EUROPUB project.

¹³ This text has been translated from French by the first author.

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Chapter 4

Forging Divergent and ‘Path Dependent’ Ways to Europe?: Political Communication over European Integration in the British and French Public Spheres¹

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Abstract

Our research question concerns Europeanization: how and to what extent does political communication now spread across the borders of two nation-states within Europe, and which actors drive such processes? A first aim is empirical and descriptive, whereas a second is explanatory: by identifying cross-national and actor-level similarities and differences, and by interpreting such findings, we may account for divergent or convergent experiences of transformation, either nationally, or by actor type. First, we look at the chain of communicative linkages between different levels of political institutions (EU, trans-European, foreign EU, national domestic) that are mobilised by collective actors and appear in the public spheres of the two countries. Here our contrast is between France, a founder member of the European project, and Britain, a latecomer, who has not joined integrative projects, such as monetary union. We refer to political theories of ‘path dependency’ (Pierson 2004) in order to account for cross-national differences and similarities. We examine whether the deeper institutional and discursive

engagement of France within the project of European political integration compared to Britain has led to differences in the two national patterns of political communication. Second, we focus more closely on the dynamics of actor-relationships within the two countries. Here we examine the type of cleavages (elite versus civil society; left versus right political parties), and the relationships (competitive/consensual, opponents/allies), between national collective actors who mobilise demands, and their positions on European integration (pro-European versus Eurosceptic).

Introduction

In 2005, the project of European integration appeared to have reached a crucial phase of development. The attempts to introduce a European Constitution foundered after popular rejections at referendums in two founder countries, France and the Netherlands, where political elites broadly supported adoption of the Constitution. At the very least such an occurrence, and the political responses to it, constituted another decisive step in the erosion of a permissive consensus over European integration. These events also created shockwaves in the national domestic politics of two countries that have traditionally placed themselves as 'pace-setters' at the centre of the common European project, as well as generally putting the brakes on advancing European integration. In Britain, such a national permissive consensus over European integration has been historically lacking. Had a referendum on the Constitution been called in Britain, a major political party, the Conservatives, would have opposed it, the Labour government would have provided lukewarm support, or sat on the fence, and the public would have most likely have voted resoundingly 'no'. Such an occurrence may have disappointed other member states, and the EU institutions, but it would not have surprised them, nor would it create a domestic political crisis on a similar scale, nor threaten the whole European project. This is largely because it would follow in the established tradition for Britain's relationship to Europe.

How did France and Britain arrive at such different political relationships to Europe, and how have such positions been maintained, and with what consequences for a common Europe? These are questions that we shall address here.

In the academy, much has been written on European integration and the processes which drive and constitute this political development, which links different political levels (national and supranational), and occurs across national borders. We discuss this literature on Europeanization and put forward a position that emphasises the importance of the transformative impact of political communication in the national public spheres. So far there has been relatively little empirically informed research on political communication over European integration. In this article, we attempt to unpack evidence on the nature and extent of emergent Europeanization trends, and the specific constellations of actor relationships which are driving them, by undertaking a comparative analysis of political communication over European integration in British and French public spheres. Britain and France are selected as two nation-states that entered into the common European project at different times and which have participated in the integration process to different degrees. We discuss these different historical national relationships to Europe, and refer to political theories of 'path dependency' (Pierson 2004) in order to account for cross-national differences and similarities.

Our empirical evidence on political communication allows us to examine patterns of convergence and divergence, both nationally, and across different actor types (state v civil society cleavages; political party cleavages) within a country, which we relate back to the degree of political involvement of each country, and each actor type, within the project of European integration. Our aim is to reach an empirically grounded understanding of the drivers and processes of Europeanization.

The empirical analysis is in two parts. First, we look at the chain of communicative linkages between different levels of political institutions (EU,

trans-European, foreign EU, national domestic) that are mobilised by collective actors and appear in the public spheres of the two countries. Here our contrast is between France, a founder member of the European project, and Britain, a latecomer, who has not joined integrative projects, such as the abolition of border controls by the EU's Schengen group and monetary union. We examine whether the deeper institutional and discursive engagement of France within the project of European political integration compared to Britain has led to differences in the two national patterns of political communication. Second, we focus more closely on the dynamics of actor-relationships within the two countries. Here we examine the type of cleavages (elite versus civil society; left versus right political parties), and the relationships (competitive/consensual, opponents/allies), between national collective actors who mobilise demands, and their positions on European integration (pro-European versus Eurosceptic).

Our central research question is: how and to what extent does political communication now spread across the borders of these two nation-states within Europe, and which actors drive such processes? A first aim is empirical and descriptive, whereas a second is explanatory: by identifying cross-national and actor-level similarities and differences, and interpreting such findings, we may account for divergent or convergent experiences of transformation, either nationally, or by actor type.

In the next section, we discuss Europeanization processes, before outlining insights from policy studies of European integration and path dependency theories, which lead us to expect cross-national differences. We then give a brief outline of Britain's and France's historical relationships to the European project, before outlining our methodological approach for political claims-making analysis. The subsequent two sections are an empirical analysis, which looks at the extent and type of Europeanized communication across political levels and borders, and then focuses on the political communication between different types of national collective actors, in the two public spheres. Finally, in the conclusion, we discuss the relevance of these findings

with regard to European integration and the path dependency thesis.

European Integration and Political Communication: Europeanization processes

Early pioneers of European integration, including Jean Monnet, saw their challenge as 'building Europe in the absence of Europeans'. They considered that citizens would transfer their loyalties, and that the emergent European polity would be considered legitimate, as the beneficial impacts of integration on key economic and social sectors were felt and experienced by people in the European region. Key early academic theories of European integration shared this optimism. Ernst Haas (1961: 196) a 'founding father' of European integration studies foresaw a 'process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new political centre'. This early functionalist vision of a European consensus over ideas, principles and interests, now appears outdated and idealistic. This holds to some extent for elite actors, but especially with regard to Europe's citizens, when voters remain stubbornly uninterested in European elections, and European identities clearly remain secondary to national forms of allegiance, loyalty and political understanding .

In spite of, or perhaps because of, this relative 'absence of Europeans', the advancement of European integration has been substantial over the last 50 years, driven by political elites. From the vantage point of 2005, the 'European Union (EU)' presides over a new regional order of 25 countries, and represents the world's most advanced example of regional cooperation and close interpenetration of societies, markets, and governments, both across borders, and between supranational and national institutions. Over time, the European institutions' influence over the policy agenda has been continuously but unevenly (across time and policy fields) extended. This has brought a

system of governance which has emerged at multiple levels to politically manage the changes, especially those brought about by the advancing transnationalisation of economies and markets across the region. However, the power of the EU's supranational political base has been limited by the unwillingness of some member state's governments to cede national sovereignty. Instead of a more federal type of political union, governance therefore occurs largely by intense policy co-operations through institutional arrangements which are largely 'intergovernmental' and conducted between member states (see, Tsoukalis 2003).

The term Europeanization is broadly, and differently, used, but can be generally considered to describe a spectrum from simple co-operations to full integration by government and non-government organisations, with universal or limited memberships, and covering a wide range of activities and policy fields, both within and across borders and across different political levels.² Since Haas' early functionalist vision, interpretative models for Europeanization have become more realistic and sensitive with regard to the ways that political actors and publics have both responded to, and become constitutive of, the emergent European polity through their actions. Nonetheless, most approaches, including neo-institutionalism (Stone Sweet, Sandholtz and Fligstein 2001), multi-level governance (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 1996), network governance (Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999) and political opportunities and contentious politics (Imig and Tarrow 2001), continue to share the basic premise that as the locus of institutional political power shifts to the European level, political actors will adapt themselves and their actions to this new playing field. Differences of opinion remain on the processes of political transformation that constitute Europeanization, regarding: the nature, form and impact of such changes, both within and across borders, and across different political levels; on their extent, direction and possible outcomes; and on the nature of relationships between institutions, discourses, norms and rules, and actors, which produce and reproduce them. In general, however, the orthodox view is that political

actors will shape their expectations and behaviour with regard to the institutional changes brought by advancing European integration.

In addition to viewing Europeanization as a form of institutional development involving primarily elite actors, it is important also to examine to what extent, and how, these emergent forms of politics are mobilised by other types of collective actors and mediated through public discourses to the broader citizenry. This has been recognised by recent studies of political conflict over European integration, focussing on political party cleavages (Hix and Lord 1997, Taggart 1998), the activities of interest groups (Wessels 2004), and 'contentious politics' and citizens' protest (McAdam and Marks 1996, Imig and Tarrow 2001, Statham and Gray 2005).³ In addition, several authors have emphasised that political communication and the construction of a *public sphere* is an essential prerequisite for a meaningful process of European integration. In this vein, Calhoun (2003: 243) states, 'If Europe is not merely a place but a space in which distinctively European relations are forged and European visions of the future enacted, then it depends on communication in public, as much as on a distinctively European culture, or political institution, or economy, or social networks'.⁴

Building on such insights, we consider that an understanding of the emergent processes of Europeanization, how they occur, the extent to which they have developed, and their likely outcome, requires study not only of political institutions, policy-making and elite actors, but also of the public sphere, and the transformation of political communication and action by collective actors.⁵ Our focus is on the public sphere, but it needs underlining that this basic idea is not functionalist, i.e. that an active participatory public sphere will occur automatically in response to the European integration of political institutions. To the extent that it emerges at all, a European public sphere will build itself, and be built, through the interactions of collective actors who politically engage over European issues, both between and within different levels of politics. For the idea of a 'public' sphere, it is also important to see to what extent such actions are mediated through the mass media and

rendered visible to citizens in the public domain, which potentially opens politics up to processes of wider public scrutiny and deliberation, and thereby confers a degree of legitimacy on decision-making.⁶ This approach views ‘the public’ as a mobilised actor (not just an aggregate of opinions measured through opinion polls) and political communication as a field of interaction for collective actors. Thus our research focuses on an examination of *Europeanization in the public sphere*, i.e., public acts of political communication over European integration that take place in, and thereby help to create, a space of relations among political actors, institutions and citizens.

Our general approach follows in the ‘institutionalist’ tradition, and specifically the political opportunity⁷ and contentious politics approach, which made the important contribution of systematically including the ‘mobilised public’ as a collective actor within the analysis of Europeanization processes (Imig and Tarrow 2001). Whereas Imig and Tarrow’s research focuses only on extreme examples by studying protest acts, however, we look at public acts of political communication over European integration by a full range of collective actors, including elites, which allows for a more complete examination.

In order not to walk into our comparison of political communication over European integration theoretically naked, we discuss factors that may lead us to expect cross-national variations in the next section. To gain insight on possible cross-national differences between Britain and France, we draw inspiration first from policy research on member states’ motives for and responses to Europeanization (Börzel 2002), and second from ‘path dependency’ approaches associated with historical institutionalism (Pierson 2000, 2004). In addition, ‘path dependency’ theory also stresses the importance of timing within political processes, that is, we argue, especially relevant in explaining nation-states’ approaches to European integration.

Towards Explaining Cross-national Differences in Europeanized Political Communication

As, we have outlined, the 'institutionalist' orthodoxy is to expect political actors to change their behaviour in response to the emergence of European-level institutional developments, however, it is still necessary to specify a basis for expectations of cross-national variation within such processes.⁸ A first insight for expectations of cross-national differences comes from studies of policy-making within the context of advancing Europeanization. Here a salient argument is that countries have a general incentive to 'upload' their policy arrangements to the European level, because this reduces the costs of having to 'download' common policies, nationally, and institutionally adapt to them. Thus states, given their distinct social, political and economic institutions, will generally promote policies that conform to their own 'national model' and the preferences of their constituencies (see especially Héri-tier 1996). As Börzel (2002: 194) puts it, in her 'two-way process' model for Europeanization: 'national executives strive to minimize the costs which the implementation of European norms and rules may impose on their home constituencies. Therefore they have a general incentive to upload their domestic policies to the European level. The better the fit between European and domestic policies, the lower the implementation costs at the national level. Since Member states have distinct institutions, they compete at the European level for policies that conform to their own interest and approach.' From this, national sectoral interests and established political institutions, norms and discourses for advancing them, which are strongly different between countries, are likely to lead to a high level of cross-national competition and negotiation between national elites over the substance and contents of common European policies. This competition over common European policies and practices transforms the context for political action both for national elites and interest groups. Elites

representing their nations externally, and attempting to legitimate their stances internally, plus collective actors with defined sectoral interests, will have different perceived interests within this new Europeanized context to those they had in the 'old' established politics. In addition, these 'new political opportunities' offered by European collaboration will not be evenly distributed across countries, nor will collective actors who have established themselves within a specific policy domain nationally necessarily be those who are best in a position to adapt and benefit from the new situation. Overall, considering the large number of countries required for reaching a working European consensus for an approach, and the high stakes involved due to potentially high adaptation and implementation costs, both for countries, and for specific collective actors within them, the potential for cross-national and internal political conflicts, over issues of European integration, is very high indeed.

In general, higher adaptation costs are likely to lead to conflictual approaches towards common EU policies, as actors perceive themselves as losing relative advantages from the existing situation. Conversely, lower adaptation costs are likely to lead to consensual approaches, as actors perceive new potential benefits in European integration. Facing the perceived impacts of a Europeanization that fits their national preference to a greater or lesser degree, elites acting on behalf of their national constituencies, and collective actors affected, are likely to adopt different strategies with regard to the new political context. Such strategies may be identified as: *pace-setting*, actively pushing a national policy preference to the European level to minimize adaptation costs; *foot-dragging*, blocking potentially costly EU policies to prevent them or receive compensation for implementation costs; and *fence-sitting*, neither systematically pushing, nor blocking policies, but building tactical coalitions with pace-setters and foot-draggers. These strategies were identified with regard to EU environmental policy-making (Börzel 2002), but are applicable, we argue, also with regard to European integration, in general, for countries, and for collective actors within a country.

Overall, the general logic for participating in a common European project is that extra benefits accrue through pooling activities (especially economic ones) with neighbouring countries, leading potentially to increased gains for all. Unlike markets and economic systems, however, political systems exhibit 'stickiness', that is features which appear to be especially resilient toward adaptation, even when such changes may be desirable or optimal. This feature of politics has been discussed in the literature on historical institutionalism as 'path dependency' (Pierson 2000, 2004). This provides a second insight for expectations of cross-national variation in Europeanization, with regard to timing.

In this view, existing political approaches, both 'national models' and those of established actors, will be especially resistant to change, since such approaches will have been built through processes of increasing returns and positive feedback – for which politics has an especially high propensity-toward the chosen 'path', which was selected initially from a multiple range of possible alternatives to become the enduring mode. As Pierson argues (2004:40), 'There are, then, compelling reasons to believe that political processes will often be marked by dynamics of increasing returns. Tendencies toward positive feedback characterize four processes central to political environments: collective action, institutional development, the exercise of authority, and social interpretation. In each case, there are reasons to anticipate that steps in a particular direction can trigger a self-reinforcing dynamic. This conclusion should be underlined.'⁹

Applying insights from 'path dependency' theory, the potential for cross-national differences in political conflicts over European integration becomes even more pronounced, especially when we consider the time dimension. Political approaches or 'paths' are defined by contingent key events, perhaps even small ones, which shape them initially at a crucial early formative time, but thereafter have large enduring and deep consequences. In this view, the timing of entry within a European collaboration will be an important factor in determining whether a country is in a position to shape

the common European 'path' towards its own national approach, or not. Timing of entry in relation to the process of institutional development becomes crucial.

A country involved in the early and formative stages of collaborations will have importantly shaped the substance and direction of European political institutions and policies, and the norms and discourses around them. In addition, its national political path will have been integrated within the joint European 'path' at an early contingent stage. By contrast, a country joining at a later stage, faces much higher hurdles of political adaptation and implementation, because it has established its own national political approach independently, and then has to join a European 'path' that is already established, and moving along a defined and institutionalised course. The European path is unlikely to fit the latecomer's national path well, unless the latecomer's established path is by chance complementary to this collective collaboration, or alternatively it is weakly established or underdeveloped as an institutional 'path', and therefore relatively open to change. At the time of entry into a common Europe, latecomer countries which are highly economically developed and politically institutionalised such as Britain, are likely to have a national political path that is more 'fixed' and harder to adapt, than countries which are relatively less developed economically, such as Ireland, or 'newer' politically and institutionally, such as Spain and Portugal, which have emerged more recently as liberal democracies from dictatorships. In addition, the latecomer countries are joining at a time after the formative phase when events could have had large contingent impacts on the general European path, and so are unlikely ever to 'catch up' the full impact of this relative advantage and have the opportunity to definitively re-direct a European collaboration, compared to founder countries. Again, relative to highly economically developed and highly politically institutionalised ones, latecomers with less established paths will have more chances of making European collaboration central to their own national path as adaptation processes are likely to become dynamic and self-reinforcing. Thus the

importance of timing of entry within the EU process along with the nature and level of national institutional development explains why countries are likely to start, and largely remain, in different positions with regard to their respective perceived incentives, advantages and interests in European integration. In addition, it gives insight into how such political positions become established and self-reinforcing over time.

Whereas the 'two-way process' model emphasises the importance of cross-national variation in the 'institutional fit' of national policy-making with the European-level for defining actors' political strategies, path dependency theories emphasise the importance of timing of entry within a European collaboration as a factor which strongly influences the costs of political adaptation. Applying these insights to the topic of European integration, one can make some general hypotheses about cross-national variations in a country's politics.

First, the time of entry into the common European project, and the conditions and basis of agreement forming that decision, will have crucial contingent effects on the future path of a country with regard to European integration. This holds both in its relationship to other countries (EU and non-EU) and the supranational EU, and internally in the way that its politics, constituted by its relationships between political parties, and elites and civil society actors, deals with the potential adaptation changes brought by Europeanization. In general, latecomers with a high level of political institutionalisation and economic development, such as Britain, will face higher adaptation and implementation costs, and are more likely to respond to projects of advancing European integration as 'fence-sitters' or 'foot-draggers', when compared to founder countries, such as France. This strategy is likely to become self-reinforcing, leading to differences also with other latecomer countries which are less politically institutionally and economically developed at the time of entry, and so more able to dynamically adapt to European collaborations than Britain. In contrast to the latecomers, France's national political institutionalisation has proceeded in tandem with shaping the

common European political collaboration from its earliest formative stage, and so is likely to face low costs of adaptation that will have become mutually reinforcing as Europe has continued along its path of development. Thus, compared to Britain, France is much more likely to be a 'pace-setter' for European integration.¹⁰

Facing fewer potential hurdles of political adaptation, French political elites are more likely to take a consensual and favourable stance toward European integration and European institutions and policies. Within France this is likely to be reflected in less conflict between political parties, and between state and civil society actors over Europe, since political understandings will have been constructed within an environment where national interests have been formative in shaping and defining European ones. Perceptions of the relative advantages and benefits of European collaboration will have been mutually self-reinforcing among French political actors.¹¹ In addition, this longer standing involvement within European political collaboration, will not only have shaped national institutions, rules, norms, and discourses, but will also lead to a deeper and more consensual level of political engagement by French political actors with supranational European institutions. One would therefore expect to find more forms of political communication that directly address EU institutions in France.

By contrast, British elites will have historically faced high hurdles of political adaptation in trying to upload their political models to Europe. This will have led to cross-national conflicts with elites from other member states, as well as EU institutions, since there will have been considerable difficulties in 'fitting' the perceived established British policy interests and approaches within a pre-existing European model. In addition, British elites will have faced the difficult task of legitimating European integration to their own domestic collective actors, who will in many cases have been facing higher adaptation costs than their French counterparts. Such political dynamics are likely to have increased elite uncertainties and cleavages over the European project, and be expressed through domestic politics, leading to higher levels of

political party competition over Europe, as well as legitimating political understandings questioning the national value of European integration and which are less favourable to European integration in the wider public domain. Thus, for example, British Prime Minister Wilson required the public legitimacy of a referendum vote to remain within Europe, then known as the Common Market, soon after joining, at a time when the French public was unheard and permissive over Europe. Overall, compared to France, for Britain one would expect a form of political communication where Europe is a contested issue within national politics, with relatively less consensual and direct engagement with European institutions.

A further point to make concerns the emergence of European institutions themselves as potentially powerful actors shaping domestic national politics. In general, the deeper the power and influence of supranational European institutions, rules, norms and discourses, the more one would expect similarities to be produced cross-nationally across countries. However, following our previous discussion, the longer and deeper institutional involvement of France compared to Britain, and closer institutional 'fit' with and within Europe, would make it likely that the EU has a greater presence and legitimacy as an actor in French politics than in British. Such an impact is likely to have been self-reinforcing.

Here we have outlined some general basic hypotheses regarding cross-national variations in the contents and direction of political communication over Europe in Britain and France. Before our empirical analysis, we shall first add some contextual detail by giving a brief historical account of their divergent political views of European collaboration.

Britain and France: Diverging Visions for Europe¹²

If we are to compare their different national trajectories, and the political communication of their elites and citizens with regard to European integration, it is worth briefly recounting historically Britain's and France's

different starting points for engagement in the European project. The idea of European co-operation initially bore fruit in 1950, a few years after the experience of a devastating war, with the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community, between France, Germany, Italy and the three Benelux countries. In many ways it was an economic means to a political end, and in particular, an attempt by France and Germany to resolve their bellicose history, by establishing interdependence for, and integrating, their key strategic productive sectors. It is not surprising that national elites chose to establish this regional co-operation and transnational bridge-building away from the gaze of their citizens, given the still bitter experiences of a war waged through ideologies of nationalism. In addition, the surviving liberal democracies of continental Europe were still in a precarious condition, institutionally weak, and culturally recovering from the combined traumas of occupation and guilt of Nazi collaboration, and attempting to reconstitute their legitimacy around national political myths of resistance. Thus elite-driven technocratic solutions designed to ensure regional peace and economic stability were accepted relatively unquestioningly by Europe's war-weary publics. This permissive consensus toward elite-led European co-operation was underwritten, and subsequently politically legitimated, by the remarkable period of economic growth which the six founder countries experienced until the oil shock of the early 1970s.

Across the Channel, flush with the victors' enthusiasm and psychologically unburdened by the stigma of Nazi occupation, the post-war British electorate voted to power a Labour government with a landslide majority to manage a national social transformation away from the class inequalities of the pre-war era. Internationally, however, Britain's delusions of world political influence through empire and commonwealth were abruptly ended by the emergence of two competing superpowers the USA and the USSR.

In contrast to their French counterparts, who adopted a stance of national pride in becoming a leading architect of Europe, British elites initially

remained uninterested and failed to see the potential significance of the first substantive inter-state co-operations in continental Europe. However, after the political and economic realities of a changed post-colonial world set in, the United Kingdom finally joined the European Economic Community in the first enlargement in 1973, along with Denmark and Ireland. A couple of years later this measure was given the legitimacy of support by a popular referendum following Prime Minister Wilson's advice and voting against withdrawal. Britain was in large part attracted by the 'economic miracle' of continental Europe which had been far less evident on the island. Delayed for some years from joining the economic club by French President de Gaulle's veto, however, British elites felt aggrieved with an overall package deal which required them to accept Community legislation as a complete package. Even sections of the political elite who promoted entry joined were unsatisfied by terms which appeared skewed towards the interests of founder members, a factor which has subsequently shaped political views on Britain's relationship to Europe.

Over the last few decades characterised by rapidly advancing Europeanization, initially of markets followed by an emergent multi-levelled political institutional system of governance, France and Britain have supported strikingly different visions and commitments to the project of European integration, and of what Europe and the European Union should be. Although, like France, a major player in the European Union, British elites have adopted a more pragmatic, cost-benefit and 'ad hoc' approach to co-operation and participation, when compared to the expressed political idealism of their French counterparts. British elites, similar to their fellow late-comers, the Danes, have consistently been resistant and have applied logics of national self-interest to the new proposals for advancing integration that have evolved over the subsequent years. For the British elites, the advancing European Union has been perceived more as a neo-liberal market project than as a political entity. British Governments have advocated a single European market but have generally opposed any measures that would limit

national sovereignty over deciding welfare issues, defence and foreign policy, and immigration. Even when incremental change and increased cooperation has advanced in such policy fields, the British have always pushed for ‘intergovernmentalist’ not ‘federalist’ solutions, retained as much national autonomy as possible, and when projects nonetheless advanced, gone for national opt-out clauses, as in the cases of the common borders of the Schengen Accord, the Social Chapter (belatedly joined by Blair’s Labour government), and European Monetary Union. In part, this has been because German-Franco led policies, for example, with regard to social welfare and employment, have been perceived as not suitable or fitting for the more liberalised structure of the British economy. British elites have had difficulty visualising themselves at the core of the European integration processes. This has also been reflected in Britain’s relationship to Europe which over time has been an issue contested within and between the main political parties of left and right, both in government and opposition. Lastly, regarding the public, Britons regularly appear at the end of the Eurobarometer opinion poll scale which sees least value in European collaboration and is most opposed to it.

For France, the idea of being central to Europe is a core element of post war national political identity in the postcolonial era. French leaders have seen themselves as important architects of European integration. At a time when British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was using a veto to enforce a ‘rebate’ for British contributions to Europe, a Frenchman was at the Head of the European Commission ‘relaunching Europe’ backed by a French President and German Chancellor. It is not hard to envisage that French ideas became more central to shaping this period of European institutional development just as they had laid out the initial blueprint for European collaboration. This has allowed a mainstream political party consensus over European collaboration, which has shunted opposition to marginal political parties and organisations at the political fringes. It has also occurred within a context where opinion polls have depicted the French public as perceiving the benefits of European collaboration, and although this has declined over

time, the French have remained distinctly more in favour of Europe than the British.

The case of European Monetary Union is illustrative. European Monetary Union (EMU) was an elite decision taken on the basis of a political rather than economic rationale, described by German Chancellor Kohl as a matter of 'war and peace in the 21st century'. It was a German response to French pressure, with Germany underlining its continued deep commitment to Franco-German steering of the European project, after German unification, an event that non-German European states had greeted with less enthusiasm (Tsoukalis 2003: 146-7). However, EMU was not without costs and substantive changes. It has required important substantive transfers of national sovereignty to the European Union, and its Central Bank, not least the ability to use monetary policy and the exchange rate as instruments of economic policies. For France, it also meant replacing the Franc, a much-loved symbol of the republic. That French political elites were prepared to relinquish such national symbols and powers underlines the depth of their commitment to advancing European integration. The French political elite continue to be the central driving force of integration, and their vision remains of Europe as a political union, not simply a single market. It is within this European political union that they see French national interests as being best served. This contrasts with the British government, who despite having her most politically Pro-European Prime Minister of modern times, could still not envisage setting a date for a national referendum on joining EMU in 2005. Thus, whilst Britain opted out of EMU as a 'foot-dragger' and 'fence-sitter', France, along with Germany, were 'pace-setters' leading the twelve EU states which replaced their national currencies with a single currency, the Euro, one of the most substantial and dramatic steps toward integration.

The influence of French ideas within the political ideas of the European Union's institutions is demonstrated by a French former leader Giscard D'Estaing heading the Convention on the Future of Europe. This attempt to draw up a European Constitution in the wake of an expansion of European

Union membership to twenty five countries was once more a Franco-German initiative, the potential merits of which British elites were significantly more sceptical of. This time, and in contrast to the narrow referendum victory supporting the adoption of the Euro, the French citizens significantly voted against the Constitution in 2005, an action which, along with a similar rejection in the Netherlands, has thrown both the national identity over the French relationship to Europe, as well as the European Union's own political identity, into question. A similar referendum rejection in Britain, would have been expected, but would also have been in line with the established British approach to Europe, and so less threatening to the heart of the European project as a whole. Overall, France has been a 'pace-setter' for advancing European integration, whereas Britain has been a 'foot-dragger' and 'fence-sitter'. In the empirical section, we examine such cross-national differences in political communication over Europe in more detail. First, however, we present our method.

Methodological Approach: Political Claims-making Analysis

Political claims-making analysis¹³ is an established approach for examining the public dimension of politics (Koopmans and Statham 1999b, Koopmans et al 2005). By making claims, collective actors strategically attempt to make their political demands appear more publicly rational and legitimate than those of their opponents, thereby potentially opening up policy decisions to wider deliberation processes. *An instance of political claims-making is a unit of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of intentional and public acts which articulate political demands, decisions, implementations, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors in a policy field.* Not all collective actors mobilize political demands, some lack the material and

symbolic resources to do so, whereas others perceive their interests to be sufficiently represented thus making mobilization seem unnecessary. In addition, not all claims-making acts reach the public domain, since the mass media selects and reports on those events, claimants and opinions which by definition have crossed a threshold of public significance as politically important issues. Claims-making analysis is an appropriate method for our purposes, because it provides empirical information on the actor-relationships which are visibly seen within the public sphere to be engaged in driving, resisting, or simply being part of the politics of European integration. It provides information on the actors carrying the project of European integration, the nature of their relationships which do so, as well as an overall birds-eye 'view' of the politics over European integration that is made open and visible to citizens in a national public domain.

We draw our original samples of political claims-making over European integration in Britain and France, from newspaper sources. Although there are other forms of intermediary public sphere, and arenas where politics is opened to the citizenry, we consider the national mass media (in this case the press) to be the most appropriate for our purposes, since it is the broadest and most general forum for political debates, the most publicly accessible for citizens, and where significant political events of the day will be selected and reported by journalists.

Our data is taken from three years 1990, 1995, 2000 and drawn from editions of *The Guardian* and *The Times*, for Britain, and *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, for France.¹⁴ We decided to retrieve our cases of claims-making over European integration from a sample determined by specific days that were selected in advance at regular time intervals within each year. This retrieval strategy was considered to be preferable to sampling around key events of European debate –e.g. the controversy around Haider in Austria, or the launch of European Monetary Union. Our findings will therefore have more chance of representing general trends (cross-nationally, nationally, and across time) regarding the Europeanization of claims-making in the public sphere,

instead of telling us about specific event-driven occurrences whose importance, though significant, may be limited within a specific policy field or event, or within a contingent time period.¹⁵

Acts were included in the data if they involved demands, criticisms, or proposals related to the regulation or evaluation of events in relation to European integration, irrespective of which actor made the claim.¹⁶ Regarding territorial criteria, we included acts in the United Kingdom and France, respectively, and those in the European Union/EEC, even if they were made by foreign or supranational actors or addressed to foreign or supranational authorities. Coded actors include civil society groups, such as employers and trade unions, NGOs, and European campaign organisations, and also political parties and state actors, such as the courts, legislatures, governments and supranational institutions. To give an idea of the type of information coded, claims-making acts are broken down into seven elements, for each of which a number of variables are coded (See Koopmans 2002 for codebook):

1. Location of claim in time and space (WHEN and WHERE is the claim made?)
2. Actor making claim (WHO makes the claim?)
3. Form of claim (HOW is the claim inserted in the public sphere?)
4. Addressee of claim (AT WHOM is the claim directed?)
5. Substantive issue of claim (WHAT is the claim about?)
6. Object actor: who would be affected by the claim if it were realised (FOR/AGAINST WHOM?)
7. Justification for claim (WHY should this action be undertaken?)

In the next section, we compare claims-making over European integration at the general level, by examining the structure of claims-making in the British and French public spheres, before focussing more directly on cleavages between national actors over European integration, by examining state/civil society relationships, and political party relationships.

Political Communication over European integration in British and French Public Spheres¹⁷

The first step of our analysis is to determine whether the overall patterns of political communication that appear in the British public sphere are similar to or different from those in France, a country with a deeper and longer institutional involvement in European integration. To make the step toward analysis, it is necessary to see claims-making acts as *communicative links*. Claims-making acts communicatively link different political levels (EU supranational, EU foreign, national domestic) and different types of actors (e.g. elites/civil society; left/right political parties) and express different purposeful views on European integration (pro-/anti-) which may be framed in different ways (political, economic, cultural). Here we compare to what extent, and how, the political claims mobilised by collective actors communicatively link across the different levels of polities (supranational, foreign national, domestic national). A prime concern is the extent to which claims link actors beyond the geopolitical boundaries of a nation-state, or not.

Claims-making acts which link different levels of polities are important carriers of Europeanization processes in national public spheres. With regard to links across different levels of polity, hypothetically a claims-making act may construct a *vertical* relationship between the domestic nation-state and the supranational European institutions, for example, when a Prime Minister, President or pressure group makes a 'bottom-up' demand on EU institutions with respect to a concern about policy, or alternatively, when a European institution demands 'top-down' that a national government changes its policy with respect to a European issue. Second, a claims-making act may constitute a *horizontal* relationship between actors within different EU member states, for example, when the French government criticises the British for their lack of commitment to the European Constitution. Another form of claims-making remains *national*, comprising those demands about Europe which are between

national actors and remain within the boundaries of the nation-state. Here for example, the British Conservative Party may criticise the Labour Party over its pro-European stance, or alternatively, French farmers may demand that their national government protects their subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy in European negotiations. By aggregating the different types of claims-making, it becomes possible to see the similarities and differences between the British and French public spheres, in their respective political communications over European integration. We now map and compare the *communicative links*, both within and between different polities, which are produced by claims-making in the two national public spheres.

Figure 1 shows nine possible types of claims-making relationships that may occur between collective actors across three different levels of polity. It does this by relating claims-makers from three political levels (national domestic, foreign, supranational) to their addressees, the institutional actors on whom demands are made, from three political levels (national domestic, foreign, supranational). Each of the nine cells is a possible communicative relationship between political actors that carries a specific form of Europeanization.

Figure 1: Possible types of political communication in claims-making acts over issues of European integration in national public spheres

	National Domestic Addressee	Foreign Addressee from other EU country	EU/EEC Supranational addressee
National Domestic Claims-maker	(a) National claims-making over Europe (domestic actors target domestic actors)	(c) Horizontal claims-making on foreign EU actors (domestic actors target actors from other EU states)	(e) Bottom-up vertical claims-making on EU/EEC (domestic actors target EU)
Foreign Claims-maker from other EU country	(b) Horizontal claims-making by foreign EU actors (actors from other EU states target domestic actors)	<i>(f) 'External' transnational horizontal claims-making between actors from foreign EU states in domestic national public sphere</i>	<i>(h) 'External' bottom up claims-making on EU/EEC actors in national domestic public sphere</i>
EU/EEC Supranational Claims-maker	(d) Top-down vertical claims-making by EU/EEC (EU actors target domestic actors)	<i>(g) 'External' top-down claims-making by EU/EEC on actors from foreign EU states in domestic national public sphere</i>	<i>(i) 'External' supranational claims-making between EU/EEC in domestic national public sphere</i>

'Active' types where national domestic actors are purposefully engaged as either a claims-maker or an addressee are in normal type, 'passive' types both by and on collective actors 'external' to the nation-state are in italics.

Another important distinction to make is between those types of claims-making which involve a national domestic actor as either a claims-maker or an addressee, and those which are 'external' to the receiving public sphere and which are communicative interactions between collective actors

who are outside the domestic nation-state. We propose here to focus principally on the five claims-making relationships in which national domestic actors are actively engaged as claims-makers or addressees ((a), (b), (c), (d), (e)). Such types of claims-making can be expected to have a more *active* transformative impact as carriers of Europeanization trends on the domestic national public sphere, because they purposefully engage national domestic actors into communicative political relationships over Europe. Conversely, the four ‘external’ types of claims-making represent the reporting in British and French public spheres of the supranational and transnational interactions of ‘outsiders’, i.e., foreign and supranational actors (cells in italics). Such cases are more *passive* in that they do not engage national actors, but simply report on and render visible the communication of these ‘outsiders’ over European integration to national publics. They will be discussed secondarily.

Thus the five possible types of more ‘active’ claims-making in which national actors are engaged are:

(a) *National claims-making over Europe* – Here national actors mobilise demands over European issues on other national actors. This is evidence for ‘internalised’ national political debates over European issues, including contestation, as a form of Europeanization.

(b) *Horizontal claims-making by foreign actors from European member states on domestic actors* – Here actors from other EU member states enter national domestic politics demanding responses over European issues from national domestic actors. This contributes to Europeanization by linking the national politics of two or more EU states.

(c) *Horizontal claims-making by national actors on other EU member states* – This is the reverse of (b). Demands are mobilised by national actors on actors from other EU member states over European issues. These horizontal types of claims-making ((b) and (c)) depict a Europe of nation-states whose politics are being more closely communicatively interwoven with one another by conflict over, or collaboration in, European integration.

(d) *Top-down vertical claims-making by EU institutions on national actors* – Supranational European political institutions are the driving force behind Europeanization by calling for a political response from national domestic actors over issues of European integration. This creates a top-down vertical Europeanising relationship from the supranational to the national domestic polity.

(e) *Bottom-up vertical claims-making by national domestic actors on EU institutions* – This is the reverse of (d), where political claims-making by national actors calls on EU supranational institutions to respond to demands over Europe.

Each of the possible types of claims-making represents a relationship between actors that constitutes a specific form of Europeanised political communication. This means that by aggregating the cases of claims-making across the different types, we are able to draw up an overall picture of the patterns of communicative relationships in a national public sphere.

Of the five possible communicative relationships, horizontal and vertical claims-making carries forms of Europeanised communication which creates links between the domestic nation-state, and states beyond national borders transnationally (b) and (c), and the EU supranational institutions (d) and (e), respectively. Such forms of communication across borders and levels of polities can be considered a more purely *open* variant of Europeanised communication. In such cases, the national public sphere visibly carries direct supranational and transnational interactions between actors across EU, foreign member-state, and national domestic politics. By comparison, national claims-making over Europe (a) is a more *closed* variant, where Europe becomes a topic for politics between actors only within the national domestic framework, and without carrying any direct transnational or supranational communicative links.

This closed and indirect form of claims-making over Europe is still Europeanised communication, and following those historians who have

emphasised conflict in the formation of the nation-state (e.g., Tilly 1978), one could even argue that contestation within a country, and the increasing references to Europe it brings, might contribute to future European integration processes. From our point of view, however, the crucial difference is that ‘nationalised’ communication over Europe –as it presently *is*, not what it may arguably bring in the future– constitutes, and makes visible in the public sphere, a less direct communicative engagement with the supranational EU institutions (vertical), and with other foreign polities (horizontal). This means, for example, that if the EU is not visibly seen to make political demands, or have demands directed on it, then European institutions are not being directly ‘opened up’ in a public sphere to national collective actors and the wider citizenry for processes of political engagement and deliberation. Instead European politics becomes indirect and ‘nationalised’, becoming apparent and mediated only through competition between domestic national actors. *Clearly, this difference between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ communicative relationships is important, because ‘open’ links constitutes ‘Europeanization’ as a multi-levelling of collective actors and political institutions, a new form of political communication, whereas ‘closed’ links is simply a case of ‘new wine in old bottles’, Europe as an issue within the existing relationships of national collective actors and political institutions.*

Turning to our analysis, Tables 1a and 1b show distributions across the types of claims-making for Britain and France, respectively.¹⁸ In addition to the share of each claims-making type, we show a score for ‘position’ over European integration which ranges from -1 to +1. A -1 score is attributed to a claim against a deepening of the European integration process, or which implies restrictions in the rights and position of European institutions and regulations (or a rejection of extensions). Conversely, +1 is for a claim in favour of deepening European integration, or for the extension of the rights and positions of European institutions and regulations (or a rejection of restrictions). Thirdly, a 0 score indicates neutral or ambivalent claims. The position score is reached by aggregating the position scores of all claims of that type and then calculating a mean. By comparing the mean positions of

different claims-making types, we are able to show a first qualitative indicator for whether specific types of claims-making are generally in favour of, or against, European integration.

Table 1a: Britain: Share and Position of Types of Political Communication over European Integration, from Claim-making Acts in National Public Sphere, 1990, 1995, 2000

	British Addressee	Foreign Addressee	EU Supranational Addressee	All Addressees
	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>
British Claims-maker	(a) 35.2 <i>+0.12</i>	(c) 1.6 <i>N/A</i>	(e) 15.5 <i>-0.24</i>	52.2 <i>+0.03</i>
Foreign EU Claims-maker	(b) 4.2 <i>+0.38</i>	(f) 7.9 <i>+0.40</i>	(h) 14.4 <i>+0.35</i>	26.5 <i>+0.36</i>
EU/EEC Supranational Claims-maker	(d) 5.5 <i>+0.62</i>	(g) 2.1 <i>+0.13</i>	(i) 13.6 <i>+0.42</i>	21.3 <i>+0.44</i>
All Claims-makers	44.9 <i>+0.16</i>	11.5 <i>+0.30</i>	43.9 <i>+0.20</i>	100.0 <i>+0.20</i>
N	171	44	166	381

Table 1b: France: Share and Position of Types of Political Communication over European Integration, from Claim-making Acts in National Public Sphere, 1990, 1995, 2000

	French Addressee	Foreign Addressee	EU/EEC Supranational Addressee	All Addressees
	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>	share (%) <i>position (+1/-1)</i>
French Claims-maker	(a) 12.6 <i>+0.39</i>	(c) 3.1 <i>+0.40</i>	(e) 26.6 <i>+0.29</i>	42.3 <i>+0.32</i>
Foreign EU Claims-maker	(b) 2.3 <i>+0.27</i>	(f) 5.2 <i>0.00</i>	(h) 16.7 <i>+0.25</i>	24.2 <i>+0.19</i>
EU/EEC Supranational Claims-maker	(d) 2.5 <i>+0.58</i>	(g) 4.5 <i>+0.41</i>	(i) 26.4 <i>+0.54</i>	33.4 <i>+0.52</i>
All Claims-makers	17.5 <i>+0.40</i>	12.8 <i>+0.24</i>	69.7 <i>+0.38</i>	100.0 <i>+0.36</i>
N	85	62	338	485

A first general observation to make is that the positions over European integration expressed in the French public sphere are significantly more pro-European than those in the British, both for claims-making by, and on, national domestic actors (All British claims-makers +0.03, all French claims-makers +0.32; All British addressees +0.16, all French addressees +0.40). This indicates that political debate over Europe in France occurs on an axis that is more favourable to integration than that in Britain, which is an important general difference. Overall, in France the country with the longer and deeper institutional involvement and commitment in European integration, 'active' political debates over Europe, occur on a cleavage line that is already less sceptical than in Britain.

Turning to the types of claims-making over Europe, if we start with top-down 'vertical' claims-making, where EU supranational actors make demands on British and French actors (d), we find relatively modest amounts in both countries (Britain 5.5%, France 2.5%). This indicates a limited penetration of European institutions as a visible and 'active' political actor addressing national domestic politics, even in the field of claims about European integration. The EU appears to be a poor communicator, though it could also be the case that the national media are poor in picking up EU demands. Overall however, the effect is the same, there are relatively few opportunities for citizens in both countries to see the EU as an initiator of political demands on national actors, although it is clearly a powerful institutional actor in this field. These findings support the idea of the EU's 'democratic deficit' in political communication. Not surprisingly, when it does reach national public spheres it is a strong advocate of European integration (Britain +0.62, France +0.58).

Conversely, when we look at the claims made by national actors on EU institutions with regard to European integration (e), we find this bottom-up way of linking the EU into public debate three times more prevalent in Britain (15.5%), and ten times more so in France (26.6%), than the top-down type (d). This shows that the EU is brought into debate as an addressee much more than it puts itself forward by making claims. Another important observation is the striking cross-national difference. This type of bottom-up, vertical claims-making accounts for significantly less claims-making in Britain and puts forward a strong Eurosceptic position (-0.24). By contrast, this claims-making directed towards EU institutions is the most prominent form in France and evaluates European integration much more positively than the British (F +0.29; UK -0.24). This shows that French actors have produced a channel of communication that directly addresses European institutions, more so than their British counterparts. Such direct links upwards to the EU polity are also made significantly visible and open to scrutiny by the French public. This development indicates the emergence of a public sphere where French

national actors open up the EU for deliberation over issues of European integration, and where the public have more of an opportunity to actually see the EU as a powerful institutional actor. It is evidence that political relationships in France produce communication that is more multi-levelled and engaged with EU institutions than Britain. Such communication will not only result from France's deeper institutional entrenchment in the European project, but will also contribute to, re-constitute and re-enforce such processes, as political actors invest in the idea of a multi-levelled polity. In contrast, the British actors work politically to a lesser extent at the supranational level, and when they do so are highly sceptical and critical of the European project in comparison to their French counterparts. So once more we see important cross-national differences that can be related to each country's approach to the institutional advance of European integration as a political project.

Regarding the possible development of political communication 'horizontally' across borders between EU member states over European integration (b) and (c), we find relatively small amounts in both countries (taken together: Britain 5.8%, France 5.4%). So far it appears that there is relatively little transnational political communication over European integration that would be indicative of horizontally interacting Member states. This indicates that the institutional emergence of the EU has stimulated some political communication between actors across Member states, but that this is secondary to the vertical links and political channels that have been produced between national domestic politics and the EU institutions, which as we have seen are driven primarily bottom up by national actors making demands on the EU.¹⁹

Lastly, we turn to the more 'closed' type of claims-making that communicates neither upwards supra-nationally, nor trans-nationally across EU national borders, but remains internalised within the nation-state (a). This type of claims-making accounts for almost three times as much claims-making in Britain (35.2%), where it is the most prominent form, compared to France

(12.6%). Such nationally internalised claims-making over Europe is also significantly more Eurosceptic in Britain (+0.12) than in France (+0.39). This provides clear evidence that internal debate and competition between national actors is the defining characteristic of Britain's political communication over Europe, which is in stark contrast to France's. British actors are twice as likely to address demands at other British political actors and institutions, over issues of European integration, than they are EU actors and institutions ((a) 35.2%, (e) 15.5%). The reverse is true in France, where national actors are twice as likely to address demands at EU actors and institutions, over issues of European integration, than they are French actors and institutions ((a) 12.6%, (e) 26.6%). This is a striking difference in the way that political actors in the two countries have responded to the institutional emergence of multi-levelled European politics. British actors view the European project primarily as an issue within national politics, and the sceptical position of such debates, ((a) +0.12 compared to the overall mean +0.20, and the French (a) +0.39), indicates there is a high level of criticism for the European project within national politics. Whereas as French internal debates appear to be more consensual and exist around a pro-European axis, in Britain, the higher degree of 'internalised' politics over Europe over a more Eurosceptic axis, indicates that Europe is a more conflictual issue in Britain. From this we would expect to see different dynamics of political competition over Europe between actors in the two countries, leading to these two divergent political paths that actors have constructed over the increasing emergence of the European Union. We shall examine these shortly by comparing in detail state versus civil society, and political party cleavages over Europe.

Here the overall comparison with France, a country which has been a driver of European institutional integration, has served to demonstrate that British debates about European integration have emerged as being more nationally 'closed' and engaging less directly with the EU as a political actor. A further consequence is that compared to their French counterparts, the British public has fewer opportunities to see the EU institutions directly

addressed by problems and issues relating to European integration. Instead European politics is made visible to them in the public domain as a national issue, mobilised primarily by British actors addressing British actors. To a certain extent this precludes opportunities for citizens to see themselves having a direct relationship to EU institutions, and for seeing the EU as an influential actor in its own right, rather than as an epiphenomenon of national politics.

Regarding the 'passive' claims-making which is 'external' to the domestic public sphere and does not engage national actors (f), (g), (h), (i), of particular interest is the strong presence that we find for claims-making by supranational European actors which is also directed at the EU/EEC institutions and actors (i) (France 26.4%, Britain 13.6%). Here we see that claims made by EU/EEC supranational actors tend to remain enclosed within the domain of supranational EU affairs by being made on other EU actors. Thus national publics get to see EU political affairs to a significant extent as externalised and self-enclosed, rather than engaging national actors. Thus the EU appears in national public spheres as a distinct and separate supranational political entity. Such a view of EU politics is especially prominent in France (26.4%) compared to Britain (13.6%), which again points to the greater salience of EU institutions within French public affairs.²⁰

In sum, this comparison of the structures of claims-making over European integration in the two public spheres has served to demonstrate basic cross-national similarities and differences. The major difference is that in France processes of Europeanization are most likely to occur through vertical claims-making by national domestic actors on the supranational level, whereas in Britain the 'closed' form of Europeanization through internalised national communications was most prominent. This significant cross-national difference supports the view that the political communication which constructs and reproduces the relationship to European institutions is substantively different in the two countries. It supports a 'path dependency' argument, whereby the deeper and longer institutional involvement of

France, an initiator of the European project who had an important influence in shaping it in its own image and interests at the early stages, has led to political communication that is more favourable to European integration, and collective actors who view the political world in a way that they engage more directly with EU institutions. By contrast, political communication in Britain, a relative latecomer who joined the European project after it had already been significantly defined and institutionally shaped by others, is carried by actors who engage less and are more critical of EU institutions, and who are still debating internally over the value of European integration for the country. Such debates would be much harder to make in France, where politics, and the discourses around it, has institutionalised the idea of national centrality to the European project, which gives French actors a different baseline to operate from than their British counterparts.

In addition, we found a very limited role of the EU as a communicating actor in national public spheres, which suggests that it is national actors who carry the respective and apparently different 'European projects' forward in Britain and France. In the next section, we examine cross-national differences further, by focussing on two types of possible cleavages between national actors over European integration, those between state and civil society actors, and those between political parties, since these are two important forms of political mediation linking institutions to citizens in the nation state.

National Actors' Political Communication over European Integration

i. State and Civil Society Cleavages

Given the different overall structures of political communication in Britain and France, and the importance of national political actors in driving and reproducing those specific relationships to European Union institutions,

we now examine the nature of cleavages between national state and civil society actors over the project of European integration. An important consideration here will be the share and position of state actors in claims-making over European integration since this will be a decisive factor in shaping the opportunities for civil society actors to purposefully enter political debates.

Tables 2a and 2b show the shares and positions among different types of national domestic actors in Britain and France, respectively.²¹ In addition to showing the overall categories of aggregated state and civil society actors, we have ordered the different sub-categories of actors according to their positions over European integration, with more pro-European positions at the top and more Eurosceptic ones at the bottom. This gives a visual presentation of the discursive distance between collective actors over European integration, given through their expressed stances, and identifies who are likely allies and opponents, as well as the public stances of the different institutions, relative to one another.

Table 2a: Britain: Share and Position of National Collective Actors in Claims-making over European Integration, 1990, 1995, 2000.

	BRITAIN	
	Share	in Position over
	Claims-	European
	making	Integration
	(%)	(-1 to +1)
National Domestic State and Political Party Actors	72.2	-0.02
National Domestic Civil Society Actors	27.8	+0.06
Employers and private companies	6.0	+0.27
National central bank	2.2	+0.25

Other National state actors	1.4	+0.20
Unions and employees	1.6	+0.17
Scientific and research experts	3.3	+0.17
Economic experts	4.1	+0.07
Other national civil society organisations and groups	3.8	+0.07
National government and executive actors	42.5	+0.06
Pro/Anti European campaign organisations	9.0	-0.15
National legislative actors, political parties and politicians	26.2	-0.16
All Domestic National Actors	100.0	+0.01
Number of Cases (N)	367	

Table 2b: France: Share and Position of National Collective Actors in Claims-making over European Integration, 1990, 1995, 2000.

	FRANCE	
	Share in Claims-making (%)	Position over European Integration (-1 to +1)
National Domestic State and Political Party Actors	74.8	+0.47
National Domestic Civil Society Actors	25.2	+0.13
National government and executive actors	42.2	+0.54
National legislative actors, political parties and politicians	29.3	+0.37
Scientific and research experts	5.2	+0.36

Employers and private companies	2.6	+0.29
National central bank	1.9	+0.20
Other national civil society organisations and groups	6.7	+0.17
Economic experts	7.8	+0.14
Unions and employees	2.6	-0.43
All Domestic National Actors	100.0	+0.38
Number of Cases (N)	270	

Note: Excludes Pro/Anti European campaign organisations (0.4%) and Other National State actors (1.5%) from subcategories, which have too few cases ($n < 5$) to calculate a position.

First, we again see that French political debates over European integration are constructed by national actors around an axis that is significantly more pro-European (+0.38) than in Britain (+0.01). Turning to the type of collective actor, overall we find similarity in the share of demands, with state actors making three times more than civil society actors in both countries (Britain: state 72.2%, civil society 27.8%; France: state 74.8%, civil society 25.2%). This high proportion of claims-making by state actors is indicative of a highly institutionalised field of politics and an especially elite-dominated debate. Previous research on Britain using the same method reveals that by comparison state actors account for a smaller share of claims-making in racism and discrimination (46.0%), and unemployment (39.8%) (Koopmans and Statham 2000b; Statham 2003). However, there is also a striking cross-national difference, namely that British state and civil society actors hold similar and sceptical positions on European integration (state and political party -0.02, civil society +0.06), whereas in France, civil society actors (+0.13) challenge the state's strongly favourable stance to European integration (+0.47) with demands that are more sceptical. Thus, the British cleavage over European integration cross-cuts different actor types, both among elites and institutions and within civil society. In France by contrast, there is a cleavage over European integration between pro-European political elites and institutions versus a more Eurosceptic civil society.

Looking at the shares and positions of specific collective actors, the picture becomes clearer regarding the nature of these striking differences. First, we consider the political institutional actors who dominate the debates in both countries, and whose position defines the opportunities and starting reference point for other collective actors to mobilize demands over Europe. In Britain, the legislative and political party actors (26.2%, -0.16) are the most opposed actors to European integration, and the government and executive actors (42.5%, +0.06) are also strongly present at the Eurosceptic end of the scale. This is in complete contrast to France, where the government and executive (42.2%, +0.54) are the most pro-European actor, followed by the legislative and political party actors (29.3, +0.37). Here we see that the stances over European integration which are advanced by the national political institutions, and which are constitutive of the discourses which reproduce embedded institutional positions, are diametrically different in Britain and France. In line with 'path dependency' arguments, British institutions remain strongly sceptical of the European project, even between two and three decades after joining it. Government and Parliament remain questioning and critical of the value of European integration.

There are many examples which support this. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, 20/03/90, states that responsibility for fixing budget deficits in Brussels would represent an 'unacceptable loss of national authority'. As Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, 10/10/95, declares that the Conservative government will not allow Brussels to control our defence policy and that 'British troops will never die for Brussels' accusing the Labour opposition of endorsing surrender to 'European federalism'. Peter Lilley as a Conservative Social Security Secretary, 3/02/95, claims that 'There can be no question of extending the community's competence into the area of financing our diverse social security systems', stating that the government would not tolerate the EC extending its remit to taxes and benefits. Lord Denning, 13/07/90, says that European law is 'like a tidal wave bringing down our sea walls' and that the European Court of Justice 'has made many decisions impinging on our statute

law'. In 2000, 22/11, the Labour government's Foreign Secretary Robin Cook tells the Foreign Affairs Select Committee that Britain will if necessary use its veto on social security harmonisation at next month's Nice EU summit since it could mean 'quite significant potential sums of additional spending'. Likewise the Labour British Government, 14/03/00, supported by the Opposition, reject the European Commission's proposals to extend qualified majority voting to areas of tax and social security, saying that 'the Commission could propose what it liked, but it was up to member states to decide.'

By comparison, the French state, largely supported by its legislature, is a committed advocate and national proponent of the European project, over which there is a clear consensus within the political institutional arena. Political debate exists within French institutional politics, but is premised on the benefits of European integration, not questioning its value. We find many examples supporting this. Thus, Elisabeth Guigou, Socialist Minister for Justice, 26/04/00, claims during a parliamentary debate on the Future Charter of European Rights that the project is a sign that EU is a matter of common values and identity. President Chirac, 29/05/00, calls on the Eurozone States to have a more coordinated policy to support the currency, and the European member states to reform their pension schemes and elaborate a good education system which can benefit all citizens. Socialist Finance Minister Laurent Fabius, 29/05/00, supports the propositions of Joschka Fischer for a Federal European Union and calls for close concertation between Berlin and Paris, and then on a different occasion, 07/11/00, declares that the Euro is a long term bet and a pillar of the European construction process.

Such examples of British state scepticism and French state Europeanism are not atypical and serve to demonstrate further that debates over Europe occur on different terrains within the two countries. Overall, national differences in elite and institutional positions over European integration appear to have been enduring and, according to our evidence, continue to be re-enforced through contemporary political communication. Unlike France, a political elite consensus has never been achieved over the perceived benefits

of advancing European integration within Britain, who has had to adapt and define her political interests, within a template institutional framework that had already been shaped, and was more compatible with the interests of France.

The way that civil society actors perceive the benefits and losses of advancing European integration will be strongly shaped by, and refer to, the expressed positions of national political elites and their institutions. Civil society actors in Britain exist in a situation of elite uncertainty and scepticism over the potential benefits European integration, which opens up this issue to the broader public arena for political competition. In contrast, the French elite's consensus over the benefits of advancing European integration, leaves civil society actors in the position of making demands by referring to this established pro-European institutional stance. In Britain, the project of European integration is put up for discussion by the elites, and it is striking that we find no actors expressing more than a cautious pro-European stance, with employers and private companies being the most pro-European (+0.27), with a position that in France would rank as a sceptical challenge the elite's consensus. In fact, employers and private companies (Britain +0.27, France +0.29) and central banks (Britain +0.25, France +0.20) in both countries hold similar positions. In addition, it is worth stating that to the cautious and limited extent that it is advanced at all in Britain, the pro-European cause is carried by market concerns and actors, whereas in France it is promoted as a political concern by elites. This indicates that commitment to advancing European integration is part of mainstream institutionally backed French political identity, whereas in Britain it is viewed more as a limited sectoral interest and economic concern, which is changeable, negotiable and 'ad hoc'. In Britain pro-Europeanist values are not an established element of the elite's political identity.

Looking at the composition of civil society groups making claims, for the most part these are economists, private firms, bankers, and academics in both countries, who are hardly the type of actors who would be indicative of

a participatory active 'demos' over European integration. This gives support to the notion of a 'democratic deficit' of the European Union project, since citizens seem to have mobilized relatively little through social movements over this undoubtedly important political issue, even at the national level.²² The major exception to this overall rule is a dedicated European protest movement sector in Britain, which accounts for a tenth of national domestic claims-making and has an overall impact which is Eurosceptic (9%, -0.15). In the British situation of the elite's divisions and overall unwillingness to endorse European integration as beneficial to the national good, competition spills from the institutional arena over into the public domain. We found thirteen organisations which existed specifically to campaign over issues of European integration, with 'Britain in Europe' the most prominent pro-European, and 'Business for Sterling' the most visible of the Eurosceptics.

A considerable number of the claims by campaign groups in Britain focussed on the main project of European integration within our time period, the prospect of European Monetary Union. In Britain, the decisions of successive governments (both Conservative and Labour) not to decide on a timetable for joining monetary union, and to take a sceptic and ambivalent stance, created political uncertainty and has opened up a space for extra-parliamentary campaigning on this issue. Here the campaign groups appear, with 'Britain for Europe' stating typically: 'Britain cannot stand like a latter-day King Canute, holding back the tide. Whether we like it or not, the euro exists and British companies are being forced to deal with it.' Against such demands Britain for Sterling, point out that the year 2000 'is the 10th anniversary of Britain joining the ERM, which cost 100,000 business bankruptcies, 1.75m homes in negative equity and a doubling of unemployment.' By contrast, in France with a pro-Euro governmental stance, we find only one equivalent case, and even in that the 'Alliance pour la souveraineté de la France' is acting in co-operation with a British group. Together they organise a 'Sovereignty European Charter' and protest against the euro at an 'alternative' to the official Nice Summit.

In France, the institutionalisation of European integration as a political project provides few material or symbolic resources for campaign organisations who question the value of Europe. A campaign sector over Europe was virtually absent in France accounting for a miniscule 0.4% of claims. Instead the only real opponent of European integration in France, were the trade unions and employees, who were barely visible (2.6%, -0.43), and were mostly critical of the neo-liberal direction of the European Union rather than the principle of European integration. Thus, the general secretary Marc Blondel of Force Ouvrière, 07/12/00, declares that it is not because bosses are more Europeanist that they are less bosses, and goes on to criticise the President of the European Confederation of Unions, Emilio Gabaglio, for being not very involved in defending employees. In other cases, the Unions, and especially the CGT, 05/12/00, demonstrate against the absence of the social question within Europe and supports the Fundamental Rights Charter in Nice, whereas radical unions, 7/12/00, demonstrate against the Charter and the neo-liberal EU, and the public sector, 29/11/95, strike in protest against the deregulation programme of the European Commission and reforms of social security brought by EU laws. Here we see a sectoral opposition to the EU which is seen as an economic model that is more neo-liberal than the French one. There are no such examples in Britain, where, as the examples of elite's claims show, 'social' Europe is perceived as a potential threat to Britain's national autonomy over its existing market-based economic model.

In sum, an important factor in explaining the differences between Britain's and France's politics over Europe is the different stances of their political elites. 'Fence-sitting' and 'foot-dragging' by national elites has created uncertainty over Britain's future role in the EU. These elite divisions and ambivalence over advancing European integration within the institutional arena has provided opportunities for single issue campaigns over Europe to emerge in the public domain. By contrast, French elites and their institutions appear as unequivocal 'pace-setters' for European integration. This has led to

a limited cleavage between state and civil society, but one where civil society actors generally accept the value of European integration, and defend their perceived sectoral interests within that project.

ii. Political Party Cleavages

There has been considerable academic debate over party political positions on European integration, and the extent to which pro-European and Eurosceptic positions cross-cut left and right cleavages. Here a salient thesis is that political party positions cross-cut left/right divisions, so that parties of the centre of left and right tend to be pro-European and Euroscepticism is confined to the marginal poles of 'extreme left' and 'extreme right' parties, thus forming an inverted 'U' pattern (Hix and Lord 1997, Taggart 1998, Aspinwall 2002). So far, this thesis has been grounded in analyses of experts' assessments (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2004), party programmes (Gabel and Hix 2004), and party positions imputed by voters (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004), but not in the political communications that party actors mobilise into the public domain. Such political communication is arguably a more relevant form of data to address such issues because it relates to party's actions in relation to ongoing political events that are real and continuous over time, and is drawn from the medium where parties communicate with citizens as an ongoing process, and not just their one-off attempts to woo citizens with strategic propaganda and promises about the future at election time, or expert or public perceptions measured at a specific moment in time. In addition, given that for nation states, political parties are the classic form of intermediation between institutional politics and citizens, we considered it important to examine the evidence for party political cleavages over European integration. Tables 3a and 3b show the shares and positions of all collective actors with a party political identity, and across the three selected years, 1990, 1995, 2000.²³

Table 3a- Britain: Share and Position* of Actors from National Domestic Political Parties in Claims-making over European Integration, 1990, 1995, 2000.

	All		1990		1995		2000	
	Share	Position	Share	Position	Share	Position	Share	Position
Conservative	53.3	-0.29	67.2	+0.02	95.5	-0.30	33.0	-0.50
Labour	41.9	+0.33	25.4	0.00	4.5	N/A	61.5	+0.38
Liberal Democrat	2.5	+0.75	7.5	+0.80	-	-	1.6	N/A
All Political Party Actors**	100.0	+0.01	100.0	+0.07	100.0	-0.29	100.0	+0.09
N	315		67		66		182	

*Position score only given if n>5, otherwise N/A. ** also includes those not subcategorised in table.

Table 3b- France: Share and Position of Actors from National Domestic Political Parties in Claims-making over European Integration, 1990, 1995, 2000.

	All		1990		1995		2000	
	Share	Position	Share	Position	Share	Position	Share	Position
Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)	30.7	+0.56	31.1	+0.14	51.2	+0.64	23.3	+0.70
Parti socialiste (PS)	38.5	+0.48	44.4	+0.40	14.0	+0.67	45.7	+0.49
Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF)	10.7	+0.68	15.6	+1.00	9.3	N/A	9.5	+0.45
Parti Communiste Français (PC)	3.9	-0.14	-	-	2.3	N/A	6.0	-0.14
Mouvement des Citoyens	2.4	-0.60	-	-	-	-	4.3	-0.60
All Political Party Actors**	100.0	+0.40	100.0	+0.47	100.0	+0.47	100.0	+0.36
N			45		43		116	

*Position score only given if n>5, otherwise N/A. ** also includes those not subcategorised in table.

Note: Parties of Government are included in *bold italics* for the three years. Our retrieval of the sample allowed twice as many opportunities for inclusion for 2000, compared to 1990 and 1995 (see above). The figures for the All column are not weighted by year, but the total claims made by a party in our samples. Retrieval strategies are equivalent for both countries, allowing for cross-national comparison, as well as cross-party comparison within a country.

A first important difference is from the overall positions of the largest and mainstream centrist political parties, where in France we find a pro-European consensus and in Britain we find political competition over Europe.

In France, the overall centrist consensus between the main political parties of centre-left Parti Socialiste (PS) and centre-right Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF), is pitched in the pro-European camp (RPR +0.56, PS +0.48, UDF +0.68) compared to the other political parties (overall mean +0.40). Here we find numerous examples where politicians of the French centre are 'pace-setters' for European integration. Thus, François Hollande, French socialist leader declares, 12/05/00, that the Franco-German motor is essential to the development of Europe. Likewise, MP Pervenche Berès (PS) claims that the debate over the Charter of European Rights is a good occasion to show that franco-german relationship is not as loose as some claim. In another, 30/05/00, Senators including Jean-François Poncet (UDF) back German Minister Joschke Fischer's proposals for an ambitious institutional reform during French presidency. And in another from the many examples, President Chirac declares, 26/06/00, on German television his will to deepen the "great european adventure" thanks to franco-german cooperation.

Against this consensual pro-European centre which accounts for four-fifths of party political claims-making (79.9%), there is party political opposition to Europe from small parties, among which the left wing Parti Communiste Français (PC) (3.9%, -0.14), and Jean-Pierre Chevènement's Mouvement des Citoyens (socialist nationalist) (2.4%, -0.60) were most prominent, and there were also a lesser number from others including the trotskyst left, Lutte Ouvrière (workers' struggle) and the Ligue Communiste

revolutionnaire (LCR), and from the nationalist right, the Mouvement pour la France (national catholic party) and Rassemblement pour la France (RPF), and the extreme-right Front national. Thus, Jean-Pierre Chevènement leader of Mouvement des Citoyens declares, 21/05/00, that German Minister Joschke Fischer's propositions for institutional reform towards a federal EU were a sign that Germany wasn't cured from its Nazi past. In another, 21/05/00, he adds that Germany, with its ethnic conception of the nation, dreams always of a Holy German Roman Empire. Also from the left, Communist candidate, Robert Hue (PC), demands a new referendum on EU before the new IGC in 1996, 26/03/95. And from the trotskyist left, Arlette Laguiller (LO), 26/03/95, claims the EU is anachronistic and prefers to promote the "Socialist United States of Europe" and the general secretary of the LCR, Alain Krivine, 07/12/00, calls for 'a Europe of workers and people'. From the right, Charles Pasqua (RPF), 02/05/00, states that soon he will launch a campaign to abrogate the Maastricht Treaty, whereas the Front National protest peacefully against the EU, 07/12/00, led by Marie-France Stirbois.

Thus it is important to note that although overall an elite centrist party pro-European consensus predominates, that this is neither uniform nor unchallenged within French politics. We find evidence for dissent from the radical poles of left and right of the party system, and these appear to have become more vociferous over time, especially from the left PC and MdC, who were challenging the pro-European centre-left Socialists, in 2000, at a time when the Communists were also a minor party in the governing socialist coalition. In general and at the aggregated level, however, for France, the party political cleavage over European integration largely cross-cuts the left/right distinction, and follows an inverted 'U' pattern between a pro-European political centre and the Eurosceptic periphery. However, it should be noted that in our time period this inverted 'U' was not a pure one, in that Euroscepticism came more from the left than the right pole. In France, Euroscepticism comes mostly from a perceived defence of the French social

welfare system against a neo-liberal Europe by the left-wing parties, and to a lesser extent from the ideological nationalism of the right and extreme right.

By contrast, we see that in Britain, Europe is an issue for party political competition between the two major parties of centre left and centre right. Labour (+0.33) has taken an overall more pro-European position compared to the Conservatives who have been strongly Eurosceptic (-0.29). The Conservatives, both as the party of government (1990, 1995) and the party of opposition (2000) have taken up Eurosceptic positions. Thus, in the Commons, 11/12/00, opposition leader Willaim Hague accused Prime Minister Blair and Foreign Minister Cook of a 'sell out' claiming that the Nice agreement 'represents major steps towards a European superstate?' It is worth noting, however, that this Euroscepticism was relatively unchallenged by the Labour opposition in 1990 and 1995. At those times it appears that an elite consensus existed among the main centrist political parties that was either against, or ambivalent, towards European integration. Thus Nicholas Ridley, whilst Trade and Industry Secretary in the Conservative Government claimed in an interview with the *Spectator* magazine, 14/07/90, that handing over sovereignty to the EC was 'tantamount to giving it to Adolf Hitler' and that the moves towards European monetary union was a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe. In France, such extreme views would have been inconceivable from a main centrist party of government. However, in the same period, Labour were also unenthusiastic and ambivalent about Europe, for example, with Peter Shore, Labour MP, 11/06/90, stating in the Commons debate on the EC that European monetary union will deliver Britain, bound hand and foot, to the European decision makers.

Since entering office Labour has taken up a pro-European position (+0.38), whilst in opposition the Conservatives became strongly Eurosceptic (-0.50). Thus Britain does not conform to the inverted 'U' model for party positions on Europe. Also the most pro-European party have been the Liberal Democrats, Britain's third political party with a much smaller number of seats than Labour and the Conservatives, who are barely publicly visible on the

issue (2.5%, +0.75). Here, for example Paddy Ashdown, former Lib Dem leader, 16/06/00, claimed that Tony Blair needed to take the lead on the issue of joining the Euro and that the country was being left leaderless, and that this was the biggest decision the country had to take'.

In general, competition over Europe is partly facilitated by the British party system which produces single party governments with significant majorities and strong executive power, which do not need to moderate their stance in order to gain the support of other parties. The British electoral system is also much less favourable to smaller parties than the French where parties are often required to form coalition governments. However, although they contribute to them, these general differences between political systems are not sufficient to fully explain the issue specific differences over Europe between Britain and France. Instead we consider in line with the logic of path dependency that there is an embedded and institutionalised difference between the ideological stances of political elites in the two countries over Europe that has endured and reproduced itself over time. Thus, Labour's relatively recent conversion to a pro-European stance will lack the institutional embedding and depth compared to that of the French centre parties of left and right, and so will more easily shift back to ambivalence or opposition in the future. This is partly because the axis of the British ideological cleavage for political competition over Europe is substantially more Eurosceptic than in France, since it is based on 'ad hoc' national benefits arguments, rather than being an ideological commitment to 'pace-setting' and advancing the European project.

As a consequence, Labour's new pro-Europeanism is perhaps most accurately depicted as Anti-Euroscepticism rather than a substantive ideological pro-Europeanism, especially when compared to that of the French centre parties. Thus, Britain's Minister for Europe Keith Vaz claims, 1/09/00, that the right wing press are turning voters against the EU with a stream of scare stories report that the EU's proposed charter of rights would be a disaster for UK business. Then, after the signing of the EU Charter of Fundamental

Rights, he states, 07/12/00, 'Get this clear. It is not a constitution. It is not legally binding. Nobody has talked about it being legally binding'. In another, Robin Cook, 10/02/00, UK Foreign Secretary presses the Prime Minister to be more positive towards the single currency because failure to join would damage relations with the rest of the EU and not divulging the results of Labour's 5 economic tests for joining Monetary Union may damage Labour election chances. In another typical case, during visit to Moscow, Prime Minister Tony Blair, 21/11/00, uses a BBC interview and press conference with President Putin to launch an attack on UK's Eurosceptic press, saying its coverage of EU defence force plans was fundamentally dishonest and in the grip of anti-European hysteria. On our evidence, the New Labour elite should rightly be considered Anti-Eurosceptics rather than pro-Europeans.

In contrast to the French, British political elites view European integration as an issue that is still open to question and competition, and use it as a possibility for mobilising support from the public. In France, competition between the main political parties appears not to address or question the national commitment to European integration to any substantial degree, and dissent over this issue is by parties of the far left and right, who mobilise against the centrist political establishment on different formulations of a perceived defence of national autonomy and/or the French social welfare system. In short, Britain's past elite scepticism over Europe has contributed to reproducing the current malaise of institutionalised elite divisions within British politics over Europe. In France, elite consensus over the general goals of European integration appears to have largely pre-empted conflict over Europe within mainstream politics, though that may now be eroding and facing a new challenge. Indeed in France it is the small and marginal parties at the poles of the political spectrum who are Eurosceptic, but while their momentum may be rising, their overall impact on the political centre will also remain limited, not least because such parties often have other institutional barriers to their success, that are not related to the issue of Europe.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this article we set out to examine the extent and type of political communication by collective actors in Britain and France, that is both constitutive of, and a response to, the advancing Europeanization of political institutions and discourses of member states. We advocate a stance that sees Europeanization as a process that is not confined to elites, institutions, and policy communities, but which extends through publicly visible acts of political communication mobilised by collective actors and carried by the mass media to the wider citizenry. Such an approach towards European integration follows in the related 'contentious politics' and European public spheres traditions. To our knowledge, this analysis is one of the first attempts to study acts of Europeanized political communication in national public spheres by recourse to a systematically cross-national comparative data-set. By retrieving claims-making acts from the same regular pre-selected dates for both countries, we allowed the claims-making data to 'speak for themselves' and provide information about countries' and actors' positions on European integration that is relevant for depicting the general trends of Europeanized political communication, and not limited by being tied to specific events that would be unrepresentative at the general level. Such a methodological approach is necessary since we required evidence on general differences between countries, and between actors, to address the central question of the extent and form of political communication over European integration, and for examining what processes might account for evident similarities and differences.

Overall, our empirical findings established that there are striking differences in the forms and contents of political communication through which collective actors in Britain and France politically mobilise issues of European integration.

First, our comparison demonstrated that the two countries have distinct patterns of political communication over Europe. French political debates are more ‘supranationalised’ than British ones. They exhibit stronger linkages to the European supranational political institutions and actors, a relationship that is largely produced by the ‘bottom-up’ claims-making by French actors on the EU. By contrast, British political debate is characterised by national ‘internalisation’, a type of communication that is indicative of inward-looking competitive relationships over Europe. British political debates occurred along an axis that was more critical of, and opposed to, European integration than the French. British debates also tend to make the EU a topic for national politics, more than they open up spaces for political exchanges with the EU as a powerful institutional actor. Thus EU politics is made publicly visible to British citizens primarily as a national affair. In comparison, French actors have transformed their communicative relationships to a greater extent and engage purposefully with the supra-national political level above the nation-state. Overall, this constitutes a more substantive type of Europeanization of political communication, based on, and formative of, multi-levelled interaction and relationships, compared to Britain.

We sought to explain such differences by drawing on ‘path dependency’ theory. The deeper and longer institutional involvement of founder member France relative to latecomer Britain, as well as its self-location at the centre of the advancing European project, has importantly shaped the way that French political actors perceive and invest in the supranational level of European politics, compared to their British counterparts. Given that we found relatively little evidence for the EU intervening as a political actor in national public spheres (though more in France than in Britain), we turned to national cleavages, between state and civil society actors, and between political parties, to examine the relationships which have most likely produced and reproduced these two different national trajectories for relationships to European integration. This also allowed us to look more closely at the qualitative contents of political communication.

In both countries, the politics of European integration is an elite dominated affair. However, here the similarities end. In Britain, elites remain sceptical over the benefits of European integration, there has been strong competition over Europe in the institutional political arena, and this has spilled over into civil society, where issue-specific pro- and anti-European campaign groups add their own voices to the debate over the value of national involvement in Europe. Party political competition between Labour and Conservative Parties is also evident in the time period of our sample. Though it needs qualifying that Labour as an opposition party was sceptical towards Europe (1990), and remained silent in response to the Euroscepticism of the Conservatives (1995), and even when in power (2000), Labour has tended to be more anti-Eurosceptic than pro-European, primarily over the issue of monetary union. In France, political elites are the most pro-European actor, and have strongly promoted European integration. This elite consensus over European integration has received limited opposition from civil society actors, but this is weak and mostly a defence of sectoral interests, mostly from trade unions in opposition to the perceived threat of a neo-liberal Europe to the French social system. The general pro-European elite consensus means that there is relatively little competition among the main political parties of government over European issues. Opposition to Europe is confined to parties which are usually excluded from governing coalitions or the minority junior partners at the national level, which were again mainly from the left against the perceived neo-liberalism of Europe, but also to a lesser extent from the right on an ideology of defending national autonomy.

Overall, our findings emphasise the key importance of national elites' positions on Europe, which shape the institutional and discursive political environment in which other collective actors mobilise demands. A quarter of a century after joining the common European project, British elites have still not been, using Haas' words (1961:196), 'persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new political centre.' In other words, their initial diffidence and ambivalence towards European integration

which precipitated a referendum only a couple of years after joining, has continued to the present day. Other latecomers, such as Spain and Ireland, have exhibited less political ‘stickiness’ on this issue, and have grown and transformed themselves within the image of a developing and advancing Europe. We suggested earlier that relatively underdeveloped national economies and weak national political institutions (of Spain and Ireland compared to Britain) would be factors that would make countries more adaptable to the pressures of the European ‘path’ even for latecomers. Such a hypothesis can be tested by examining more cases of European countries, and their starting points of entry into, and contemporary forms of political communication about, the common European project. The data of Europub.com will allow such research. In this study, we can only contrast the British political elite’s reticence with the French elite’s advocacy of European integration, and are most likely dealing with cases at opposite poles of the scale.

Britain, the perennial ‘footdragger’ and ‘fence-sitter’ over European integration, stands diametrically opposed to ‘pace-setter’ France, which is also why the political leaders of the two countries so often visibly and publicly clash at European summits over such issues. At the same time, we argue in line with path dependency theories that their distinct trajectories over European integration are dynamic and self-re-enforcing, and that they have been both institutionalised and internalised as cognitive models by political actors, so that potential reversals are less likely than ongoing steps along existing ‘paths’. This sounds tautological but it is not. Our examination of political communication shows that political actors, in France and Britain, have invested in and built different institutional and discursive political worlds or ‘paths’ through which they engage with European integration. It is through these, and any shoots and branches that may grow from them, that they will have to start to address any future developments or changes that could potentially lead to a shift in perspectives. Such transformations will be a difficult and conflictual process, as many actors have invested strongly in their

existing political worldviews, which are also underpinned by a deep institutional embedding.

Here an example from France is instructive. The French public's 'no' vote in a referendum on the European Constitution in 2005, constituted a national political crisis, because it potentially threatened the established elite consensus on France's advocacy of advancing European integration. A 'new' branch may emerge from the existing 'path' allowing a transformation here, for example, if politicians from the mainstream French political parties start to become more like their British counterparts, and politically compete over the value of the European project and attempt to build public or electoral support by doing so. This would erode and diminish the elite consensus over Europe in France. However, France is not going to turn overnight into Britain over Europe, just as Britain –where a public 'no' vote would simply have followed to a large extent the existing political tradition- will not change into France. The point here is that because of the distinct types of political communication that have built up in the two countries, and have constructed their relationships to European integration, any changes that do occur are likely to be slow, and incremental, and take place within the parameters of existing national cognitive models, rather than be wholesale and sweeping.

A final point to make is that from the perspective of the European Union itself. An French elite without a clear and consensual stance for advancing European integration is potentially more threatening than a British one, since this will cut off the flow of ideas and one of the main impetuses for advancing European integration that has been present since the beginning. However, the institutional establishment and relative autonomy of the European Union as a supranational entity is sufficient to endure such events. If the 'no vote' turns out to be a turning point and the end of a permissive consensus toward Europe in France, and transformative of French elite positions, then the European Union risks becoming an institutional development without a coherent and legitimating political idea of where it is going. To a certain extent, this is nothing new, as countries have always

competed over political projects for a common Europe. However, if the ‘pace-setters’ of European integration get cold feet, then the European Union is likely to be marked by a period of prolonged ‘stasis’ until those national elites who have built and shaped it, with themselves at the centre, decide to pick up the mantle once more.

Notes

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² This draws from Börzel’s (2002) definition which was designed for policy analysis. It is a suitable starting point for our discussion, but, as will become clear, we extend the focus on political elites and collective actors to include also the citizenry, who are linked to political processes through broader mass mediated communication. Our understanding of Europeanization is thus more in the tradition of the literature on contentious politics and the European public sphere.

³ For ‘state of the art’ on political conflict over European integration, see contributions to Marks and Steenbergen 2004.

⁴ On the European public sphere, see Gerhards (1992), Eder and Trenz (2002). Previously, Habermas (1989) demonstrated that the emergence of the nation-state as the predominant unit of political space, superseding the local and regional levels of political organisation, was not just a question of institution-building from above, or an outcome of pre-existing identifications among the citizenry, but depended crucially on the development of a civic public sphere, as an interactive field which increasingly involves citizens in national public debates. Most scholars agree that whatever form Europeanization of the public sphere takes, it will not simply replicate the experience of the nation-state at the supra-national level, to form a

supranational European public sphere. In the virtual absence of a transnational Europe-wide mass media and the predominance of national media, the most likely location for Europeanization trends is within national public spheres (Schlesinger 1999). Most scholars also emphasise that an intermediary public sphere of political communication for bridging the gap between European institutions and the European citizenry will be essential to any resolution of the EU's 'democratic deficit'.

⁵ This is the starting premise for the empirical research outlined in the Europub.com project, see Koopmans and Statham (2001).

⁶ For a more detailed exposition on four functions of the mass media in the European policy process: legitimation; responsiveness; accountability; and participation, see Koopmans (2005).

⁷ Political opportunities are 'consistent –but not necessarily formal or permanent– dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure' (Tarrow 1994:85). See Kriesi et al (1995) for a cross-national application.

⁸ Recent cross-national comparative research has emphasised the need to distinguish between general aspects of political opportunities, such as differences between political systems, and issue-specific ones, which are of particular importance for the substance of the specific field of contention, in this case European integration (Koopmans and Statham 2000a, Koopmans et al 2005). Here our discussion focuses primarily on factors that might account for issue-specific cross-national differences (i.e., with regard to European integration) and only secondarily to general differences in opportunities that are derived from the political systems.

⁹ It should be noted that Pierson's approach synthesises the research of many others, in taking the step from economic theories of 'path dependency' and specifying their relevance to politics.

¹⁰ It should be noted that here we are talking about general European integration. There will, of course, be variation across policy fields, as the involvement of the EU in some policy fields, e.g., immigration, has occurred much later and has less institutional power and development than in others, e.g. agriculture. Thus in some cases Britain will have been involved in the formative stages and have had the potential to be a potential European 'pace-setter' for policies. To the extent that they have any power at all, European common policies on asylum have been shaped very much along restrictive norms that are compatible with the British national policy approach. By contrast, Britain has been the biggest 'foot-dragger' with regard to the long established and powerful European Common Agricultural Policy, to the extent that Britain receives a pay-off in the form of a substantial annual rebate from the others to allow the common European 'path' to continue its way.

¹¹ Following path dependency theory, such pro-European stances could be expected to remain even beyond the time when initial advantages in European collaboration had diminished.

¹² This brief account of Britain's and France's relationships to Europe is a limited caricature which is intended to add historical contextual flavour to the outlined framework. For a detailed and comprehensive coverage, see Tsoukalis (2003).

¹³ While content analyses study how the media frames events, claims-making analysis examines the news coverage of claims-making by non-media actors. Following 'protest event' analysis (Rucht et al 1998), the unit of analysis is not an article, but an individual instance of claims-making.

¹⁴ These papers were chosen because they are newspapers of public record with an encompassing coverage of the specific issues of interest. We used two newspapers per country with different (left/right) political affiliations as sources in the attempt to control for possible selection bias of the type of reported events. Data were coded from Lexisnexis versions of the newspapers by trained coding assistants on the basis of a standardized codebook. All articles in the home news section of the newspapers were checked for relevant acts, i.e. the search was not limited to articles containing certain key words, for selected days. For some of the main variables in the analysis (actors, addressees, aims, etc.) open category lists were used. This allowed us to retain the detail of the original reports in the analysis. Conventional inter-coder reliability tests were undertaken both for the selection of articles and coding, and in addition, coders participated in regular discussions about difficult cases. In total we selected a sample from 52 days for 1990 and 1995, and 104 days for 2000. Thus the opportunities for claims were overrepresented for the most recent year of our data-set 2000, compared to 1990 and 1995, by a ratio of 2:1. As our main approach for this paper is comparative, we have not adjusted the tables to account for this bias toward 2000, but this should nonetheless be borne in mind.

¹⁵ For an example of an alternative strategy see van der Steeg and Risse (2003), whose case study of the Haider affair attempts to make general statements about Europeanization on the basis of a contingent and policy specific event.

¹⁶ We coded all acts in the field of European integration, and all acts with a European issue scope in six strategically selected policy fields: two where EU competences have extended furthest (monetary, agriculture), two intermediary (immigration, troop deployment) and two where nation-states retain most autonomous control (retirement/pensions, education).

¹⁷ Our analysis is drawn from the years 1990, 1995 and 2000, a period of advancing European integration and over which Europe has transformed from the European Community to the European Union. Here we use the terminology EU and European Union, for our analysis, to avoid the clumsiness of writing EU/EC and European Community/European Union throughout, although we are of course aware of the institutional developments over time.

¹⁸ In Tables 1a and 1b we include only cases where there was both a claims-maker and an addressee, as this constitutes an actor relationship. Cases without an addressee were excluded.

¹⁹ Cross-nationally, it is worth noting that British actors are less likely to address actors in other EU countries (c) (1.6%), than be addressed by them (b) (4.2%), which is not the case for France ((c) 2.3%, (b) 3.1%). In this relatively limited type of communication French actors seem to have acted more 'openly' to external Europeans than their British counterparts.

²⁰ It is also worth noting that foreign EU political actors are at their most visible (as either claims-makers or addressees) with demands that are made on the EU institutions (h) (Britain 14.4%, France 16.7%). Thus Foreign EU political actors appear most often in both countries as claims-makers making 'bottom-up' demands on EU institutions.

²¹ The samples in Tables 2a and 2b, and 3a and 3b, include cases of claims-making acts where no addressee was specified.

²² The national level is also where civil society actors are most present over European integration too. From our full samples of claims-making acts, national domestic civil society actors (Britain 14.0%, France 9.2%), were far more prominent than EU supra- and transnational civil society actors (Britain 1.0%, France 2.3%), and foreign EU civil society actors (Britain 3.8%, France 3.5%) – (Britain n is 729, France n is 740). Thus civil society participation and engagement in political debates over European integration in national public spheres, is largely a project of national civil society actors, not EU supra- and transnational ones, who are hardly visible.

²³ Note this includes all actors of all types with a recognisable political party identity and so cross-cuts the state/civil society distinction.

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Chapter 5

Democracy, Legitimacy, and the European Union

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Although the current crisis in the European Union, caused by the No votes in the French and Dutch referenda, has huge consequences, this should not be interpreted as an indication that the European Union or its main achievements are no longer supported by the peoples of its members. Borrowing Easton's distinction between specific and diffuse support, we may say that although the No votes reveal low specific support for the EU constitution, they do not necessarily say much about diffuse support for the European Union. Post-referenda surveys conducted in France and The Netherlands, as well as Eurobarometer data on levels of support for membership of the European Union, in fact show that two, or even three, times as many think that membership of the EU is a "good thing" compared to those who think that it is a "bad thing". These data demonstrate the persistence of high levels of diffuse support for the European Union. However, during the 1990s general levels of support for membership of the European Union declined back to the crisis levels which prevailed in the early 1980s and they have only marginally risen since the addition of ten new members in mid-2004.

Ever since the Danish No to Maastricht, scholars and commentators have commented on the European Union's democratic deficit as one

important reason underlying the EU's legitimacy crisis, to the point of actually moving the European Union institutions to place subsidiarity at the center of European integration and, as in the Treaties drafted or approved since Maastricht, to gradually increase the European Parliament's power. The European Commission's research priorities in the social sciences have also come to include the study of the European public sphere. Following Habermas and others, the EC has concluded that a healthy democracy at the European Union level of government demands the development of a dynamic public sphere.

In this paper, I will not get into the issue of how democratic the European Union is or into the issue of what changes are needed to make it more democratic. Rather, I will explore the validity of the claim, made since Maastricht, that the European Union's legitimacy crisis since the 1990s has something to do with a "purported" democratic deficit. I do so using framing analysis with various sources of data collected individually and collectively in the past few years, on both ordinary people's and journalists' frames on European integration and the European Union. I complement these sources with additional data relative to the European Union's degree of legitimacy in a number of EU member states. The results presented here are preliminary, but they suggest that a perceived democratic deficit (rather than an actual one) may indeed be among the relevant factors responsible for this legitimacy crisis. The paper is organized as follows: first, I synthesize my approach to the study of diffuse support for the European Union and European integration, which emphasizes the role of frames; second, I discuss the role of the European Union's public sphere, both as a vehicle for the democratization of the European Union's sphere of government and, also, as a vehicle for the diffusion of particular frames; third, I examine the role of the democratic deficit both in ordinary people's frames and in public sphere frames; finally, I examine what frame analysis tells us about the factors likely to impinge on the EU's general and country-specific levels of legitimacy.

Frames

There is some confusion in the literature regarding the meaning of the term “frame”. This confusion reflects the actual ambiguity of the term itself. I will focus on only two meanings. A frame can refer to that which “frames” something, like the structure surrounding a painting. To frame is therefore to delimit something, to leave something in and to leave something out. A frame, however, can also refer to a slice of film, that is, to the characteristics of something as captured by a camera at a specific moment. A frame, in the first sense, a delimitation of what goes in and what stays out, produces, however, a frame in the second sense.

In this frame objects are organized in particular ways. Some objects in the frame appear bigger than others; one sees them, but not as well as one sees other objects. Some objects are more pleasant than others to the person who looks at them, and so on. From this perspective, a frame is a universe of things seen, of things structured in particular ways, of things that have varying salience and are evaluated differently. A frame in the second sense differs, however, from the mental frames to which I refer in this paper. A film frame reflects, at least in part, a conscious choice to frame in a particular way: to leave out this house or that person. There is a structure, a salience, a dislike of things left out of the frame by the person who framed. A mental frame, however, largely results from unconscious framing processes (exceptions are situations in which individuals actively leave certain things out of the picture). Only exceptional situations or someone skilled in ‘decyphering’ frames, such as a psychologist, a social scientist or an insightful person, may succeed in making the frames explicit.

The Study of European Integration: The Role of Frames

The study of European integration has mainly focused on elites, and this is understandable. The European unification process has been led by elites, with very little interest shown by the general population. Over time, however, the population has been invited, with increasing frequency, to participate in major decisions which, whether the citizens want to acknowledge it or not, affect them in many and important ways. The invitation has been extended under pressure by the most democratically-conscious fractions of the elites and by segments of the elites who either oppose European integration or seek to strengthen their political legitimacy at home by showing that the European population backs their European initiatives. Although the European population's interest in European affairs remains embarrassingly low, the outcomes of European parliamentary elections and, especially, of national referenda, have had a significant effect on the course of European integration. One could actually say that the democratization of the European Union and the current lack of popularity of federalist positions owe something to the outcomes of referenda in some of the European Union member states. Current developments suggest that the role of public opinion in shaping the course of European integration will increase directly (through referenda) and indirectly (through elections to the European Parliament) as the European Union develops a more political profile. This is a good justification for investing effort in understanding what makes people more supportive or less supportive of European integration.

Only recently have researchers begun to consider the role of frames in shaping people's attitudes toward European integration. Early work on this topic drew on Deutsch's transactionalism, stressing the role of factors such as travelling abroad or learning foreign languages. These factors were seen as conducive to a European we-feeling among the population and, through this,

to favorable attitudes toward European integration. Soon, however, the stress of this approach shifted to the intermediate variable--the European well-being--and the broader set of factors explaining the development of this feeling. This led to the emphasis on cognitive mobilization as a key explanatory variable of attitudes to European integration. The hypothesis put forward by both Deutsch and Inglehart was that individuals with greater levels of cognitive mobilization were better able to transcend parochial attachments and identify with Europe, and to support European integration (Deutsch, 1964; Inglehart, 1977).

Although there was very little research on attitudes to European integration until the late 1970s, which is consistent with the small role public opinion played in theories of European integration, what little there was continued to focus on psycho-sociological variables. Inglehart, for instance, applied his postmaterialism thesis to the study of attitudes to European integration, and hypothesized that postmaterialists, less concerned about material and physical security, should be more supportive of European integration. In the mid-1980s, Hewstone produced the first systematic analysis of attitudes to European integration (Hewstone, 1986). This analysis heralded a gradual shift from cognitive and sociocultural explanations to interest-based ones, such as value-expectancy theory. In the 1990s, some of the most influential contributions to the study of European integration represented this interest-based approach. Thus, Eichenberg and Dalton emphasized the role of domestic economic performance and trade dependence in explaining variation in support for European integration, whereas Gabel operationalized the propositions of a panoply of rational-choice approaches to attitude formation (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998).

At the turn of the millennium researchers finally began to take the role of national identity and frames seriously. Frames, however, had been lurking in the background from much earlier on. Inglehart was certainly conscious of the role they played, but never translated his intuition into a systematic

statistical analysis. In his 1977 piece, for instance, he remarked that cognitive mobilization should be positively related to support for European integration only if the information conveyed about the European integration process were positive. Otherwise, there would be no reason to expect a relationship between the two variables. He also said that postmaterialists should be more favorable to European integration than materialists only if the European Union were perceived as promoting stricter environmental standards. Hewstone was also conscious of the role of frames (he used the related concept of “social representations”). In his book on attitudes to European integration, however, he simply collected and described contrasts in the way students in various countries conceive of European integration and then proceeded to a statistical analysis in which these qualitative findings were completely ignored. Frames of the first type, that is, framing frames, are also present in rational choice approaches by Eichenberg and Dalton and Gabel. Eichenberg and Dalton, for instance, assume that Europeans frame positive domestic news items as reflecting the government’s performance and negative news as reflecting the impact of membership in the European Community. Gabel, in turn, assumes that individuals use an interest-based frame when judging the opportunities offered by the European integration process, and that they frame what the European Union represents as fully informed citizens.

The assumption that the European Union and the European integration process are perceived in the same way by all citizens within and across countries has, until recently, remained unquestioned. In my book, *Framing Europe*, I place frames at the center of the analysis of public opinion research on European integration¹. My focus is on frames of the second kind-- that is, framed frames--although in the process, I provide insights into the framing frames individuals use.

Frames and Attitudes toward European Integration: An Illustration

I became interested in the role of frames after noticing that three decades of public opinion studies had failed to come up with empirically supported explanations of international variation in support for European integration. I was also dissatisfied with the prevailing rational choice approach. Matt Gabel's book was exemplary in its analytical and statistical rigor, but the calculating individual that he presented had nothing to do with me and with the people I knew. I thus designed a qualitative study that was based on the premise that how individuals conceive of themselves, their country, and the European Union affects their attitudes to European integration. The study consisted of semi-structured qualitative interviews with comparable samples of ordinary citizens and local elites in modal mid-sized towns in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain. The goal was to provide citizens with an opportunity to argue in favour of or against European integration and membership of the European Union without in any way leading them in a particular direction. My assumption was that the longer they talked, the more likely it was that they would make explicit the frames within which they formed their opinions about the European Union.

The information I collected allowed me to confirm Lamont's and Thévénôt's insight that national frames overlap on certain issues and distinguish themselves on others (Lamont and Thévénôt, 2000). British, German, and Spanish citizens shared an image of the European Union as a predominantly economic area, a bloc with the aspiration to compete with other areas of the world, a space for freedom of movement, and a poorly governed series of institutions. At the same time, each country's social representation of the European Union offered distinctive traits. In Germany, for instance, the European Union was perceived as a potential threat to jobs and working conditions because of immigration. European integration was

also perceived as positive for Germany's image in the world, deeply marked by the Nazi era and World War II. In Spain, the European Union has been represented as an opportunity to modernize the country and to break with Spain's secular isolation. Finally, in the United Kingdom, the European Union has been represented as a threat to national identity. My book shows that this last frame largely explains why the British population is less supportive of European integration than are the populations of other European Union member states.

Frames about European integration are the context within which individuals develop their attitudes. Knowing whether individuals have a strong or a weak national identity does not help to predict whether they are in favor of or against European integration. If citizens do not see any linkage between European integration and national identity, it is irrelevant whether this identity is strong or weak. Furthermore, my book demonstrates that frames are a major conduit through which culture impacts on attitudes toward European integration. Through systematic analysis of various institutional materials, such as prize-winning novels, history textbooks, and addresses by heads of state, I show that all the frames that distinguish British, German, and Spanish respondents resonate with the broader national culture. In Britain, in particular, the fear of losing British national identity resonates with a strong sense of cultural distinctiveness that characterized this country for the entire 20th century and still lingers today.

In sum, my book fits into the current constructionist trend in the new institutionalism literature, concerned with emphasizing the role of sociocultural factors in the explanation of European integration. Previous research in this area had examined norms, ideas, values, and identities, but rarely frames, and even less frequently, frames about European integration. My book shows that this approach can be useful, since it allows one to explain international variation in support of European integration to a considerable degree.

The Public Sphere: Democratic pre-requisite and Framing vehicle

Ordinary citizens' frames about political objects are significantly shaped by debates in the public sphere, and the European Union is no exception. The public sphere is thus both a key democratic institution and a vehicle for how people conceive of political objects. The last decade has witnessed a significant amount of theoretical reflection and empirical research on the need for, the possibility of, and the characteristics of a European public sphere². Pessimistic diagnoses of the prospects for a European public sphere have slowly given way to more optimistic ones, based on a conceptualization of the European Union as a multilevel governance structure³. As a new level in Europe's multilevel governance structures, the EU offers the potential for adding a supranational dimension to national public spheres and for more frequent and intense horizontal debate across Europe. Over time, the research emphasis has shifted from the ontological question of whether or not a public sphere exists to the characterization of the new space of communication created by the European Union. It is impossible in such short space to do justice to the large number of studies currently under way or just finished that focus on the public sphere. The projects "Organized Civil Society and European Governance", "Europeanization and National Public Discourse", *EU Politics on Television News*, "European Public Space Observatory" or *Europub*, "The Transnationalization of the Public Spheres", and "Transformation of Political Communication in European Public Spheres" or *Europub.com* are prominent examples⁴. These projects are guided by different definitions of the public sphere and use different but related methodologies. Some of the themes that have engaged researchers are the Europeanization of national public spheres, broadly conceived of as the increasing presence of the European Union and the various EU member states in the claim-making process⁵, the simultaneity of debates on European Union

topics across the European Union's member states⁶, the similarity of meaning structures in debates about European topics across public spheres and transnational discursive interaction⁷. Recent years have also witnessed an interest in the democratic character of the emerging European public sphere⁸.

Table 1: Claims-making in national public spheres. Percentage of claims with a European-level actor, by country and year⁹

	1990	1995	2000	2002	Average 1990–2002
Germany	8	8	10	13	10
Switzerland	11	7	9	12	10
Spain	15	12	16	19	16
Italy	7	18	14	17	14
United Kingdom	5	6	7	8	7
France	11	15	11	13	13
Netherlands	6	5	10	11	8
Seven-country average	9	10	11	13	11

Source: Ruud Koopmans, 2004. "Integrated Report: Analysis of Political Claims in European Print Media", in *The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres*, Project Europub.com, funded by the Vth Framework Programme of the European Commission, Contract Number: HPSE-CT2000-00046

Extant research has revealed that one can certainly speak of a Europeanization of public spheres¹⁰. Tables 1 and 2 show results for seven European countries, all but one (Switzerland) members of the European Union. The data for these tables were gathered as part of the Europub.com project, funded under the European Commission's Vth Framework Programme, in which I participated as Spanish coordinator. The table reports

country-specific and general trends over time in the percentages of claims in which the actor or the addressee was the European Union. These percentages have been obtained by systematically examining claims made in seven policy areas. These are monetary politics, agriculture, immigration, troop deployment, pensions, education, and European integration. Table 1 and Table 2 show a gradual Europeanization of claims-making during the 1990s, significantly more visible with respect to claims in which the addressee is the European Union. Thus, we see that early in the new millennium, about one in five claims made in these seven policy areas are addressed to European Union actors. These trends largely reflect the strengthening of the EU's competencies in some policy areas and the accelerated pace of European integration since the 1980s. Indeed Table 3 shows that most of the Europeanization of claims-making has taken place in monetary politics and European integration, where there has been the greatest transfer of competencies to the European Union institutions and the most dynamism. Research on the European Union public sphere has also revealed some cross-national simultaneity in debates about the EU¹¹ and some sharing of relevance structures or transnational discursive interaction¹².

The Europeanization of national public spheres over the last fifteen years is a step toward the democratization of the European Union, which complements the gradual strengthening of the European Union. When we analyze trends in support for the European Union during the same period, however, we notice that support has steadily declined just as the democratic deficit was being reduced. Between 1990 and 2002, beginning and end dates for our study, the percentage of EU citizens who think that membership of the EU is a good thing dropped from 70% to 55%. Although one may argue that diffuse support for the EU reflects the impact of a wide array of factors, so that support may have declined while citizens perceived it as becoming more democratic, these trends already provide some indication that the democratic deficit *per se* cannot be the main source of discontent among European Union citizens.

Table 2: Claims-making in national public spheres. Percentage of claims with a European-level addressee, by country and year.

	1990	1995	2000	2002	Average 1990–2002
Germany	14	13	26	19	18
Switzerland	28	15	24	14	21
Spain	9	7	28	27	18
Italy	8	10	26	24	17
United Kingdom	11	15	18	15	15
France	19	32	34	37	31
Netherlands	10	17	28	25	20
Seven-country average	14	16	26	23	20

Source: Ruud Koopmans, 2004. “Integrated Report: Analysis of Political Claims in European Print Media”, in *The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres*, Project Europub.com, funded by the Vth Framework Programme of the European Commission, Contract Number: HPSE-CT2000-00046

Table 3: Claims-making in national public spheres. Percentage of claims with a European-level actor, by issue and year.

	1990	1995	2000	2002	Average 1990- 2002
Monetary Politics	10	7	26	31	19
Agriculture	16	28	17	21	21
Immigration	7	5	3	5	5
Troop Deployment	2	2	2	3	2
Pension	0	1	2	3	2
Education	1	0	1	0	1
European Integration	24	28	29	34	29

Source: Ruud Koopmans, 2004. "Integrated Report: Analysis of Political Claims in European Print Media", in *The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres*, Project Europub.com, funded by the Vth Framework Programme of the European Commission, Contract Number: HPSE-CT2000-00046

The study of the Europeanization public spheres allows us to assess the degree of democracy at the European Union level of governance objectively and, in this sense, recent empirical research has made huge strides toward this goal. The literature on the European public sphere has failed, however, to investigate the contribution of the EU public sphere to the legitimation of the European Union¹³. I want to argue that the degree of legitimation of the EU depends on whether the population represents the European Union in ways that resonate favorably with its political culture and aspirations, whatever these may be. This approach to the problem of legitimation calls for the investigation of two aspects of the European public sphere that have been neglected in recent empirical research. The first is the political socialization

role of the European public sphere and the second its contribution to expressing and creating particular conceptions of what European integration and the European Union mean. As a socialization agency, the EU level of the public sphere provides information, arguments, political signs—e.g. who defends what position—, frames, and symbols that inform citizens' attitudes toward the European Union. This socialization role depends first and foremost on how closely citizens follow the political debate. As the vehicle for the expression and creation of representations of the European Union, the European level of the public sphere can be taken as being both an indicator of the extent to which one can speak of a European demos and a causal factor in the creation of a demos with particular characteristics. In this section of the paper I examine the role of the democratic deficit in the way the European Union has been framed in the quality press of the seven countries under examination. One would assume, based on the important role of the public sphere in shaping how citizens conceive of the European Union, that the democratic deficit only plays a role in delegitimizing the European Union to the extent that it is a salient element in how the public sphere frames the debate on the European Union.

In *Framing Europe*, I examined frames contained in a systematic sample of editorials on European integration topics, published during the period 1946–1997 in German, British, and Spanish quality newspapers (*Die Zeit*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *The Economist*, *The New Statesman*, *El País*, and *ABC*). I selected editorials in which the main issue was European integration, European institutions, European policies (e.g. ECSC, EEC, EC, or EU policies), or European actors (e.g. ECSD, EEC, EC, or EU actors). I coded these editorials for the presence or absence of a series of frames that had proved salient in in-depth interviews with ordinary citizens from these three countries. The results, presented in Table 4, reveal that between 1986 and 1997 10% of these editorials framed the European Union as suffering from a democratic deficit. The perception that the European Union is poorly governed and managed, the perception that European countries are too small

to compete against the USA and Japan, the conception of the EU as a huge market with beneficial economic consequences, and the European Union's contribution to peace are the only frames that appeared more frequently than the democratic deficit, and this was only marginally so.

Table 4: Positive and Negative Descriptions or Evaluative Comments about European Integration in Spanish, British, and German Lead and Op-Ed articles, 1986-1997, (% of articles)

	Spain	The United Kingdom	Germany	Total
Common Market (P)	8.2 (6)	13.6 (8)	14.8 (9)	11.9 (23)
Common Market (N)	2.7 (2)	3.4 (2)	2.1 (1)	2.6 (5)
CAP *	2.7 (2)	16.9 (10)	4.9 (3)	7.8 (15)
Democratic Deficit *	4.1 (3)	18.6 (11)	9.8 (6)	10.4 (20)
Strong Bloc *	9.6 (7)	8.5 (5)	23.0 (14)	13.5 (26)
Governance	16.4 (12)	18.6 (11)	14.8 (9)	16.6 (32)
Against Isolation	4.1 (3)	5.1 (3)	1.6 (1)	3.6 (7)
Lack of Voice	2.7 (2)	5.1 (3)	3.3 (2)	3.6 (7)
Modernization	1.4 (1)	1.7 (1)	-	1.0 (2)
Social Benefits (P)	1.4 (1)	3.4 (2)	1.6 (1)	2.1 (4)
Social Benefits (N)	-	1.7 (1)	1.6 (1)	1.0 (2)
Sovereignty and Identity (P) *	-	11.9 (7)	14.8 (9)	8.3 (16)
Sovereignty and Identity (N)	1.4 (1)	3.4 (2)	-	1.6 (3)
Standardization	1.4 (1)	5.1 (3)	4.9 (3)	3.6 (7)
Lessons of WWII*	-	-	19.7 (12)	6.2 (12)
Peace and Security*	5.5 (4)	8.5 (5)	21.3 (13)	11.4 (22)
Structural/Regional Funds*	13.7 (10)	1.7 (1)	3.3 (2)	6.2 (13)

N (articles) = 73 59 61 193

Chi-Square Sig. At 0.05 level, two-tailed, (p) Positive Effect; (n) Negative Effect

Note : See *Framing Europe* for a methodological description. This table was not included in the volume.

The democratic deficit therefore appears as a prominent frame in public debate over European integration and the European Union in the 1986-1997 period. However, it does so unevenly, across countries, being virtually absent in the Spanish public sphere. Even in Spain, however, where editorials are generally descriptive pieces devoid of frames, the democratic deficit was also among the five most important frames in this period. We get a similar impression of the role of the European Union's democratic deficit in public debate when we look at the results of the Europub.com project. Europub.com drew a larger sample of editorials, covering a slightly different time period (2000-2002), a different set of newspapers (quality newspapers, regional newspapers, and tabloids). It also focused on the seven policy areas described above when discussing the Europeanization of national public spheres and only analysed those in which the newspaper itself made a claim through the editorial. Finally, it used a different coding method: firstly, it did not focus on the presence/absence of particular frames but, rather, it coded all frames; secondly, it did not code all the frames contained in an editorial but, rather, only the frames that were attached to the main claim related to European integration in each editorial. The decision to code only frames attached to the main claim on European integration in an editorial rather than all frames in an article means that the obtained proportions of frames by claim are much smaller than the proportions of frames by article that I obtained in *Framing Europe*. Nonetheless, the ranking of frames gives an indication of the relative salience of the democratic deficit frame in the period 2000-2002. The analysis of frames using this database shows that the democratic deficit was again among the top eight broad categories of frames present in editorials. Furthermore, as was reported in *Framing Europe*, the press in the United

Kingdom emphasized this frame more than did the press in Germany, and the press in Germany emphasized this frame more than did the press in Spain. In fact, among the seven countries that participated in Europub.com, the United Kingdom was the one in which the democratic deficit frame was most salient. I will come back to this data below.

Public debate on European integration and the frames invoked in these debates significantly shape how ordinary people think about the European Union and the attitudes resulting from these conceptualizations. This is so, in particular, because Europeans rarely connect their daily experiences with EU laws or policies. A national representative survey conducted in Spain just a few months ago, revealed, for instance, that only 25% of the respondents claimed to have made such connection. The EU achievement that this group of respondents mentioned most frequently when probed by the interviewer was the Euro. One in three of them did so. Other topics less frequently mentioned were the Erasmus program, farm subsidies, and structural funds for building new roads. The strong impact that public debate on European integration has on citizens' conceptions directly or indirectly does not mean that citizens passively swallow everything that they are fed. These citizens actively select the information they get, based on their value priorities, on how different topics resonate with their worldviews and on life conditions and experiences. One should not therefore expect that ordinary citizens would readily include the EU democratic deficit as part of the way they imagine the European Union and European integration.

In *Framing Europe*, I examined ordinary citizens' representations of Europe in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom, in 1996 and 1997, about the time when the topic of the EU's democratic deficit was most intensely discussed in the public sphere. Table 5 shows that 27, or seventeen percent, of my randomly selected 160 respondents spontaneously framed the European Union as having a democratic deficit when asked to justify their answers to general questions about the European Union and the European integration process in about one and a half hours long in-depth interviews.

The table also shows that, as was the case in public debate around the same time, the democratic deficit was a salient frame in Germany and the United Kingdom, but not in Spain. On average, the salience of the democratic deficit may seem high compared to what I described for the newspapers analyzed in this same period. One must be aware, however, that the interviews were far more conducive for the expression of all kinds of frames than are short, focused, editorials. In fact, out of 16 broad categories of topics, as outlined in Table 5, the democratic deficit is the ninth most mentioned topic, far behind other categories of frame, such as the economic advantages of a large market, the perception that European states are too small, the removal of barriers to the movement of people, and the perception that the EU is poorly governed. Relatively speaking, then, the democratic deficit was less salient in ordinary citizens' frames than in the public sphere, and it was salient in Germany and the United Kingdom but not in Spain. Interestingly enough, Germans and British conceive the democratic deficit in very different ways, which reflect the difference in their democratic traditions. In Germany, people attributed the democratic deficit to the European Parliament's secondary role in the EU's decision-making process, whereas in the United Kingdom people referred it to the lack of proximity between the decision-makers in Brussels and Strasbourg and British citizens. The same British citizens who criticized the EU's democratic deficit were in fact opposed to a strengthening of the European Parliament, whereas German citizens, for whom the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit, did not care about issues of physical proximity.

Table 5: Themes Mentioned to Justify Positive or Negative Comments about European Integration or the European Union, by City (Number of respondents who mention a particular theme)

	Germany		Spain		United Kingdom		Total
	Westadt	Oststadt	Quijotón	Catadell	Engleton	Scotsburg	
Common Market	23	22	19	20	23	22	129
Strong Bloc	12	14	16	14	13	10	79
Removal of Barriers	13	10	11	8	13	12	67
Governance	12	10	9	9	14	16	70
Free Movement and Competition	10	10	1				21
Democratic Deficit	11	6	4		5	1	27
Lessons of WWII	17	2					19
Peace and Security	11	9	4	1	9	8	42
Understanding between Peoples	16	5	9	6	11	6	53
Modernization	1		8	9	3	3	24
CAP	1	4	15	12	7	8	47
Structural/Regional Funds	1	1	12	10	6	9	39
Against Isolation		1	7	5	2		15
Lack of Voice		2	4	8	3	3	20
Sovereignty and Identity	2	1	2	2	9	9	25
Social Benefits	1	2	4	4	5	8	24
Total Respondents	27	29	27	24	27	26	160

Note: The city names are fictive, for confidentiality purposes (see *Framing Europe* for an explanation of the city and respondent selection process).

Democracy and Legitimacy

The analysis in the previous section has examined the importance of the EU's alleged democratic deficit to the way in which the public sphere and ordinary citizens view the European Union. This analysis suggests that in effect this frame has been mobilized since the 1990s, but that it has happened unevenly across countries. The democratic deficit was less salient, however, than other more powerful frames. *Framing Europe* shows that the economic, geopolitical, and governance dimensions of European integration are the core

elements in how the public sphere and ordinary citizens conceive of the European Union and European integration (see Tables 4 and 5). The data collected in Europub.com for the period 2000–2002 confirm this impression. Table 6 displays the percentages of editorial claims containing particular categories of frames for each of seven countries in the period 2000–2002. For clarity of presentation, only the nine most important categories are displayed. They represent one fifth of all the frames contained in the claims that have been analyzed. As can be seen, the democratic deficit is the eighth most frequent frame, present in 7 out of every 1000 claims. The most frequent frames are those 1) speaking to the European Union's economic problems, 2) emphasizing governance problems in the European Union, 3) stressing the loss of sovereignty and the threat to national identity that they entail, 4) pointing to the EU's economic advantages and 5) stressing the European Union's lack of popular legitimacy. The most noticeable country contrasts generally involve the United Kingdom. Here editorial claims emphasizing the European Union's economic, governance, and legitimacy problems are more frequent than in the other countries. Furthermore, British editorial claims emphasize the EU's impact on loss of sovereignty and identity more often than do those in the remaining countries. Other country contrasts involve the Netherlands and France. In France, editorial claims emphasize the existence of shared values across the European Union more do those in other countries. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, editorial claims emphasize governance problems more than do editorial claims in other countries except the United Kingdom.

**Table 6: Classification of Editorial Frames by broad categories
(Specific) (2000-2002) %**

	Germany	Switzerland	Spain	Italy	United Kingdom	France	Netherlands	Total
Economic Problems	1.1 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.4 (2)	0.0 (0)	7.9 (66)	0.3 (2)	2.6 (19)	2.1 (98)
Poor Governance	1.1 (9)	0.5 (3)	1.0 (5)	0.0 (0)	4.3 (36)	0.3 (2)	3.3 (24)	1.7 (79)
Loss of Sovereignty/Identity	0.4 (3)	0.2 (1)	<i>1.4</i> (7)	<i>0.7</i> (5)	5.3 (44)	1.0 (6)	1.0 (7)	1.5 (73)
Economic Benefits	<i>1.8</i> (15)	<i>1.1</i> (6)	0.4 (2)	0.1 (1)	1.1 (9)	2.7 (16)	2.1 (15)	1.3 (64)
Lack of legitimacy and citizen participation	0.8 (7)	0.3 (2)	0.4 (2)	0.1 (1)	3.2 (27)	1.5 (9)	0.8 (6)	1.1 (54)
Shared Values	0.5 (4)	0.2 (1)	0.8 (4)	<i>0.7</i> (5)	0.4 (3)	3.2 (19)	0.8 (6)	0.9 (42)
Peace and Security	0.2 (2)	0.2 (1)	0.6 (3)	0.3 (2)	0.8 (7)	1.5 (9)	1.8 (13)	0.8 (37)
Democratic Deficit	0.4 (3)	0.7 (4)	0.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.9 (16)	0.5 (3)	0.8 (6)	0.7 (33)
Strong Bloc	0.5 (4)	0.0 (0)	1.0 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.2 (2)	0.7 (4)	0.4 (3)	0.4 (18)
Total Claims	835	562	516	673	835	602	718	4741
Percentage of claims without frame	74.1 (619)	89.7 (504)	75.6 (390)	80.8 (544)	73.2 (611)	58.3 (351)	70.2 (504)	74.3 (3523)

Total Number of Frames: 2286 (0.48 frames per claim; about one frame every two claims)

% of Frames classified under these categories: 21.8 (498)

One can look at this data from a different perspective: one that emphasizes the categories of frames that are most salient independently of how the EU is evaluated in a particular claim. This is what I do in Table 7. The eight categories represented in this table classify slightly more than two-thirds of all frames. The table shows that 8% of the claims contain an economic frame. Other prominent frames, by rank order, are value, governance, democracy, sovereignty/identity, and citizen frames. Again, data for the United Kingdom contrast with data for other countries. In the United Kingdom editorial claims emphasize economic and sovereignty/identity issues more than they do in other countries. Meanwhile, Dutch claims emphasize economic and, especially, governance frames more often than do claims in other countries, except the United Kingdom.

**Table 7: Classification of Editorial Frames by broad categories
(2000-2002) %**

	Germany	Switzerland	Spain	Italy	United Kingdom	France	Netherlands	Total
Economic Issues	8.4 (70)	2.8 (16)	5.6 (29)	1.3 (9)	13.1 (109)	9.6 (58)	12.4 (89)	8.0 (380)
Values	3.1 (26)	2.5 (14)	3.1 (16)	6.5 (44)	4.8 (40)	6.5 (39)	6.1 (44)	4.7 (223)
Governance	3.6 (30)	0.9 (5)	2.3 (12)	1.2 (8)	5.7 (48)	3.8 (23)	8.9 (64)	4.0 (190)
Democracy	5.3 (44)	2.7 (15)	4.3 (22)	3.0 (21)	2.5 (21)	4.7 (28)	4.3 (31)	3.8 (181)
Sovereignty/Identity	1.6 (13)	1.1 (6)	3.7 (19)	3.1 (21)	8.3 (69)	3.3 (20)	3.5 (25)	3.6 (173)
Legitimacy and citizen participation	1.7 (14)	1.6 (8)	1.7 (9)	2.4 (16)	4.3 (36)	5.6 (34)	4.2 (30)	3.1 (147)
Peace and Security	0.6 (5)	0.7 (4)	1.9 (10)	2.4 (16)	2.3 (19)	1.7 (10)	3.8 (27)	1.9 (91)
Strong Bloc	1.0 (8)	1.8 (1)	2.5 (13)	2.4 (16)	2.9 (24)	3.7 (22)	1.9 (14)	2.1 (98)
Total Claims	835	562	516	673	835	602	718	4741
Percentage of claims without frame	74.1 (619)	89.7 (504)	75.6 (390)	80.8 (544)	73.2 (611)	58.3 (351)	70.2 (504)	74.3 (3523)

Total Number of frames: 2286 (0.48 frames per claim; about one frame every two claims)

% of Frames classified under these categories: 64.9 (1483). Other frames not classified in this table: Various Internal frames: 9.7% (221); Various Historical: 6.4% (147); EU-US relations: 3.1% (70); Exclusion frames: 2.6% (60); Globalization frames: 2.4% (56); National Interest: 1.8% (41); Equality frames: 1.5% (34); A country's voice: 1.4% (32); Cohesion: 0.3% (8); Various Instrumental Political: 0.3% (8); Social Benefits: 0.3% (7); Removal of barriers to movement of persons: 0.1% (2); Other: 5.1% (117)

The main conclusion one can draw from this analysis is that the public sphere frames the European Union mainly in economic terms, balancing positive with negative, except in the United Kingdom, where in recent years negative ones have overwhelmed the positive. At some distance from the economic realm, governance, sovereignty, democracy and shared values are the other main themes. Based on the strong correlation between public sphere and popular frames, as demonstrated in *Framing Europe*, one can thus assume that when citizens think about the European Union, they think more or less in these terms. Their evaluations of the European Union will vary

with how much importance they attach to economics, governance, democracy, shared values, and sovereignty/identity and with their current assessment of the European Union's performance in these realms. Both the attached importance to these issues and the citizens' assessment of the European Union's performance varies across countries. In *Framing Europe*, for instance, I pointed out that issues of sovereignty and identity resonate more with British than with German and Spanish culture and I also ventured an historical explanation for why this is so. Both *Framing Europe* and *Europub.com* also show that the British assessments of the European Union's performance in the economic, governance, sovereignty, and democracy realms are more negative than those in other countries.

To the extent that preferences are more stable than are performance assessments, the legitimacy crisis in the European Union since the early 1990s ought to be seen in changes in how the public has assessed the European Union along the economic, governance, democracy, sovereignty, and values dimensions. The public's perception of how the EU is governed was never particularly positive. One may then hypothesize that changes in the other four domains have more to do with the legitimacy crisis. The European Union has accumulated more power in the last decade and therefore absorbed more of its member states' sovereignty. However, sovereignty is more relevant in some countries than in others. Meanwhile, the European Union has become more democratic over the years, at least in the way continental Europeans understand democracy (i.e. a strengthening of the EP) and this would seem to weaken the democratic deficit argument. One is thus left with economics and values as the most likely explanatory factors for the EU's legitimacy crisis: All countries value economic performance highly and there is no reason to think that they differ in how much importance they attach to shared values across Europe. Furthermore, although they may differ in their perception of the EU's economic impact and in their perception of how similar European Union countries are in terms of their values, the fact that European Union member states did not perform particularly well in economic

terms in the 1990s and that they have become more diverse culturally lends plausibility to this hypothesis. A comparison between Tables 4 and 6 shows, for instance, that while in the period 1987-1997 frames stressing the economic advantages of the EU were much more frequent than those stressing the economic disadvantages, in the period 2000-2002, this was no longer the case. The United Kingdom is the extreme case of this reversal, but in other countries, positive evaluations are only marginally more frequent than negative ones, or are slightly less frequent. Further research is needed to test this hypothesis.

Conclusion

In this paper I have used two approaches to examine the role of the democratic deficit in explaining the EU's legitimacy crisis. Firstly I have looked at the legitimacy crisis in the context of institutional transformations and the development of the public sphere. From this standpoint, the democratic deficit is an unlikely candidate: the EU's legitimacy crisis has run parallel to a gradual process of democratization of the European Union. Secondly I have examined the legitimacy crisis from the perspective of social representations. This perspective posits that the EU's level of legitimacy depends on the combined effects of individual preferences and their perceptions of what the EU is and does. From this perspective, a perception that the EU is undemocratic may have contributed to the delegitimization of the EU. The democratic deficit is an established frame when we consider the EU as a whole and decline in support to the European Union in the 1990s was steeper in countries like Germany and the United Kingdom where the frame is relatively well established than in countries like Spain or Italy, where it is not prevalent. The analysis has shown, however, that the democratic deficit is no more salient than economic, governance, sovereignty/identity, and value frames. These and the democratic deficit frame delimit the range of

topics where researchers ought to seek an answer to the current legitimacy crisis that threatens to paralyze the functioning of the EU in years to come.

I began the paper by referring to the French and Dutch referenda. An appropriate analytic frame to explain the citizens' behavior in these referenda would consider the following factors: A) Factors unconnected to the EU Constitution (e.g. citizens' party allegiance) B) Factors connected with citizens' evaluations of the EU Constitution. Among these factors are 1) Diffuse support for the European Union and 2) Specific support for the European Constitution. Specific support is influenced by the interaction of a) the citizens' preferences and b) how they represent the European Constitution. This representation would in turn result from the interaction of i) the competing political groups' framing strategies, ii) the citizens' perceived social conditions and iii) the resonance of the political groups' frames with the frames about the European Union that citizens have developed over time. This paper suggests that winning this referendum hinged in part on connecting people's dominant representations of the European Union to their current social conditions. In this sense, it is not surprising that fear of the economic and cultural consequences of current and future enlargements, rooted in unemployment and ethnic diversity, have played major roles in people's behavior. Explaining why those stressing the economic promise of the EU constitution or the shared values of the peoples that comprise the European Union lost out to those emphasizing the opposite requires going beyond frame analysis into socio-structural and social movement approaches. After all, aside from an indication of the themes on which the debate about the EU constitution was most likely to center, there is little in what we have presented above that would have led to the expectation of a No vote in France and the Netherlands.

Notes

¹ Juan Díez Medrano. 2003. *Framing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

² Kielmansegg, P. 1996. "Die europäische Union—ein Gebilde sui generis? In Klaus Dieter Wolf (ed.) *Projekt Europa in Übergang? Probleme, Modelle und Strategien des Regierens in der Europäischen Union*. Baden-Baden: Nomos; Grimm, D. 1995. "Braucht Europa eine Verfassung?" *Juristische Zeitung* 50; Gerhards, J. 1993. Westeuropäische Integration und die Schwierigkeiten der Entstehung einer europäischen Öffentlichkeit. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22; Schlesinger, P. 1999. "Changing Spaces of Political Communication: The Case of the European Union." *Political Communication* 16.

³ On the European Union as multilevel governance structure, see M. Jachtenfuchs. 1997. "Democracy and governance in the European Union", in Andreas Follesdal/Peter Koslowski (eds.) *Democracy and the European Union*. Berlin: Springer and M. Zürn. 1998. *Regieren jenseits des Nationalstaates. Globalisierung und Denationalisierung als Chance*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

⁴ Eder, K. C. Kantner, and H.J. Trenz. 2000. "Transnationale Öffentlichkeit und die Strukturierung politischer Kommunikation in Europa". *Antrag auf Förderung eines Forschungsvorhabens im Rahmen des DFG-Schwerpunkts Regieren in Europa*; Giesen, B. and T. Risse. 1999. "When Europe Hits Home: Europeanization and National Public Discourses. *Neuantrag an die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*. Konstanz, Florence: Universität Konstanz and European University Institute; Peter, J., H. Semetko, and C. H. de Vreese. 2003. "EU Politics on Television News: A Cross National Comparative Study". *European Union Politics* 4 (3); Giorgi, L. 2004. "The European Public Space Observatory: Assembling Information that allows for the Monitoring of the European Public Space. Final Report". Web site: <ftp://ftp.iccr-international.org/europub/europub-finalreport.pdf>; Peters, B. and S. Sifft. 2003. "The Transnationalization of Public Spheres", paper presented at the Conference *Europeanization of Public Spheres?* Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, June 20-22, 2003; Koopmans, R. "The Transformation of Political Communication in European Public Sphere". Web site: <http://Europub.wz-berlin.de>

⁵ Koopmans, R. and J. Erbe. 2004. "Toward a European Public Sphere?". *Innovation, The European Journal of Social Science Research* 17,2;

⁶ Eder, K. and C. Kantner. 2000. "Transnationale Resonanzstrukturen in Europa. Eine Kritik der Rede vom Öffentlichkeitsdefizit", in M. Bach (ed.), *Die Europäisierung nationaler Gesellschaften*. Sonderheft 40 der *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*; Eder, Kantner, and Trenz, "Transnationaler Öffentlichkeit..."

⁷ Risse, T. 2002. "How do we Know a European Public Sphere when we see one? Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators. Paper prepared for IDNET Workshop "Europeanization of the Public Sphere", European University Institute.

⁸ Eriksen, E. and J. E. Fossum. 2000. *Democracy in the European Union. Integration through Deliberation?* London: Routledge; Giorgi, L., J. Crowley, and S. Ney. 2001. "Surveying the European Public Space—A Political and Research Agenda", *Innovation, The European Journal of Social Science Research* 14,1; Imig, D. and S. Tarrow. 1999. "The Europeanization of Movements? A new Approach to Transnational Contention. In D. della Porta, H. Kriesi, and D. Rucht (eds.) *Social Movements in a Globalizing World*. London: MacMillan.

⁹ For a description of the codebooks and detailed explanations of the coding process, go to <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>

¹⁰ Koopmans and Erbe, "Towards a European..."

¹¹ Díez Medrano, J. 2001. "Die Qualitätspresse und Europäische Integration." *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 14, 4.

¹² for conflicting views see Van de Steeg, M. 2004. "Does a Public Sphere Exist in the EU? An Analysis of the Content of the Haider Case." *EUI Working Paper* 2004/5 and Trenz, H. J. 2000. "Korruption und politischer Skandal in der EU. Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen politischen Öffentlichkeit", in M. Bach (ed.) *Die Europäisierung nationaler Gesellschaften*. Sonderheft 40 der *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*.

¹³ Calhoun, C. 2003. "The Democratic Integration of Europe: Interests, Identity, and the Public Sphere", in M. Berezin and M. Schain (eds.) *Europe without Borders*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chapter 6

Europe-topics in Europe's media: The debate about the European public sphere: a meta-analysis of media content analyses¹

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The existence of a European public sphere is often disputed – and this dispute is not limited to communication and media studies. A common thesis is that a European public sphere can be constructed through the Europeanization of reporting in national media. On the basis of a qualitatively oriented meta-analysis, this contribution aims to answer the question of whether such Europeanization is taking place in European countries. Empirical research carried out in the German, English and French languages since the beginning of the 1990s is systematically evaluated with reference to 17 studies which analysed media content from several European countries. All the studies examined compared the reporting of European topics in the media of different European countries. The meta-analysis shows that in the 15 member states of the European Union prior to the 2004 enlargement, there are, to differing degrees, discernable tendencies towards the development of Europeanization in the national public spheres. Overall, EU topics account for an extremely small proportion of the reporting in any particular national media. Players at EU level only feature in minor roles. It can be concluded that the public spheres of EU states continue to exhibit strong national orientations. Keeping in mind that there has been little empirical research in

this field so far, the results of this analysis are a first step towards a systematization of the existing research at a time when the debate about a European public sphere becomes even more important against the background of the ongoing expansion of the EU.

Introduction and presentation of the problem

More than one third of the citizens of the European Union (EU) are of the opinion that the national media attach too little significance to EU topics. This is the conclusion drawn by the European Commission from its Eurobarometer survey² (European Commission, 2004: 22). And yet there were plenty of opportunities to report on ongoing political integration in Europe: the EU has just experienced the greatest enlargement in its history. In mid-June 2004 342 million eligible voters elected a new European parliament. In addition, decisions were taken on a constitution for the political and economic community which political scientists describe as a 'new protagonist in international relations' (Hrbek, 1998: 143) but which, at the same time, 'reveals elements which are normally attributed to states' (ibid.).

In the EU member states elections to the national parliament are normally big events, which the media accompany for weeks in advance with talk shows, special programmes and newsprint (Medien Tenor, 2002: 8). The media do more than assume the role of observers here: 'Today ... the impressions relevant to elections are mainly conveyed by media reporting' (Brettschneider, 2002: 37; for a detailed discussion Schulz, 1998). In the national media system television, radio, print and Internet media make available information on parties and election programmes as a matter of course – after all, the politicians standing for election will determine the fortunes of the country in the coming years.

Important political decisions at the level of the nation-state are therefore associated with the national public sphere. Public sphere in the sense of political public sphere 'is to be regarded as an intermediate system which

mediates between society or its sub-systems and the political system or its core, the state administration' (Tobler, 2001: 8). Against the background of increasing European integration (Weidenfeld, 2001: 20 ff.) the issue of a European public sphere which fulfils similar functions assumes ever-greater significance (cf. also Hagen, 2004; Lünenborg, 2000: 391 ff.).

Two views of the European public sphere, presented in greater detail in the following section, are found in the current scientific discussion: one starts from an ideal image of a European public sphere that is independent of individual states while the other view lets it emerge as a result of a Europeanization of national publics (Gerhards, 1993: 100). The public deficit of the EU, which is accompanied by a democracy deficit, is also important in this connection (cf. Trenz, 2002: 11; Kantner, 2003: 213). The public role of the media in modern and complex societies acquires special significance due to the fact that the citizens are essentially dependent on the information provided by the media (cf. Neidhardt, 1994: 10).

An analysis of media reporting as an essential indicator therefore recommends itself when attempting to answer the question about the existence of a European public sphere empirically. Content analysis permits statements about which topics occur, when, in which media, of which states, and how frequently. In this way it is possible to examine which information on EU politics is made available to the citizens of Europe via the media. The extent to which the recipients also use the information and the effect which it has cannot, of course, be answered solely by means of content analysis (Merten, 1995: 29; Früh, 2001: 42). It is, however, possible to describe the source of information on the EU that is crucial for most of the citizens and therefore the basis of potential effects (cf. also Wiesner, 1990: 161 ff.).

In order to be able to search extensively for signs of the existence or development of a European public sphere it would be desirable to conduct comparative analysis of media reporting in as many European states as possible over the longest period possible. However, for reasons of research economics, it would hardly be possible to undertake such a research project. All of the

content analyses of media reporting on the topic ‘European public sphere’ performed so far have also had to make a selection. Nevertheless, the available studies which consider comparatively partial aspects and periods of time, as well as the media reporting of some states, each provide a piece of the puzzle regarding the question of the European public sphere. The investigations that have already been performed can therefore be utilized in their totality if they are systematized and evaluated by means of a meta-analysis. This is the research approach pursued here.

Before explaining first the theoretical background and then the methodological implementation of the analysis, it still remains necessary to clarify what is to be understood by ‘Europe’ when the expression European public sphere is used. In this contribution, ‘Europe’ is used synonymously with the term ‘European Union’. The borders of the EU are identical to those of the EU of the 15 member states prior to enlargement in May 2004. This definition is determined by the currently available material: neither the theoretical literature relating to the field of research on the European public sphere nor the content-analysis studies which can be considered for the purpose of a second evaluation have so far included the ten accession states.

Theoretical background

Europe, democracy and the public

The debate about the European public sphere is regarded as fundamental for the preservation or the realization of democracy in the merging Europe as, for example, Cathleen Kantner explains:

‘The public deficit of the European Union is considered to lie at the heart of the European democracy deficit. Answering the question about the conditions for the constitution of a European public sphere is therefore essential for answering the question about the democratizability of European governance.’ (Kantner, 2003: 213)

From the point of view of political science and jurisprudence, the existence of a democracy and legitimacy deficit in the EU is undisputed (e.g. Beetham and Lord, 1998; Majone, 1998; for an overview see Meyer, 2002: 39 f.). Briefly summarized, this deficit arises from the fact that the EU member states are handing over an increasing number of state responsibilities to institutions such as the European Council, the Council of Ministers or the Commission without democratic legitimization by the citizens of Europe of the decisions taken by those in authority. An example: many directives which the EU member states are subsequently obliged to transpose into national law are still proposed by the Commission and then passed by the Council of Ministers without these draft directives requiring the agreement of the EU parliament in which directly elected representatives of the people sit (Giering 2001: 116 ff.).

Scientific consideration of the topic 'European public sphere' proves difficult: most common ideas of public sphere are based on the model of the nation-state (Imhof, 2003: 205 f.; Gerhards, 2000: 54). Although the European Union undeniably exhibits some characteristics of a state structure, it is, however, still considered to be a new type of protagonist and not a state (Hrbek, 1998: 143). And, of course, the peoples that live in the territory of the EU belong to different nations, nationalities and nation-states. It is therefore self-evident that the existing models of public sphere cannot apply here without being adapted to the conditions that obtain in the EU.

A further problem surfaces: since its foundation the EU as a political structure has found itself in a process of transformation, not only with regard to its inner constitutional order but also in terms of its continuous 'growth' through the addition of new member states. Whoever talks about any type of a European public sphere must in each case take into consideration the status of Europe at the period under discussion: is it still a question of the EU of the 12, as in 1993 when Jürgen Gerhards wrote his essay on '*West-European Integration and the difficulties with the emergence of a European public sphere*' (Gerhards, 1993; emphasis added)? Or are we discussing an EU which

now comprises 25 states? This very important aspect, the constantly changing nature of EU territory, should be considered when making statements about the European public sphere.

Two models of a European public sphere

In the theoretical debate about the existence of a European public sphere, two continuously recurring fundamental ideas are discernible (e.g. Gerhards, 1993: 100 ff.; van de Steeg 2000: 62 f.). Accordingly, a European public sphere is conceivable

as a pan-European public sphere independent of individual states or

as a European public sphere which emerges as a result of the Europeanization of the national public spheres.

Fundamentally, it can be observed that the existence of a European public sphere (whatever its specific appearance) is rejected by the majority of authors (e.g. Sievert, 1998: 18; Gerhards, 2000: 46 f.). In many cases there is even talk of a public deficit (cf. Baerns and Raupp, 2000: 39; Meyer, 2000: 107):

‘A public deficit, that is to be distinguished from a democracy deficit, would exist when political decisions were taken increasingly frequently not by the nation-states but by the institutions of the EU while the reporting to the public remained bound to the nation-state and only considered to a small extent the European decisions and discussions of the decision-makers there: the consequence would be that the citizens would not be sufficiently informed about the decisions and discussions which nevertheless directly affect them.’ (Gerhards, 2002: 141)

As shall be seen in the following, the model of the pan-European public sphere that is independent of the individual states requires different conditions than the model of the Europeanization of the national public spheres. Nonetheless it is also the more ambitious, the one that is more difficult to achieve and yet the ‘more ideal’ (Gerhards, 1993: 100).

A pan-European public sphere

The prevailing view in communication research is that a pan-European public sphere independent of individual states does not exist (e.g. Gerhards, 2002: 142). Occasionally described as a 'utopia' (van de Steeg, 2003: 171), it is also regarded as relatively improbable that there will be a development towards it in the medium term (Gerhards, 2002: 142).

The most important precondition here is the **existence of a common language** in which EU citizens can communicate with one another (Grimm, 1995: 42; Kielmansegg, 1996: 55; Kantner, 2002: 98 ff.). Such a language is, however, missing:

'Europe is not a communication community because Europe is a multi-language continent – the most banal fact is at the same time the most elementary. The peoples of Europe live in their languages as special 'structures of perception and understanding' and they will continue to live in them if Europe remains Europe.' (Kielmansegg, 1994: 27 f.)

Although English is the most widespread language in the EU states, as EU citizens indicated in December 2000 during the Eurobarometer survey (European Commission, 2001: 1), English cannot be regarded as the language of the masses and is by no means the lingua franca for the entire EU area.

The language aspect is to be seen in connection with the second precondition for a pan-European public sphere which is independent of individual states: the **existence of mass media** (or other public forums) **with EU-wide reach** (Ruß-Mohl, 2000: 130 f.; Kantner, 2002: 95 ff.; Díez Medrano, 2003: 193). The assumption is made that since there is no language of which all Europeans have the same degree of command, there cannot be any Europe-wide mass media through which the citizens of the various states can communicate with each other. There only exist a few media, each with a low readership or audience, which have a pan-European approach or are distributed, at least in part, with largely identical content in different EU states. These include the Financial Times, the Economist, the European Voice

(Kevin and Schlesinger, 2000) or, in the case of the audiovisual media, the TV news station *Euronews* (Machill, 1998: 434 ff.). Experiments for a European ‘Television without Frontiers’ (Meckel, 1994) such as Eurikon and Europa TV, which were intended to promote the integration process in Europe (cf. Kleinsteuber and Rossmann, 1994; Siebenhaar, 1994), failed above all because of the language aspect (cf. Beiler, 2000: 14).

Closely associated with the lack of EU-wide media, the **lack of a uniform journalistic and media culture in the EU states** is often cited (Sievert, 1998: 78 ff.; cf. also Wiesner, 1990). Such a culture comprises the self-image of journalists, how journalists are judged by others, the organization of journalistic work, the scientific discourse on journalism, the training of journalists, the comparison of journalistic products and basic social and legal conditions (Machill, 1997: 13 ff.). To these are added different historically formed ethical standards to which journalists submit themselves or their understanding of their role (Sievert, 1998: 88 ff.). All of this produces a situation in which a German journalist may understand the term ‘news item’ differently from a Spanish or British journalist (Machill, 1998: 432 ff.).

To summarize: since neither a uniform European language nor Europe-wide media exist, the most important preconditions for the existence of a pan-European public sphere are absent. Consequently, we will now present the model of a European public sphere that emerges as a result of a Europeanization of the national publics.

European public sphere as a result of the Europeanization of national publics

A European public sphere which emerges as a result of the publics of the EU member states being Europeanized is considered a possibility by some authors (Kantner, 2002: 121; Gerhards, 2002: 142 ff.; cf. Hasebrink, 1995). EU media policy also needs to be mentioned in this connection (Meckel, 1994; Siebenhaar, 1994; see also Venturelli, 1993): the quota rule in the so-called Television Directive (Council of the European Communities, 1989,

1997) can be interpreted as an attempt to produce a certain Europeanization of the national television stations by means of European media regulation. Accordingly, broadcasters shall 'reserve for European works ... a majority proportion of their transmission time' (Art. 4 Sect. 1).³

According to Gerhards, Europeanization would take place precisely when 'in the national public spheres, over time, reporting increasingly focused on the European decisions and the elites taking the decision' (2002: 142). In Gerhards's view, an increase in the reporting of European topics in the national media is the primary observation under Europeanization. Four indicators, which are linked in terms of content, are frequently cited for the more precise determination of the term Europeanization. They are presented in the following in slightly simplified form:

1st indicator: *Protagonists in one place in the EU enter into debate with protagonists in other places* (Díez Medrano, 2003: 193⁴; van de Steeg, 2003: 178). Koopmans and Erbe (2003: 6) also call this *horizontal Europeanization*. The term describes communicative connections between protagonists of various EU member states via the national mass media. In this description the EU is not only understood as a European central government. Instead, account is taken of the fact that the governments of the EU member states must look to the neighbouring states with regard to many of their decisions in order that a compromise is finally reached in Brussels.

2nd indicator: *Protagonists in different EU states participate in debates on the same topics and agree with regard to the delineation of the problem* (Díez Medrano, 2003: 193; van de Steeg, 2003: 178). This indicator is based on the previous one. It is directed towards the fact that a topic is discussed simultaneously in the media of several EU states. These debates strongly resemble each other. In an ideal scenario, the reporting of topics with Europe-wide significance even takes place in various EU states *synchronologically* (Sievert, 1998: 66 ff.; Grundmann et al., 2000: 300 f.).

3rd indicator: *Protagonists from EU states enter into debate with protagonists at the EU level*. Koopmans and Erbe (2003: 6) call this *vertical Europeanization*.

It is encountered when there are communicative links between the national and the European level which are reflected in the respective national reporting.

4th indicator: *Protagonists debate uniform aims and the same means from the perspective of the entire EU area* (Díez Medrano, 2003: 193).

At first glance the empirical examination of these indicators appears to be more difficult than in the case of the aforementioned image of a pan-European public sphere. In this case it is obviously necessary to analyse the debates between the protagonists more precisely. Since communication at the level of the political public that is under examination here takes place in the main via the mass media (Brettschneider, 2002: 37), these debates can be followed and analysed on the basis of the contents of national media. Accordingly, the intensification or the change in the reporting seems to be the subject of analysis which permits a statement to be made about a possible Europeanization of the national public spheres and therefore enables the emergence of this type of European public sphere.

In all theoretical approaches to Europeanization, one extremely important question remains unanswered: from which point is national reporting so Europeanized that a new form of European public sphere is present which (in contrast to the model of the pan-European public that is independent of individual states) gets by without a common language and common media? The approaches that are brought together here from current theoretical research do not provide any measure for the point from which a national public sphere can be regarded as 'completely Europeanized'. Consequently, in the case of the existence of one or more of the indicators, it is at best only possible to talk about Europeanization tendencies. However, it must be emphasized here that different types or dimensions of Europeanization are also conceivable which correspond to the four above-mentioned indicators.

Aim

In summary: this contribution will attempt to search for signs of the existence or development of a European public. The search takes place on the basis of the idea that a European public sphere can develop via the Europeanization of national public spheres, which are in turn essentially constituted via the national media. In this regard, national differences in the reporting of the media in the various EU states are likely. First there will therefore be an examination of the intensity of the reporting of the national media a) via EU-related topics (Europeanization through synchronization), b) via actions and statements from EU protagonists (vertical Europeanization) and c) via other EU states (horizontal Europeanization). Secondly there will be an investigation of how it has developed over time. Thirdly we will ask whether reporting on the EU in the national media intensifies at certain EU-specific events such as, for example, the introduction of the Euro, and whether a higher degree of Europeanization of the national public spheres is therefore present. The central importance in journalism of reporting that is oriented towards events results from the assumptions of the news value theory (e.g. Schulz, 1990; Staab, 1990; Galtung and Ruge, 1965). The methodological design by means of which these questions are to be answered is presented in the following.

Research design

Meta-analytical method

The question of the existence and the development of a European public sphere will be examined using a meta-analytical approach since, for pragmatic research reasons, it is not possible to perform one's own extensive content analysis to include all EU states. This compares many media with each other and encompasses a fairly long period of time (cf. with regard to the research strategies of internationally comparative studies, Wirth and Kolb,

2003). However, meta-analysis enables a large part of the existing media content analyses on this topic to be summarized systematically and analysed with regard to the research question.

A meta-analytical research strategy is rarely applied in communication and media science. In related disciplines, too, (e.g. Hunter and Frank, 1990; Glass et al., 1981) meta-analyses frequently only relate to the comparative evaluation of almost completely identical investigations, e.g. the results of extremely similarly designed experiments. A rough definition of meta-analysis is provided by Kiecolt and Nathan:

‘Meta-analysis integrates the findings from a universe (or sample) of investigations of some phenomenon. That is, the study itself becomes the unit of analysis. ... Meta-analysis has been used primarily to evaluate experimental research in psychology and education, but the technique may also be applied to research in other disciplines’ (1985: 10).

In the present case the challenge of the meta-analytical procedure lies in particular in making the different approaches of the studies included accessible to the question at issue. The quality criteria of scientific research, namely a systematic procedure and intersubjective comprehensibility (cf. Brosius and Koschel, 2003), must, of course, be observed. For the purpose of the comparison of various studies, an analysis framework in the form of a research-oriented question catalogue was developed (cf. 2.3.).⁵ The research tools primarily aim to present the results of the studies so that their contents can be interpreted. The results found in the studies were compared systematically, keeping in mind the different research designs. The procedure in this meta-analysis is therefore qualitative in nature.

Selection of the studies for analysis

The subjects of this meta-analysis are 17 existing studies on media contents which, in the widest sense, concern themselves with the phenomenon of the European public sphere. The results of these studies

constitute a comprehensive data basis for the meta-analysis. However, pragmatic research conditions imposed limits on the selection of the studies. Limiting factors were the languages known by the authors and the searchability of the studies. The selection criteria that resulted in the 17 studies in total were as follows:

- The study must be comparative, i.e. the media of at least two EU states must have been analysed.

- A content analysis of media reporting must have been performed in the study.

- The study must have been published after 1990⁶ because intensive research in the area of the European public sphere has been conducted since about this time.⁷ Studies published up to the end of November 2003 as the meta-analysis started were included.⁸

- The subject of the studies must be the political reporting of the media since this corresponds to the understanding of public sphere as a political public sphere which forms the basis of the current study (cf. 0).

- In addition, the study must concern the European public sphere directly or the EU itself (for example, in the form of its policy or institutions) or a topic field must have been investigated which is important throughout the EU or for the public of several EU states.⁹

- The study must be in a language which the authors master (German, English, French).¹⁰

Furthermore, due to research-pragmatic reasons studies could only be selected, which were searchable because they were quoted in the relevant literature or listed in electronic databases.¹¹ In addition publication texts of the studies had to be available.¹² Considering these criteria, a broad data basis for the meta-analysis was created by including the 17 most significant studies in this field.

Some of the studies were available in different versions, i.e. in different languages and scope. Use was always made here of the most detailed presentation, with preference given to German or English texts. In the following the most important key data of the investigated studies are first summarized to provide an overview of the analysis material.

Overview of the material for analysis

Eight of the 17 studies included in the meta-analysis were in the English **language**, eight were in German and one was in French. Germany and the UK are the most frequent **states of origin** of the investigated media (cf. Table 1 in the following). In 15 of the 17 studies German media are the subject of the analysis, British media accounting for 14. Nine studies concern themselves with French media. Media from all of the other EU states are analysed much more rarely. In each case, the other countries are only investigated in one to five studies. This imbalance between the ‘big’ and the ‘small’ states, as well as the circumstance that the investigation of the studies started from Germany, must be taken into account during the interpretation of the content-related results (cf. section 0; see also note 9). Since considerably more data are available in connection with Germany, the UK and France, it appears possible to make more reliable statements about them than about the other states. The comparison between the countries is also made more difficult.

On average, the content analyses examine media from four states. Only one analysis (Díaz Nosty, 1997) concerned itself with media from all 15 states, the analysis by Kevin (2003) included media from eight states; all of the others considered only a few states.

The studies also differ in terms of the **types of media** that are included. Nine of the 17 studies examine print media exclusively. Daily newspapers are investigated in eleven studies, weeklies or news magazines in five. Television reporting is the exclusive subject of analysis in five studies. Both types of media are considered in three studies. It is striking that there is

no analysis of radio news or online media. The interpretation of the results of the meta-analysis must also take account of the differing composition of the media sample. For example, it is known from agenda-setting research (for an overview see Schenk, 2002: 399 ff.) that a different function with regard to the public is ascribed to different types of media. It is therefore to be assumed that print media tend to set the longer-term agenda whereas television has a spotlight function (cf. Eichhorn, 1996: 38 f.).

Table 1: Overview of the studies as well as the media analysed there and their EU-states of origin (in alphabetical order)

Studies	EU-states of origin of the analysed media															Analysed media		
	A	B	D	DK	E	F	FIN	GB	GR	I	IRL	L	NL	P	S	Σ	Σ	Type ¹
Bange (1999a)			■			■		■								3	3	Print
Bange (1999b)			■			■		■		■						4	5	Print
Díaz Nosty (1997)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	15	24	Print
Díez Medrano (2001)			■		■			■								3	7	Print ²
Grundmann et al. (2000)			■			■		■								3	3	Print
Hackenbroch (2000)			■					■								2	25	Print ² /TV
Hodess (1998)			■					■								2	8	Print/TV
Kevin (2003)			■		■	■		■		■	■		■		■	8	51	Print ² /TV
Law et al. (2000)			■			■		■					■			4	11	Print
Leroy and Siune (1994)		■		■												2	8	TV
Meckel (1994)			■			■		■								3	3	TV
Palmer (1998)		■	■			■		■								4	19	Print ²
Sievert (1998)	■		■		■	■							■			5	8	Print ³
Sturm and Bange (2000)			■					■								2	8	TV
Trenz (2002)			■		■											2	4	Print
de Vreese (2003)				■				■					■			3	6	TV
de Vreese et al. (2001)			■	■				■					■			4	8	TV
Σ	2	3	15	4	5	9	1	14	1	3	2	1	6	1	2	M=	M=	
																4	12	

Notes: 1 = if not indicated differently, in the case of print, only daily newspapers; 2 = dailies and weeklies; 3 = only weeklies

On average, almost 12 **media** per study are examined. However, considerable differences exist: the analysis performed by Kevin (2003), which incidentally includes both print media and television, as well as the second

highest number of states, provides a very large set of media. Three studies (Hackenbroch, 2000; Díaz Nosty, 1997; Palmer, 1998), each with about 20 analysed media, offer a medium set. The great majority of the studies, 13 out of 17, include only relatively few media – about 10 or less.

It becomes apparent from a detailed look at the investigated media that the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is analysed the most frequently (in 10 of the 17 studies). Second place is occupied by the British news programme *BBC 1 News* (in six studies). Analysis involves the German media *Bild* (5), *ARD Tagesschau* (5), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (5), the British *ITV News* (5), *The Guardian* (5), *The Times* (4), the French *Le Monde* (5), *Libération* (4), *Le Figaro* (4) and the Spanish *El País* (4) relatively frequently. There is an imbalance in the media represented in the studies: newspapers which are distributed nationwide and have an elite readership are analysed more often than other media. Overall, however, different media are considered.

The studies included in the meta-analysis comprise quite different *periods of analysis* and durations, ranging from very short investigations lasting only a few days to long-term investigations (Díez Medrano, 2001). Nine studies, just over half, pursue an event-oriented approach. The most frequently investigated reporting event (in part, different events in one study) is the introduction of the Euro on 1 January 1999 (five studies). Four studies deal with different European elections and three cases cover different sessions of the European Council. Further events are the Kosovo crisis (two studies), the resignation of the Santer Commission and Joschka Fischer's Berlin speech of 12 May 2000 (one study each). The different analysis periods and the different events also mean that it is more difficult to make comparative statements about the European public sphere and its development over time.

The essential (formal) 'adjusting screws' for the range of internationally comparative studies are therefore the number of included states, the number and types of included media (and the extent of the analysis of the reporting of these media) and the period of the study. The more extensive these factors are, the greater the number of statements that can be made. As the scope

increases so too, of course, does the research effort – this represents a problem for this field of research. After this overview of the material considered in the study, the results of the meta-analysis will be presented.

Results

Since a qualitatively oriented meta-analytical research design is used here in order to be able to bring together 17 studies that differ greatly in terms of methods and content, it is obviously not possible to provide any absolute answers to the above-mentioned research questions relating to the degrees to which there is reporting on EU topics, EU protagonists and other EU states. We can only establish a relationship between the result of the particular studies for the purpose of interpretation. In addition attention must be paid to the different definitions of an EU topic or an EU protagonist in each study. The analysis is performed on the basis of the published texts of the studies examined. It therefore follows the weighting of the particular researchers with regard to the selection of the results of the analysis deemed worthy of publication. In the case of unclear references in the published texts of the studies, in cases where there is no direct comparability of results from different studies or if the texts contradict the attached tables or graphics, use of the results is dispensed with.

National differences in the reporting

Clear differences between the individual EU states in reporting by the media are revealed in the meta-analysis. In the following analysis they are first subdivided according to reporting on EU topics, EU protagonists and other EU states and then subsequently brought together again.

Reporting on EU topics (Europeanization by synchronization)

In the case of the topics associated with the EU clear differences in reporting between the individual states become evident. One special feature is

apparent: as soon as a particularly large amount of reporting is devoted to one event in a state, the respective authors of the studies justify this with reference to *national* events or debates connected with the particular EU topic.

German media report more frequently on EU topics than do the media of many other EU states. Four studies agree on this finding. However, in two cases (Hackenbroch, 2000; Hodess, 1998) the more intensive reporting is justified by mentioning national German discussions on the particular topic. Extensive reporting on the EU is also provided by **Finnish** media. Although only investigated in the study by Díaz Nosty (1997), they are compared here with media from all the other EU states and over a comparatively long period of time.

In connection with **Spanish** media, too, only the results from Díaz Nosty (1997) are utilizable with regard to this question. Accordingly, in comparison with the media of other states, Spanish media report on EU topics a great deal. Also only on the basis of one study (de Vreese, 2003), the media in **Denmark** concern themselves with EU topics quite frequently. This applies both to reporting occasions linked to particular dates such as summits or the introduction of the Euro and to routine weeks. However, in the case of this study attention must be paid to the fact that the evaluated periods of time are located at a relatively short distance from the EU referendum in Denmark in September 2000. The few possible statements about the **French** media indicate that although overall they report to a lesser extent than do the German media, extremely intensive reporting occurs in connection with a special event (European elections 1999).

By comparison, the media in the **Netherlands** report to only a moderate extent on EU topics. However, the performance of the country in the study by de Vreese (2003) is justified by the fact that during the period of investigation a national event (government crisis) overshadowed the EU event (European elections), and this resulted in a particularly small amount of reporting.

Examination of the studies on **British** media reveals that the UK represents a special case with regard to EU topics. Although five of the studies agree that the country's media report extremely little on EU topics, this changes when the focus is on *currency-policy* topics. British media report much more intensively on this subject than on other EU topics. In the UK this topic is also presented as a political issue more frequently – in other states it is at most 'only' a clearly economic matter. British media also reported on the Kosovo crisis to an unusually large extent.

With regard to **Italy** and **Belgium** it can be stated, on the basis of only one study each (Kevin, 2003; Palmer, 1998), that there is very little reporting of EU topics in these countries. In the studies examined for the purpose of the meta-analysis, no detailed statements regarding EU topics can be derived for Austria, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden.

Reporting on EU protagonists (vertical Europeanization)

Overall the media in the individual states examined name protagonists from home much more frequently than they mention players on the EU stage (e.g. the European Commission, associations at the EU level or individual members of the European Parliament). This is true of both particular EU-specific reporting occasions such as, for example, the introduction of the Euro or European summits and of 'routine periods'. Only Trenz (2000) arrives at a different result in his analysis of the reporting of the resignation of the Santer Commission: according to him, the reporting on this topic in Spain and Germany was associated more with the EU than with national protagonists.

The studies examined show that the media of the **Netherlands** report on EU protagonists unusually frequently. This finding applies both to directly EU-related reporting and to Netherlands reporting as a whole. The frequency with which EU protagonists are named is therefore not linked to EU-specific topics but is particularly marked in the case of EU topics.

Although the **UK** media report on EU protagonists more frequently than those of most other states, one special feature is discernible in the studies:

reporting in British media appears to be particularly closely associated with EU protagonists when currency-policy issues such as EMU or the introduction of the Euro are discussed. Players at the EU level are named in the **Danish** media at a similarly high frequency to that found in the British media. However, this finding can only be supported with reference to one study (de Vreese, 2003).

In **German** and **French** media EU protagonists are named less frequently than in the media of the above-mentioned countries. **Austria's** media also report less frequently on the players at EU level than the front runner, the Netherlands. However, this can also only be supported by the results from one study (Sievert, 1998). This limitation applies likewise to the finding that **Spanish** media report less on EU protagonists than do German media (Trenz, 2002).

On the basis of the studies examined in the meta-analysis, no detailed or clear statements with regard to EU protagonists can be derived for Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Sweden.

Reporting on other EU states (horizontal Europeanization)

The studies analysed only rarely examine whether and how reporting on other EU states occurs in the individual EU states. Frequently the situation is viewed from the other side: the researchers check which states are named, and how frequently, in the total reporting of all the other states that are examined in each case. Consequently, this aspect will be discussed here briefly.

Although only very few results can be found in the studies, the analysis performed by Kevin (2003) indicates that the media in **Sweden** report on other EU states more frequently than do those in other countries. **Austria**, **Germany**, **France** and the **Netherlands** can be numbered among the states which make reference to foreign EU states moderately often. With regard to **Spain**, completely contradictory judgements arise from two studies (Kevin, 2003 and Sievert, 1998). **British** media report very little on other EU states as

is the case for the **Irish** and **Italian** media. No utilizable results can be found in the studies in relation to Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal.

It becomes clear from the meta-analysis that the most highly populated EU states, the **UK**, **Germany** and **France**, are themselves most frequently the subject of reports in the other EU states or reference is made to them in articles or contributions. Owing to contradictory results, it is not possible to determine reliably which of the three states is the most important for the reporting of the media from other states in this regard. References to **Italy** are also made quite frequently in the media of other EU states.

Results for **Belgium** are only found in one study (Díaz Nosty, 1997). They suggest that information about the EU does not originate as frequently from any other EU state as it does from Belgium. This finding is hardly surprising in view of the fact that many EU institutions are based in Brussels.

In the case of **Denmark**, **Finland**, **Sweden**, **Portugal** and **Ireland**, it can be stated, on the basis of the study by Sievert (1998), that the media of other EU states do not make any reference to them at all. It is not possible to make reliable statements about Austria, Spain, Greece, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

Summarizing presentation and discussion

The meta-analysis shows that the Europeanization of the national public spheres in the states of the EU has advanced to differing extents. Characteristics for the public spheres of the individual states are described in the following paragraphs. For the purpose of clarity, the attempt is made to represent the tendency in EU reporting visually (cf. Table 2).

Overall, **German** media report on EU topics a great deal and make reference to other EU states moderately often. However, in comparison with some states, EU protagonists are only named with moderate frequency. Germany itself appears in the reporting by the media of other states very frequently. **Danish** media also concern themselves with EU topics quite

frequently. By contrast, Denmark almost never appears as the subject of reporting in other states. The media of the **Netherlands** report on EU protagonists with unusual frequency. This applies not only to EU reporting but to reporting in the country as a whole. The media make references to other EU states moderately often.

Table 2: Comparative overview of the national differences in the Europeanization of media reporting (tendencies)

EU-states of origin of the examined media	Intensity of the reporting in comparison with other EU states on			Overall tendency of the degree of Europeanization in comparison with other EU states	Naming in the media of other EU states
	EU topics	EU-protagonists	other EU states		
A – Austria		(■)	■	moderate	
B – Belgium	(▼)			low	(▲)
D – Germany	▲	■	■	high	▲
DK – Denmark	(▲)	■		high	(▼)
E – Spain	(▲)	(▼)		moderate	
F – France	■	■	■	moderate	▲
FIN – Finland	(▲)			high	(▼)
GB – Great Britain	▼	■	(▼)	low (special case)	▲
GR – Greece					
I – Italy	(▼)		(▼)	low	■
IRL – Ireland			(▼)	low	(▼)
L – Luxembourg					
NL – Netherlands	■	▲	■	high	
P – Portugal					(▼)
S – Sweden			(▲)	high	(▼)

Notes: ● = high; ● = moderate; ● = low; () = assessment only on the basis of one study; empty cells = no statement possible

French media devote themselves to EU topics with moderate frequency and refer to EU protagonists and other EU states as frequently as happens in the media of other states. France itself is named unusually frequently in the media of other EU states. Compared with the reporting of other states, **Austrian** media refer moderately often to EU protagonists and foreign EU states. The media in **Spain** report on the topics associated with

the EU to a relatively high degree but refer to EU protagonists comparatively rarely.

The **UK** media report more on EU protagonists than do the media of other states, but only when currency-policy topics are involved. Overall, there is unusually little reporting on EU topics in this country, although the situation is different with regard to currency-policy topics. In addition, when EU reporting occurs, the UK media give a political emphasis much more frequently than do the media of other states in which the EU is mostly an economic topic. UK media refer to other EU states comparatively rarely. By contrast, the country plays a very important role in reporting in foreign EU states. Some of these findings on UK media may sound contradictory, but it should be considered that, for example, reporting on EU protagonists and on other EU member states are seen as different research items in this contribution. So the results cannot easily be generalised in every case.

Italian media report only rarely on EU topics and on other EU states. By contrast, the media in foreign EU states refer to Italy relatively frequently. **Belgian** reporting also deals with EU topics very rarely. By contrast, Belgium plays an extremely important role as the country of origin for information on EU topics due to the fact that many EU institutions have their headquarters here. Very little reporting on other EU states is to be found in **Irish** media just as Ireland hardly features in articles and contributions in other EU states.

It is hardly possible to make definite statements about the reporting of **Finnish** media on the basis of the analysed material. The few available results indicate that there is a considerable amount of reporting on EU topics but that Finland itself does not play a significant role in the media of other states. Comparatively speaking, **Swedish** media report on other EU states very frequently. However, Sweden itself hardly figures in reporting by other states. On the basis of a very limited data base, a relatively high degree of Europeanization is to be assumed for these two states.

No definite statements on the public spheres of **Luxembourg, Greece** and **Portugal** can be made on the basis of the meta-analysis.

In summary, common features in the reporting of the media of various states are also discernible. For example, the meta-analysis shows that in all states EU reporting only accounts for a small part of total reporting. Furthermore, the media of all the states mostly focus on national protagonists when topics of EU-wide significance are involved. The results create the impression that national interests and debates often exert a very strong influence on the reporting related to EU topics. When the media of a country refer to other EU states, attention focuses particularly frequently on Germany, France, the UK and also relatively frequently on Italy, along with Belgium, as the 'capital of Europe'. This is hardly surprising given that these are the politically and economically most powerful states in the EU. Consequently, the news factor 'elite nation' comes into play. Partially contradictory results are due to differences in the approaches pursued by the studies. There is still a great need for research, above all in relation to the smaller EU states.

It is therefore not possible to arrive at an overall judgement about which national public sphere of the 15 examined EU states is the most or least europeanized at this point, even if it can be established as a rough tendency that German, Danish and Netherlands media devote themselves more to Europe. Not only Denmark, but also the other Scandinavian countries, appear to possess relatively europeanized media, whereas in France, Spain and Austria the media tend to report moderately, and in Italy, Ireland and Belgium to a low extent, on Europe. The UK represents a special case, because in British media attention focuses especially on Europe's currency-policy issues, with highly personalized reporting of the EU protagonists. By contrast, only a small amount of reporting is devoted to other EU topics and states. It would be more accurate to talk here of a 'negative Europeanization'.

In summary it can therefore be stated, in connection with the first research question, that the Europeanization of national public spheres in the EU has advanced to differing extents. The results of the meta-analysis suggest that debates on EU topics in different national public spheres often remain linked to national protagonists and interests.

Development of EU reporting over time

The meta-analysis is unable to find any indications that an increase in the degree of Europeanization of the national public spheres has taken place over time. This applies to the investigation of a period of time lasting several years and the pure set of reporting on EU topics, EU protagonists and EU states. Account must be taken here of the fact that the studies included in the meta-analysis only very rarely analyse such long periods of time and hardly ever explore the question of differences between individual EU states.

Primarily, such statements are only permitted by the studies by Díaz Nosty (1997) and Díez Medrano (2001). With particular regard to the reporting of EU topics, both indicate constancy in the type and quantity of reporting. Even these studies do not provide any results in connection with EU protagonists and the thematization of other EU states.

In contrast to the two previously mentioned studies, Hodess (1998) comes to the conclusion, during the comparison of the periods 1985 and 1990/1, that EU reporting that is clearly more intensive can be found during the later period. However, account must be taken of the fact that the author examined events occurring at particular points in time, namely EU summits. Consequently, a generalization that the quantity of reporting has increased during the period from 1985 to 1991 does not appear appropriate. However, since the types of events are comparable it is possible to speak of a certain increase in the sensitization of the media.

Both Hodess (1998) and Díaz Nosty (1997) establish an increase in commenting contributions in the media they examined. A more intensive commentary may indicate that journalists consider the EU to be more important than they did previously and that a topic is debated more controversially in the national public sphere than before, something which can be interpreted as a Europeanization tendency. However, the limited data base related to this aspect and the very short investigated periods compared, amounting to only a few years, do not permit generalization or the determination of a clear tendency.

The second research question about whether the degree of the Europeanization of national public spheres has increased over time (operationalized as an increase in reporting on the EU) can therefore not be answered on the basis of the meta-analysis of the present studies, since the data base for such statements is too limited.

Importance of reporting events

The studies examined in this analysis all come to the conclusion that EU reporting by the media in the various states increases very considerable at particular points in time. These points in time are closely associated with certain events. However, attention must be paid to the fact that many of the studies pursue an event-oriented approach anyway, i.e. they link their period of analysis to a particular EU event. For this reason they provide a great deal of information on the importance of reporting events. As a rule, the statements in the studies refer to the amount of EU reporting in general.

The analysis shows that the intensity of EU reporting always increases rapidly when a topic which is of interest EU-wide, or at least in several EU states, is connected with a particular event. It is possible to differentiate here between several types of events which each impact on reporting differently:

1. Events connected with EU policy or the continued development of European integration. Included here are, on the one hand, sessions of the European Council or European elections and, on the other hand, for example, the introduction of the Euro or the accession of new member states. Such events are examined preferentially in the studies. The analysis makes it clear that a considerable increase in EU reporting occurs on the days of such events, sometimes even shortly before. However, it is clearly not the case that the particular EU topic then dominates the national news agenda, rather it simply becomes visible. De Vreese summarizes this phenomenon as follows: 'News about the EU is cyclical: it enters the news agenda and vanishes immediately after the end of a specific event' (2003: 102).

In a comparison with a routine period he establishes that the percentage of reporting on the EU summits in 1999 and 2000 is higher by a few percentage points. In addition, individual results (e.g. Trenz, 2002) indicate that EU events result in a synchronous increase in the quantity of reporting in the states that are examined in each case.

2. National events in individual EU member states. These can, on the one hand, themselves be occasions for reporting on EU topics. The investigated studies name, for example, the speech on the fundamental principles of Europe by the German foreign minister Joschka Fischer at Berlin's Humboldt University in May 2000 (Hackenbroch, 2000). This led, particularly in Germany, the country directly associated with the event, to increased reporting on the topic of European integration. However, such events can also radiate beyond the country in question: in May 1999 Kevin (2003) established that there was increased reporting on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the eight states which she analysed – at a time when a dioxin scandal was smouldering in Belgium and a subsidy scandal was making headlines in Spain. As a third possibility, national events in a country can also overlie EU reporting, with the effect that it is almost invisible, even when an important EU event is taking place in parallel. For example, de Vreese (2003) comes to the conclusion that the European elections in June 1999 hardly featured in Netherlands reporting because a national government crisis was attracting the full attention of the media at the same time.

3. Events outside the EU. Included here are events which happen outside the territory of the EU or lack any direct link to it. The material investigated in the meta-analysis includes only one example of this type of event, the Kosovo crisis at the beginning of 1999, which falls into the periods analysed by several studies. According to a number of studies (Grundmann et al., 2000; Kevin, 2003; de Vreese, 2003), it dominates the entire reporting and overlies EU events such as, for example, the European elections.

During interpretation of the results it is necessary to consider that when selecting news journalists generally orientate themselves strongly towards events, as is also postulated by the news value theory. Since, however, this is also the case with national events, very good comparisons can be made between the EU reporting and the reporting of EU events. Only when journalists consider an EU event to be important enough does it find its way into a newspaper or a programme and possibly displaces a national topic – although overall it is the national topics that are the main focus of reporting in the individual EU states.

The third research question can be answered relatively clearly on the basis of the available results: the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres – measured as an increase in the reporting of EU topics – rises steeply at the time of special occasions or events. These events may affect the entire EU or only individual states and may then radiate out into other states. On the other hand, both external European events such as the Kosovo crisis and national events can also hinder or prevent EU reporting.

Discussion and conclusion

Against the background of the widely discussed public and democracy deficit of the European Union, this contribution has attempted to search for signs of the existence or development of a European public sphere. It was assumed here that the European public sphere constitutes itself via the national public spheres, with the media assuming central importance. To this end, 17 studies which investigate media reporting relating to the topic of the European public sphere via content analysis in a national comparison and which were published between 1994 and 2003 have been viewed through the prism of meta-analysis.

Different dimensions or indicators of the Europeanization of national public spheres have been taken into consideration, these being a) a Europeanization through synchronization (operationalized by the reporting of

EU topics), b) a vertical Europeanization (reporting of protagonists at the EU level) and c) a horizontal Europeanization (reporting of other EU states).

The meta-analysis shows that, overall, EU topics account for an extremely small share of reporting in the particular national media. Compared with national protagonists, the players at EU level also only feature in minor roles. It can therefore be stated that the publics of the EU states continue to exhibit a strong national orientation. Consequently, the national public spheres must be assessed as being only slightly europeanized overall. At best it is possible to talk about the first signs of a European public sphere –“the” European public sphere has by no means emerged.

Different degrees of markedness in EU reporting between the media of the member states have become apparent and so, therefore, have national differences in the markedness of Europeanization tendencies. The following findings number among the most striking results. The public spheres of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany are the most europeanized. French, Spanish and Austrian media also devote themselves to Europe to a relatively high degree in contrast with the below average treatment in the Belgian, Italian and Irish media. The UK represents a special case: basically, British media report on EU topics and other EU states comparatively rarely. However, the reporting of EU topics and the naming of EU protagonists increase greatly when the euro or currency-policy aspects are involved. It must be assumed that this reporting tends to be critical. Hardly any statements can be made about the other member states.

Statements about an increase or decrease in Europeanization tendencies over a period of several years or even decades are not possible either due to the inadequate state of empirical research on which this meta-analysis depends. The requisite analyses of time series comparing EU countries are not available.

Europeanization of the national public spheres increases on particular occasions. This applies in particular to big political EU events or events associated with the further development of European integration such as

European elections, sessions of the European Council or the introduction of the Euro. As a rule, the extent of EU reporting increases in all of the states at the time of such events. This corresponds to patterns of journalistic selection according to which reporting is above all oriented towards events, this also representing the basis of the news value theory.

However, even in the case of EU-wide events it is not possible to talk about a complete synchronization of the debates since, here too, national differences emerge. On the one hand, national debates linked to the event can result in more intensive reporting of an EU topic as was the case, for example, with the 1985 EU summit in Milan when the Common Agricultural Policy was debated in Germany (Hodess 1998). The above-mentioned example of the UK reflects the special treatment of economic and currency-policy topics in this country. On the other hand, important events in the member states can also create a situation in which the national media hardly report an EU event at all. This happened, for example, in the Netherlands at the time of the 1999 European elections when the government crisis there displaced all other topics (de Vreese 2003). Both examples clearly indicate the strong national orientation of the media, something that can be explained via the news factors proximity, ethnocentricity or the degree to which one is personally affected.

With regard to the theoretical basis of this contribution or the meta-analysis it can be noted that, according to the current status of research, there are gaps in the model of a European public sphere as the result of the Europeanization of the national public spheres. To date no scale has been developed in international communication and media science by means of which the degree of Europeanization of national public spheres can be measured. As from what point is a public sphere (sufficiently) europeanized? And does “the” European public sphere emerge if all national public spheres are largely europeanized?

Empirical research relating to the European public sphere is an extremely demanding field requiring a high level of resources. In view of the considerable differences between the media systems and journalistic traditions,

special care is needed with regard to the equivalence of the subjects of the analysis. Only one of the 17 studies evaluated here examines media from all 15 EU states (Díaz Nosty 1997). On average, the studies are content to analyse newspapers or television news programmes from four states. In addition, most of the studies investigated here analyse only a short period of time around a particular (mostly EU-connected) event. It would be possible to answer the question about signs of a Europeanization of national public spheres considerably better using prolonged time series analyses which additionally include comparisons with routine periods and, as far as possible, examine all EU states. However, in view of the EU enlargement by ten states in 2004, such studies will now probably be more difficult to undertake than in the EU comprising 15 states. There is nevertheless such a research project, which examines the reporting in all 25 European Union states on the European elections in June 2004 by means of a content analysis (cf. Banducci/de Vreese 2004).¹³ Ideally, future media content analyses on the European public sphere should also pay more attention to the media set, avoiding the existing emphasis on newspapers with a relatively elite readership.

The present study on the basis of a broad meta-analysis inevitably comes to the conclusion that the much-discussed deficit in terms of democracy and public in the EU runs in parallel to a deficit in European media reporting, even if the first signs of a Europeanization of national public spheres are discernible. Again, it should be taken into account that, with the 2004 enlargement, the EU of now 25 member states consists of even more public spheres with different languages and reporting traditions than before. It will be a very demanding task for communication and media scientists to analyse the development of the deficit in media reporting in a new wave of empirical research.¹⁴

By means of correspondingly extensive reporting the media of the EU member states should lay the foundation for a greater Europeanization of national public spheres which, in turn, can be the basis for the emergence of a

common European public sphere. But of course not only the journalists are in charge. EU institutions and national governments should spare no effort to close the information gap between Brussels policy and the everyday life of EU citizens.

This demand is particularly urgent against the background of a situation in which an essential part of the statutory rules and regulations affecting the citizens in the entire EU are today already decided on and passed in Brussels rather than in the nation-states. The present deficit in terms of public and democracy threatens to worsen still further if in future the EU comes closer together politically, something that is expressed, for example, in the disputed European constitution: the more responsibilities the member states hand over to the European level, the more important Europe-wide debates on EU policy become.

Notes

¹ The copyright for this article is with the *European Journal of Communication* where it has been published in volume 21, pp. 57-88. For additional publication on this research topic in the German language see Machill, Beiler and Fischer (2006b).

² For the biannual Standard Eurobarometer survey, the EU Commission puts questions to about 1000 citizens from all member states in connection with their opinions about, and attitudes towards, the EU (European Commission, 2004: 1).

³ Inter alia, news programmes, which can be expected to have most influence on the public, are, however, exempt from the quota rule.

⁴ Díez Medrano (2003) derives his argumentation relating to the indicators for a pan-European public sphere from Weber (1983) and Anderson (1983) who concern themselves with the conditions for the emergence of nations or national sentiment. His concept of public sphere is closely linked to the question of how strong the feeling of solidarity is among the Europeans or rather how marked the European identity is (cf. also Kantner, 2002: 85 ff.; Wiesner, 1990: 168 ff.).

⁵ In addition, a methodological comparison of the previous research approaches was performed in order to learn lessons for future comparative studies on the European public sphere. However, this cannot be presented here.

⁶ 'Published' means that the study appeared in a scientific journal or an anthology, was published as a monography or is a dissertation. Academic theses could not be considered because, on the one hand, they cannot be reliably investigated and, on the other hand, inclusion of all searchable theses would have exceeded the framework of the present study.

⁷ The period prior to 1990 is partially covered because some of the studies selected for analysis also investigated it (e.g. Díez Medrano, 2001).

⁸ For this reason it was not possible to include, for example, the comparative study by Göler and Stammer (2004) on the media reporting of the European elections in Germany and France.

⁹ This criterion is difficult to understand since, without an analysis of its own it is hardly possible to describe how much reporting is necessary for a topic to be 'of importance' in the EU states. However, no borderline cases emerged during the practical selection of the studies. Only studies concerned exclusively with bilateral relations between states (for example, German-French summits) are clearly excluded by this criterion – provided that they do not have a connection to the EU. Consequently, this 'soft' description of the criterion for the selection of topics is considered sufficient for pragmatic research purposes.

¹⁰ This pragmatic and centrist restriction with regard to the 'biggest' languages can, however, cause the result of the meta-analysis to be distorted in a particular direction. Account is taken of this in the presentation and interpretation. However, on the basis of a cursory search for studies in other languages it can be assumed that this bias is not great at all.

¹¹ For example, national bibliographies, European Commission Library Catalogue (ECLAS), subitio, Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog (KVK).

¹² For these reasons some studies could not be analysed, e.g. the 'Euromedia' study conducted by the European Commission between January 1995 and September 1997 (European Commission, 1995-7) as well as the study by Peter (2003).

¹³ See also online: http://www.claesdevreese.com/research_european_elections_2004.html

¹⁴ The lack of empirical research in this field does not seem to be limited to media content. Therefore, researchers at the ongoing, EU-funded Project 'Adequate Information Management in Europe' (AIM) concentrate on actors (e.g. institutions, journalists) and on mechanisms (e.g. structures and processes of new management) which shape the media coverage of EU issues (see online: <http://www.aim-project.net>).

List of the studies examined in the meta-analysis

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Palmer, Jerry (1998) 'L'Union monétaire dans la presse de cinq pays européens: quelques comparaisons quantitatives', pp. 43-62 in Marc Lits, Jerry Palmer and Wolfgang Settekorn (eds) *L'Euro médiatisé. La construction de la monnaie unique dans les médias européens*. Louvain-la-Neuve (BE): Les dossiers de L'ORM/COMU, Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve.

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Chapter 7

Visibility and Communication Networks on the Internet: The Role of Search Engines and Hyperlinks

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Introduction

Whenever the role of the public sphere in relation to transnational democracy is discussed, two deficiencies are usually singled out. First, the predominating public arena in modern democracies, the mass media, is seen as being focused on national politics and national audiences, making it difficult for transnational and supranational actors to get media attention. Second, the mass media favour resourceful institutional actors over more weakly organized and less resourceful civil society actors. The question we address in this paper is to what extent does the emergence of the new medium of the Internet offer the potential to overcome these biases of the traditional mass media. Technically, the Internet certainly allows egalitarian and transnational forms of political communication. At very low cost and with limited skills, anybody can set up a website and make the information and opinions of her choice available to a worldwide audience. Moreover, transnational communication is greatly facilitated by the Internet. Unlike any other information medium, distance and geographical and political borders do not count on the Internet. Access to websites is just as easy, fast, and cheap no matter where they are

hosted, be it on the other side of the globe, across oceans, mountain ranges, ideological, political, and cultural boundaries, or just around the corner.

In theory, then, the Internet public sphere may help to overcome the inequalities and national focus of traditional mass media. But of course, there are many reasons why in practice the Internet may be less egalitarian and transnational than what it technically allows. The most important reason, which we will develop in detail in this paper, is that it is precisely the ease with which websites can be set up and made available to global audiences that has produced a vast – and vastly expanding – web space is characterized by an enormous oversupply of web offerings that no human being can navigate without aids that give some structure to this ever-growing universe. Our analysis will be based on the two most important of these navigation aids; search engines and hyperlinks. Both act as selection mechanisms that make some websites more visible and more easily accessible than others, thus introducing inequalities in the online public sphere. The question that we address in this paper is whether online inequalities among actors differ structurally from the inequalities in the traditional offline mass media. Are the biases in favour of resourceful institutional actors less intense on the Internet than in the offline media? Are selection processes in the Internet more conducive to supranational actors and transnational flows of information? In order to explore these questions, we begin with an overview of existing research and theories on the relation between the Internet and democracy.

The Internet, democracy and the public sphere

The Internet's impact on democracy is often discussed in terms of binary oppositions: optimists and pessimists, utopias and dystopias [Fisher, 2001 #579], technical determinists and social determinists [Dahlberg, 2004 #577], mobilisation theorists and reinforcement theorists [Norris, 2000 #154], and so on. Some predict that the Internet will have positive effects on democracy, others expect negative effects and yet others foresee no relevant

effects at all, for an example see the “normalization of cyberspace” thesis [Resnick, 1997 #529]. Initially, the discussion of the Internet’s effect on democracy was mostly speculative and strongly normative, lacking empirical evidence for the strong claims made. From the mid-1990s and especially the late 1990s on, the discussion has been fuelled by more and more empirical input from an increasing number of studies attempting to demonstrate and to measure the actual changes that the Internet does or does not bring about. Today, the issue of the relation between the Internet and democracy is a lively and innovative research field in the social sciences.

The question of how the Internet may affect democracy requires clarification. First of all, what is meant by democracy? Barber *[Barber, 1998 #279] distinguishes three different concepts of democracy, and van Dijk *[van Dijk, 2000 #525] differentiates between six models of democracy that shape the opportunities and risks that confront people in relation to the new media¹. “In one case, we may say digital technology is well-suited to enhancing democracy in such and such a way; but with democracy understood in another way, we may regard the same technological features as hostile to it” [Barber, 1998 #279: 2]. Moreover, these concepts strongly influence the questions that are posed. Those in favour of participatory democracy will presumably focus on Internet features that may improve direct democratic practices, while those adhering to the concept of representative democracy will primarily look for ways in which the Internet may contribute to better information exchange between citizens and government.

But even if the underlying concept of democracy is clear, the impact of the Internet on such a complex concept as democracy – regardless of the preferred model – cannot be reduced to a singular, unequivocally positive or negative evaluation. Moreover, it is necessary to separate the term into more observable component parts. Following Barnett *[Barnett, 1997 #174] one may distinguish four components of an effective democracy: (1) information (knowledge and understanding), (2) debate, (3) participation, (4) representation and accountability. Most of the empirical studies are

concentrated on one of these aspects, while each aspect opens a diverse field of questions and approaches, and the components themselves are again interrelated. The studies can be separated into those analysing users and patterns of usages on the side of the citizens, and those analysing the use of the Internet on the side of political actors, especially as supplier of political information and communication.

Explorations of Internet users and usages on the side of the citizens have been based mostly on large-scale surveys, originally carried out by market-oriented firms, but increasingly undertaken by national governments, other political actors (e.g. EU, OECD), academics, and long-term enterprises such as the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the World Internet Project. These studies mostly concentrate on the number and socio-demographic attributes of users and non-users and on the different kinds of usage (See [Wellman, 2004 #548: 126]). Social scientists increasingly rely on such data to explore the societal consequences of Internet usage and non-usage, for instance using the concept of the “digital divide” [Katz, 2002 #582; Katz, 2001 #480; Norris, 2000 #153; Norris, 2001 #149; Chen, 2003 #581]. Others within this strain of research address the question of the Internet’s impact on political participation *[Weber, 2003 #523; Tolbert, 2003 #532; Bimber, 2001 #585; Norris, 2001 #149] or on the formation of social capital [Quan-Haase, 2004 #584; Shah, 2001 #528]. Further, there are many empirical studies that examine online communities, including in-depth ethnographic studies and content analysis of participants in chats, forums and newsgroups [Hill, 1998 #572; Davis, 1999 #619; Stegbauer, 2001 #254; Rosen, 2003 #555]. Empirical analyses of Internet usage by political actors have long concentrated on well-established and traditional actors such as governments, parliaments, and political parties and online election campaigns [Norris, 2000 #148; Römmele, 2003 #533]. The Internet usage of other significant actors in the political process, such as interest groups, NGOs and social movements, has only recently been addressed by empirical research [van den Donk, 2004 #261]. Most of the research in this realm focuses on content analysis of websites or

on case studies of single projects [Vedel, 2003 #30].

On the theoretical level, the capacity of the Internet to generate new and diverse spaces of information and communication has from the beginning been the subject of lively debate, especially in relation to its potential to enhance the public sphere [Buchstein, 1997 #178;Poster, 1997 #522;Connery, 1997 #611;Geser, 1998 #103;Gimmler, 2001 #24;Dahlberg, 2001 #42;Papacharissi, 2002 #15;Poor, 2005 #552]. The public sphere – a concept combining all of the above mentioned components of an effective democracy: information, debate, participation, representation and accountability – is strongly involved with the concept of democracy. “The essence of the public sphere is supposed to be politics, implying that common concerns are discussed and contested in public. In the democratic tradition, the notion of political life without a well-established public sphere would be unthinkable, and Habermas in effect used to call it the political public sphere.” [Sassi, 2000 #567: 97].

Today, the mass media are widely understood to be the predominant forum for public political communication [Neidhardt, 1994 #354]. Hartley even states that the media *are* the public sphere: “Television, popular newspaper, magazines and photography, the popular media of the modern period, are the public domain, the places where and the means by which the public is created and has its being [Hartley, 1992 #612: 1]. Consequently, the concept of “mediated public spheres” was introduced in the 1990s, implying that media substantially expanded the potentials of the visible and the range of those who may be reached by what is made visible [Dahlgren, 1991 #613;Zolo, 1991 #614;Thompson, 1995 #615;Schulz, 1997 #616;Oblak, 2002 #80]. This media public sphere, however, is at the same time strongly accused of trivialization, sensationalization and distortion [Barnett, 1997 #174], “biased by vested commercial and political interests in close co-operation” [van Dijk, 2000 #565: 213].

Regarding how the Internet may affect public spheres, one of the most common attempts is to analyse the Internet’s theoretical potential of

enhancing a deliberative, Habermasian public sphere that is centred around openly accessible, egalitarian, and transparent debates that might overcome the deficiencies of the existing mass media public sphere [Dahlberg, 2001 #42;Gimmler, 2001 #24;Poor, 2005 #552]. Others focus on the formation of alternative online (counter)public spheres that might challenge the existing power structures [Plake, 2001 #4;Downey, 2003 #546]. Some see the Internet as supporting a pluralistic diversity of intersecting public spheres [Becker, 2001 #617], while others expound the problems of the Internet as a force of fragmentation [Buchstein, 1997 #178;Sunstein, 2001 #259].

Empirical investigations along these lines have, however, been largely limited to the analysis of online forums, chats and usenets [Schneider, 1997 #618;Tsaliki, 2002 #124;Poor, 2005 #552]. The concept of public spheres is thus reduced to new encounter public spheres, while the Internet's potential to generate an alternative for mass media public spheres remains unconsidered. Moreover, most empirical analysis of the Internet has treated it as a collection of single websites. One of the specific characteristics of the new medium – namely that it constitutes a new interconnected space of information and communication – has often been disregarded on the empirical level.

Our analysis of online communication in this paper will focus on the World Wide Web. Among the numerous Internet features that are available, only the World Wide Web fulfils the basic requirement of a public sphere, namely that it is a form of communication that can in principle be joined and accessed by every citizen. We will explore two basic properties that are often discussed in association with the Internet. First, its accessibility to civil society groups which do not command much institutional power and prestige. Second, the degree to which the Internet provides a forum for transnational communicative exchanges. Our methodological approach to these questions is to take the perspective of an average online citizen who searches for information and opinions on current affairs on the World Wide Web. Because of the vastness of the Web space, our online citizen depends on navigation aides that can help him to sort out the most relevant information

and opinions. Our analysis focuses on the two most important types of online navigation: search engines that allow users to search the Web by keywords, and hyperlinks that allow the user to “surf” from one website to another.

Selection processes and visibility on the Internet

Most collective actors need to draw the public’s attention and to mobilise public support in order to influence the policy process. A few resourceful actors may be able to exert such influence without mobilising visibility and support within the public sphere (e.g. by way of lobbying, financial support for political candidates, etc.), but most societal interests are not in a position to affect the policy process in such a direct way. This makes most collective actors crucially dependent on the mass media, because in modern democratic societies it is mainly through them that public visibility and support can be gained. The Internet has the potential to weaken and modify this dependence by allowing collective actors to circumvent the traditional mass media, and use their online presence to directly mobilise public visibility. Technically, the Internet seems to be a non-hierarchical communicative space that allows everybody to present and retrieve information and opinions without being dependent on the selection and description biases of traditional mass media. With a very limited investment of resources, everybody can set up a homepage and thereby make his or her opinions accessible to a worldwide public. Conversely, access to a huge amount of varied information and opinions from across the world is only a few mouse clicks away for Internet users.

It would be naïve, however, to assume that selection processes do not play a significant role within the Internet. The amount of available websites is so vast that even for a relatively limited topic it would be impossible for a user to look at more than a very small proportion of all the websites that offer information or opinions on that issue. Apart from the impossibility of looking

at every relevant website on a particular topic, the enormous number of websites also creates the problem of finding relevant websites among many irrelevant ones. Without the assistance of some kind of map to guide the user through the sheer endless web space, the Internet would be a labyrinth in which nobody would be able to find what they were looking for. Therefore, the question arises as to how Internet users search for information.

Obviously, orientation within the Internet is no problem if the user already knows exactly which actor's views he or she is interested in. In this case, all one needs to do is to find out the web address of this particular organization or institution. To facilitate this, resourceful actors are willing to pay substantial sums for a web address that is easy to identify and to memorise. However, if this were the only way to retrieve information online, the Internet would be nothing more than a new way of accessing information on actors already known to the user. In this sense there is hardly any qualitative difference between getting information from a particular political actor by using the Internet, or by using telephone, mail, or personal contact. From a quantitative aspect, there are of course advantages to using the Internet: more up-to-date information can be retrieved without spending much time or money. But still, this contact depends on a pre-existing knowledge and interest in a particular actor and his positions. Such prior knowledge and interest will be strongly influenced by the degree of visibility and legitimacy that collective actors have been able to achieve in the traditional mass media. In this way, Internet communication would do little more than reproduce the existing offline patterns of who is well known and is considered as a legitimate speaker on certain issues.

It is therefore more interesting to look at how information retrieval is structured for users who do not have a pre-existing interest the particular site of one particular actor, but who want to get information and opinions about a certain topic from a variety of actors and perspectives. The two means of access to web information most often used are search engines and links or recommendations from other websites. Among several studies that analyse

how Internet users search for information on the Internet, the number of people who use search engines varies between 70% and 90%. A similar share of users, between 60% and 90%, rely (alternatively or additionally) on recommendations by way of links from other websites (Forrester Research Inc. (2000); Fittkau & Maaß (2000); Graphic, Visualisation & Usability Center (1998); Alexander, J./Powell, J./Tate, M. A. 2001)). Because, as we will discuss below, search engines often use linking frequencies as one of their criteria for ranking websites, the two selection mechanisms are in practice correlated.

We can thus distinguish between two forms of selection that influence the visibility of political communication on the Internet:

- ***Vertical, hierarchical selection by way of search engines***, which guide the user through the Internet by presenting a hierarchical sample of websites which are relevant in regard to a particular search issue defined by the Internet user. Search engines act as gatekeepers to the web space and disclose a certain part of “online reality” according to particular criteria.

- ***Horizontal, network selection by way of hyperlinks***, which helps the user to find websites by following the links that are offered on other websites. Through the links that are offered on their websites, public actors themselves act as gatekeepers to the online sphere by providing links to some actors, and excluding other actors from their selection.

Vertical hierarchical selection by search engines

The criteria used to select websites differ from one search engine to another. Some offer the possibility of simply buying a high visibility on their search result lists. Like the commercial trade in easy web addresses, this selection mechanism tends to reproduce offline differences of power: the offline rich can buy themselves a prominent web presence. However, most of

the commonly used search engines use more ‘democratic’ criteria. Generally, search engines do not search the World Wide Web directly, but extract results from the contents of their databases. There are three different kinds of database building and indexing: (1) automatic, (2) manual or (3) mixed. So-called directories depend on humans for building their databases. Short descriptions of websites are submitted to the search engine’s directory by the website’s owner, or editors write descriptions for sites they review. A search looks for matches only in the submitted descriptions. Search engines that create their database automatically are so-called “true search engines”. They search the web by using software called “spiders”, “robots” or “crawlers”. When such web crawlers find pages, they pass them on to another computer program for “indexing”. This program identifies the texts, hyperlinks, and other contents in the page and stores it in the search engine’s database so that it can be searched by keyword. Search engines that maintain their databases in both ways, automatically and manually, are called hybrid search engines. There are also search engines that search several other search engines to compile their result list; these are called meta search engines (e.g. Metager).

Different types of database building and indexing obviously lead to different results, for instance some search engines index more web pages than others, or they focus on different kinds of pages. Therefore no two search engines cover exactly the same collection of web pages. Furthermore, search engines employ different forms of results ranking. The general aim is to return the most relevant pages at the top of their lists. To determine this relevance, crawler-based search engines follow a set of rules (algorithm). Exactly how a particular search engine's algorithm works is a closely-kept trade secret. However, all major search engines follow, to different extents, some general rules. One important criterion is the location and frequency of the keyword on a web page. Pages with search terms appearing in the HTML title tag are often assumed to be more relevant to the topic than other pages. Search engines also check whether the search keywords appear near the top of a web page, in positions such as in the headline or in the first few paragraphs of text.

The assumption is that the pages most relevant to the topic will mention those words right from the beginning. This location/frequency method is very susceptible to the attempts of website owners to influence their position within the result list. By repeating a word hundreds of times on a page (spamming) they try to increase its frequency and thus get their page higher in the listing.

Search engines watch for common spamming methods in a variety of ways and have also developed so called “off page” ranking criteria that cannot be influenced by webmasters easily. The most popular one is hyperlink analysis. By analyzing how pages link to each other, a search engine can determine both what a page is about and whether that page is deemed to be “important” and thus deserves a high ranking within the result list. In addition, sophisticated techniques are used to screen out attempts by webmasters to build “artificial” hyperlinks designed to boost their rankings. Another “off page” factor is click-through measurement. This means that a search engine monitors the results that a user selects for a particular search, and uses this information to eventually drop pages that are not attracting clicks, while promoting pages that do pull in visitors. The criteria of hyperlinks and click-through measurement are emergent phenomena that are neither imposed from above, nor obviously dependent on the amount of resources controlled by an actor. Since past popularity of a website determines the prominence in the search listing, the theoretical effect of such search criteria is a path-dependent process that reinforces the visibility of websites that are already popular and prominent. This will inevitably introduce inequalities in the Internet space over time, by making some websites more visible and more easily accessible, and others less so.

Horizontal selection by hyperlinks

Hyperlinking is a technological capability that enables either internal navigation within a website, or establishes links between different websites. Wilkinson et al. *[Wilkinson, 2003 #49] define internal hyperlinks as those

that have a source page and target within the same site. External hyperlinks provide direct access from a source website to a target website with a different URL that is usually run by a different actor. Such external hyperlinks are not to be conceived of “simply as a technological tool but as a newly emerging social and communicational channel.” [Park, 2003 #47]. Or, as Garrido and Halavais state: “Since establishing a hyperlink is a conscious social act executed by the author of a Web site, we may assume that some form of cognitive, social, or structural relation exists between the sites.” [Garrido, 2003 #52: 10]. When we understand hyperlinks as a type of relationship, the methods of social network analysis can be put to use to describe observed patterns of connections and disconnections within a network of websites [Park, 2003 #48; Park, 2003 #47; Jackson, 1997 #292].

Of course, hyperlinks between websites need not indicate a deeply ingrained social relationship, but they do express the fact that the actor who is the source of the hyperlink attributes relevance to the target website. A link to another actor’s website implies that the source actor finds it worthwhile to direct the attention of his website’s visitors to the content of the other website. Hyperlink affiliation networks have also been explained in terms of credibility, prestige, and trust [Park, 2003 #48; Brin, #293; Kleinberg, 1999 #623]. A website that is perceived as highly credible, prestigious, and trustworthy will receive more hyperlinks than other websites. Given the overload of potential targets for hyperlinks, the choice of to whom one will provide links and whom not is a highly selective process. The inevitable result of such selection processes is that some websites will be on the receiving side of many hyperlinks from other actors, whereas other actors will receive few hyperlinks or none at all. [Egloff, 2002 #43].

Hyperlinking can result in different patterns of interconnection among websites that can be analyzed with conventional network analysis techniques. Centrality measures can indicate the degree of concentration of hyperlinks on certain target websites, or certain groups of target websites within a larger community. The analysis of hyperlinks can also provide a measure of

intermediary brokerage positions, by identifying websites that provide crucial connections among clusters of websites, even if they do not necessarily have a large number of hyperlinks leading to them directly. Search engines such as Google use measures of the structural positions of websites, such as looking at the hyperlink structure that surrounds individual websites, as one of their criteria to determine the most influential website within a group [Henzinger, 2001 #384]. Hyperlink networks among websites and social relations in the offline world may be seen as co-constructing each other to some extent, implying that offline relationships can influence the way online relationships are developed and established, and vice versa [Birnie, 2002 #625; Hampton, 2000 #626].

The online public sphere through the lens of search engines

Our analysis of search engine results includes seven European countries: Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland.² In each country the two most often-used search engines were chosen.³ These search engines were used to search the Internet for information about seven policy fields: monetary politics, agriculture, immigration, troop deployment, retirement and pensions, education, and European integration. Two search strings, one general and one more specific, were defined for each issue field and translated into each of our countries' languages.⁴ Given our question about the Internet as a transnational space, it was of course important for us to consider whether we should search in the national language of each of the seven countries, or, alternatively, should use English throughout. We decided against the latter option because, outside a rather small business and scientific elite, most people search the Internet in their own language. The Internet's potential as a transnational medium is not tied to English becoming the dominant web language; rather, it is defined by

its possibility of offering the same information in different languages. Such multilingual websites were picked up by our searches in national languages, too. For each search string, the first ten relevant results were included in the first round of coding, and the first five relevant results in the second round of coding.⁵ The two rounds of coding were conducted in July and November 2002.⁶

Altogether, we collected a sample of 2,640 websites that contained relevant textual information on the search issues and that were located in Europe or stemmed from supranational institutions (e.g., the EU or the UN) or transnational organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, the Red Cross or Terre des Hommes). This restriction was necessary because we would otherwise have ended up coding many non-European websites, particularly for the searches in English (websites based in the USA), and in Spanish (sites from Latin America). To a lesser extent, similar problems occurred for the searches in French (especially sites from Quebec). A user wanting to exclude US sites from searches in English would probably add “UK” or “Britain” to her search string or use the option to search only in UK sites. However, since we are interested in transnationalization this was not an option for us, because our findings would then have been strongly biased towards websites with a national scope and content. We therefore chose the compromise of excluding non-European websites in order to avoid a built-in transnational bias for countries whose national languages happen to be world languages, while retaining the possibility of investigating cross-national communicative linkages within Europe or with supranational institutions and transnational organizations.

We are aware that this decision remains to some extent contestable, because there is a real sense in which users from countries where a global language is spoken are more likely to be confronted with information and opinions from websites from other countries that speak the same language. This situation, however, also occurs for other media. For instance, US films, newspapers, magazines, and television programmes and news excerpts will be

more frequently read and watched in the UK than in France, whose readers and viewers are in turn more likely to be exposed to written and audiovisual information from Quebec, French-speaking Africa, and other francophone countries. In that sense, communicative patterns in countries where global languages are spoken will be more transnational than will be the case elsewhere, even if this transnationalism is limited to a specific language community. For our analysis, we have chosen to exclude this form of transnational communication within global language communities and to focus on the question of the extent to which the Internet facilitates communication across national and linguistic boundaries within Europe, or between the national level and supranational and transnational organizations.

In the next step, we searched for the most important claim-maker – an actor who expresses an opinion about the issue in question – within each selected text and thus arrived at a sample of 2,172 claims (for the notion of claims making, see Koopmans and Statham 1999; Koopmans et al. 2005).⁷ We distinguish two ways in which claim-makers can become visible on the Internet. First, they can present themselves and their opinions on their own homepage. Second, their opinions and views can be presented or quoted on the websites of other actors. We define these two different forms as *autonomous online visibility* and *dependent online visibility* of claim makers. We will also compare the claim-makers that we find in our online searches to those that appear in newspaper coverage on the same seven issue fields in the year 2002. These data are based on two national quality newspapers in each of the seven countries.⁸

We will now turn to the empirical analysis of our two leading questions:

- (1) How egalitarian is the sphere of political communication that is disclosed by search engines?
- (2) How transnational is the sphere of political communication that is disclosed by search engines?

Online and offline actors compared

To investigate whether the Internet can help less prominent and resourceful actors to overcome the selection biases that are inherent in the traditional offline media, we first look at which actors own the websites that our online searches delivered. As the first column of Table 1 shows, almost half (46%) of the websites that we found through the search engines were actually run by news media. In other words, traditional news media have, through their online versions, gained a substantial amount of control over the political information and opinions that circulate on the Internet. Our findings indicate that a web user who uses a search engine to look for information and opinions on a particular political issue has a chance of almost one in two of landing on the website of the same news media that also dominate the offline public sphere.⁹

Table 1: Share of different categories of actors among owners of websites, claim-makers on websites, and claim-makers in print media in seven countries on seven issues, 2002¹⁰

	Owners of websites	Online claim-makers – autonomous visibility	Online claim-makers dependent visibility	Online claim-makers total	Claim-makers in offline print media
Media	46	13	3	7	9
State actors and parties	26	54	68	63	71
Socio-economic interest groups	9	13	10	11	9
NGO's, social movements and other civil society organizations	16	18	15	16	10
Other actors	2	2	3	3	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	2,171	761	1,407	2,171	2,195

The other 54% of websites that we found in our searches were not run by news media, but by various political and societal collective actors. This,

one might argue, is an improvement in accessibility of the online public sphere compared to the almost 100% control that news media exert over the dissemination of politically relevant information and opinions in the offline public sphere. However, we find that there is a clear hierarchy in the degree to which various actors can profit from the opportunities that the Internet offers to reach audiences directly without the intervention of the news media. Actors from the core of the political system (government, administrative agencies, political parties, etc.) are more successful (25% of the websites found) in reaching the online audience than are socio-economic interest groups such as employers, labour unions, or professional organizations (9% of all websites), and NGO's, social movements, and other civil society organizations (16% of websites).

The owners of websites must, however, not be the same actors as the claim-makers whose opinions are represented in the texts to which our searches directed us. This is especially true for the media websites, which may contain claims by media actors themselves (e.g., editorials), but mostly report claims that were made by other political and societal actors. The websites of non-media actors must not necessarily contain claims by the website owners themselves, either, but may also include texts that represent the claims of other actors, often like-minded ones, but sometimes also those of political adversaries. In the second column of Table 1, we first look at those claims that were made by actors on their own websites, which we refer to as autonomous online visibility. As expected, the news media are now much less prominent, and account for only 13% of the claims, although they owned 46% of all the websites that our searches revealed. Among the other actors, we find the same hierarchy as in the first column of the table. Among the claims that reach the online audience without the intervention of an intermediary, state actors and political parties predominate with 54% of all claims. Socio-economic interest groups (13% of all claims), and NGO's, social movements and other civil society organizations (18%) have a much weaker autonomous online presence. When actors depend on the intermediation of the websites of the

news media or of other actors to bring their claims to the attention of the audience, resourceful institutional actors predominate even more strongly. State and party actors account for 68% of all claims that are presented via other websites; socio-economic interest groups make up 10% and 15% of the dependently visible claims come from NGO's and social movement organizations.¹¹

Clearly, many of the features that characterize the offline public sphere are reproduced on the Internet. News media are the predominant gatekeepers to political information and opinions, and among the claim-makers that are able to reach the online audience resourceful institutional actors are strongly predominant. Still, the Internet might, in a relative sense, be a more conducive environment for civil society actors than the offline media. We can assess this by comparing the final two columns of Table 1, which show, respectively, the online distribution of claim-makers (taking autonomous and dependent visibility together), and the distribution of claim-makers in the print media on the same issues in the year 2002. It is striking how similar these two distributions are. The shares of different actor types do not differ more than a few percentage points between the online and the offline (print media) public sphere. However, these relatively small differences suggest that the Internet is a slightly less selective environment for civil society actors and especially for NGO's and social movements than the offline media. NGO's and social movements command a share of only 16% of the online claims, but that is still significantly more than the 10% that they achieve in offline print media. Socio-economic interest groups are also slightly better represented online than in the offline print media (11% versus 9%), while state actors and political parties are slightly less prominent online (63% versus 71% in the offline print media).¹² We thus find some modest support for the thesis that the Internet is a less selective environment for civil society actors than are the offline media. However, the similarities between the selectiveness of online and offline public spheres are much more impressive than the differences.

The geopolitical scope of online and offline claim makers

We now turn to our second question, namely whether the Internet facilitates the transnational exchange of politically relevant information and opinions. Our analysis of this question parallels the one above, but this time we focus not on distinctions between more or less institutionalized actors, but on the geopolitical scope of the actors. We distinguish two types of supranational actors; extra-European ones, such as NATO, the UN, or Amnesty International, and European ones, such as the EU, the Council of Europe, or the European Trade Union Federation. Further, we distinguish three categories of national actors; those from the same country where we conducted our searches (“national own country”), those from other EU member states, and those from outside the EU. If the hypothesis that the Internet offers better opportunities for the transnational flow of political information and ideas than traditional news media is correct, then we should find greater shares of foreign national or supranational actors in our online search results than in the content of traditional print media.

Table 2: Share of actors of different geopolitical scope among owners of websites, claim-makers on websites, and claim-makers in print media in seven countries on seven issues, 2002

	Owners of websites	Online claim-makers – autonomous visibility	Online claim-makers dependent visibility	Online claim-makers total	Claim-makers in offline print media
Extra-european supranational	6	6	6	6	2
European supranational	6	11	18	15	13
National: own country	75	71	49	56	56
European countries	12	11	14	13	16
Non-european countries	1	1	13	9	13
Unknown	1	1	1	1	0
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total N	2,171	758	1,411	2,171	2,195

We again begin by looking at the owners of the websites that we found in our searches. The first column of the table shows that 75% of the websites found were from the country where the search was conducted, 13% were websites of organizations and institutions based in foreign countries, and 12% were websites of various supranational organizations, agencies, and institutions.¹⁵ That may not seem much in terms of transnationalism, but we should compare it to the virtually 100% dominance of national media sources within the offline public sphere. One reason why searches led to websites outside the country was that some of the search languages were also spoken in other European countries, e.g. English in Ireland, Dutch in Belgium, French in Belgium and Switzerland, and German in Austria and Switzerland. A second and theoretically more interesting reason is that some organizations offered their entire websites or specific information on them in several languages. This was especially true for supranational organizations, for instance the websites of various EU institutions. As a result, a user conducting a search in French would not only find websites in Francophone countries, but also European and other supranational websites (and to a lesser extent also some foreign national websites in non-Francophone countries) that were offered in French. Overall, 14% of the websites offered information in more than one language. If several languages were offered, English was, not surprisingly, the most often-included additional language (65% of the multilingual websites), followed by German (35%), French (33%), Italian (21%), Spanish (19%), and Dutch (12%). Twenty-two per cent of the multilingual websites offered information in some other European language, and eight per cent in a non-European language. 14% of the websites being multilingual may not seem much, but again one must see this figure in the relative light of the fact that access to foreign offline media always requires knowledge of the respective language, whereas online, one can read at least some information from foreign or supranational sources in one's own language.

However, this does not necessarily mean that someone who searches the Internet for political information and opinions will encounter more

foreign and supranational points of view than someone who reads the traditional print media. The reason is that although traditional offline media are almost without exception national in scope and monolingual, they do offer substantial coverage of news and opinions from foreign countries and from supranational organizations and institutions. Whether websites are nationally, foreign, or supranationally based is therefore not in itself decisive; we must next look at the geopolitical scopes of the actors that obtain a platform to diffuse their information and opinions. The second and third columns of Table 2 show the geographical scope of the claim-makers that appear on the websites, and distinguish again between autonomous and dependent online visibility. There is not much difference between the distribution of autonomously visible claim-makers – i.e., those that present their own claims on their own websites – and the distribution of web site owners. This implies that actors from all geopolitical levels are about equally likely to present their own claims on their websites. It is more interesting that the distribution changes significantly when we look in the third column at the actors that appear as claim-makers on another actor's – often an online medium's – website. Supranational actors make up 24% of dependently visible claim-makers, and foreign actors another 27%, while the share made up by national actors declines from 71% to 49% compared to the distribution of website owners. In other words, when national websites offer a platform to the claims of other actors, they often provide a place for claim-makers from other countries or from the supranational level.

The final step in our analysis is again to compare the resulting overall distribution of online claim-makers (column 4 in the table) with the distribution of claim-makers in the offline print media in the same period and on the same issues. Again, it is striking how similar these two distributions are. The share of claim-makers from the country in which the online searches were conducted and the investigated newspapers were published is identical online and offline (both 56%). For the other geopolitical levels, the differences are not very large, either. Search engines are somewhat more likely to pick up

supranational claims than are newspapers (21% against 15%), whereas newspapers contain more claims from foreign countries (29% against 22% for search engine results). Thus the results in no way suggest that the spectrum of political information and opinions revealed by online search engines is any less nationally focused than the content of national newspapers. However, in so far as the two media direct attention to actors outside the own country, Internet searches are more likely to lead to supranational actors, whereas newspapers are stronger on the transnational dimension of covering claims by foreign national actors. We will see below that our evidence on hyperlinks gives further support to this result.¹⁴

It is worthwhile to reflect further on these findings, which are particularly remarkable because the process by which the online and offline visibility of news and opinions is produced is so different. In the case of the offline media, professional journalists and editors decide according to professional standards and routines and based on estimates about the public's interest, to include certain information, events, actors, and points of view in their coverage, and to exclude others. This is a conscious human selection process, in which a small part of the huge amount of information and opinion that becomes available on a daily basis is hand picked for coverage and much else is sorted out. The process by which online visibility is produced through the channel of search engines is very different. If we enter a range of keywords in a search engine, there is no editor, journalist, or any other human actor who decides what we will find. Instead, there is an automatic algorithm that looks at the frequency and prominence of the keywords in a large number of online texts. The hierarchy among texts that contain the keywords is then calculated on the basis of emergent indicators of relevance based on the number of external links that a given website receives from other websites, and the number of times that web users click on a certain website if it is offered as a search result. In contrast to the conscious, top-down, and centralized form of decision-making that characterizes selection processes in the offline media, selection on the Internet is a largely unconscious, bottom-

up, and highly decentralized process, which mechanically aggregates thousands of small attributions of relevance by a multitude of actors to a summary score that determines a website's listing in the search results.

Despite the fact that the offline and online mechanisms of selection could hardly be more divergent, their outcomes are, as we have seen, virtually indistinguishable, both when we look at the distribution among actors of different levels of institutional power, and at the visibility that is given to actors of different geopolitical scopes. How can this similarity be explained? One part of the explanation is certainly our finding that online media (which are in the majority of cases just online versions of offline media) make up an important part (somewhat less than half, see Table 1) of the websites that search engines disclose. Online journalists and editors will base their decisions on inclusion and exclusion largely on the same news values as their offline colleagues – that is, if there is any separate decision-making process at all, because often there are hardly any differences between the online and offline editions of the same medium. It is worth noting, however, that the prominence of online media in the search results itself needs to be explained as an emergent result of the unconscious, decentralized selection process that generates online visibility. Online media can only be so prominent in the search results because other websites provide links to them, and because users often click on search results that stem from online media. This same decentralized process governs the selection process that produces visibility (or not) for non-media websites. That state actors and parties appear prominently in search engine results and NGO's and social movements do not, is not because of some conscious decision by web editors, but must be the emergent result of the fact that more websites provide links to state and party actors than to NGO and social movement actors, and that web users tend to click more often on state and party websites than on NGO and social movement websites. In the next section, we will provide evidence on hyperlinks that supports this reading of the online selection process.

Online networks of communication through hyperlinks

Although the mechanisms of online and offline selection differ strongly, selection by way of search engines also shares an important feature with the offline mass media public sphere. In both cases citizens must rely on what a gatekeeping institution – a newspaper, a television station, or a search engine – offers according to criteria over which they have no control. In both the online and offline sphere, there are possibilities for citizens to seek politically relevant information and opinions independent of gatekeepers. In the offline public sphere this is a rather time-consuming and costly process, which involves writing or calling institutions, politicians, and organizations and requesting material from them. One only has to consider one's own behaviour to see that this is not an effort that many citizens are prepared to make, and certainly not with a frequency that would make such direct information gathering any significant compensation for the flood of information and opinions that reach people through the mass media.

The Internet, however, allows citizens high-speed access to a world of information and opinions at virtually no cost. Citizens may use search engines to make a selection from the available information, but they can also choose to navigate the web independently, by surfing from one website to another by following hyperlinks that are offered on websites. Often, users will combine these two strategies. For instance, they may start by entering keywords in a search engine, but once they have found an interesting starting website for their quest, they may continue looking for information by surfing from that website to another and so on. In this section, we want to investigate whose information and opinions a user is likely to encounter if they rely on surfing hyperlinks.

While the metaphor of “surfing” suggests the user's freedom from constraints, in reality the user must surf on “waves” (hyperlinks) that are

supplied by others (the owners of websites) and that lead him to destinations (the targets of the hyperlinks) that he has not selected himself. In that sense, hyperlink surfing also relies on gatekeepers, namely the owners of websites, who decide to provide links to some other websites, but not to many others that might be potentially relevant and interesting to the user. Websites to which few or no other websites provide links will remain just as inaccessible to the user as websites that are not listed prominently in search engine results. Therefore, we need to investigate which types of actors are more likely to be on the receiving side of hyperlinks from other websites. The more often a website is targeted by hyperlinks, the more likely it is that Internet users will land on that particular website and be confronted with the information and opinions that it offers. The questions that we ask regarding the characteristics of websites that are reached by way of hyperlink surfing are the same as the ones we discussed above for search engines. First, is hyperlink surfing more likely to lead the user to websites of less prominent and less resourceful actors, or will it lead the user to websites of the same type of actors that also predominate in search engine results and in the offline media? Second, is hyperlink surfing more likely to provide access to foreign and supranational websites, or is it as likely to lead to the information and opinions of actors from the user's own country as are search engines and offline media?

We conducted an analysis of hyperlinks for websites from the same seven countries as the search engine analysis, and added websites from the European supranational and non-European supranational levels. Because of the technical complexity and time-consuming character of hyperlink analysis, we limited the issue fields that we investigated to three: agriculture, immigration, and European integration. Given the huge number of websites of actors that are in some way active in these three fields and the sometimes very large number of hyperlinks offered on websites, it was impossible to investigate all possibly relevant websites, and all hyperlinks on these sites. We therefore focused our analysis on a predefined structured sample of websites that included the most important actors in the three fields (many of whom are

generalists who are active on a broad range of issues) within the same categories of actors that we used for the search engine analysis: state and party actors (47 per country), socio-economic interest groups (19 per country), NGO's and social movements (43 per country), and media (25 per country). For reasons of cross-national comparability, the criteria for selecting websites were exactly the same in each country. Here are some random examples from across the four actor categories of actor types which were selected in each country: the main agency responsible for border protection; the local government of the capital city; the five most important farmers' organizations; the most important labour union representing workers in the state sector; the most important animal protection organization; the most important anti-racist organization; the four most important national TV channels; the most important regional newspaper in the region with the strongest regional identity. The resulting list of 134 organizations and institutions in each country reads very much like a who's who of national politics in each of the countries, and includes many well-known organizations and institutions that are active on many different issue fields, next to some more specialized organizations that are relevant only to agriculture, immigration, or European integration. A full list of criteria and selected organizations can be found in Koopmans and Zimmermann (2004: 9-11). Within each of the predefined categories our country teams selected the most important representative(s) on the basis of their own knowledge and the relevant literature on the three policy fields. We did the same for the European and extra-European supranational levels, but because of the fact that many of the predefined categories did not have an equivalent on the supranational level, we ended up with smaller numbers (70 organizations for each supranational level) than on the national level.

All in all, we investigated the hyperlinks that were offered on 1,078 organizational and institutional websites.¹⁵ Data on hyperlink networks can be obtained in three ways: (a) by human observation, (b) by computer-assisted measurement and (c) by a combination of both. For a small sample of

relatively small websites, observation by the use of human coders is surely the best way to generate valid data. However, for a research purpose such as ours, which is aimed at analysing the hyperlink connections among more than 1,000 websites and includes enormously large websites, such as the websites of national governments or the website of the European Union, this method quickly reaches its limits. Therefore, we needed to use a computer-assisted tool, a so-called web-crawler, which automatically collects the required data from the websites.¹⁶ After testing several programmes, we chose the hyperlink check tool Xenu's Link Sleuth™, which meets our needs most adequately and provides the most reliable data in comparison with other programmes.¹⁷ Altogether, we were thus able to identify 16,590,762 hyperlinks on the 1,078 selected websites. This number includes internal (those for navigating within one larger website) and external hyperlinks. Only the external hyperlinks – those connecting the websites of different actors – were relevant for our analysis. These still amounted to no less than 384,532 hyperlinks. We narrowed the range of observation further by focusing on those hyperlinks that connected websites within our sample of 1,078 websites. This left us with 17,951 hyperlinks among our selected websites. On average, then, our selected websites contained links to about seventeen other websites in our sample.¹⁸

Table 3: Receivers and senders of hyperlinks by actor type in seven countries and on the supranational level in three issue fields, 2003

	Total number of hyperlinks received	Total number of hyperlinks sent	Number of websites in sample	Average number of hyperlinks received per actor	Average number of hyperlinks sent per actor
State and party actors	10,110	7,987	423	23.9	18.9
Socio-economic interest groups	1,602	2,386	153	10.5	15.6
NGO's, social movements, and other civil society actors	3,052	4,042	311	9.8	13.0
Media	3,187	3,536	191	16.7	18.5
Total	17,951	17,951	1,078	16.7	16.7

Table 3 shows the frequency with which websites of different actor types were the targets and senders of hyperlinks from and to other websites. The results indicate that even the selection process by way of hyperlinks, in which the gatekeeping function is maximally decentralized to individual websites, tends to reproduce the type of inequalities that we already found in the search engine results and in the offline media. State and party actors (24 received hyperlinks on average) are about 2.5 times more likely to be the target of hyperlinks than are socio-economic interest groups or NGO's and social movements (on average respectively 11 and 10 received hyperlinks). Mass media fall in between with an average of 17 received hyperlinks. The differences in the propensity of actors to send hyperlinks to other actors are less pronounced. NGO's, social movements and other civil society actors are not only the least likely to receive, but also to send links to other websites (13 sent links on average).

State and party actors are the only net receivers of hyperlinks: they receive more links from other actors than they send. This is related to the fact that the linking behaviour of state and party actors is relatively self-centred: 70% of the links they send are directed at other state and party actors. By

contrast, only 23% of the links of socio-economic interest groups, 36% of the links of other civil society groups, and 30% of the links of media are directed at the same actor type, and each of these categories sends more links to state and party actors than to actors of their own type (51%, 43%, and 46% respectively). If we take the results of hyperlinks sent and received together, the implication is that hyperlink surfing will tend to gravitate towards the websites of state and party actors, and away from those of socio-economic interest groups and other civil society actors. Once a hyperlink surfer has reached a state and party actor website, there is, moreover, a strong tendency for him to remain there, because the large majority of links from these websites point to other state and party actors.

The relative likelihood of state and party actors, socio-economic interest groups, and other civil society groups to be on the receiving end of hyperlinks (on average respectively 24, 11, and 10 received links) is roughly similar to their relative frequencies in the result listings of search engines (26%, 9%, and 16% respectively of all prominently listed websites; see the first column of Table 1). This suggests that using search engines or surfing hyperlinks leads to outcomes that favour state and party actors about equally. This similarity is probably due in large part to the fact that search engines use hyperlinks as one of their central criteria for determining the prominence of websites in their listings. Still, there is an important difference between the search engine and hyperlink results, namely the degree to which media websites occupy a central position in the dissemination of information and opinions. No less than 46% of all prominent search engine listings were the websites of media, but media websites are not senders or targets of hyperlinks disproportionately often. Search engine access to information and opinions is thus more likely to pass through the filter of media actors than hyperlink surfing. As we have seen in Table 1 above (see the column on dependently visible claim-makers), claim-makers that are presented on media websites are much more likely to be state and party actors and less likely to be NGO's and social movements. The less prominent role of media websites in hyperlink

networks therefore benefits the visibility of civil society actors and mitigates the bias in favour of state and party actors, when compared to the search engine results.

Table 4: Receivers of hyperlinks by geopolitical scope of actor in seven countries and on the supranational level in three issue fields, 2003

	Total number of hyperlinks received	Total number of hyperlinks sent	Number of websites in sample	Average number of hyperlinks received per actor	Average number of hyperlinks sent per actor
Extra-European supranational	3,034	1,372	69	44.0	19.9
European supranational	2,479	1,689	75	33.1	22.5
Total links to national level	12,438	14,890	933	13.3	16.0
Total	17,951	17,951	1,078	16.7	16.7

We now turn to the question of whether hyperlink surfing is more likely to transcend national boundaries and to establish connections to supranational organizations and institutions. Table 4 shows how often websites on the European and extra-European supranational levels and on the national level were the targets and senders of hyperlinks. Extra-European (44 received links on average) as well as European supranational websites (33 received links) turn out to be 2.5 to 3.5 times more likely to receive hyperlinks than national actors (13 received links). They are also somewhat more likely to be senders of hyperlinks, but the difference from national actors is much smaller here. As a result, supranational websites are net receivers of hyperlinks, especially the websites of extra-European supranational actors who receive more than twice as many links as they send (44 links received on average and 20 sent). National websites, by contrast, are net losers in the hyperlink exchange process. Compared to the results of the search engine analysis, these results suggest a much stronger position for supranational actors

in hyperlink networks. National websites were very strongly predominant in search engine results (88% of all websites), and supranational websites were relatively marginal (6% each for extra-European and European supranational websites). By contrast, in hyperlink networks there are strong gravitational tendencies towards the websites of supranational actors.

It is, however, too early to conclude from these results that hyperlink networks are less nationally bound than the communicative space disclosed by search engines or by traditional offline media. The results in Table 4 group all national websites together, regardless of whether they are from a user's own country or from one of the other six countries. Our search engine analysis suggests that access to online information is strongly focused on sources from the own country. Of the 88% national websites in the search engine results, 75% were from the own country. This result may have been partly caused by the fact that we conducted our searches in national languages. We consider this a realistic choice given the fact that most users search in their own language, but some readers may find that this decision has artificially produced the result of an online public sphere (as disclosed by search engines) that is as nationally focused as the offline media public sphere. Hyperlinks allow us to address this issue squarely, because our study of hyperlink networks does not depend on any restrictions regarding the search language. Websites in different countries can be linked to one another regardless of their language(s).

Whether they do so is of course another question, which can be answered by way of a more detailed analysis of the hyperlink networks among our sample of websites. We will investigate this by computing network density measures within and across categories of actors. Density measures summarize the distribution of connections in a network by comparing the number of realized connections between a set of actors to the maximum possible number of connections among them (Scott 1991). A network density of 100% means that all possible links between actors have been established, a density of 0% means that no connection at all has been realized.¹⁹ The whole network includes 1,078 actors. With 17,951 realized

connections out of 1,116,600 logically possible connections, the density of the whole network is 1.6%.

Table 5 shows the network densities within countries, between countries, and between countries and the European and extra-European supranational levels. The table shows these densities in two directions (except within countries, where this distinction does not make sense): from the row country to the column unit (numbers before the slash) and to the row country from the column unit (numbers after the slash). The results indicate that network links are most strongly developed within countries, ranging from a density of 5.0% realized links in Italy to 10.3% in Germany. The second most developed links are those from countries to extra-European supranational websites, ranging from a density of 2.7% for the Netherlands to 3.9% for Germany. The next most important type of network links are those from countries to the European supranational level, ranging from 1.7% for non-EU member Switzerland to 4.0% for Germany. Links in the reverse direction, from the European level to national websites, are only half as dense, and strongly focused on Germany (a density of 2.2%), the United Kingdom (1.7%), and France (1.7%). Judging from the linking densities, Italy (0.9%), Spain (0.9%), and the Netherlands (1.0%) are regarded as considerably less important by the owners of European-level websites. Websites in Switzerland are the least likely to receive links from the European level (0.5% density). This tendency to favour more powerful countries over less powerful ones is also visible in the linking densities from the supranational level to the seven countries. However, while European websites are most likely to link to Germany, extra-European supranational websites link most frequently to the United Kingdom (2.1%), followed by France (1.4%), and only then Germany (1.1%). This fits the fact that Germany, because of the size of its economy and population, is a powerful player in Europe, but, because it lacks a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and has limited military capabilities, is less important than France and the United Kingdom as a world power. The linking densities again indicate that Italy (0.8%), Spain (0.8%), the Netherlands

(0.7%), and Switzerland (0.5%) are considered to be less important by the owners of supranational websites.

The most striking result of Table 5 is however the extremely weak development of cross-national network links, which have an average density of only 0.25%, i.e. twenty-nine times lower than the density of within-country networks, but also ten times lower than the density of links to the European level, and fourteen times lower than links to the extra-European supranational level. Regarding the sources of cross-national linkages, the United Kingdom stands out with a particularly low density of links going to other countries (0.1%). Regarding the targets of cross-national links, we find the same hierarchy of nations as we already found among the links to countries from the supranational levels. Germany, France, and the United Kingdom are (relatively speaking) frequent targets of links from other countries (0.4% density each), whereas the other four countries are only half as likely to be the target of cross-national links. Concomitantly, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom are net receivers of links from other countries, whereas Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland receive fewer links than they send to other countries.

Table 5: Density of network links (realized links as a % of all possible links) among actors of different geopolitical scope in seven countries and on the supranational level in three issue fields, 2003

(Overall network density = 1.6%; network links with twice or more the overall density are in bold type; network links with less than half the overall density are in bold italic type)

	Within Same country	From/To Other country (averages)	From/To European supranational	From / To Extra-European supranational
DE	10.3	<i>0.3 / 0.4</i>	4.0 / 2.2	3.9 / 1.1
UK	8.6	<i>0.1 / 0.4</i>	2.7 / 1.7	3.3 / 2.1
FR	6.7	<i>0.2 / 0.4</i>	2.7 / 1.7	3.5 / 1.4

IT	5.0	0.3 / 0.2	2.5 / 0.9	3.4 / 0.8
ES	5.8	0.2 / 0.2	2.3 / 0.9	3.3 / 0.8
NL	7.8	0.2 / 0.1	2.3 / 1.0	2.7 / 0.7
CH	6.8	0.3 / 0.2	1.7 / 0.5	3.5 / 0.5
Average	7.3%	0.2% / 0.3%²⁰	2.6% / 1.3%	3.4% / 1.1%

Reading example: Links from Germany to other countries have a density of 0.3% averaged across the six other countries; links to Germany from other countries have a density of 0.4% across the six other countries. See text for further examples.

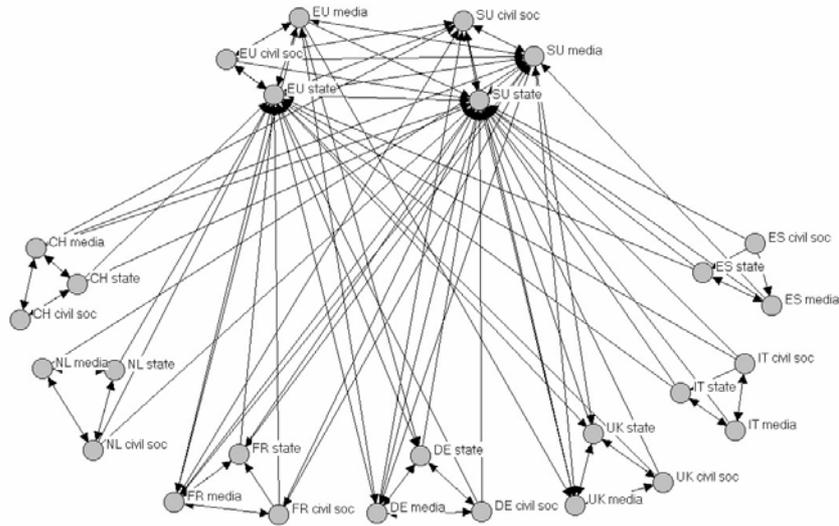
There is thus no straightforward answer to the question of whether surfing hyperlink networks is more likely to transcend national boundaries than is using search engines. National communicative exchange predominates quite strongly in both ways of accessing the information and opinions that are available on the Internet. Users of search engines have a high probability of landing on a search result from their own country, and likewise users who follow hyperlinks are more likely to jump from one website to another website in the same country than to do anything else. However, compared to the search engine results where own national outnumber supranational websites by more than seven to one, the difference in the densities of within country networks and links from the national to the supranational level are much smaller (about 2.5 to 1). While supranational websites are more likely to be found by surfing hyperlinks than by using search engines, the opposite is true for websites from other countries. Websites in other European countries commanded only a very modest share in our search engine results (12% compared to 75% own national), but the difference between the densities of within-country and between-country networks revealed by our hyperlink analysis is of an even larger magnitude. This finding shows that the low prominence of foreign websites in our search engine results cannot be considered as an artefact of our decision to search in national languages. The search engine results turn out to be congruent with the linking behaviour of website owners, who only very rarely establish links to websites in other

countries.

Figure 1 gives a graphical overview of the main findings of the hyperlink analysis. Apart from the seven countries and the two supranational levels, the figure also distinguishes between state and party actors, civil society actors (including socio-economic interest groups), and media within each of the geopolitical units.²¹ Arrows between two categories of actors have been drawn if the density of links from the one group to the other is at least twice as strong as the density of the whole network. The general picture that emerges is that of national public spheres that are highly segmented from one another, but are linked in what resembles a federative structure to the European and extra-European supranational levels, which are themselves also strongly interlinked. On closer inspection of the figure, there are some qualifications to be made regarding this assessment. The federative element turns out to have a strong bottom-up component (national actors linking to the supranational level) but the reverse linkages are much less developed. Apart from Swiss civil society actors, all national groups are linked to at least one actor group on the supranational level. However, many of these linkages are one-way traffic. None of the Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and Swiss actors are recipients of strong links from the supranational level. The same is true for civil society actors in Germany and the United Kingdom. European-level civil society groups are not strongly connected to the communicative exchange between the supranational and national levels either, because unlike the other supranational groups, they do not receive strong links from any of the national groups.

Figure 1: High-density linkages among categories of actors and geopolitical units

(threshold = twice the density of the whole network = 3.2%)



If the network of communication that we find resembles a federation, it is one with some serious deficiencies. First, it is largely a bottom-up network which directs web surfers to supranational websites, but does not direct nearly as much back from the supranational to the national level. If supranational websites directed strong links back to the national level, they could serve as relays to link national public spheres in an indirect way. But in the absence of such linkages, the communicative isolation of national groups from one another cannot be compensated for by way of indirect connections that pass through the supranational level. The only partial exceptions are the more powerful actors in the more powerful countries, i.e. state and party actors and media in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, which are on the receiving end of some strong links from the supranational level.

In the case of the European supranational level there is a second deficiency, namely the isolation of European-level civil society groups, which neither link strongly to the national level, nor receive any significant links

from the national level. More generally, the federated structure is less developed in relation to the European supranational level, as is shown in the diagram by the significantly lower numbers of arrows sent and received by European supranational groups compared to extra-European supranational groups. This is the more remarkable given the fact that we selected our actors for their relevance in the issue fields of agriculture, immigration, and European integration, which would seem to favour linkages to European-level actors rather than to global supranational actors. There is no doubt that European supranational governance, particularly in these fields, is more developed in terms of resources and competences than are global forms of governance, but our results suggest that the progress of European integration is not matched by the development of a Europeanized online public sphere. It is hard to avoid such an interpretation in view of the fact that extra-European supranational actors are, in almost all respects, better connected to national actors than European-level institutions and organizations.

The lack of any significant horizontal connections between the seven European countries does not of course suggest strong Europeanization tendencies either. None of the cross-national links comes close to the threshold criterion of twice the overall network density. There are, however, a few cross-national linkages that are slightly above or slightly below the overall network density of 1.6% (not shown in the figure). Interestingly, these are almost all linkages between media websites. The most important targets are British, French and to a lesser extent German media, whereas the sources are media from all countries, except the UK (which fits the result in Table 5 that UK actors are the least inclined to provide links to other countries). Thus we find at least the rudiments of a transnational communicative network among media websites. This result may provide some further evidence against the “blaming the media” frame, which ascribes the lack of transnational communication to the national parochialism of the media. Contrary to this image, the only online national actors who are at least somewhat involved in transnational exchange are media websites. An equally remarkable and

significant finding is that civil society actors, who are often heralded as the harbingers of transnationalism, are in fact the group of actors that is by far the least likely to make transnational linkages.

Conclusions

Our aim in this paper has been to analyse the structure of online public spheres with regard to two leading questions. First, whether the Internet is, compared to traditional offline media, a more egalitarian arena that offers better chances to less resourceful actors to get their information and opinions across to the audience, and second, whether the Internet is a more transnational space for political communication. In contrast to the majority of existing studies in this field, we did not focus on the contents, format, and other characteristics of single websites or small samples of websites, but have striven to gain an overview of the overall structure of the Internet public sphere. Moreover, and again in contrast to most earlier studies, we have investigated political communication on the Internet in direct comparison with offline media (print media more particularly), thus allowing us to directly engage the question of to what extent and in which respects the range of politically relevant information and opinions that are offered to a newspaper reader differs from what an Internet user is likely to encounter when she ventures into the web space in search of political content. To answer this question, we have focused on the question of how online citizens can find their way in the vast and ever-expanding web space. We have argued that this is only possible with the help of navigation aides and have analyzed the two most important of these: search engines and hyperlinks.

The mechanisms by which both search engines and hyperlink networks select websites from the vast number that are on offer are very different from the selection process by which offline media editors and journalists select news items. In the case of the offline media, we are dealing with a selection process that is carried out in a conscious fashion by a few centrally located individuals,

namely journalists and editors. This centrality of media professionals in the news selection process is often seen as introducing “media bias” in favour of resourceful, institutional and national actors, while excluding the views of civil society actors and of supranational and foreign national actors. Selection processes on the Internet, by contrast, are emergent phenomena that do not depend on the conscious selection of a few gatekeepers, but on the aggregation of millions of small and independent behaviours of individual users and online organizations, who decide to click on certain websites and not on others, or to direct hyperlinks to some other websites, but not to others.

Given these widely divergent selection processes in the offline and online public spheres our most remarkable finding is the great similarity of the outcomes. Regarding both the type of actors – state and party actors, socio-economic interest groups, other civil society actors, and media actors – that achieve the highest levels of visibility, and the prominence of (own) national actors compared to foreign and supranational actors, it does not make much difference whether we analyze the content of newspapers, inspect the websites that are prominently listed by the most often-used search engines, or follow the hyperlinks that are offered on the websites of a variety of actors. In all three cases, the types of actors whose views we are by far most likely to encounter are the state and party actors from the own country. To be sure, there are some comparatively minor differences that suggest that the Internet is somewhat less biased in favour of resourceful, institutional actors. In the search engine results civil society actors were slightly better represented than in newspapers, and we could observe the same in the hyperlink analysis. Regarding the transnationality of Internet political communication, our results are ambivalent. On the one hand, both the search engine analysis and (more obviously) the hyperlink analysis, showed a higher level of visibility for supranational actors than we found in the content of newspapers. However, the Internet is much less transnational than offline newspapers when it comes to directing the citizen’s attention to the views of actors in other countries

than one's own. This finding was particularly pronounced in the hyperlink analysis, which revealed that there are very few cross-national linkages among websites, even among actors of the same type. Interestingly, the only actors who did show a modest propensity to establish such links were media websites – those same actors who are supposedly holding us imprisoned in national parochialism.

The reason that offline media are better equipped to convey the views of actors from other countries may be due to the fact that journalists, and particularly foreign correspondents, act as translators, transferring foreign-language information and opinions to an audience in their own country. To some extent such a translation service is also available on the Internet in the form of multilingual websites, which made up 14% of the prominent results from our search engine runs. However, many of these multilingual websites belonged to supranational organizations and institutions, and many less to national ones. Thus, multilingual websites make only a small contribution to enabling cross-national dissemination of online information. If this reading of our results is correct, we would have to conclude that, far from being an obstacle to transnational discourses, media professionals are crucial intermediaries in the cross-national exchange of information and opinions. Our Internet results show that without this mediating effort of journalists we would actually have less, rather than more cross-national communication.

Notwithstanding these differences between the Internet and offline media, our most intriguing finding is how similar the hierarchies of visibility that emerge in these two communicative arenas are. Ultimately, the decentralized and largely unconscious selection process on the Internet produces virtually the same results as the centralized and conscious decisions of the journalists and editors of offline media, and this is a finding of huge theoretical importance because it raises important questions about the role of the news media in constructing social reality. There are two possible explanations for the large degree of online-offline congruence, which do not exclude each other. The first is that citizens, as well as political organizations

and institutions, have so strongly internalized the criteria of relevance of the offline media that they reproduce these criteria in their own online linking and clicking behaviour in such a way that they collectively do the job for the online public sphere that journalists and editors do for the offline media. The other possibility is that the professional quality that distinguishes journalists is that they have a very sensitive antenna for what political actors and the public at large find important and relevant, and that they select the news accordingly. On the Internet, the aggregation of millions of linking and clicking behaviours allows a direct measurement of what the public and political actors find relevant, and thereby makes journalists superfluous – but with the same outcomes.

In the first view, journalists and editors are all-powerful constructors of a media reality that ordinary people, as well as professional political actors, have so deeply internalized that they reproduce that reality almost perfectly even if, when they enter the online public sphere, they are allowed to decide entirely freely what they find relevant and important, without the intervention of journalists or editors. In the second view journalists and editors, by using their professional routines, trained observation skills, and intuition, essentially do what search engine algorithms do mechanically on the basis of their vast memory and calculation capacities: they observe what their readers or viewers find interesting, and what the sources of their information find relevant, and accordingly decide to cover certain information and opinions prominently and to ignore many other possible news stories.

It is possible to combine these two interpretations and to argue that it is a bit of both: the public and political actors have to some degree internalized the criteria of relevance of the media (e.g., by selecting websites of actors that they already know from the offline media), and journalists have to some degree internalized the relevance criteria of the public and of political actors (by acting as human search engine algorithms). In terms borrowed from evolutionary biology, this implies a co-evolution of the relevance criteria of the public, collective political actors, and the media, which converge on

common standards about who and what is relevant, which are largely shared by all involved actors. The implication of each of the three interpretations is that it does not matter much whether the selecting is done in a centralized, conscious fashion by journalists, in a decentralized, unconscious fashion by the aggregation of many, small online behaviours of individuals and organizations, or in some combination of the two. The results will be largely the same, because the relevance criteria of all these actors are so similar.²²

The results reported in this paper are based on a substantial effort, involving research teams in seven countries, and time-consuming and technically complicated data gathering. Still, we are all too aware that this can only be the beginning of an exploration of how online information is selected, how differential visibility on the Internet emerges, and how the outcomes of these processes are different from, or congruent with what we know about the traditional offline media. The limitations of our analysis are clear. In our search engine analysis, we have only investigated the results of a limited number of search strings on two different days, using the two most important search engines in seven countries. Although the stability of our results across countries gives us reason to be confident about their validity, it is evidently necessary to replicate this type of study in other countries, using different search engines and search strings, and, given the volatility of the content of the Internet, also on more points in time. Our hyperlink analysis has similar limitations. It is only a snapshot of one point in time, and, because we needed to keep the volumes of data to be processed manageable, we had to limit our analysis to the interconnections among 1,078 pre-selected websites in seven countries and on the supranational level. Although we selected the websites of the most important actors in three issue fields (agriculture, immigration, and European integration) and although this selection includes many actors that would also have been among the most relevant ones in other issue fields, we cannot tell whether the results might have been different had we focused on other issue fields, or chosen a different set of organizations. Much needs to be done, therefore, but we hope to have

inspired others to extend and refine some of the lines of research that we have developed in this paper.

Notes

¹ Barber differentiates thin or representative democracy from plebiscitary and strong democracy. Van Dijk distinguishes as ideal types: legalist, competitive, plebiscitary, pluralist, participatory and libertarian democracy.

² See for a detailed description of the research design and the sampling and coding process * [Koopmans, 2002 #589]

³ Germany: Google.de, Fireball.de / Spain: Google.es, Altavista.es / France: Google.fr, Voila.fr / Italy: Arianna, Virgilio / Netherlands: Google.nl, Vindex.nl / United Kingdom: Google.uk, MSN.uk / Switzerland: Search.ch. Switzerland is a special case, because the most often-used search engine in the German speaking part of Switzerland is the same as in Germany (Google.de) and the same applies for the French speaking part where Google.fr is the most often-used search engine. Because of this, we decided to use the next often-used search engine in both parts of Switzerland. Even though we will analyse the situation in Switzerland on the basis of the data from the searches with "Search.ch", it must be kept in mind that to some extent the findings for Germany and France also apply to Switzerland.

⁴ The English search strings in the different issue fields were MONETARY POLITICS: *monetary politics* and *interest rate decision*, AGRICULTURE: *agriculture subsidies* and *BSE cows*, IMMIGRATION: *immigration politics* and *deportation*, TROOP DEPLOYMENT: *troops deployment* and *troops peacekeeping*, RETIREMENT AND PENSIONS: *pension politics* and *pensions demographic*, EDUCATION: *education politics* and *education equal opportunities politics*, EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: *EU reforms* and *EU enlargement*. All search strings also included 2002 to get as much actuality as possible.

⁵ Keyword searches often return some results that are not actually about the topic that one is looking for. Such results were skipped, as were any websites that could not be accessed or that required registration or a password.

⁶ Since the results of searches can vary from day to day, the day on which the country teams should search and with which search string was scheduled exactly. There were two periods of coding which took place in July and November 2002. The only exception is Switzerland where, because of technical problems, only the second round of coding was conducted. Because of this, the Swiss data will be weighted in the analysis.

⁷ The difference between the number of texts and the lower number of claims is caused by the fact that not all texts included claims, i.e. texts that only offered information but no opinion on the issues in question, often in the form of tables and figures on interest rates, numbers of BSE cases, inflow of immigrants etc.

⁸ See for a detailed description of the research design of this newspaper study *[Koopmans, 2002 #521]*.

⁹ The predominance of news media websites was most pronounced in the UK (75%) and least so in France (26%). This contrast is linked to the fact that these are also the countries where state and party actors are respectively least (UK, 8%), and most prominent (F, 42%) among the website owners that we found in our searches. Cross-country differences for the remaining two actor types were less important.

¹⁰ All data in Tables 1 and 2 were weighted by country and by issue in such a way that all seven countries and all seven issues contributed equally to the overall results.

¹¹ This hierarchy of visibility is found in a very similar way in all seven countries. Moreover, in all countries the distribution is more skewed in favour of state and party actors among the dependently than among the autonomously visible claims. The main findings are also reproduced if we compare across the seven issue fields. State actors and political parties are the predominant online claim makers in all issue fields (between 77% in troop deployment and 47% in pensions and retirement). Socio-economic interest groups are less important in immigration, troop deployment, and European integration (less than 10% in each of these fields), and most prominent in pensions and retirement (25%). NGO's, social movements and other civil society organizations achieve a substantial level of visibility only in the immigration and education fields, where they are responsible for 27% and 26%, respectively of all online claims.

¹² These differences between the online and offline public spheres are again very stable across countries. The only significant exception is that the share of NGO's etc. is everywhere higher online than offline, except in the Netherlands, where it is the reverse.

¹³ These results are relatively similar across countries. The share of own national websites is however a bit lower in France (59%) and the UK (69%) than in the other countries. This is related to the fact that more foreign or supranational websites offer information in English and French than in the other languages. As a result our searches in English and French landed somewhat more often on a website outside France and the UK.

¹⁴ While online and offline results are similar in all countries, there is some variation. Germany, Spain, and Italy display the same pattern as the cross-national average results, namely very little difference between the geopolitical scopes of actors in the online and offline public spheres. In Switzerland and the Netherlands, own national actors are actually more predominant online than offline. In the United Kingdom and in France it is the other way around, and it is the

newspapers that have a stronger national focus than the online public sphere.

¹⁵ This number is slightly lower than $7 \times 134 + 2 \times 70$ because some of the selected actors did not have a website, or because some actor types do not exist in some countries.

¹⁶ Although computer-assisted measurements have significant advantages compared to human-based data collection, a few problems need to be mentioned here. First, there are slight differences in the operating procedures of web-crawlers, which implies that their results will not be exactly identical (Park/Thelwall 2003). Further, web-crawlers are not able to identify hyperlinks that are programmed in certain formats, such as JavaScript. However, we checked whether there was any association between the use of such formats and the type of actor, or the geopolitical scope of the actor, and found no such connection. Therefore, we can conclude that we may have missed some programmed in problematic formats, but that such omissions are distributed randomly across our sample and therefore do not affect the direction of our results.

¹⁷ Xenu's Link Sleuth™ can be downloaded for free at "<http://snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>". The programme is designed to check websites for broken hyperlinks in order to enable webmasters to maintain their websites easily. Although the actual purpose of the programme is not a scientific one, we were able to use it for our objectives. In order to find broken hyperlinks, XENU searches the whole website and compiles a list of all hyperlinks available, internal hyperlinks as well as external hyperlinks.

¹⁸ Several hyperlinks from one website to the same other website were counted only once.

¹⁹ The density of networks depends on their size, which makes the comparison of density across networks of different size problematic. In general, density tends to decrease with an increasing network size, since the number of logically possible relationships in a square network grows exponentially as the number of actors increases linearly. Our analysis is however not affected by this problem, because the numbers of cases in each country are (almost) equal by design.

²⁰ Because of rounding errors, the "To" and "From" figures are not exactly the same when averaged across the seven countries.

²¹ While these categories are self-explanatory on the national level, the reader may wonder what is meant by these actor types on the European and extra-European supranational levels. Supranational state and party actors include executive and judicial organs of the EU (e.g., the European Commission or the Committee of the Regions), the UN (e.g., the FAO or the International Court of Justice), and other supranational organizations (e.g., the IMF), as well as supranational party federations (e.g., the Socialist International or the European People's Party). Supranational civil society organizations in our sample include, among many others, Attac International, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, the World Council of Churches, the European Network Against Racism, and the Association of European

Chambers of Commerce and Industry. A few examples of supranational media included in our sample are Arte, the International Herald Tribune, Euronews, Financial Times Europe, and CNN.

²² Of course this is true only in the aggregate. There may be important variation in the relevance criteria of individual web users and organizations that are active on the Internet. What matters is that on average these relevance criteria resemble those of the offline mass media.

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Chapter 8

How domestic are European elections?

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The topic addressed in this paper is the degree of Europeanness of the European Parliamentary (EP) elections. While these are *European* (in the sense of EU wide) elections, previous research has emphasized the *domestic* orientation of the elections. In this paper we assess the Europeanness of the elections through a systematic content analysis of the news media coverage of the 2004 EP elections in all 25 EU countries.

The domestic foundation of the EP elections has contributed to observations about a lack of a European public sphere. It has been argued that the development of European democracy depends on the existence of a European public sphere which entails a common public debate carried out through a common European news agenda (Schlesinger, 1995; 1999), ideally in a European media system (Grimm 1995; 2004). This ‘strict’ conceptualization has been widely criticized as idealized (e.g., Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; van der Steeg, 2002). Instead, several scholars have formulated minimal criteria for a European public sphere. These include synchronous media coverage in different countries and shared points of reference, expressed in a transnational community of communication in which “speakers and listeners recognize each other as legitimate participants in a common

discourse that frames the particular issues as common European problems” (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003, p. 21).

At the very least, a European public sphere can reflect national media reporting on the same topic using common sources, including EU sources and sources from other EU countries. A European public sphere can also be reflected in recognition of non-domestic and European considerations in relation to issues that transcend national boundaries (Semetko, de Vreese & Peter, 2000). These indicators have been classified as examples of horizontal and vertical Europeanization respectively (Koopmans & Erbe 2004). A discussion of European issues amongst a set of EU actors in the media is important to the development of a European public sphere, or Europeanized national spheres, which will sustain and further develop democracy in the European Union. The elections for the EP arguably provide an important indicator and benchmark for the state of affairs on EU democracy and European public sphere building. With the media providing a space for public debate, visibility of EU sources and actors is a key indicator of the vitality of a ‘European’ debate.

European and domestic foci in the news

Following the first 1979 elections for the EP, it was concluded that in most countries the news was predominantly Europe-oriented (Siune, 1983: 235–6), although in quite a few countries a strong “domestic pull” exerted itself. However, as the ‘novelty’ aspect of European elections wore off, a stronger emphasis on domestic matters was to be expected. Contrary to this expectation, one could argue that the increasing amount of autonomy and legislative power that has been transferred since 1979 from the member states to ‘Brussels’ should lead to a stronger presentation of the European aspects of the elections. A study of the 1989 elections, however, found that most of the coverage of the European elections was domestic in nature with only a little reference to the European dimensions of the issues in question (Leroy and Siune, 1994).

Investigations of the Europeanness of the elections may focus on several criteria: visibility of the elections in general, topics, actors and sources, and the location of reporting or the geographical focus of the coverage. Visibility of the elections is a first and basic criterion since information about key democratic moments such as elections in the news is a pre-requisite for enhancing public awareness and possible engagement in EU politics. Moreover, the EU, faced with challenges of legitimacy and unclear structures for political accountability, is dependent upon political communications in general and media coverage in particular to reach its citizens and provide the information basis from which legitimacy may grow.

In addition to the visibility of the elections in the news, the presence of political personalities and actors at the EU level (such as candidates for the EP, members of the commission and EU institutions) is a necessary condition for the functioning of political representation in a democracy (De Vreese, 2002), which would allow for issue debate/campaigning on an EU rather than national level. The visibility and identification of potential *representatives* is a condition for a healthy democratic process. One of the features of the democratic deficit is that European parliamentary elections are contested by national parties which clash over national or domestic cleavages and not over European issues. The second order theory of EP elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980) posits that EP elections take a secondary role to national politics and are largely contested over national not EU issues. Looking at actors in the news can therefore give us an assessment of whether the news covers *European* elections as a contest between either national or between European actors.

Several studies have investigated the visibility of actors in *national* election campaigns (e.g., Semetko and Schönbach, 1994; Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch and Weaver, 1991; van Praag and Brants, 2000). However, we have only scant knowledge about the representation of the EU in the news. Analyses of the 1999 EP elections suggest that EU actors were much less visible than national actors (De Vreese, Lauf, and Peter, 2005a) and this was particularly so in countries that were long-standing members of the EU

(Peter, Lauf, and Semetko, 2004). This pattern makes it relevant to assess, in the light of the May 2004 enlargement, whether EU actors were evident in the news in the enlarged and 'new' Europe, as the findings of the 1979 study would suggest (Siune 1983). A final indicator of the domestic vs. European nature of the election coverage is the location of the news. International news tends to be made relevant to audiences by taking on a domestic angle (e.g., Clausen, 2004) and this has also been found to be true in the case of news about issues of European integration (de Vreese, 2003).

European news, European publics? Media and public opinion

Important links have been established between media coverage of the EU and public perceptions of EU legitimacy, mass support and citizen engagement in elections. Greater visibility of European campaigns, for example, is related to higher turnout in European Parliamentary Elections (Banducci and Semetko, 2003, 2004). Greater visibility of EU news is related to knowledge gains about the EU (De Vreese and Boomgaarden, 2005), and a greater visibility of pro-EU actors tends to positively influence support for EU membership (Banducci, Karp and Lauf, 2002).

In this present study we make a tentative attempt to link the Europeanness of the news coverage of the EP elections to citizens' satisfaction with EU democracy. If the coverage of the EP elections focuses on European (rather than domestic) aspects this may convey to citizens the notion that EU institutions are *active* and handling political actors. This may in turn be related to satisfaction with EU democracy if the EU institutions and actors are represented in the news and if European perspectives are included.

Goal of the study

Our key intent in this study is not to report on how the media shape public perceptions, but to give a *detailed examination of the Europeanness of the media content across the 25 EU member states* in order to better assess the possible

role the media can play in enhancing EU democracy and shaping public attitudes. Structured knowledge about the media's coverage of European elections is only emerging and we have virtually no knowledge about the way in which news media in the new member countries approach European political and economic topics. Studies of the European public sphere have focused on quality newspapers or magazines and on specific countries (e.g., van de Steeg (2002); Meyer (2005); Peters, Sifft, Wimmel, Brüggemann & Kleinen-von Konigslow (2005); Trenz (2004)). Our study contributes to the debate on the democratic deficit, the media and EU public opinion by providing analysis of media content across print and television in the all current member states.

We report the findings of an EU-wide study of the news media's coverage of the 2004 EP elections. In this study we specifically investigate the extent to which national news media represented the elections as a national or European event. This is addressed in a comparative fashion. In addition to cross-national comparisons, we distinguish differences between media and groups of countries. We compare the coverage of television and newspapers, public and private networks, and broadsheets and tabloids. Further, we compare the coverage in the 'old' EU-15 countries with the new ten member states. The data reported may be a useful resource for researchers examining public opinion, elections and media influences in the context of the European Union. The study reports characteristics of coverage across all member states using standardized measures. The results reported in the paper thus provide values on important contextual indicators. While the results and analysis remain largely descriptive, other researchers can incorporate these measures into their own research on the European Union and EP elections.

Method

To investigate the 'europeanness' of the news coverage of the 2004 EP elections, we carried out a media content analysis in the 25 member states of

the EU.¹ We included in our study two television news programmes and three national newspapers from each country, as these media are consistently listed as the most important sources of information about the EU for citizens in Europe (Eurobarometer 54–62) and because television and newspapers were the two most widely cited sources through which citizens were exposed to information about the 2004 elections (Eurobarometer 162). In each country the two most widely watched public and private television newscasts were analyzed. We further include two ‘quality’/ broadsheet and one tabloid newspaper from each country. These media outlets were selected to provide a comprehensive picture of the news coverage in each country. For reasons of comparability between media we focus on the final two weeks of news coverage.

For television, our sample consists of 49 television news shows and we sampled 74 different newspapers.² An overview of missing days (due to technical problems) is provided in the Appendix. For television, we coded the entire news program of each station. Given that the length of news programs in Europe varies (from 15–60 minutes) and given that the number of news stories per program differs too, we base the analyses of visibility of the campaign on length of the individual news story as part of the total length of each news program. Our unit of coding and of analysis is the individual news story, defined as a change of topic, typically introduced by the anchor. In total, 9,339 television news stories were analyzed. For newspapers, we also used the individual news story as the unit of analysis. We coded all stories on the front page of the newspaper, which resulted in 8,280 stories coded.

Coding procedure

With supervision and in close cooperation with the principal investigators, coding was conducted by trained and supervised coders. Coder trainers were trained with the codebook for the study developed by the principal investigators. Individual coders were recruited based on their language capabilities. They completed initial training and only when their

coding was of sufficient quality (assessed by coder tests that were matched with master codes completed by the coder trainer team), did actual coding commence. Given the challenges in cross-national content analysis (see Peter & Lauf, 2002), coders were monitored and intra- and intercoder-reliability tests were conducted. The results of these tests were satisfactory (between 80-100% agreement on the measures used for this study).

Measures

We are interested in the ‘europeanness’ of the coverage of the European election campaign. To contextualize the indicators of ‘europeanness’, we first present the *visibility of campaign news* in the different countries. Each news story was coded for *topic*. News about European elections was designated a range of codes that enables us to identify when a story was about the EP elections.

To tap the domestic versus European nature of the story, we relied on the coding of *actors* in the news. An actor is defined as a person (e.g. MEP candidate), groups of persons (e.g. political party), institution (e.g. national parliament) or other organization (e.g. Red Cross) that is featured in the story. Up to 20 actors per news story were coded. Coders first identified *main actor* (in terms of importance in the coverage) and then *other actors* in order of appearance. Actors have been classified as *EU actors*, *domestic political actors* or *other actors*. EU actors include MEP candidates as well as the EU president and EU commission members and European institutions. Domestic political actors are members of the government, spokespersons for government agencies or members of opposition parties. This includes all members of the national parliaments. The category of ‘other actors’ includes journalists, celebrities, ordinary citizens and other actors that do not fall into the EU or domestic political actor categories.

Lastly, coders noted the *geographical focus* of the news story. This was defined as the place or country or institution where the news story was situated. We differentiate between stories located within the country where

the news is broadcast, within the European Union in general (or its institutions), in other EU countries and EU accession countries, in other European countries, in the United States or in Canada, and stories that placed in space, the internet or for which location is unidentifiable.

Data analysis

In our analyses of the visibility of campaign news as well as the geographical focus, we use the individual news story as the unit of analysis. In the analysis of the presence of different actors in the news, we rely on the coding of actors, which is the unit of analysis. For each election story, a maximum of 20 actors could be coded and across all news stories a total of 19,851 actors were coded.

In order to draw conclusions about the ‘europeanness’ of campaign coverage per country, we compute an index from the different indicators for ‘europeanness’ and the visibility of the coverage. We added up (1) the proportion of campaign stories with a geographical focus on the EU in general, (2) the proportion of campaign stories with geographical focus on other EU, European or EU accession countries, (3) the proportional visibility of EU actors as main and (4) the proportional visibility of EU actors as other actors. These values, divided by four, were then multiplied by the proportional visibility of campaign news in television and on newspaper front-pages (added and divided by two). The index was then standardized to range from 0 to 1.³

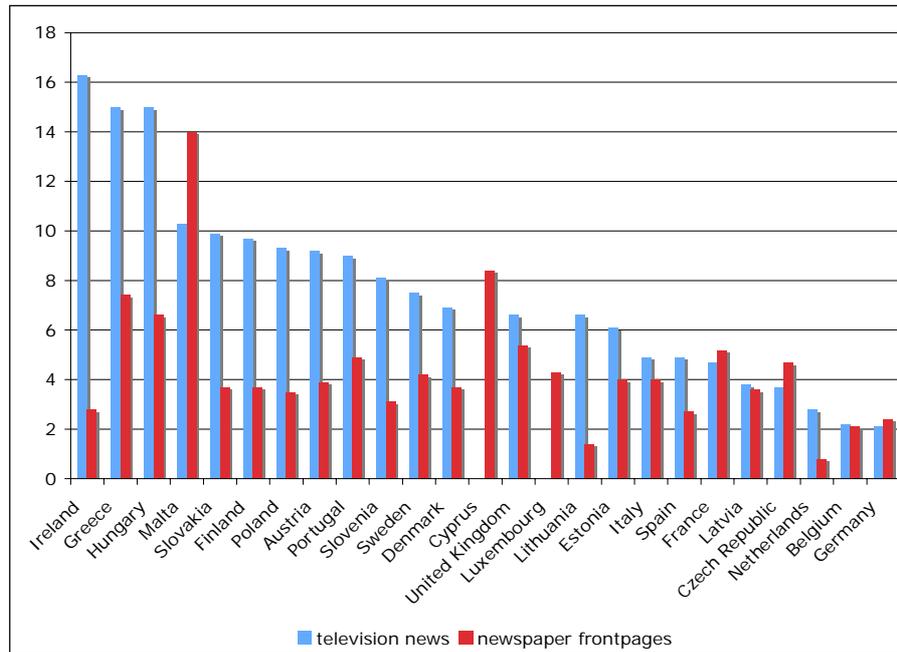
Survey data

To investigate whether there is a relationship between the ‘europeanness’ of the campaign coverage and public satisfaction with democracy in the European Union, we rely on survey data collected through the European Elections Studies project (see <http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net/> for details about the study, including question wording, sampling, and field dates in the different

countries). We include in this analysis the question asking respondents to express their level of satisfaction with EU democracy. We look at the relationship by means of correlation between the index of 'europeanness' and visibility of the elections in the media and the mean satisfaction aggregated on country level (n=23, Lithuania and Cyprus missing in survey data).

Results

We first turn to the visibility of European election campaign news in the 25 member states. The blue bars in Figure 1 illustrate visibility in television newscasts and the red bars visibility on newspaper front pages. We first of all see that there is not a strong correspondence between the visibility of the EP elections in the two media. Only in countries with a relative high or low visibility of the elections do we see a consistent pattern across television news and newspapers. High visibility on television was associated with high visibility in newspapers (Greece, Hungary, Malta) and vice versa (Netherlands, Belgium, Germany). The campaign was most visible on television in Ireland, Greece, and Hungary and most visible in newspapers in Malta, Cyprus, Greece, and Hungary. The campaign was least visible in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany (television and newspapers), and Lithuania (newspapers only). The bi-variate correlation between the visibility of EP election campaign news in television news and on newspaper front-pages on country level is $r = .374$, $n=25$, $p = .06$.

Figure 1: Visibility EPE campaign news by country

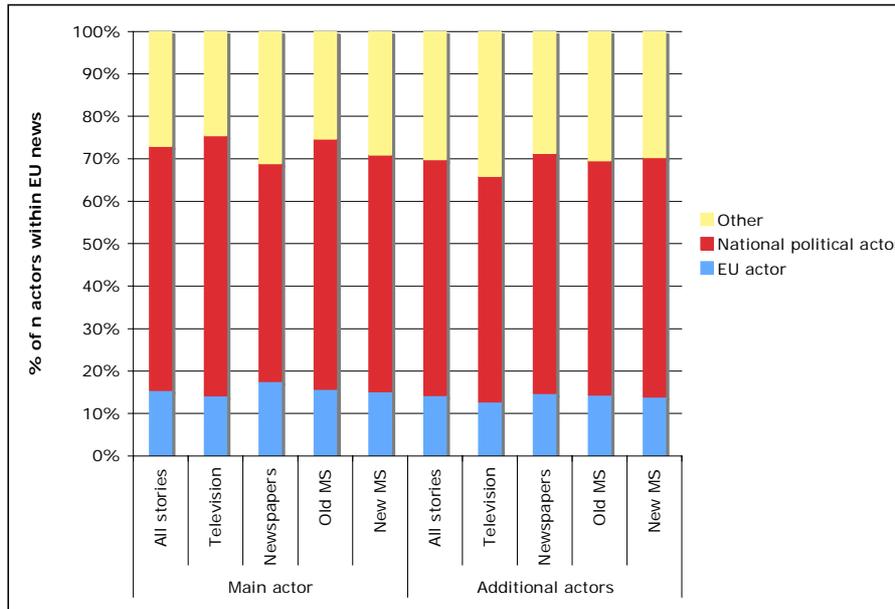
Note: Values are percentages of 1) sum of length of television news stories per country and 2) all newspaper front-page stories.

We also looked at the share of EP election news as part of all news mentioning the EU during the campaign. Overall EP election campaign news is about 80% of all news mentioning the EU during the campaign. However, this number differs greatly between the countries. Whereas in the UK or Ireland *all* news mentioning the EU was about the election campaign, in Denmark, for instance, the share of all EU-related news on television was 20% of all news in the period of analysis but only 6% was actually about the EP election. The bi-variate correlation between visibility of EP election campaign news and other EU news is -0.003 , indicating that media deal with the different issues quite autonomously.

We next turn to the analysis of actors in campaign news stories. Figure 2 shows a, by and large, modest representation of EU actors in European election campaign news. Considering all campaign stories, among the main actors about 16% were classified as EU actors, and among the additional actors

this was about 14%. The majority was made up of domestic political actors, with a share of more than 50% of all actors. Differences between medium type and old and new member states were limited. The visibility of EU actors was slightly higher in newspapers than in television and in the old member states.

Figure 2: Visibility EU and other actors within EU news stories by medium type and old versus new member states.

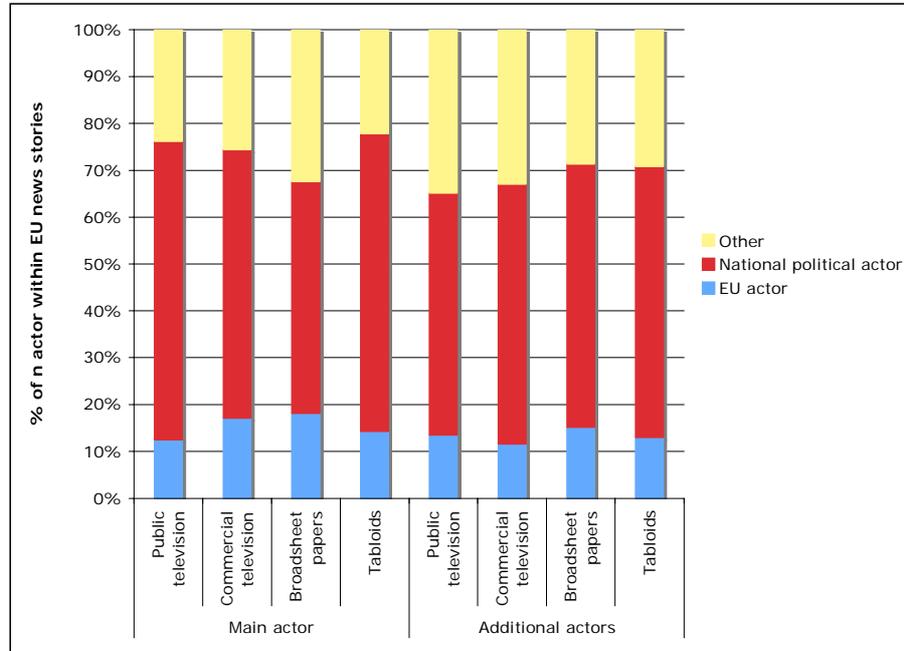


Note: Basis for percentages is number of actors appearing in EU news stories. Up to 20 actors could be coded per story. All stories: main actor n=1256, additional actors n=18033. Television: main actor n=773, additional actors n= 4920. Newspapers: main actor n=483, additional actors n=13113. Old MS: main actor n=689, additional actors n= 11894. New MS: main actor n=567, additional actors n= 6139.

Looking at actor visibility in the different types of news outlets as illustrated in Figure 3 again reveals only minor differences between quality press and tabloids and between public and commercial television newscasts. The results for newspapers show that visibility of EU actors was generally higher in the quality press than in tabloid papers. For television the pattern is

less clear, with among the main actors a higher share of EU actors on commercial television news, and among additional actors a higher share on public television.

Figure 3: Visibility EU and other actors within EU news stories by outlet type.

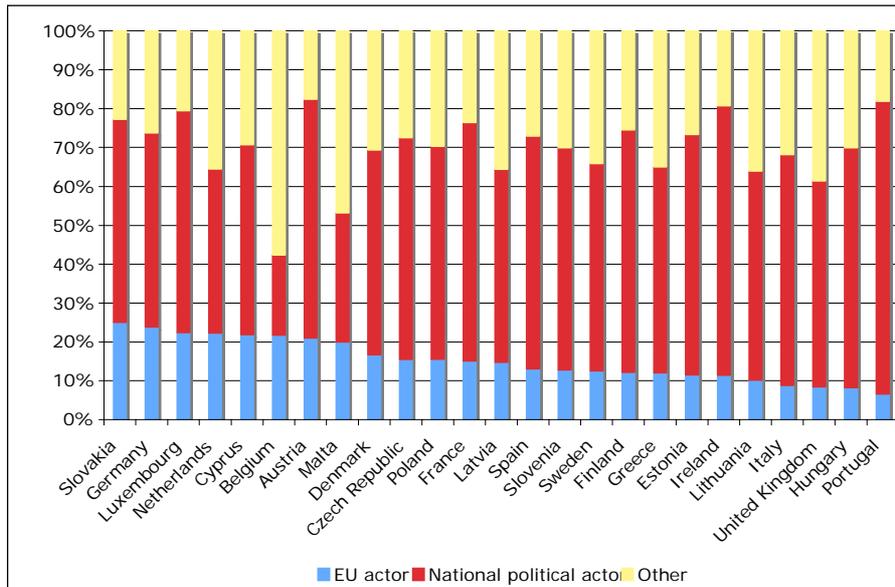


Note: Basis for percentages is number of actors appearing in EU news stories. Up to 20 actors could be coded per story. Public television: main actor $n=480$, additional actors $n=3016$. Commercial television: main actor $n=293$, additional actors $n=1904$. Broadsheet papers: main actor $n=420$, additional actors $n=10636$. Tabloids: main actor $n=63$, additional actors $n=2477$.

Country comparisons of actor visibility (Figure 4, based on the results for the additional actors) showed that in seven countries EU actors made up a share of more than 20% of coded actors (Slovakia, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Cyprus, Belgium and Austria). By contrast, in five countries the proportion of EU actors was below 10% (Portugal, Hungary, UK, Italy, and Lithuania). Looking at the visibility of main and additional actors, we found that EU actors were most prominent in EU campaign stories in the

Netherlands, Slovakia, Germany, and Luxembourg. By contrast, the lowest EU actor visibility was found in the United Kingdom, Portugal, Hungary, and Ireland. The between country differences (variation) were more pronounced for main than for additional actors (i.e. for the former the range was from around 4% to more than 43%, whereas for the latter the range was between 7% and almost 25%).

Figure 4: Additional actors in EU news stories by country.

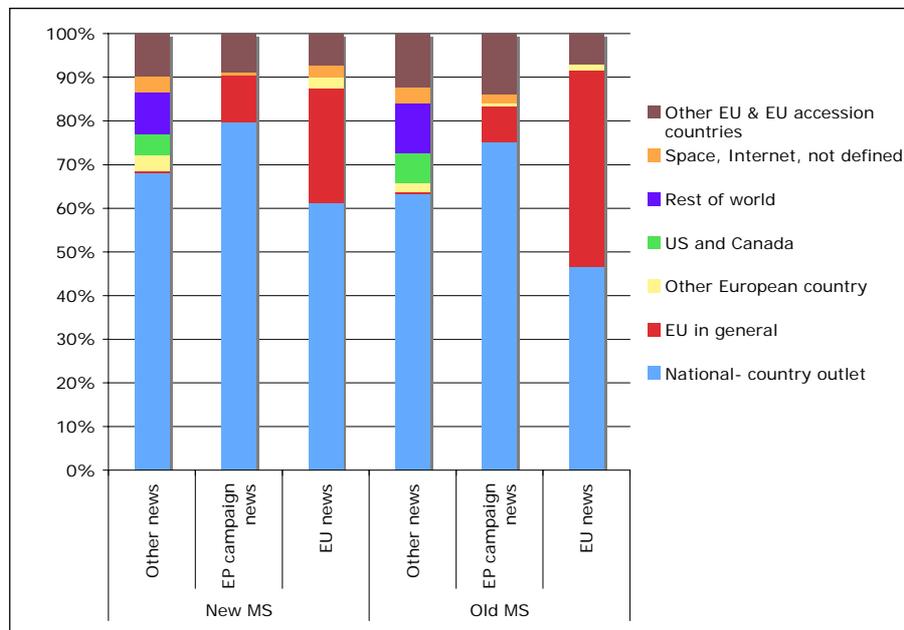


Note: Basis for percentages is number of additional actors coded in EU news stories. Up to 20 additional actors per EU news story, n=18033.

Next, we look at the geographical focus of the news by comparing the location of European election campaign stories, of other EU news stories and of other news stories. Generally, the biggest share of news coverage focuses on the country of the news outlet. The comparison between EU news in general and EP election campaign news is especially telling. The broad pattern suggested by the results is that general EU news is located much more regularly “in the EU” compared to EP election campaign coverage, with between three and four times less stories set in the EU in general. Neither EU

news nor campaign stories are ever located in countries outside Europe. Inter-medium differences are very small. The national focus is almost as high in newspaper coverage of the campaign as in television news, at about 77%. In newspapers there is slightly more campaign coverage located in the EU generally, however, television has slightly more coverage set in other EU or EU accession countries. Figure 5 shows that general EU news is much more commonly located in the EU in general, as opposed to campaign news, where the EU-focus is much less pronounced. Furthermore, the results suggest that coverage in the old member states is slightly less nationally focused and slightly more European than in the ten new countries.

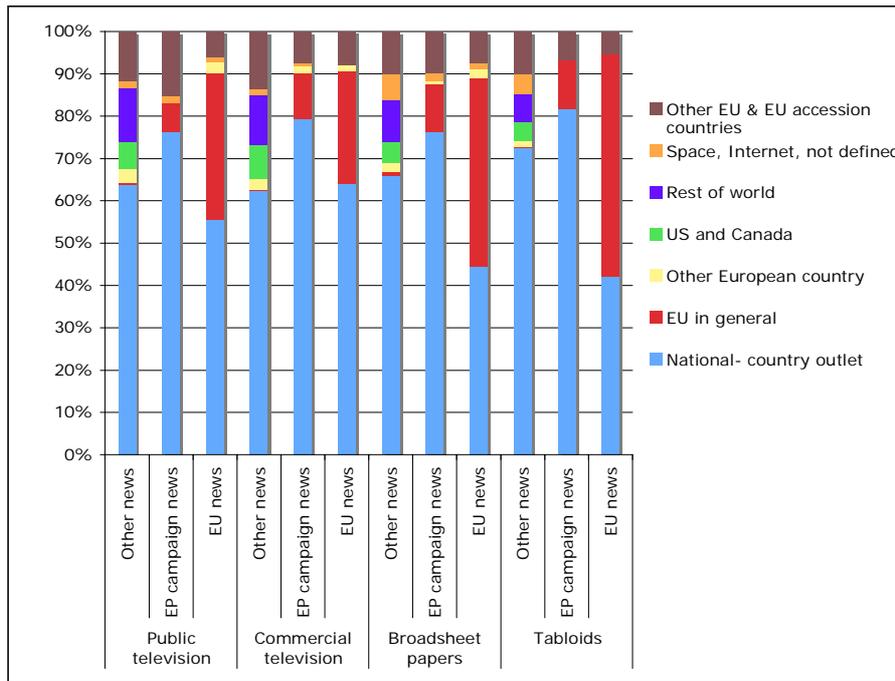
Figure 5: Geographical focus of EP campaign, EU, and other news by old versus new member states.



Note: Basis for percentages is number of news stories coded. New MS: n=6679, other news n=6112, EP campaign news n=456, EU news n=111. Old MS: n=10940, other news n=10251, EP campaign news n=490, EU news n=199.

Figure 6 illustrates intra-medium differences in terms of geographical focus of the coverage. Most interesting here is that both the public broadcasting news and the broadsheet press are more European in their coverage than are their sensationalist and commercial counterparts.

Figure 6: Geographical focus of EP campaign, EU, and other news by type of news outlet.

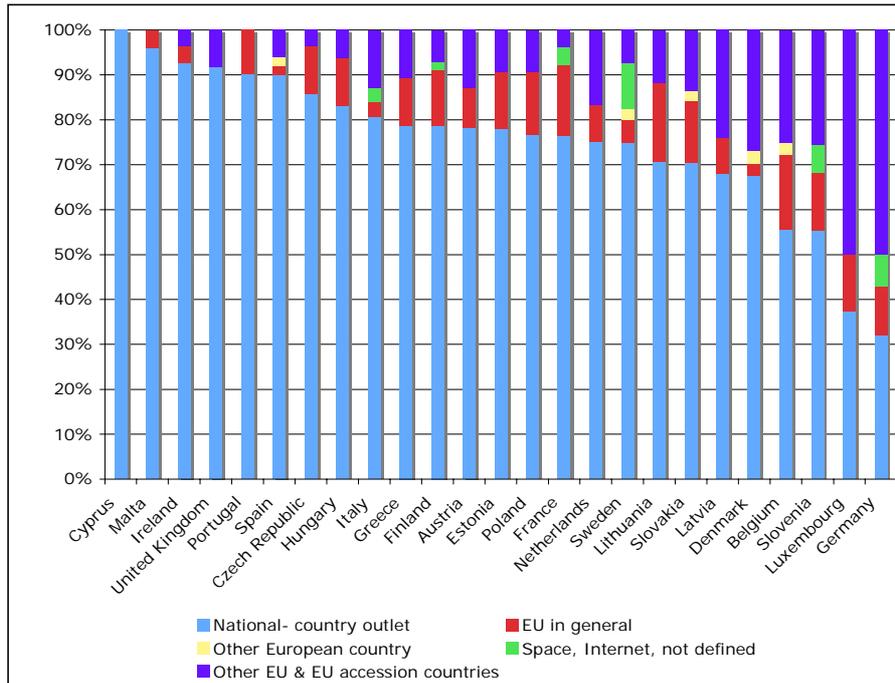


Note: Basis for percentages is number of news stories coded. Public television: n=4824, other news n=4344, EP campaign news n=399, EU news n=81. Commercial television: n=4515, other news n=4222, EP campaign news n=218, EU news n=75. Broadsheet newspapers: n=6637, other news n=6217, EP campaign news n=285, EU news n=135. Tabloid newspapers: n=1643, other news n=1580, EP campaign news n=44, EU news n=19.

Again, it is interesting to consider between-country differences concerning the geographical setting of the news. Figure 7 displays the geographical focus of EP election campaign news in the 25 EU member states. Again we see great cross-national variation. News in Cypriot media was entirely set in Cyprus and therefore least European in terms of

geographical focus. The picture is similar in Malta, Ireland, the UK and Portugal, where more than 90% of the campaign coverage has a national focus. At the other end, only in Luxembourg and Germany does the national focus drop to less than 50%. Belgium and Lithuania are also at the lower end, with national focused coverage below 60%.

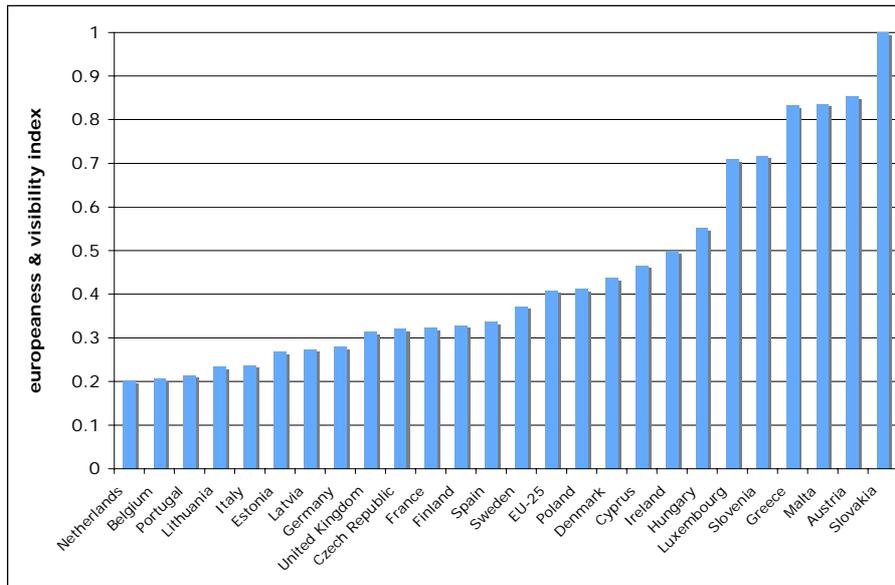
Figure 7: Geographical focus of EP campaign news stories by country.



Note: Basis is the number of EP campaign news stories, n=946.

In an attempt to offer a summarizing view of the degree of Europeanness of the media coverage of the EP elections across the EU, we created an index of the measures shown above. Figure 8 displays the country score on the index (standardized to range from 0 to 1). The least European news was found in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal. The most European news was found in Malta, Austria and Slovakia.

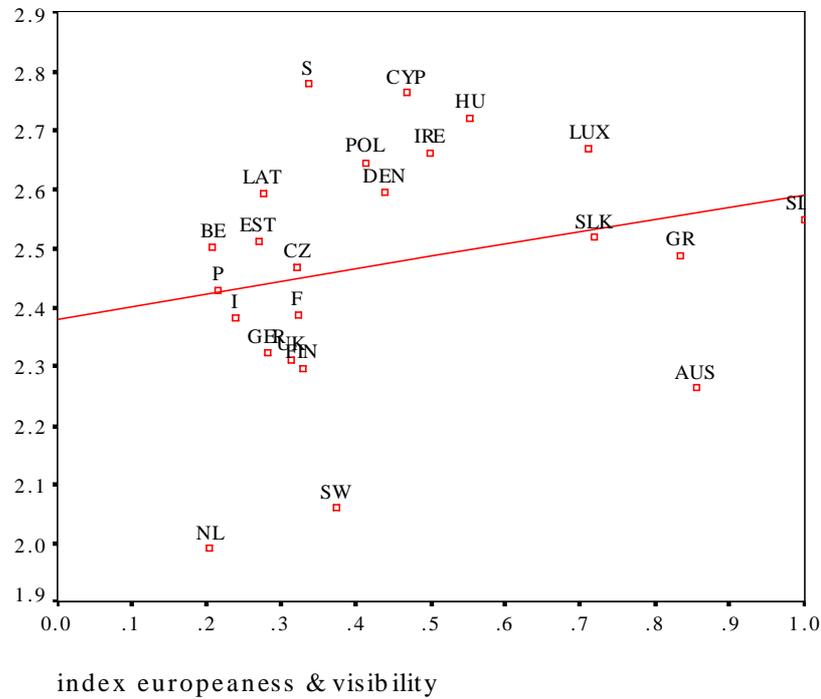
Figure 8: ‘Europeanness’ and visibility index by country



Note: Index of europeanness and visibility was created by adding up proportion of EPE campaign stories with geographical focus on the EU in general, proportion of EPE campaign stories with geographical focus on other EU, European or EU accession countries, proportional visibility of EU actors as main and of EU actors as other actors and multiplying by visibility of EPE campaign in television and on newspaper front-pages. Index standardized to range from 0 to 1.

Finally, we turn to the possible relation between citizens’ satisfaction with EU democracy and ‘europeanness’ and visibility of the news coverage. Figure 9 shows a scatterplot of mean satisfaction and the ‘europeanness’ index. The most and the least ‘European’ coverage was shown in Figure 8. Figure 9 also shows satisfaction with EU democracy. This was highest in Spain, closely followed by Cyprus, and contrasts with the Netherlands and Sweden, where people were least satisfied with EU democracy. In general, we see only a rather weak positive relation between the two measures on a country level of aggregation. The bi-variate correlation between mean satisfaction and the index is .238 and not statistically significant (n=23).

Figure 9: Scatterplot of mean satisfaction with democracy in EU and index of Europeanness and Visibility of EPE campaign news.



Note: Mean satisfaction with EU democracy on 5-point scale, 1=not satisfied – 5=satisfied. For computation of Europeanness-index see note of previous figure.

Discussion

How domestic are European elections? Given the considerable cross-national variation the answer to this question is not really straight forward. Citizens in Germany and the Netherlands, for example, were offered only limited amounts of news but with a relative high proportion of EU actors in the news. Citizens in Slovakia were treated to a relatively high amount of news and a strong European focus. Citizens in Britain were offered an average amount of news but virtually no European perspective or actors. Overall,

news about the EP election is still more domestic than European. Most actors in the news are domestic political actors and the largest share of the news is reported from the home turf.

At first glance, our study dovetails into previous research with respect to the domestic focus of news about EP elections (e.g., de Vreese et al., 2005a). However, though the coverage is still focused on domestic actors, there was an overall increase in the proportion of EU actors in 2004 compared to 1999. In some countries (e.g., Malta, Portugal and France), the proportion of EU actors reached or exceeded the proportion of domestic political actors. Moreover, countries that show a higher proportion of main protagonists that are EU actors also show a high proportion of other actors that are from the EU. Therefore, while we see that EP election news coverage still predominantly features domestic political actors, there has been an increase in attention paid to EU actors. Only in the Netherlands were there less EU actors featured in the campaign coverage in 2004. Almost no change was found in Austria and Spain. Portugal sticks out, since here the visibility of EU actors increased from less than 2% in 1999 to almost 50% in 2004 (de Vreese et al., 2005b).

In accordance with our expectations about the increased importance of the EP we found that in 2004 in the old countries, the visibility of EU actors had gone up (in most countries) compared to 1999 (see De Vreese et al., 2005b). Contrary to expectations based on previous research (Peter et al., 2004), we did not find a higher level of EU actors in new member states. Our findings add to extant knowledge that although news seems to include fewer EU actors in countries that have experienced several EP elections, this is not a general pattern.

Looking at where the news was taking place, we find that citizens in countries such as Cyprus, Malta, Ireland, the UK and Portugal were only exposed to non-domestic EP election news in less than 10% of the news. In Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Lithuania citizens are exposed to news from other European countries and from the EU level in about half of the

stories about the EP elections. Given the absence of a pan-European media system, European issues must be on national media's agenda if they are to reach citizens across the EU. With respect to synchronous media coverage in different countries it is clear that the EP elections represent one of the few occasions on which one topic is covered across countries (Grimm, 2004). That said the content of the EP coverage on national news agendas is highly divergent. EU sources are present in the news across the different EU countries, but their presence varies substantially, and in certain countries news only offers a non-domestic perspective occasionally. There are also substantial differences within countries. Broadsheet newspapers and public television news reported more news from a non-domestic location than did their tabloid and private television news counterparts.

Our study spans across the 25 countries in the EU. The tradeoff between a 25-country study that offers a view of Europeanness in breadth is the limited depth that the study offers. We cannot assess whether EU actors, when included in the news in several countries, were addressing the same topic and thereby contributing to a media coverage of the EP elections that meets the criteria for synchronous media coverage and shared European problem definitions (as suggested by Risse and van de Steeg (2003)). The elections for the EP arguably provide an important indicator and benchmark for the state of affairs on EU democracy and European public sphere building. If institutionalized and predefined pivotal democratic events cannot trigger European-driven news, especially in a situation of increased Parliamentary competence and in the wake of the largest ever EU enlargement, it is hard to suggest when we might find such coverage. Therefore the relative increase in EU actors compared to 1999 may offer some perspective and may provide optimism for proponents of Europeanized public spheres. Still the question of adequacy is pertinent. As has been argued with respect to the volume of news devoted to EU affairs (e.g., Norris, 2000; de Vreese et al., 2001), it is equally hard to define the adequate amount of Europeanness in news.

As the next steps, we propose a more systematic assessment of the cross-national variation in the Europeanness of the media content. As suggested by Peter et al (2004) several system level and contextual factors may affect the degree to which EU actors are included in the news and to which that news is presented in a European perspective. Finally, we also aim to elaborate on the relationship between media content and citizen satisfaction with EU democracy. In this paper we present an initial, aggregate-level analysis of this relationship. No strong pattern emerged from this analysis, but when it is extended to the individual level, we may find, when controlling for other factors, that exposure to specific news content, with a high proportion of news with a European perspective, is affecting citizens' perceptions of and satisfaction with EU democracy.

Notes

¹ The study was funded by research grants from the Dutch Science Foundation [NWO], The Halle Foundation, the CIVICACTIVE Research Program, and Amsterdam, Twente and Emory University to the principal investigators Susan Banducci, Claes de Vreese and Holli Semetko.

² Television: in Belgium two French and two Flemish stations were included; in Finland and Germany four newscasts; in Spain and Poland three newscasts; in Austria, Greece, and Ireland one newscast). We had to exclude Cyprus (for technical reasons) and Luxembourg (for linguistic reasons). Newspapers: in Belgium, three French and three Flemish newspapers were included; in Luxembourg, Malta, Lithuania, and Cyprus, only two newspapers were included because of availability.

³ Since visibility values are missing for television coverage in Cyprus and Luxembourg, for these two countries we used the mean visibility of all countries.

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Appendix

Outlets and missing days

Country	Outlet	Missing
Austria	ORF, Kronen Zeitung, Der Standard, Die Presse	None
Belgium/Flemish	Het Journaal (VRT), VTM Nieuws, Het laatste nieuws, de Morgen	None
Belgium/French	JT Meteo, Le Journal, La Dernière Heure, La Libre, La Soir	None
Czech	TV Ceska, TV Nova, Mlada Fronta, Pravo, Blesk	None
Cyprus	No television, NP: Cyprus Mail, Politis	None
Denmark	TV-Avisen (DR TV1), TV2 Nyhederne, JyllandsPosten, Politiken, EkstraBladet	TV Avisen June 1 / TV2 Nyhederne June 5
Estonia	ETV, Kanal 2, Postimees, SL Ohtuleht, Eesti Paevaleht	Kanal 2 June 3, 12
Finland	Yle, MTV3, Ruutu4, Helsingin Sanomat, Aamulehti, Hufvudstadbladet	Yle June 1 / MTV3 June 4, 6, 7 / Ruutu4 June 1.2
France	LaJournal (TF1), Le Journal (F2), Le Monde, Liberation, Le Figaro	F2 June 5
Germany	ARD Tagesschau, ZDF Heute, RTL Aktuell, Sat1, Bild, FAZ, SZ	None
Greece	ET1 news, Ta Nea, Kathimerine, Eleftheortypia	ET1 June 10, 13
Hungary	MTV, TV2, Magyar Nemzet, Nepszabadsag, Blikk	Magyar June 1
Ireland	RTE1, Irish Independent, Irish Times, The Star	None
Italy	TG1, TG5, Il corriere della sera, La Repubblica, Il Giornale	TG5 June 1 / La Repubblica June 6/ Il Giornale June 7
Latvia	Lat TV, LATvija Televizija, Diena, Rigas Balss, Neatkariga	LatTV, Latvia Televizija June 11
Lithuania	LRTV, TV3, Lietuvos rytas, Respublika	LRTV June 10 / TV3 June 4-7, 11
Luxembourg	No television, Luxemburger Wort, Tagesblatt	LW June 2, 3 / Tagesblatt June 1, 3
Malta	TVM, Super1, The Times, Malta Independent	Super 1 June 2
Netherlands	NOS Journaal, RTL nieuws, De Telegraaf, NRC, de Volkskrant	None
Poland	TVPSA, POLSAT, Rzeczpospolita, Gazeta Wyborcza, Super Express	None
Portugal	RTP1, SIC, Public, Correio de Manha,	RTP1 June 1
Slovenia	RTV, POPTV, Slovenske Novice, Delo, Dnevnik	None
Slovakia	STV1, Markiza, Novy Cas, Daily Pravda, Sme/Praca	None
Spain	TVE, Antenna3, Tele5, El Pais, ABC, El Mundo	TVE June 1, 2, 6, 8, 9
Sweden	Rapport TV2, Nyheterne (TV4), Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Goteborgsposten	TV4 June 4-13, GP June 12
UK	BBC1, ITV, The Sun, Daily Telegraph, The Guardian	None

Chapter 9

When the people come in: Constitution-making and the belated politicisation of the European Union

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Abstract

The EU has over decades gradually developed a material constitutional arrangement, with very limited public input. Since 2001, the Laeken constitutional process which produced the *Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe* has become greatly politicized. This automatically directs our attention to the public sphere as a core requirement of any modern constitutional system. More specifically, this paper will analyse the structural determinants of mediation and public communication between European constitution-makers and their diversified constituencies. The aim is to relate the negative referendum results or what we refer to as ratification failure to the European public sphere deficit. Three possible explanations for ratification failure will be discerned and discussed: The first posits that constitution-making, in order to be successful, *must rely on* pre-existing resources of common trust, solidarity and understanding, which are constitutive of a shared public sphere. The second explanation takes as its point of departure that a process of constitution-making has a catalytic function that in turn *can constitute* a shared public sphere. The third explanation attributes ratification failure to the

manner in which *mediatisation* affects public communication in the EU. As will be argued, the contingent character of mediatisation contains particular risks for the European constitutional endeavour which merits further research attention.

Introduction

When the heads of state and government gathered in October 2004 for a lavish ceremony in the Renaissance splendour of the Campidoglio hall in Rome to put their signature on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, often touted as the first Constitution for a united Europe, this was widely trumpeted as a major milestone in European history. The aristocratic setting was chosen in an effort to create a symbolic repetition of the founding act of the European Communities. The ceremony was meant to re-affirm the principles of European integration – a process that could now, with this act, also draw on the powerful vocabulary of constitutionalism as the key to Europeans' normative-identitarian self-understanding.

The October 2004 gathering, however, is different from its forebear. Now, such an epochal achievement can no longer be concluded merely through the signatures of Europe's 'enlightened' rulers. Today, the constitution-signers also have to confront the people's choice. In October 2004 they seemed well on track: all major political parties supported their project; and major NGOs and representatives from civil society expressed their overall satisfaction by acknowledging that the Constitutional Treaty would improve the social and political rights of European citizens and enhance civic participation in EU- decision-making¹ Last, but not least, the confidence in the success of the constitutional adventure was backed by Eurobarometer opinion polls indicating that a substantial majority of the populations in all the Member States (with the exception of the UK) were in favour of the Constitutional Treaty.²

Nevertheless, subsequent popular responses brought to light what is now referred to as a deep gulf between citizens and elites. Some seven months later French and Dutch citizens, in their respective national referenda, rejected the Constitutional Treaty by wide margins, and impressed upon the leaders that the ECT should effectively be consigned to the proverbial dustbin of history.

Why was the Constitutional Treaty rejected? In some quarters, it was taken for granted that people would approve of a constitutional text whose presumed effect would be to expand their rights and enable them to participate more effectively in the decision-making processes at the supra-national level. These participants and analysts were perplexed when they found that large portions of the peoples of Europe – maybe even a majority – did not take up the offer or simply did not care. One important way to improve our understanding of the reasons behind people's reactions is to look at the structural determinants of mediation and public communication between European constitution-makers and their diversified constituencies.

In this paper we relate the failure of European constitution-making to the 'European public sphere deficit'. Two possible explanations can be discerned from the state of the art of European public sphere research: The first posits that constitution-making, in order to be successful, must rely on pre-existing resources of common trust, solidarity and understanding, which are *constitutive* of a shared public sphere. The Union, predictably, does not have such; hence it lacks the trust and solidarity that a constitutional arrangement requires. The second explanation takes as its point of departure that a process of constitution-making which unfolds through public reasoning and debates can have a catalytic function that in turn can *constitute* a shared public sphere, which makes it possible for people across Europe to accept the Constitutional Treaty. From this perspective, the ECT was rejected because the process was *not* sufficiently catalytic.

Both explanations are normative in the sense that they attribute failure to lack of success of public communication in relation to a certain standard of

common understanding, public engagement and agreement, as well as in relation to certain procedural requirements. Ratification failure would thus provide further evidence of the non-existence or malfunctioning of the type of encompassing public sphere that the launching of a project of constitution-making is seen to require. In the absence of such an intermediary sphere, European elites would not be able to transmit the constitutional message, i.e. the qualities and merits that a European constitution entails for the people. While well-established national public spheres have rescue mechanisms and channels of transmission that help avoid such failures of public communication, the EU would be trapped in its own communicative insufficiencies – defects that cannot be easily overcome by the good-will of the participants – perhaps even in the somewhat unlikely event that such was in ample supply.

In the following pages we develop these two state of the art explanations in further detail and briefly assess their adequacy. As explanations of ratification failure we argue that the first is misleading and the second needs supplementing. In response to this, we propose a third possible explanation which is based on a configuration of the public sphere that speaks to the distinctive character of the EU. It attributes ratification failure to the manner in which mediatisation affects public communication in the EU. The contingent character of mediatisation carries with it three risks for EU constitution-making: the European constitutional message could be misunderstood; it might not reach its addressees; and it could be openly rejected by the electorate. In relation to this third explanation our main purpose is to provide suggestions for how the research on the public sphere dimension of the European constitutional endeavour could most usefully be framed so as to account for recent events.

A Union without a Public?

The first explanation for ratification failure stems from the widely-cited notion that the European Union has no public sphere. Habermas's prescient warning on the eve of the French and Dutch referenda to the effect that: "there is still no European public space, no transnational bundling of themes, no common discussion, each one of the votes takes place within the bounds of the individual country's public sphere" (Habermas in *Nouvel Observateur* on 7 May, 2005) appears to be borne out.³

The absence of a common European public sphere is usually seen as a systemic constraint, closely attributed to the character of the Union *qua polity*. As such, the lack of a European public sphere is likely to preclude *all* further attempts at developing a European constitution. Dieter Grimm has noted that the "Prospects for Europeanization of the communications system are absolutely non-existent. A Europeanised communications system ought not to be confused with increased reporting on European topics in the national media. These are directed at a national public and remain attached to national viewpoints and communication habits. Accordingly, they cannot create any European public or establish any European discourse." (Grimm 2004, 78-79)

Note that this claim rests on a particular understanding of the public sphere, that is, as a pre-political discursive community. For such a discursive community to exist, certain communicative presuppositions have to be in place. In the clearest form, such presuppositions also come with an explicit set of cultural supports. They are derived from a pre-political sense of community, where the community is embedded in a common language. The present European Union, of course, falls well short of this. It is probably the most linguistically diverse polity in the world and does not even have one agreed-upon working language (although English does appear to be gaining ascendancy).

Other analysts who attribute ratification failure to the absence of a public sphere do not share Grimm's pessimistic outlook as to the lack of future

prospects for a European public sphere. At stake is the role of cultural versus legal-institutional factors in creating the communal supports for a public sphere. Institutionalists argue that cultural diversity – even in linguistic terms – need not preclude the emergence of a public sphere. What they highlight is not diversity as such, but the Union’s undemocratic character in legal-institutional terms. The Union is often portrayed as a technocratic system of governance, which fosters juridification largely bereft of democratic control and oversight. These problems are amplified by the very scale and heterogeneity of the EU multilevel system, which also helps to sustain cultural pluralism and institutional heterogeneity. The ensuing Byzantine structure is seen to place strong *de facto* constraints on citizens’ participation and involvement. This helps spur opposition, frustration and disenchantment, which are vented at any possible occasion, and notably during national popular referenda. The Union’s structure, this argument runs, also sustains a strong national imprint on the debate on issues and questions that concern the European level.

Within this line of explanation, despite the fact that analysts work from different underlying conceptions of the character of the public sphere, such a difference may not matter much, as they do agree that the Union’s underdeveloped democratic character will serve as an effective brake on any viable public sphere development. This explanation is problematic in the sense that it implicitly denies the important *European* dimension to the ratification debate and more importantly how this dimension helped prompt rejection of the Constitutional Treaty.⁴

A depoliticised Union with weak catalytic functions?

The second explanation relates ratification failure to the *process* of constitution-making. It states that European constitution-making failed because it was not sufficiently developed to launch public disputes and debates that are needed to promote citizens’ involvement and understanding. In short,

the pattern of deliberation that the process spurred did not have the presumed public sphere generating catalytic effects that analysts have attributed to democratic constitution-making.⁵ In contrast to the first explanation, which conceives of the public sphere as rooted in a pre-political community of citizens who are bound to each other by primordial ties of trust and solidarity, the notion of public sphere that the constitution-as-catalyst is based on is that of a political community of active citizens who challenge the legitimacy of existing institutions and styles of policy-making. The key to understanding the catalytic function of the public sphere is thus *politicisation* in the sense of mobilising citizens' support or resistance. Habermas notes that "this convergence [of Europeans] in turn depends on the catalytic effect of a constitution. This would have to begin with a referendum, arousing a Europe-wide debate – the making of such a constitution representing in itself a unique opportunity of transnational communication, with the potential for a self-fulfilling prophecy." (Habermas 2001, 16-17)

In these terms, the European public sphere deficit has been linked to the under-politicisation of the EU with the expectation that public mobilisation would follow once extensive opportunities for the voice of affected citizens had been created. The predicted end of the permissive consensus after the Maastricht Treaty could be assumed to have helped bring about a situation wherein public silence would be slowly replaced by voice through the official and unofficial channels of the EU.

The EU's post-Maastricht development has had democratic effects: this includes an EU-based institutional arrangement with certain representative qualities; a *material* constitution with basic rights protection; transparency provisions and popular consultative mechanisms; and a kind of an intermediary structure of civil and political organizations at the EU level. The Union has also experimented with new modes of participative and consultative governance where citizens and their representatives have been included. Together these arrangements have increasingly come to bind further steps of integration to the direct or indirect approval of the public.

Nevertheless, some fifteen years after the proclaimed “end of the permissive consensus” Peter Mair (2005) still speaks of the “remarkable under-politicization” of the EU, which is surprising in the light of the high potential for conflict over its reach, its form and its finalité. Low turnouts in European Parliamentary elections illustrate that there is limited public enthusiasm for and probably even a declining interest among European citizens in making use of the European channels for voicing their concerns. Patterns of public opinion and will formation are still very narrow, national media formats treat European issues and debates with marginal and shifting attention, and only a limited number of debates take place in fora that are able to reach ordinary citizens.

But given the strengthened commitment to democracy and the fact that the Laeken constitution-making process was far more open and accessible to the public than any previous constitution-making event in the EU (Fossum and Menendez 2005), are the *recent* constitutional referenda then the beginning of the long expected politicisation of the EU with political parties, general publics and electorates finally turning their attention to Europe? The largely unforeseen protests against the EU and the constitutional output in the Netherlands and France are certainly examples of politicisation, albeit a belated one, as they were expressed after the constitutional proposal had been forged, that is, at a point in time wherein voice was disconnected from the substantive contents of the decision. But can this be properly considered as *catalytic*?

There was no common European referendum to set off the catalytic spark which Habermas’ notion presupposes. But there were 10 national referenda planned. We could modify Habermas’ position so as to allow for the catalytic thrust either to emanate from the combined thrust of the referenda or from the process preceding this. The point is that when part of a properly set up deliberative constitutional process referenda are far more than simple ‘approval-machines’. The process can be catalytic when referenda follow *after* a comprehensive process which has helped to establish a common focus and a

common attention to constitutional debates, that is where the same issues are debated and the same normative arguments are put forward and negotiated throughout the polity. This assumption derives from the rationalising potential of a well-functioning public sphere that mediates vertically and horizontally across different levels and arenas, and promotes a common understanding among European constitution-makers, the national political arenas and the general publics. Such a public sphere must provide opportunities for the proponents and opponents of a European constitution to unfold arguments that have been previously tested in policy debates and are now proposed to the general public. It further presupposes a media system as the carrier of rational discourse and a general audience that develops critical capacities to make their choice on the basis of their best knowledge and information. This conception of catalytic constitution includes structural-institutional components, so that the catalytic impetus is seen as related to the character of the *overall process*, that is, as involving both strong and general publics rather than simply the activation of general publics at the referendum stage.

Why was the process not catalytic?

The Laeken process of constitution-making was so structured as to lend little systemic impetus to polity-wide politicization. Instead, the process was highly fragmented – with quite diversified national ratification procedures – which encouraged a greatly fragmented process of voice. The wide range of different ratification procedures ended up paying tribute to the fragmented nature of a Union still made up of largely national public spheres. The ideal that there should be a common focus and a shared relevance to the process was undercut by the reality of uneven attention in fragmented constitutional debates in the Member States which varied widely in intensity and content. Within this context referendum became a singular and quite unique opportunity structure which helped spark a lively debate in France and the

Netherlands in April and May 2005. But this was not automatically carried on to other countries (there was far less debate in the Spanish referendum in February 2005) Many of the countries had decided to ratify the constitution by parliamentary vote, which resulted in extraordinary approval rates (between 90 and 99%). Here all-partisan consensuses in the respective countries⁶ emerged, but without larger publics taking much notice. German newspapers, for instance, debated the possible choices of the French people quite intensely, but few debates were launched on what choices the representatives of the German people should make. When it came to the vote in the German Bundestag, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was claiming with some plausibility that even many MPs had limited knowledge of what exactly they voted for.

Long-term catalytic learning processes are dependent on the consistency, the overall resonance and the persistence of the ongoing debates. For the constitutional dimension to systematically figure here the process also has to be framed in explicit constitutional terms. At Laeken, the catalytic spark was held back by the basic ambiguities that inhere in EU-constitution-making itself. The title of the final product *Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe* is quite telling. Taken literally, the title suggests that the evocative power of the term constitution cannot be properly unleashed unless and until the present treaty is converted into a constitution. The ECT was framed as a constitution by the Convention and the IGC, although it was also frequently noted that this was a distinctive type of constitution, a constitutional treaty. The Laeken process, although not set out to be an explicit constitution-making process at the outset, ended by dressing up the present-day EU in constitutional garb. Beyond this the process was basically framed and organised in the same way as previous Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs), with the exception of one innovation: the Convention. The Convention was initially intended as a preparatory body for the Intergovernmental Conference, where the latter would take the decisions that had to be ratified by each member state.

The Convention, *once established*, portrayed itself as a constitution-making body.⁷ This attempt at a more open and deliberative approach to constitution-making took place in the absence of an initial constitutional signal. The “shadow of the IGC” (Magnette 2004; Magnette and Nicolaïdis 2004: 382) was hanging over the whole process; it constrained the process of deliberation and prevented a proper mediation between strong “deliberative” publics and general (or “weak”) publics⁸ *at the European level*. Assessments of the entire Laeken process have found that the degree of interconnection of strong and general publics was low, while inclusivity and transparency were insufficient to characterise the process as a properly constitutional one, from a deliberative democratic perspective (Fossum and Menéndez 2005; Shaw 2003; Closa 2004). Part of the reason for ratification failure is found in the ambiguous signals and the fragmented character of the process that preceded the referenda.

The ratification debates testify to the irregular and episodic character of citizens’ voice.⁹ In the absence of a prior process of mobilisation, politicisation through referenda is restricted to a short moment in time. Only a couple of weeks prior to the referenda the European constitution had no particular meaning to the overwhelming majority of voters. The negative referenda in France and the Netherlands are better seen as the endpoints of short electoral campaigns, than as staging events for further politicization.

Within a fragmented process, the reality of mass media communication in highly commercialised national public spheres makes referenda into launching pads for de-contextualised public debates that are partly outside of the control of constitution-makers and which may torpedo the whole process of constitution-making. To the logics of arguing and bargaining that dominated the drafting phase, referendum adds a different logic of symbolic politics and populism. Ratification then becomes a matter of presenting a *text* for approval in a new *context*. The *text* that is the outcome of arguing and bargaining has to pass the test of the public in the new *context* of broadened debate. This results unavoidably in a process of *re-contextualisation*, in which

the original input changes.

Such de-contextualising of debates is nourished by the belated ratification-driven politicization of the EU with a trans-national dynamic. The negative voice of the people could also draw on a certain common trans-national focus on issues other than those in the constitutional text. De Vreese predicted as early as 2004 that the Dutch people's vote would be deeply affected by anti-immigration sentiments, pessimistic economic outlooks and the flagging popularity of national governments, making no the most likely outcome of the referendum. The turning away from permissive consensus to resistance has apparently affected broad strata of European societies. This movement is not simply nationalist, but can be grouped along ideological cleavages, with a new "left" fighting the perceived undesired effects of globalisation - of which the EU is seen to be integral, and a new "right" using the European setting as a vehicle for promoting a neo-liberal agenda. What is seemingly a national cleavage - such as the notorious confrontation between continental Europe and the UK - can easily be turned into an ideological cleavage entrenched on the one hand in concerns with economic protection and social welfare and on the other in market liberalisation and individual responsibility. This can feed not only resistance against further integration but also resistance against the present-day EU which is seen as inadequately supranational.

Similar ideological cleavages can be found in foreign and security policy with the emphasis on 'normative power Europe' (Manners 2002)¹⁰ dividing actors on their relationship to the USA. These broad ideological debates on the shape of the EU polity are also found in those countries where no referenda took place. The politicisation of Europe can thus be partly explained as a collective European experience, where ratification provided an opening for citizens' engagement, not simply in the acceptance or rejection of the constitutional text but as a part of ongoing struggles over the restructuring of European welfare states; the balancing of supranational vs. national democracy; the entrenchment of human rights in a state-dominated system;

security; global justice and solidarity; international crime and terrorism; and global environmental degradation.

Referenda that are not properly connected to an explicit constitutional signal and a process of constitutional decision-making, wherein the people have been explicitly acknowledged as vital proprietors and where national referenda take place at distinct instances in time over a lengthy period of time, can best be seen as a collection of garbage can processes where voting takes place under conditions of ambiguity and as a result of the partially random coupling of independent streams of politics that are only loosely coupled to the constitutional text (Cohen et al. 1972; Kingdon 1984). Different actors use the referenda as “windows of opportunity” to come forward with very different problems and their perceived solutions. In such a situation of deep ambiguity, the Constitution is a means to different ends and can signify quite different things: within the conservative camp it can be seen as a bulwark against Anglo-Saxon market ideology (Jacques Chirac) or, quite opposite, as a tool against the French trust in the state (Nicolas Sarkozy). Within the socialist camp it can be a weapon against the existing liberal market jungle (François Hollande) or the first step into the jungle (Laurent Fabius).

In a democratic setting, it is difficult for other actors to control access and to close down this “window” for the “de-contextualised” participants. This leads to an inevitable crowding of the open democratic arena: rational debate risks being turned into noise. Ratification can thus be marked by a deep rupture in constitution-making, where the results of the previous phases have only very limited bearing on the actual outcome. Independent of the quality and contents of the constitutional text, it is now the context that determines the fate of constitution-making. The re-contextualisation of the constitutional text in different national settings increases the garbage can effects with incalculable and often purely casual effects. It is then no wonder that ratification seems to resemble more of a lottery than a rational process.

Ratification failure as failure of communication?

The third explanation takes as its point of departure that there is a pattern of European communication, albeit one with several distinctive features of direct relevance to the explanation of ratification failure. This pattern does not qualify as a European public sphere in the conventional sense. It is more distinctively mediated than is the case with national publics. It is a relatively thin veneer on top of a system of largely segmented national publics, where the respective contributors are not well joined together (institutionally or conversationally) or synchronised. The effect is to highlight the vertical top-down thrust of communication over that of the horizontal one, so that media and institutions talk *to* people more than talk with them, and where the mechanisms for ensuring that people talk with each other across boundaries are still weak. Such a public sphere is marked by a great element of *contingency*, with a greater propensity for re-contextualisation of debates as well as for communication failure.

When entering public debates about the European constitution, political actors and institutions confront this contingency of the 'European public sphere'. This includes, above all, the (sometimes painful) experience that mediated debates obey different rules than do deliberation and the search for compelling arguments in small communicative circles. Mediated debate has the propensity to make context more important than constitutional text. In this sense, opening public debates entails re-contextualising the text that has been finalized by the IGC.

European political actors with limited experience in dealing with the media often assume that the latter should work as the mirror of the EU political system, so as to amplify its normative debates and to assure that compelling arguments are visible to everyone. When finding discrepancies they respond with disdain. Consider the following statement by the French Commissioner Jacques Barrot in *Le Monde*, 29 May 2005: "Nous sommes devant une campagne de désinformation où le mensonge l'emporte parfois,

tout simplement parce qu'il est de bon ton de dire non. C'est snob de dire non."

European constitution-makers tend to see the media as an instrument of popular enlightenment or even as an amplifier of government information strategies.¹¹ What is blamed as disinformation and lies from the self-referential perspective of the political system is actually also part of the condition for media freedom and autonomy. Media do not work as a mirror of the political system but apply their own rules in selecting and framing political news. The affirmative input of the political system is turned into critique, the "facts" are de- or reconstructed, the functional perspective is linked to different world-views and life-world expectations, and the legal-normative context is broken up by expressive and identitarian mechanisms.

Such a mediatized public sphere may therefore do less to close the gap between citizens and elites than is commonly assumed, and hence may help explain ratification failure. Mediatization can sustain a democratic conundrum wherein the public's mistrust their elected or self-appointed political representatives and political elites lack trust in the public's ability to comprehend. Such a tension can be expected in the EU, which has limited scope for access and participation, and where the multifaceted European public has limited capacity and ability to attend to and understand each other. In a polity that is marked by deep heterogeneity and poly-contextuality, constitutional debates are almost inevitably context bound and pluri-contextual. The expected de-contextualisation of normative debates turns the empowerment of the people through referenda into a risky undertaking. Europe faces the problem of pluri-decontextualisation: one text but quite different contexts. What is needed, but is in inadequate supply in the EU, is a double translation mechanism from text to context and from context to context: vertical mediation between policy arenas and media arenas, and horizontal mediation between different media and other conversational arenas.

When taking proper account of the contingent character of the mediatized public sphere, in particular within such complex and composite settings as the EU, we recognize that the very launching of public communication is imbued with risks: The senders of political messages in the EU cannot rely on a kind of routine public understanding. There is a high likelihood that someone out there will *not* catch the right understanding or may not be willing to pay attention. Accordingly, we can understand failure of public communication as an observatory relationship wherein efforts between speakers and their addressees to reach an understanding through communication visibly fail. This rupture then shapes subsequent steps in communication. Implicit in this definition is the notion that failed communication results in follow-up communication and not in the cessation of it (otherwise we wouldn't be able to realise that communication has failed). Failed communication does therefore not, as is generally assumed, indicate the lack of a public sphere, but points to different, contingent and unpredictable ways of connecting communicative events. In this sense, failure of communication can be seen as the basis for reflection, which does not restore understanding as it was originally meant but instead allows for a second order observation of communication. Such a conception of the public sphere can explain how failures are detected and what comes after failure.

In the following we will spell out three dimensions of failure of communication and try to demonstrate how these may help explain ratification failure. These are: a) misunderstanding, b) missing the addressee, and c) rejection.¹²

A classification of possible failures of communication

1) *The risk of missing understanding*

The emphatic notion of understanding is based on the tenet that arguments become shared and consensual. Understanding is reached through a collective engagement in discourse which consists of the exchange of

arguments and their justifications and of their selection and aggregation until an agreement has been reached among the participants (Habermas 1992, 349ff.). In empirical terms, this implies that communicative processes in the public sphere must be based on reason-giving and inter-discursivity. The first states that speakers actually give justifications for their statements, and the second implies that they also make reference to and exchange these arguments among each other. In the European public sphere literature, the discursive model has been defended by Peters et al. (2005), who demonstrate that a discursive interchange is taking place between national media spheres. “An emerging European public sphere is integrated horizontally to the degree that communication exchanges cross national borders, to the degree that there is a real exchange of opinions and ideas originating in different places, in short: that public discourse flows across a European (or other transnational) space of public communication“ (142).

Peters et al. (2005) and Wimmel (2005) propose to measure the inter-discursivity of a European public sphere by the scope and range of communicative statements that transcend national borders. In this view, a deliberative and democratic public is one where the constitutional debate is formed by statements from speakers in different national contexts, who mutually refer to each other. Such effects are of course most likely to occur through the direct interventions of prominent constitution-makers (such as the Convention’s President Giscard d’Estaing) in the media spheres of different member states. During the Laeken process there were several efforts at PR-management bent on promoting and intensifying public communication with European citizens.

We have, however, seen from the second explanation that the process of European constitution-making offered little assurance of improved understanding among Europeans in the sense of a “real exchange of opinions and ideas” through discursive interactions across different public and media spheres. The given structure of national media spheres suggests that the density of transnational discursive interchange will remain rather low, even

within a constitution-making process. Furthermore, cases of intensification of discursive interchanges through statements by prominent constitution makers remain exceptions. Our main critique of the position adopted by Peters and Wimmel is, however, that it applies a rather narrow conception of the ideal model of a discursive community (in the early Habermasian sense) to the media, without properly taking into consideration that media communication works on a different level and according to different rules than do discursive communities constituted by direct discursive interchange.¹³ This does not rule out the possibility that discursive statements can be taken up by media and become intensified in the constitutional debate. But what it is necessary to keep in mind is the *contingency* involved here: such statements are a secondary construction of media discourse. They are selected, framed or re-contextualized by journalists who do not necessarily apply the same criteria for relevance as the constitution-makers.

This does not exclude media agenda and media frame convergence between national public spheres. But note that such processes do not only take place through direct discursive exchange but also through other mechanisms such as diffusion, frame alignment and trans-national resonance, that provide for horizontal and vertical processes of intermediation within the multi-level polity of the EU (Snow/Benford 1998; Trenz 2005a). Here media communication functions not simply through interaction structures constituted by communicating actors, but also through the structure of issues and rhetorical elements which create resonance in distant arenas, without speakers necessarily referring to each other. The contents and the framing of news coverage in relation to the EU's constitutionalisation process are increasingly determined by European patterns and commonly defined agendas. While networking presupposes the existence of direct relational links between national media arenas and their products, the mechanism of indirect diffusion can be explained by imitation and reproduction of information and knowledge diffused by the mass media (della Porta/Kriesi 1999, 6).

This has given rise to a reformulation of the condition of inter-discursivity, which is measured in the reciprocity of issues and which might (but does not need to) result in communicative interchange (Eder/Kantner 2002; Trenz 2005, 176ff.). Such a notion is helpful in identifying the dimensions of the public sphere that conditioned ratification failure. To properly understand the impact of this altered condition of inter-discursivity within a mediatized EU public sphere, it is necessary to recur to a less emphatic notion of understanding, where public communication is successful if communicative statements or issues become transparent (which means generally visible and thus observable to some outside third party with the potential to attend to what has been said).¹⁴ This can be extended to a baseline or bare minimum notion of public sphere which measures the success of communication not in the inter-subjective congruence of meaning of what has been said and what is understood. This model does not consider the intention of the speaker to *make a point* or the competence of the receiver to *get the point*. It is not the substance of the message that counts but only the act of sending and receiving a message. Political communication can still be based on the commonly held assumption that understanding is bound to the conformity of meaning. But the model looks at this only as one possible template through which communicating actors or institutions observe the success and failure of their communication and implicitly can re-construct it as misunderstanding. Further, the model helps us to envision scenarios wherein the rationality and truth-orientation of public communication does not figure prominently.

What does it mean under the minimum assumptions embedded in the model to say that public communication in relation to EU-constitution-making has *failed* to generate understanding? The diagnosis of misunderstanding requires the observation of an ongoing effort at communication. There must always be some form of understanding (a message that has been received) in order to be able to speak of misunderstanding (Luhmann 1984, 217). From this weak notion of

understanding it follows that misunderstandings can only be re-constructed through second order observation of a communicative event that has previously taken place. The sender of a piece of information (in our case the European constitution-makers) realises that undesired effects, wrongful interpretations or unknown thirds distort his or her original message. As will be argued, this second order observation opens up the space for reflection in the aftermath of (unsuccessful) constitution-making.

Ratification failure is further linked to the transformation of the European media landscape in the direction of *infotainment*, which is mainly provided by private television and the tabloids (whereas the input of European news delivered by European institutional actors is still mainly framed for quality newspapers). Such trends may produce a systematic bias towards producing misunderstandings, once European politics enters the national power play. The staging of the partisan struggle in the media is not only marked by explicit lies but also by a particularly acute but frequent case of misunderstanding or by scenarios wherein some actors do not bother with the truth-value of their assertions and claims at all. In a mediatised society which lives not only off information but also off entertainment, such decontextualised contributions tend to be awarded with attention by the media and always finds a public made up of citizens who have “but a casual interest in facts and but a poor appetite for theory.” (Lippmann 1927, 25)

In the EU, the ratification debates in the Member States have brought forward innumerable contributions in which particular speakers or journalists exhibit considerable indifference to the truth-value of their claims. The “bullshit strategy” (Frankfurt 2005) became a much safer route to media attention than the sticking to the rules of rational discourse. Consider for instance the 2004 Daily Mail headline to the effect that the ECT will lead to the end of a thousand years of British history and the end of Britain as a sovereign nation. This is hardly unique to the EU but the interesting question is a) whether more misinformation in relation to the EU than, for instance, to a nation-state is published systematically, and b) whether there is some form

of implicit 'licence to bullshit' that is applied to certain polities and forms of polity.

Our research hypothesis is that the mediatisation of European integration in the ratification process has brought such systematic patterns of decontextualised communication to bear on the EU. The extent to which these effects of the mediatisation of European integration have affected and will continue to affect the erosion of the EU's legitimacy remains to be tested (Meyer 2005). In the present stage, the EU is set apart by the unequal effects of mediatisation with a huge variation in the quantity and quality of Europeanised news coverage across countries and across different media types.

Mediatisation can reduce public discourse to a *struggle for attention* with frequent recourse to "illicit" measures. This might explain the success of marginal groups in the French and Dutch constitutional referenda in carrying on their struggle for recognition primarily as a struggle for attention through expressive means and symbolic actions. In contrast to the "rational commitment" of European actors and institutions, the highly mediated national power play is deeply affected by such "decontextualised" logics of political debate, which all too often find easy access into the media.

2) *The risk of missing the addressees*

The transformation of political communication into public communication is not only a normative requirement of democracy but becomes an integral part of the staging of politics in modern mediated societies. The internet has increased the amount of public communication and has accelerated the speed of its distribution. In the EU, we find public communication in the form of written documents, which are generally translated into all the EU's official languages. Similarly, the Convention process produced written statements from Members and outside participants that were made available online in the EU's three main working languages. The internet has also allowed for the visualisation of European politics and new mixed formats such as Europe by Satellite have been created where

citizens can watch EU-reality television with a broad offering ranging from live transmissions of European Parliamentary plenaries or committee meetings, Commission's press conferences, selected Council meetings, and the plenary meetings of the European Convention.

What these forms of European public communication have in common is that the probability of general public attendance is low. The principal visibility and accessibility of public communication is thus only a weak guarantee for its public resonance. Yet, even according to the minimum model of the public sphere outlined above, understanding presupposes attention. How can a communicative event attract the attention of potential addressees who are not directly involved in the communication and who, as in the case of the EU, are distant and fragmented? There are two improbabilities linked to the spread of public communication in the EU: one is the problem of spatial and temporal diffusion, the other is the discrepancy between the amount of system-generated communicative offers and an apparently limited demand by the public.

The distributional problem: Communication which takes place in one place has to draw the attention of people in other places where for the most part they have different things to do (Luhmann 1984, 218). Public communication is confronted with a problem of spatial and temporal diffusion. It is very unlikely that communication draws any attention beyond the scope of immediate interaction, and it is only by recurring to specific news values that attention can be increased.

The effects of news values on the amplification of European public communication are ambivalent. On the one hand, news values are universalised; they determine the approximation of the news agenda across countries and cultures. On the other hand, European news does not usually correspond to the generalised news values that determine the selection of media agendas. The unitary effects of news values thus consist rather in the *non*-selection of European news. These problems are amplified by the

difficulties of temporal diffusion: issue attention cycles are generally short, as too many issues compete for attention in the media. This restricts the potential for the unfolding of long term debates or even of learning processes linked to the common experience of discursive interchange. Research on the unfolding of debates in the EU has shown that there are common peaks in the attention cycle on European issues and that the same issues are discussed at the same time but that such discussions are very short lived (Trenz 2005a). These findings are not unique to the EU. We also see national public debates unfold within ever shorter issue cycles and with high risks of various public attention distractions.¹⁵

The attention gap: Ratification failure also ties in with the presumption that there is a general demand by the public that European institutions increase their communicative efforts. How do we know that an increase in European news coverage in any media product might not be perceived as an annoyance? This problem is not only linked to the EU. It points rather to a general discrepancy in modern mediatised societies: The turning of political communication into public political communication is restricted by the attentive capacities of the public.¹⁶ Even the case of absolute publicity would not bring about much change in the amount of attention that “ordinary people” are willing to devote or capable of devoting to politics. “The facts far exceed our curiosity” (Lippmann 1927, 43). While public communication is a good that can be multiplied through new technologies of diffusion etc., there is a cognitive barrier to the increase in public attention that can be activated by a public made up of humans (and not data processing machines). This results in a discrepancy between ever growing amounts of publications and relatively stable resources of attention (many would even claim that the attention of the publics, i.e. their willingness to pay attention to politics, is decreasing). Therefore media do increasingly compete for the scarce attention of a public faced with a general surplus of political communication.¹⁷ The European Union is seriously affected by this communication-attention gap. In

the strong competition for attention for politics, European issues may lose out to domestic and international issues and concerns.

Whereas the previously discussed forms of misunderstanding still constitute communicative acts, the absence of public attention indicates a situation of non-communication: the observation has not taken place, a message is sent, but is not received. Much of European public communication proceeds in the form of un-received messages. The efforts to go public remain un-responded to. This points to a general dilemma of constitution-making, which addresses the public as a social constituency, i.e. a totality, but one which cannot guarantee the full attention of the public and only gets disparate responses. The nation state was based on the assumption of a high congruence between the addressed publics and the attentive publics. In the EU, the gap between those who are addressed as a social constituency and those who pay attention or respond has widened.

Within a mediatized public, that is a public created mainly through mediatized communication, mass apathy and “majority silence” might be – as suggested by Baudrillard (1983) – a rational response of the people who resist elite efforts to include them into their integration project. The European elites’ attempt to make the silent majority politically active by injecting them with information of a ‘rational’ ‘serious’ type risks failure simply because of the public’s indifference. Their preference for spectacle over substance, for symbols over facts and for entertainment over information could be a way of subverting the political system which they have no interest in legitimating (ibid., see also McNair 2000, 11).

3) *The risk of rejection and non-recognition*

Even if communication is understood by its addressees, it is not automatically accepted. “Every utterance stimulates resistance” (Luhmann 1984, 218). In order to be successful, “Ego needs to pick up the selective content of a communication (the information) as a premise of its own subsequent acting” (ibid.). Success of communication is thus ultimately

measured by the degree of motivation to become engaged in follow-up communication in the public sphere, that is by the motivation to pick up an issue and to open a debate. Enhanced understanding through public reasoning might even increase the probability of rejection and delivers all kinds of “good” reasons that were not on the table beforehand.

The reasons for public rejection of the Constitutional Treaty can be manifold: some oppose the idea of democracy beyond the nation-state, while others do not believe in the democratic merits of the Treaty. Whatever reason for the voter’s decision to reject, such a decision will always be based on the reception of the constitutional message (i.e. on understanding). After understanding, the receiver of the information has entered a communicative commitment in which his/her choices are restricted by the communication that has taken place beforehand. His/her possible reaction is bound by the expectations that have been raised in communication and to which the follow-up speaker must in some way refer. It is therefore important to understand the restrictive force of public communication in limiting the space of possible communication to the issues that are actually at stake (ibid., 204).

Constitutional referenda regulate communication through “yes” or “no” options. This stands in some contrast to the modus of epistemic choice that marked the rounds of constitutional deliberation preceding ratification. Such previous rounds can be characterised by expanding the modus from “either/or” to “as well as” (Beck 1993, 9). Process deliberation recognises the ambivalence of the “yes” and the “no”, whereas ratification requires a clear choice. In Laeken, the process was de-linked so that the difference in the modus of epistemic and democratic choice that any process brings up was greatly amplified, with the referenda becoming garbage can situations.

The lack of proper connection between deliberative process and democratic choice helped create irritation that became apparent in the ratification process. From the pro-European elite perspective of those who share the deliberative consensus, the rejection of the constitutional message is often attributed to the insufficient knowledge or the immaturity of the voter.

The post-referenda attitude of some of the promoters of the constitution resembles that of teachers who treat the voters like young pupils or who self-critically admit that they have not been successful in passing on their lessons. The voters' rejection thus leads to a change in pedagogical styles to improve communication with stakeholders and targeted audiences (Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate).

This pedagogical attitude towards the electorate was also assumed by the enlightened journalists of the quality newspapers.¹⁸ The media basically reproduced the deliberative consensus of constitution-makers and recommended the approval of the Constitutional Treaty as the only "rational choice" for the voters. The confusion stems from the fact that the process was de-linked so that the referenda as choice situations were overloaded: the rather short periods of ratification debate had to carry both the explorative *and* the decision-framing dimensions of deliberation – within mediatized settings wherein infotainment and propaganda flourished. The problem here is that in the absence of a previous process wherein 'symbolic cleansing', issue offloading, and epistemic exploration take place and are harmonised, referenda as decision moment are overloaded and privy to all kinds of other dynamics.

What comes after failure? From failed communication to reflection

The simple lesson to be drawn from the history of ratification failure is that the expansion of public and media communication about the EU as a project of democracy does not necessarily enhance a common understanding and agreement on a set of specific institutional choices for the process of democratisation. The effects of mediatization and processes of democratisation run parallel without necessarily converging into a common European will. To encapsulate this we have broadened our conception of what a European public sphere might entail, so as to be able to capture not simply the public

sphere as the necessary infrastructure of a European democracy, but also as the realm of commercialisation, entertainment, lie or “bullshitting”.

After the negative referenda in France and in the Netherlands, these effects of the mediatisation of the EU and their impact on the project of EU-constitutionalisation and democratisation have become apparent. The diagnosis of ratification failure as failure of communication and the following “crisis” of the EU-integration process ask for rectifying measures. After failure, three possibilities emerge: a) disregard of failure by those who have launched the constitutional project (business as usual), b) resignation by the constitution-makers and subsequent cessation of communication, or c) reflection that leads to efforts to increase the chances of understanding, public engagement and agreement about the EU constitutional project.

a) Ignoring communication failure is an option, as long as those to whom failure is attributed (the addressees who have misunderstood or who did not listen) keep silent and do not intervene. In the EU, such a strategy did exist in the first three decades of integration, but since the EU committed itself to democratic principles (applied unto itself), it is heavily reliant on the impression of successful communication with the public in order to derive its basic legitimacy. The negative ratification referenda in France and the Netherlands have required an immediate response. Ignoring this vote, for instance by repeating the referenda – an option that was tried out in Denmark in 1992 and in Ireland in 2001 – was at first excluded but has since been re-introduced into official talk about how to rescue the Constitution. Such perspectives on the part of institutional actors actually weigh up such possible actions of the public sphere. They are based on rather cynical viewpoints to the effect that publics forget or change preferences, that attention cycles shift to new topics and that the public does not learn.

b) Cessation of communication is improbable in a media environment which lives off the continuous production of communicative events.

Resignation is not a viable option, limited as it is to single actors or to defined periods of time. In a democratic world, institutional actors cannot resort to silence once a critical voice has been expressed and specific counter-publics have become mobilised. In modern mediatised societies, the choice of silence is only open to the public, but institutional actors in need of legitimacy cannot resort to this with impunity. In the complex constellation of multi-level network governance, cessation of communication would be equivalent to cessation of integration and a renouncing of governmental capacities as these latter are increasingly reliant on a well-functioning system of communication between and among institutions, different stakeholders and the relevant publics (Kohler-Koch 2000). With the unresolved EU-legitimacy problem on the table, the debate about the democratic shape of the European political order can be expected to develop, with cyclical ups and downs, but showing a steady intensification and amplification in the long run.

c) Reflection is a form of second order observation of previous or ongoing communicative events which are judged on the basis of their desired or undesired effects on the issues at stake. As such, reflection is linked to the self observation of the participants and their communicative performance in the public sphere. Observing the success of previous communication as a shared experience is an important device for collective identity construction. The experience of successful settlement of conflicts and of problem-solving becomes part of the collective memory of a communicative community (Eder 2004). The question is whether such reflexive mechanisms are relying on successful communication or can be also triggered off by the diagnosis of communication failures.

The obvious research object when we are investigating reflexive mechanisms in relation to failed communication is the EU's proclaimed reflection period which is the result of the embarrassment that institutional actors experienced in the aftermath of the negative referenda. Plan-D for democracy, Dialogue and Debate is understood to be a listening exercise

established so that the European Union can act on the concerns expressed by its citizens. For this to happen, “national debates should be structured to ensure the feedbacks can have a direct impact on the policy agenda of the European Union.”¹⁹ As a specific kind of second order observation this will include a reflection on the conditions for understanding and misunderstanding not only in this particular case but also in a more general context.

What remains to be tested in empirical research is how far ratification failure has triggered off second order observations of public communication as misunderstanding. What is of interest here is the causal attribution of communication failures due either to the incapacity or unwillingness of the addressee or to the incomplete or inadequate form of the message that was sent to the public. The diagnosis of communication failures becomes the object of reflection of the DG Press and Communication, analysing the European public sphere deficit and ways to overcome it (see the Commission’s Plan-D for democracy, Dialogue and Debate). The measuring of understanding and misunderstanding of the public by European institutional actors can be seen as a way of attributing the responsibilities for communication failure. Public opinion polls are one such tool of measurement. For that purpose, the Eurobarometer has accompanied the EU-constitution-making process from its very beginning in order to monitor public attitudes and expectations about the drafting of the European constitution. As argued by Meyer (2005), politicisation in the ratification period is a prime case for demonstrating the effects of *mediatisation* on unprepared institutions. Following our line of argumentation, many of these unexpected effects of mediatisation can be reconstructed as misunderstandings that result from the de-contextualisation of constitutional debates through the media. The critique that the EU is treated unfairly by the media is itself based on such a misunderstanding, insofar as European political actors and institutions disregard the fact that media give preference to particular news formats and apply criteria of relevance, which diverge from the process of policy (or constitution-) making.

Misunderstandings can be conceived of as being essential to a long term process of reflexive integration. Note that in a world of perfect understanding, reflection of any kind would be excluded. A theory of reflexive integration usually starts from the assumption that long term deliberative processes are linked to collective learning processes through which communication failures can, in principal, be corrected (Eriksen 2005, 18). Thus reflexive integration proceeds as a correction of communication failures and as a selection of the better arguments.

Hence reflection is commonly conceived of as being a rescue mechanism for understanding, as a corrective measure to communication failures and as a mechanism for collective identity formation. Our reconstruction of communication failures points to a difference between a deliberative mode of exchanging arguments and a reflexive mode of observing the exchange of arguments. What counts then is not only whether an exchange of arguments will detect the substance or the cause of the failure of constitution-making but also the observation (and subsequent communication) of communication failures, the inclusion of new voices and the search for new publics and for new ways of expressing the EU's democratic vocation. From the "reflexive position" of second-order observation, the search for the "rightness" of arguments ends up in the implicit self-observation of the participants.

This has roots in an alternative perception of the public sphere as the arena of societal self-description (Luhmann 1996; Hellmann 1997). From this we can note that the public sphere is not simply a mechanism for influencing the state or for controlling state policies; it also shapes the social imagination of a political society, the kind of reflexivity that does not only inform the state but also the self of the public as a political entity. It assumes the role of an "arena of cultural creativity and reproduction in which society is imagined and thereby made real and shaped by the ways in which it is understood" (Calhoun 2003, 249). "To see the public sphere entirely as a realm of rational-critical discourse is to lose sight of the importance of forming culture

in public life, and of the production and reworking of a common social imaginary” (Calhoun 2003, 257).

A theory of the public sphere as a programme of societal self-description opens the way to making sense of failure of communication and misunderstanding. It helps to specify the conditions under which failed communication becomes constitutive for the public sphere and its reflexive potential. To what extent constitutional debates have triggered off such processes of “reflexive integration” beyond the evidence of failed constitution-making remains open to empirical analysis. The 2006 “Year of Citizens’ Dialogue” will certainly not bring about the long aspired breakthrough and promote a shared sphere of public opinion and will formation – not least because the targeted publics are again the citizens of the Member States, i.e. the national publics.²⁰ In the absence of an explicitly declared will on the part of the system to channel arguments into binding actions, which includes structuring the process in such a manner as to enable citizens to properly *imagine themselves as Europeans*, citizens may be appeased by symbolic politics or may react with disdain or not feel affected at all. Reflection will then, at best, amount to “reflection about its difficult implementation”.²¹ The alleged European public sphere will then resort to mere reflection on its own structural deficits and normative shortcomings. Such a form of institutional self-reflexivity about the difficulties of citizens’ dialogue might trigger off institutional learning processes, but it is still largely (and involuntarily) excluding European citizens.

Notes

¹ See the end-of-term report card issued by the Civil Society Contact Group after the closing of the Convention (<http://www.act4europe.org/code/en/civi.asp?Page=4&menuPage=4>).

² See EUROBAROMETER Special 214 “The Future Constitutional Treaty”, March 2005.

³ The reference to ‘still no’ is important here, as Habermas certainly does not rule out the possibility of a future European public sphere.

⁴ Consider the French case where the “No” was principally motivated by alternative conceptions of the European public good and the shortcomings of European constitution-making identified in the debate.

⁵ That such a catalytic function for the emergence of a European public sphere would come to bear in the context of European constitution-making was most prominently predicted by Jürgen Habermas (2001) in his debate with Dieter Grimm (1995).

⁶ For details on the national ratification procedures see the excellent documentation provided by Carlos Closa and collaborators and made accessible through the University of Zaragoza (<http://www.unizar.es/euroconstitucion/Home.htm>)

⁷ This was clearly expressed by its President. See V. Giscard d'Estaing, ‘Introductory speech to the Convention on the Future of Europe’, SN 1565/02, available at <http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/speeches/1.pdf>.

⁸ See Eriksen and Fossum 2002 for this model of mediation from strong to general publics.

⁹ Mair (2005) might therefore be premature in announcing that the EU is now “ripe for politicization” and in expecting that policy entrepreneurs will soon seize the opportunity to mobilise on EU-issues.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the merits of this notion see Sjørnsen (2006).

¹¹ This might reflect a less cynical approach to public communication. One could argue that such decontextualisations are more pronounced in the national media spheres, but here national politicians are increasingly trained to become professional media handlers.

¹² We draw these arguments on failures of communication from Urs Stäheli (2000, 109ff.) and from Niklas Luhmann (1984, 217ff.). The latter speaks of the improbability of successful communication in light of the obstacles to raising somebody’s attention, to transcending context-bound meaning and to getting an affirmative response.

¹³ Empirical surveys have pointed out that even within the existing national media spheres, the normative requirements of the discursive model of the public sphere are generally not met. Drawing on a longitudinal analysis of the debate on abortion in the German print media between 1970 and 1990, Gerhards (1997, 31) concludes that justification and reason-giving between different speakers is rather the exception than the rule. In an encompassing research overview van den Daele and Neidhardt (1996, 38) recapitulate that public debates are usually characterised by incommensurable expectations, diverging rationalities and conflicting evaluations. Instead of discursive constellations, media discourse is determined by monologic situations in which some powerful actors (in the EU usually the national governments) prevail.

¹⁴ From a Luhmannian perspective, understanding simply implies the reception of a message through which communication opens up to follow up on communication

(Anschlussfähigkeit=connectivity of communication). Understanding the communicative message means to draw a distinction between a piece of information and its act of transmission (Mitteilung), not to grasp the ultimate meaning of that message (Luhmann 1984, 203ff.).

¹⁵ See Kepplinger (1998) for Germany and Mc Nair (2000) for the UK.

¹⁶ Mc Nair (2000, 4) reports that in the 1997 election campaign in Britain the overloading of the audience with too much political coverage resulted in lower than usual ratings achieved by television news programmes.

¹⁷ This is a reversal of the conditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century public sphere described by Habermas (1963), where public attention was highest with regard to a scarce offer of public communication available through the limited news sources of that time. The public is made curious by the scarcity of information available from its rulers, but it is soon annoyed when it is confronted with an information overflow consisting of the many things the competent citizen has to know and even more things he does not want to know.

¹⁸ See Trenz (2006) for the reconstruction of pro-European attitudes in quality newspapers in the early phase of the constitutional debate.

¹⁹ See Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions: The Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for democracy, Dialogue and Debate. Brussels, 13.10.2005. COM(2005)494 final.

²⁰ The Commission speaks of the organisation of "broad ranging national debates on the future of Europe" through the involvement of national, regional and local Parliaments and through the national media.

²¹ In the words of Jean-Claude Juncker: „Wir haben im Juni 2005 eine Denkpause in Sachen Verfassungsvertrag eingelegt. Es darf nicht nur eine Pause sein, es muss auch Denken geben.“

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Chapter 10

The Europeanization of Public Spheres – modes of resonance and institutional anchorage

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The public sphere meets European studies

There is certainly no shortage of claims about the absence of a European public sphere. Within both academic and political discourse, the idea that none presently exists or will come into existence during the foreseeable future is fairly widespread. Debate about such a European public sphere really seems to have “taken off” during the mid 1990’s. Contributors to this early stage of the debate tended to conclude that a European public sphere neither existed, nor could come into existence for any foreseeable future, because there is no common European “nation” or common European political community displaying the trademarks commonly associated with the concept of the nation: historical connectedness, tangling of the destiny of the individual and the destiny of the nation, cultural homogeneity and, not least, language uniformity. Furthermore, many pointed to the absence of common European media (Gerhards 1993; 2000; 2002, Schlesinger 1995; 1999, Kopper 1997, Kielmansegg 1996).

There is hardly any point in denying that there is no common European “nation”, even though Europe could be said to display some

“national traits”, though not language uniformity. Nor is there any point in denying the absence of a common European media apart from a few examples of elitist media (Schlesinger & Kevin 2000). The question is, however, why one should consider a political community along the lines of a nation and common media a prerequisite of a public sphere. The premature dismissal of a European public sphere is implicitly or explicitly founded on the proposition that a proper European public sphere should take the shape of a fully integrated supranational public, literally transgressing or dissolving old national boundaries. The lack of a fully integrated European public sphere, according to this view, creates an asymmetry between the supranational political institutions of the EU and the persistence of national borders of civil society institutions and media.

Against such propositions about the absence of the European public sphere, this paper advances the claim that it is possible for a European public sphere to emerge, constituted by transnational resonance in national media within three overall structures of resonance: polity, policy and politics, anchored by the different institutions of the political system of the EU. Although it certainly does not propose a “best of all worlds” argument, the article thus opposes the conclusion that the absence of a European people and common European media means that a European public sphere is non-existent. This is in line with recent analysis of the Europeanization of national media. However, the article suggests that in order to understand the current status of the European public sphere and its future challenges it is necessary first to distinguish more clearly between the *modes of resonance* in the European public sphere and secondly to include more systematically the level and shape of the *institutional anchorage* of public sphere activity provided by the political system of the EU.

Before turning to these issues, however, we need first to turn our attention to the claim about the absence of a European public sphere and its theoretical sources. The first source is a strand of thinking in political theory about the public that tends to treat the bourgeois public sphere as a national

public sphere and furthermore to treat this particular instance of the public sphere as a general model of the public sphere. The second, perhaps less explicit source is the notion of “European integration” within EU-research. Both sources, however, can be seriously questioned. In order to establish a theoretical framework for discussions about the European public sphere we therefore need to recapitulate briefly – and even to strengthen – some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the generalization of the bourgeois public sphere and at the notion of European integration within EU-research.

Towards a differentiated public

As with most of the central ideas of our current vocabulary of politics and democracy, the notion of the public sphere can be traced back to the Greeks of the classical age – and probably beyond. It is a more recent author, Jürgen Habermas, who has, however, framed contemporary debates on the public sphere to such an extent that any work on the current state of the public sphere, will have to come to terms with his work. Since Habermas’ principal work “*Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*”, written in 1962, was translated into English in 1989, he has enjoyed the same status as a key authoritative figure on the theory of the public sphere in the English-speaking community as he had already attained among German speakers.¹ Subsequent translations have only served to reinforce this position. Even though Habermas has been criticised in many respects, his work remains absolutely central to current debates on the public sphere.

The debate on the European public sphere is no exception in this regard. The claim about the absence of a European public sphere usually builds more or less explicitly on a model of the public sphere influenced by Jürgen Habermas. There are certainly good reasons for this. All though the notion of the public sphere rarely takes centre stage in the more recent work of Habermas, his work does present the most comprehensive social and political theory of the potential for communicative mediation in modern

societies. Correspondingly, the point here is not that we should simply disregard or move beyond Habermas, but rather that it is possible to establish a general concept of the public sphere that requires the particular case of the European public sphere to be a fully integrated supranational public sphere. On such a reading, the proposition that the European public sphere could and should only take the shape of a fully integrated supranational public sphere seems to stem from a tendency to treat the particular case of the bourgeois public sphere as a general model of the public sphere.

There is certainly nothing new about such criticism. During the 1960's and 1970's several authors supplied corrections to Habermas, some of them almost reaching the same level of authority as the original analysis itself. Given the orientation of social science at the time, the fact that these corrections were based almost entirely on a stratificatory model of society is hardly surprising. In short, the main problem with Habermas' model was thought to be lack of differentiation according to a class-based schematic. The original model of the hegemonic bourgeois public sphere came under attack for not taking into account the existence of other class-specific and potentially counter-hegemonic public spheres, most notably of course the existence of a plebeian public sphere (Thompson 1963, Negt & Kluge 1972, Lottes 1979). Such a line of argument and the notion of "counter-publics" have been kept well alive through the 1980's and 1990's, not least aided by cultural studies (Hall, Fairclough).

What this line of argument has demonstrated very clearly is that public spheres in the historical era covered by Habermas' original analysis coincide neither with the boundaries of the political system of the state nor with the boundaries of the political community of the nation. Certainly, the bourgeois public sphere was a particular type of public sphere that displayed some of these characteristics: a clear orientation towards the fledgling constitutional states (more specifically parliaments) and an interpretation of common interest as "national interest". But the bourgeois public sphere was just one among alternative public spheres constituted within the boundaries of nation-states,

either in the shape of counter-publics based on a stratificatory model of society or of other public spheres based on other forms of differentiation. The general point is simply that the nation-state did not give rise to a single highly integrated national public sphere, but rather to an array of public spheres. Broadening this point, we could advance the claim that the constitution of a plurality of public spheres in relation to a particular political system is fully compatible with a general concept of the public sphere.

Insofar as we wish to use the singular term *the* public sphere, meaning the public sphere of *a* particular political system, we should accept that such a public sphere is not necessarily homogenous and highly integrated, but could just as well be heterogeneous and internally differentiated in autonomous and loosely coupled public spheres. Such a proposition is not an attempt to question the value of Habermas' original analysis of the bourgeois public sphere, but rather a criticism of the tendency to treat the particular case of the bourgeois public sphere as a general model. In writing the "Strukturwandel..." Habermas was, in his own words, "(...) not careful enough in distinguishing between an ideal type and the very context from which it was constructed" (Habermas 1992: 463). However, both Habermas himself and a substantial part of the literature inspired by his work – including most of the work on the European public sphere – has yet to recognise the full consequences of this insight. To some extent, the moral philosophy of Habermas' and the normative theory of deliberative democracy inspired by this work seem only to reinforce the idea that traits associated with the bourgeois public sphere are universal ideals to be met by any proper democracy. In another, more sociological vein Habermas has suggested a general concept of the public sphere, which is completely purged of the apotheosis of the bourgeois public sphere:

"The public sphere is a social phenomenon just as elementary as action, actor, association or collectivity, but it eludes the conventional sociological concepts of 'social order'. The public sphere cannot be

conceived as an institution and certainly not as an organisation. It is not even a framework of norms with differentiated competences and roles, membership regulations and so on. Just as little does it represent a system; although it permits one to draw internal boundaries, outwardly it is characterized by open, permeable and shifting horizons. The public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e. opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified *public opinions*” (Habermas 1996: 360).

Following such a concept of the public sphere, at least, there seems to be little reason to conceive the European public sphere as a fully integrated supranational public sphere. Rather, the definition above emphasizes three features critical to the public sphere. First, in terms of *morphology* the public sphere should be conceived as a network rather than a system, an institution, an organisation or any other stable social order based on clear behavioural norms and strict access criteria. One may draw internal boundaries in such a network, but externally the network remains open-ended. Interaction within the network can take place face-to-face, but this is rather the exception to the rule of “(...) the virtual presence of scattered readers, listeners and viewers linked by public media” (Habermas 1996: 361). Framing the notion of the public sphere within the distinction between networks and social order reminds us that the public sphere is an ethereal and fluctuating social domain rather than a formal political institution.

However, identifying the public sphere morphologically as a network is not enough. The public sphere also has to be conceived in terms of *function* in the conventional macro-sociological meaning of the term, i.e. as a question of the contribution of particular social domains to the reproduction of society. In short, the function of the public sphere is mediation between formal social orders and the everyday-life of common human capacity. In the writings of

Habermas as well as in public sphere theory in general, this distinction plays out as a distinction between “state” and “civil society”. In the theory of communicative action, Habermas expanded on this theme, distinguishing between a “system-world” of politics, bureaucracy and the market and a “life-world” of family, culture, morality etc. The basic logic remains the same however: society – or simply “the social” – is divided according to a binary schematic within which the function of the public sphere is the capacity to bridge this division. Consequently, the public sphere is never simply coterminous with the state or the expanded notion of “system-world”, but neither is it coterminous with civil society or “life-world”. The function of the public sphere is always and everywhere tied to its position “in-between” the world of formal social order and the world of common capacity (Postone 1992: 164).

This functionalist image of the public sphere is closely related to the third and final trademark of the public sphere: a particular *communicative form*. In the functionalist tradition of Parsons, Habermas associates the world of social orders with symbolically generalized media such as money or power. These mediums of steering (“steuerungsmedien”) support the instrumental communication of the life-world, or “goal-attainment” and “adaption” in Parsons original AGIL-schematic. The alternative to such media is the common communicative capacity of inter-subjective recognition and consensual will-formation in the world of everyday life, which bears some resemblance to “latency” and “value-commitment” in the AGIL-schematic. Following the proposition that the public sphere is identical with neither of these social domains, the question to be confronted is how we should conceive the mode of communicative that corresponds to the position of the public sphere in-between. The most widely held answer is that the public sphere is defined by the use of reason or rationality as a symbolically generalised medium of communication. Such an argument goes back to the “Strukturwandel”, in which Habermas associates the bourgeois public sphere with the emergence of a “historically unique” medium, i.e. the use of public

reason. Such a line of argument has since become even more prominent in the moral philosophy of Habermas, which basically is driven by the attempt to harness the enlightenment ideal of reason as a universal standard of communication. This is also the line of argument pursued by most authors who approach the public sphere from the perspective of normative theories of (deliberative) democracy.

In his more sociological work, however, Habermas seems to suggest an alternative medium, which is called “influence” (Habermas 1996: 363; 1987: 273 ff.). In the AGIL-schematic, the medium of influence is related to the function of integration, which is supported by courts of law and other legal institutions. This line of reasoning is clearly found in “Between facts and norms”, which deals both with two integrative potentials: law and public opinion. According to this view, the public sphere is in the final instance defined as communication aimed at influencing public opinion. The function of the public sphere depends on the possibility of employing a particular medium of communication, which can be subsumed neither under the “steuerungsmedien” of power, money etc., nor under the common communicative potential of everyday life. The medium of influence provides an alternative mode of communication based on the pursuit of influence on the public opinion and the risk – or the chance, depending on ones perspective – of being influenced by public opinion.

In sum, a sociological concept of the public sphere provides little support for the claim that the European public sphere could only take the shape of a fully integrated supranational public sphere. Such a claim seems to rest on three assumptions: that a political system requires one homogenous and internally undifferentiated public sphere, that civil society means “nation” or “people” and that common communicative capacity requires a common “natural” language. However, the function of the public sphere does not require that the state or any other political system yield only one, fully integrated public sphere. What is required is simply an open-ended network, subject to various internal boundaries. The interpretation of civil society as

nation or people certainly finds some footing in certain areas of democratic theory and the rulings of the German constitutional court, but it is not a proposition of democratic theory in general (as amply demonstrated by cosmopolitan democracy) and even to a lesser extent a proposition essential to a general concept of the public sphere. The interpretation of common communicative capacity as mastery of a common natural language also seems to miss the point. The public sphere does not require a common natural language, but simply employment of a particular communicative medium transcending natural languages, i.e. the medium of influence.

From supranational integration to transnational resonance

As mentioned above, the medium of influence is tied to the function of integration in the original AGIL-schematic. The idea that integration is the essential function of the public sphere, supported by its particular medium, forms a very strong current in much public sphere theory. However, within the framework suggested above, the notion of integration is substituted for the less demanding notion of mediation. Or, following Habermas' long-time comrade in arms in terms of inspiration from Parsons – Niklas Luhmann – we could advance the claim that *loose coupling* is sufficient – and maybe even preferable – rather than tight coupling, let alone strict integration. Conceptually substituting the integration or the tight couplings of a stable order for the loose couplings of communicative network corresponds very well with the turn in EU-studies from European integration to Europeanization.

It is certainly no surprise that the idea of integration as the essential function of the public sphere resonated well within EU-studies. The first decades of EU-research were framed by a basic distinction between integration and non-integration, largely corresponding to the theoretical positions of neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists. As a research

programme, EU-studies proceeded from the assumption that the effects of European cooperation within the various treaties could be framed analytically as a question of integration vs. non-integration. However, this approach has been seriously challenged during the last five to ten year by the concept of *Europeanization*. As noted by several observers, an authoritative definition of this concept has yet to emerge (Olsen 2002, Vink 2003), but nonetheless, Europeanization is generally used to designate the transformation of existing institutions as a consequence of EU-membership. Whereas earlier EU-research tended to follow the simple calculus of “more EU, more integration”, Europeanization research holds that a strengthening of EU-corporation is perfectly compatible with persisting differences or even increased differentiation (most explicitly stated by Heritiér et. al. 200X).

Whereas the theory of European integration framed transformation and change as a consequence of EU-membership within the distinction between integration and non-integration, Europeanization research tends rather to distinguish between convergence and divergence (differentiation). Strengthening of EU-corporation in terms of new policy areas added to the portfolio included in the treaty framework or transference of competencies to the EU-level may result in lack of change in existing institutions or, in the case of change occurring, in convergence just as well as in differentiation. It follows that Europeanization research also implies rethinking the relation between different Europeanized units. Europeanization does not produce integration, but institutions subject to Europeanization may become more or less tightly coupled as a consequence of Europeanization. The critical issue here is that coupling designates relations between autonomous units rather than the merging of such units into a new system. Strictly speaking, integration requires the disintegration of the constituent elements that is supposed to form a new totality. Coupling, on the other hand, designates relations that do not fundamentally oppose the autonomy of those tied together.

The bulk of Europeanization research has concerned the formal political and administrative institutions of member states (for overviews, see Risse...).² However, the move from European integration to Europeanization has also made its mark within the debate about the European public sphere (Semetko, de Vreese & Peter 2000). A consequence is a research programme attempting to study the emergence of European public sphere as question of Europeanization of national public spheres. The Europeanization perspective has challenged the idea that the lack of joint European media organisations and the lack of a common European nation in terms of culture and language is sufficient evidence to deny to the existence, let alone the future possibility, of a European public sphere. What is offered instead is the notion that a certain level of couplings between more or less Europeanized national public spheres may in fact be sufficient to earn the title of a European public sphere, or at least the title of an “emerging public sphere”.

Following the well-known proposition within media studies that analysis of media content provides the most “cost-effective” indicator of public sphere activity, a number of studies have attempted to measure the level of Europeanization in national media. Rather than studying (or simply lamenting the lack of) common European media, these studies provide insight into the level of what has been called the “transnational resonance” of EU-matters in national media (Eder & Kantner 2000, Risse 2003). Transnational resonance neither implies common European media nor a unitary European culture. Transnational resonance simply requires that the political communication carried by national media deals sufficiently with EU-matters, either through reference directly to the EU-institutions or decisions (made or wanted) at the EU-level or through reference to other member states in connection with EU-related issues. This kind of Europeanization has been designated as “compensatory Europeanization of national public discourse” in relation to the high level of Europeanization of formal political and administrative institutions (Meyer 2005: 124).

Observing transnational resonance – three critical issues

So far we have established that the particular concept of the public sphere against which the existence of a European public sphere is often vehemently denied seems to build on a well-established tradition of generalising and idealizing the particular case of the bourgeois public sphere within public sphere theory. Drawing on another strand of reasoning by Habermas and others, it is possible to establish a more general sociological concept of the public sphere as an open-ended and internally differentiated communicative network. Furthermore, we have established that EU-studies have turned from the concept of European integration to the concept of Europeanization. Both of these theoretical sources make it possible to reframe the debate about the European public sphere as a question of transnational resonance rather than supranational integration.

However, even among scholars who more or less agree on the fundamentals of the Europeanization perspective disagreement still persists on the extent to which a European public sphere can be said to have emerged or even to have matured. One group of studies seems to support the claim that a European public sphere has already emerged (Eder & Trenz 2003, Risse 2003, Trenz 2002, 2004, van de Steeg 2001, 2003). Such conclusions have also led to more optimistic proposals about the (deliberative) democratic potential of the EU than is usually voiced (Eder 2000; 2003, Eriksen & Fossum 2000, 2002, Eriksen 2000). A second group of seems to conclude that there is some evidence of an emerging European public sphere, but still cautions against one-sided and overly optimistic conclusions (Koopmans & Erbe 2003, Koopmans & Pfetsch 2004, Schlesinger & Kevin 2000, Meyer 2005). Finally a group of studies seems to find no or little evidence of a European public sphere, based on claims about insufficient coverage of EU-issues in national media and the persistence of national framing (Trenz 2000, Peter, Semetko &

de Vreese 2003, de Vreese 2002, Kevin 2003).

The reason for such variance is, to a large extent, disagreement about what constitutes a sufficient level of Europeanization or “transnational resonance” in national media. Conclusions in the negative tend to favour fairly restrictive demands on the EU-issues level in the national media and by implication a certain level of convergence as well. More affirmative conclusions tend to favour less restrictive demands. In other words, the question is how these central concepts should be specified into operational standards of evaluation when facing the empirical material generated by a particular content analysis. At least three standards seem to be critical in this regard: the level of EU-issues reported in media, the level of convergence or divergence between different media and different national settings and the question of European vs. national framing. Consequently, it is necessary to establish a position on such issues before moving on to the different resonance structures of the European public spheres and their institutional anchorage.

The *first* issue concerns the amount of EU-material reported in national media. A European public sphere constituted by transnational resonance of EU-matters in national media obviously requires a certain level of reporting on EU-matters in national media. The question is, however, just how much reporting is required. It seems fair to say that there is a wide-spread intuition, even among scholars who more or less support the claim about the existence of a European public sphere, that the level of EU-reporting is too low. Different analyses have yielded different numbers. One study suggests that 9.7% of the media in Germany refer to the EU or its institutions and only 3.4% place prime focus on EU issues (Rosenwerth et. al. 2005). Another widely cited number states that EU-coverage in TV ranges as low as 2-3% during “routine” periods, somewhere between 4 and 12% during “regular” events such as the EU-summits and around 20-25% for “unique” events such as the launch of the Euro (de Vreese 2002: 77). In drawing up these conclusions, however, de Vreese acknowledges that it is hard to determine whether the coverage is too peripheral or minimal to sustain claims about a European

public sphere, but leans towards an interpretation of the results as “poor” (de Vreese 2002: 116, see also Peter, Semetko & de Vreese 2003). However, de Vreese also warns against the simplified assumption that “more EU is always better” from a public sphere perspective since there “(...) are no criteria for evaluating adequacy in terms of volume of coverage” (de Vreese 2002: 116). This line of reasoning resonates well with Norris’ earlier claim that there “(...) is no simple and universally agreed yardstick to evaluate adequacy” (Norris 2000: 187).

Following agenda-setting theory, one can attempt to evaluate the level of EU-reporting against “real world” indicators or the agendas of politicians and citizens. A commonly used example of “real world” indicators is that just above 70% of national legislation is in fact implementation of EU-decisions within certain policy areas. However, even devout EU-researchers would probably have second thoughts about having to live with 80% of the national media content devoted to EU-matters. More generally, the idea that it is possible to provide measures for the “real world” importance of certain policies or issues can easily become overly simplified. Media content is always a reduction of a complex reality: there is always more “out there” than there is in the media. The logic behind comparison between media content and policy agendas and civic agendas is somewhat different. Rather than evaluation against real world indicators, the standard of evaluation is one of balance between the media agenda, the political agenda and the civic agenda (see for example Norris 2000). However, idealized notions of perfect symmetry between media content, policy programmes and civic interests makes little more sense than the notion of correspondence with real world indicators. Real world indicators, asymmetries between agendas or direct expressions of dissatisfaction with media performance can provide some background for discussion and crude checks on media content, but they cannot serve as the basis on which to judge the European public sphere non-existent. Following Europeanization theory in general, the fact remains that *any* level of EU-reporting is in fact evidence of Europeanization or transnational resonance.

Careful reflection in the context of particular studies may of course lead to calls for more visibility of EU-matters in national media, but a low level of EU-reporting in general is not in itself evidence of the absence of European public sphere when seen from a Europeanization perspective.

The *second* issue concerns the *synchronicity* of EU-reporting between national media settings. The definition of transnational resonance suggests (referring to Habermas) that national media need to deal with “(...) *the same issues at the same time using the same criteria of relevance*” (Eder & Kantner 2000: 315). According to this view, national media have to be synchronized for a European public sphere to emerge: media in different national media should ideally report on the same issues at the same point in time. However, one may raise the question of why synchronicity should be taken as a minimal condition of transnational resonance. Obviously, one may find such synchronicity appealing just as one might call for more EU-reporting in a particular national setting. Furthermore, it would seem that even a revised concept of the public sphere, drawing on the later works of Habermas support such a demand, since it provides the theoretical backdrop (together with Dewey) for Eder & Kantners “discourse theoretical determination” of the concept of the public sphere (Eder & Kantner 2000: 314 pp.)

However, one may ask why synchronicity should be a minimal condition of public sphere activity. Within national publics, no one seems to be bothered by the fact that stories move from media to media over extended periods of time, let alone by the fact that some media do not take up certain stories at all. The point is rather that resonance increases with the level of synchronicity, which is true in national publics as well as in a European public. The only difference is that in the latter case, we are dealing with synchronicity across borders. But in general there seems to be no reason why issues that receive attention in one particular national setting or even a particular newspaper or TV-channel without simultaneous attention in other national settings should be disqualified as contributions to a European public sphere of transnational resonance. Just as a European public sphere does not

simply require “more EU”, it does not simply require more synchronicity. Some EU-decisions are bound to be of more interest in national setting than others.

The issue of synchronicity is closely related to the *third* and final issue: the importance of “framing” for the European public sphere. In a widely cited definition, Gerhards has suggested that in order for Europeanization to occur, reporting of EU-matters must be conducted according to a common European frame rather than national frames and concerns (Gerhards 2002). I would argue, however, that the notion of a common European framing that supersedes – or rather dissolves – national frames, effectively moves us from transnational resonance and Europeanization and back into supranational European integration. In fact, the concept of a common European frame seems potentially at odds with the concept of the public sphere in so far as communication within the public sphere is about the fight between *particular* interests for influence on public opinion. Communication in the public sphere does not require that participants assumes the identity of the community in which they participate, but simply that they accept certain rules of communication. In short, the public sphere requires certain procedural commitments, but certainly not a comment to a particular frame as the given definition of the common interest. Making a similar point, Risse has suggested that what is needed is not a common European frame, but rather similar “meaning structures” and “patterns interpretation” across national media (Risse 2003: 4). Similarly, Eder & Kantner refer to the same criteria of relevance. However, even such a claim may be questioned. In the final instance, the presence of different meaning structures, discourses or interpretative frames is not at odds with transnational resonance. Transnational relations do not require national boundaries – in terms of frames or otherwise – to dissolve. In fact, as the debate about Europeanization and transnational relations in general has amply demonstrated, transnational relations may increase simultaneously with the strengthening of national boundaries.

Modes of resonance and the political system of the EU

Having established that it is in fact possible to observe varying levels of transnational resonance of EU-issues in national media, we now need to turn to the question of the form and content of such resonance. On this point Koopmans & Pfetsch (2003) suggest that we distinguish between different varieties of Europeanization, more specifically vertical Europeanization (links between the EU-level and the national level) and horizontal Europeanization (links between different member states). This distinction is certainly useful and provides information about the prominence of EU-institutions vis-à-vis national actors. However, it fails to deal more substantially with the dynamics of Europeanization and the political system generating it, i.e. the governance system of the EU. Thus, there is a need to bring the political system of the EU “back in” to the debate about Europeanization of national media. Such an approach focuses on the different *structures* or *modes* of transnational resonance generated by the political system of the EU, making it possible to identify the weaker and the more developed modes of resonance and thus to point more accurately to the strengths and weaknesses of the political system of the EU in terms of generating transnational resonance. The relations between the political system of the EU need to be resolved on at least two levels: modes of governance and institutions.

The *first* issue concerns the question of how to understand the political “nature of the beast”, i.e. the system of the EU. It has been demonstrated amply by EU-research that the institutions of the EU do not function in splendid isolation, but in different clusters (which may be overlapping) depending on the type of decisions to be made. The best established model of the EU along such lines of reasoning is the “multi-level governance” model, which portrays the EU in terms of different levels within a spectrum ranging from high to low politics (Peterson, Risse, Kohler-Koch, Jachtenfuchs). Others

attempt rather to distinguish between the operative procedures of legal, distributive and “soft” modes of decision-making (Knill & Lenschow, Wallace, Esmark). However, using a more general distinction between *polity*, *policy* and *politics*, less tailored to the particularities of the EU system, will make comparison between the EU and other political systems, not least national political systems, easier.

The distinction between polity, policy and politics is, in the final instance, based on a proposition, well known from older strands of political “system theory”, that any modern political system tends to display these three aspects in varying degrees. Polity refers to the formal organisation of the political system. Policy, on other hand, refers to the “operational” plans, reforms and strategies etc. of different policy areas. Whereas polity and policy are based on more general distinctions such as form/content or formal/informal, politics is to a large extent “the odd one out”. Nonetheless, politics can be said to refer to formation and contestation between social identities or interests. Applying such a framework of polity, policy and politics to the Europeanization of public sphere creates the expectation that these different domains of the political system also create different structures of resonance in the public sphere. This is not an uncommon thought in public sphere theory either, since public sphere “purists” like John Rawls have used a distinction very much akin to this one in order to argue for a restriction of public debate (or public “reason”) to issues of “constitutional essentials” and “basic justice” (Political Liberalism), i.e. polity.

The *second* issue concerns the concrete *institutions* specified in the treaty framework of the EU – or established through secondary legislation and decisions. Conclusions about the lack of a European public sphere are often backed by claims about institutional barriers such as media ownership structure, journalistic news criteria, lack of social organisation and, not least, the alleged complexity and incommunicability of EU-institutions. The claim that it is in fact possible to observe an emerging European public sphere in terms of transnational resonance between more or less Europeanized national

media implies that we are no longer forced to consider the role of institutions in terms of institutional barriers. Rather, we need to assess the role of institutions in both furthering and hindering transnational resonance in national media. Pursuing such a line of argument, analysis of media structure, source networks and news criteria has already challenged the conventional wisdom about the media as an institutional barrier to the development of the European public sphere. Rather, media seem to serve as a facilitating factor, even assuming “their own voice” (Koopmans & Pfetsch 2004). However, the role of the EU-institutions in facilitating, vis-à-vis hindering, the strengthening of transnational resonance – the public sphere-making capacity of the EU-institutions – has not been subjected to the same level of scrutiny (but see Meyer 1999, Anderson & McLeod 2004, Eriksen 2004).

To some extent, there is a need to bring political institutions back into the debate about the European public sphere, not least because political institutions do play a privileged role in terms of public sphere formation and development. The formal organisation of a particular political system constitutes the most obvious set of conditions for the formation of public spheres. At least, this is the case for so-called “strong publics”(Fraser 1992). Strong publics are constituted in relation to a particular institution or set of institutions as opposed to “weak” publics constituted outside the political system. Strong publics are institutionally anchored in the political system in question, whereas weak publics are not. Ever since Habermas’ original analysis of the bourgeois public sphere, the parliament has been regarded as the pivotal institutional anchorage point for public sphere formation. It is evident, however, that parliaments are no longer the sole *anchorage point* of strong publics: “Parliaments are quintessential strong publics but there are others (...) there are also transnational strong publics such as panels, tribunals, committees, conventions etc.” (Eriksen 2004: 11, see also Eriksen & Fossum 2002, Brunkhorst 2002).³

Such *institutional polycentrism* is no less important in the context of the EU. Notwithstanding differences in opinion about the “nature of the beast”,

the institutional architecture of the EU is made of a growing array of rapidly changing institutions, each more or less without precedents in other regional governance systems. Obviously, national political systems are not strictly mono-centric, but the formal institutional polycentrism is one of the more striking features of the EU governance system when compared to the continuing dominance of parliaments and in some cases presidencies in national political systems. It does not follow that the institutional anchorage of public sphere activity in the political system of the EU is simply stronger. But the institutional polycentrism of the EU makes it possible for different modes of transnational resonance to have several – and different – anchorage points as compared to more or less mono-centric systems. Let us now look more closely at the different modes of resonance and their institutional anchorage.

Transnational polity resonance

In general, “polity” constitutes a resonance structure within public spheres in the sense that a substantial part of the political communication within public spheres is devoted to question about the formal organisation of the political system, institutional competencies, basic rights of citizens etc. Correspondingly, polity resonance is primarily driven by major events, which open up for fundamental redistributions of power and competencies within the political system. It follows that the intensity of polity resonance increases with frequency of such events. The archetypical event is of course the revision or foundation of the political system in question: the constitution or the treaty. It is hardly controversial to state that the history of the EU is very rich in terms of such polity events as compared to national political systems. During the twenty years between 1985 and 2005 the EU has seen four treaty revisions; the accession of 10 new member states and a constitutional treaty was brought to a standstill by referendums in France and the Netherlands. If there have been debates about constitutional revision in the member states during the same period, the chances are that they have been linked to the

questions about the constitutionality of EU-membership. Events such as the much debated corruption scandal in the Commission can also be considered polity events. In general, one might tentatively advance the claim that polity resonance is in fact much more intense and well developed in relation to the EU than in most (if not all) national political systems.

Major polity events, such as treaty revisions and the launch of the Euro, which generate the highest levels of polity resonance are not limited to particular institutions, but tend rather to include all EU-institutions at some level or another. Nonetheless, some EU-institutions can be said to function as anchorage points both for major polity events and during periods without such major events. First among these is the European Council. As is well known, the European Council is not a permanent institution, but rather consists of continuous semi-annual meetings between government leaders of the member states. These “summit” meetings serve as forums for deciding on the “grand issues” and the overall direction of the EU. Some summit meetings, such as 2002 summit in Copenhagen which finalised the accession terms of the 10 new member states, are based on quintessential polity agendas. Other agendas may be more policy specific, but even these tend to gravitate towards polity, generating discussions about the overall future of the EU etc. The summit meetings always boost media coverage above routine periods, but become especially important when major polity events are on the agenda (de Vreese 2002, Norris 2000). In addition, the summit meetings conclude a half-year period during which EU-issues will usually have received substantial coverage in the member state holding the presidency of the EU.

Another important anchorage point is not a political institution in narrow sense, but balances on a knife’s edge between the political realm and the legal realm, i.e. the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In a number of instances, fundamental questions about the competencies of EU-institutions and national institutions have been settled by the rulings of the ECJ. The ECJ has developed what has been labelled a “constitutional practice”, which was not foreseen in the treaty texts themselves (Weiler, Dehousse, Joerges).

Following the same logic, national supreme courts or constitutional courts also serve as institutional anchorage points in some instances, such as the rulings of German constitutional court in 1996 and of the Danish Supreme Court in 1998. It seems well established that the ECJ does not receive stable coverage in national media. However, it should be remembered that the cases and rulings of the ECJ do in fact sometimes assume the status of polity events, which become the centre of attention in national settings.

The European Parliament (EP), like national parliaments, can also assume the status of institutional anchorage points for polity resonance. In general, elections and parliamentary communication in between elections tend to blend all three modes of resonance in different ways. When election campaigning and party programmes rely heavily on polity issues, however, parliaments generate substantial polity resonance. Elections to the EP constitute an interesting case in this regard. EP-elections have clearly tended to play out as polity-elections, meaning elections based on campaigning about constitutional issues, the proper division of competencies between the EU-level and the national level etc. Protest movements obviously demonstrate the logic most clearly, but to the extent that conventional political parties pursue the same type of campaign strategy, EP-elections tend to turn into *de facto* referendums along the yes/no-divide. However, to the extent that campaign strategies and party programmes more generally are based on specific policy issues, EP-elections move into field of policy resonance (which is exactly what happened in the EP-2004 election in Denmark, see Esmark & Ørsten, forthcoming 2005).

A final institution to be mentioned is the Convention on “the future of Europe” that drafted the Constitutional Treaty. The Convention marks an interesting addition to the array of EU-institutions, modelled on other “constitution-making” forums of the past. It included representatives from national governments, the EP and the Commission and was specifically aimed at generating a more open public debate as compared to the earlier technical approach to treaty revision. Several analyses have already been conducted to

discern whether the Convention fulfilled its goal. The Convention process consisted of 38 plenary sessions and received input in the shape of 180 written statements from NGO's. None the less, some remain doubtful about the level of resonance generated by the Convention (Schutter 2003, Eriksen 2004). In short, most seems to regard the Convention as an interesting addition, which does hold great potential in terms of institutional anchorage of public sphere activity, but "needs more work". However, one should bear in mind that drafting the Constitutional Treaty and especially the subsequent referendums in France and the Netherlands constituted one of the most decisive polity events in the history of the EU. In-depth analysis is still to come, but it does not seem controversial to state that the "fall of the treaty" resonated intensively throughout national media for an extended period of time. Proponents of the "common European frame" argument would hold that the national framing of debates in France and the Netherlands disqualifies these as contributions to a European public sphere. Based on the perspective suggested here, however, the resonance generated by these national referendums throughout the other member states constituted a perfect example of a vibrant European public sphere driven by a major polity event.

Transnational policy resonance

The term policy resonance refers to public and political communication driven by policy problems and agendas within specific policy areas such as agriculture, the environment, social policy etc. In other words, policy resonance is not driven by fundamental constitutional events, but rather by the day-to-day business of concrete policy-making. In turning our attention to this aspect of the political system, we are entering somewhat unclear terrain in terms of public sphere theory. To some extent the discussion reiterates the long-running discussion about the relationship between parliamentary decision-making and corporatism, in relation to which public sphere theory has traditionally allied itself with the former, taking corporatism primarily to

mean “closed networks” and “secret negotiations” as opposed to decision-making open to the scrutinizing gaze of the public eye (Esmark 1999). However, even though much public sphere theory remains suspicious of the policy differentiation of the public sphere, there seems to be a budding recognition that this integral part of any modern political system is not necessarily antithetical to a general concept of the public sphere.

Turning to policy resonance we have moved from the fundamental issue of how the political system should be organised, issues of “basic justice” and rights etc. and into the realm of reforms, strategies and programmes in relation to specific policy programmes. In short, political communications have moved from the general to the specific, or perhaps rather from form to content. The concerns voiced about policy differentiation and its tendency to generate corporatist structures, however, usually refers to the issue of actor inclusion. In short, policy areas tend to generate a segment of specialised actors engaged in more or less professional communication, sometimes labelled as “technocratic”, which is exclusive to substantial parts of the citizenry. There is certainly a fair amount of truth to this image: policy resonance is in most cases less inclusive than polity resonance. However, proceeding from the general concept of the public sphere suggested here, the fact that policy resonance does not include every citizen acknowledged by the political system is not sufficient to rule policy resonance out of the public sphere. The point is not that policy resonance is simply exclusive, but rather that it is based on another principle of inclusion. Whereas inclusion in polity issues is based on citizenship, inclusion in policy segments is based on the principle of affectedness known from both deliberative democracy and associative democracy (Esmark forthcoming 2006). Adding the observation that being represented by interest organisations and “a special class of deliberators” (Guttmann & Thompson) is not incompatible with the concept of the public sphere it is possible to produce a less one-sided view of the role that policy resonance plays in the European public sphere – and other public sphere for that matter.

It is certainly true that in many instances policy resonance does not spread through that large national media to the European populations, but rather through specialist media and direct communications between political-administrative institutions and organised interests (including the “less organised” NGO’s and new social movements). However, such interactions may in fact constitute “segmented publics” (Eriksen 2004) across national boundaries, which contribute to the overall, internally differentiated, communicative network of the European public sphere. Secondly, policy resonance is also mediated through national mass-media. The policy coverage of “routine periods” may be very low (de Vreese 2002), but some policy areas do in fact seem to receive substantial attention. Finally policy resonance can become very intense when certain policy areas develop into media storms, such as BSE or farmers protesting against agricultural policy etc.

The institutional anchorage of policy resonance is provided by the two most dominant institutions in the political system of the EU, i.e. the European Commission and the Council of Ministers. Both institutions are divided into specific policy areas. In the case of the Commission, policy differentiation runs from the Commissioners themselves down through the Cabinets and General Directorates. In the case of the Council, policy differentiation starts at the level of Council meetings and runs down through Coreper and the Council work groups. The alignment of policy differentiation within these institutions also includes the EP to some extent. The EP hosts an array of policy specific workgroups headed by the so-called “rapporteurs”. However, there is little doubt that the Commission plays a privileged role in the policy-production of the EU, not least due to its proposal-making prerogative. The Presidency should also be mentioned in this context. This has a very concrete agenda-setting role in relation to the summit, but more generally, it works on the basis of a programme which highlights certain policy areas as especially important.

However, the qualities of the Commission as an institutional anchorage point for public sphere activity have certainly not always been evaluated

favourably. Even setting aside the accusations of technocratic discourse and inaccessibility, which is more often than not a matter of reiterating a much too restrictive concept of the public sphere, it seems evident that the Commission is still plagued by some deficiencies in terms of institutional anchorage. For one thing, the Commission is boring: basically, it is a public administration headed by boring ministers. The one exception seems to be strong leaders such as Jaques Delors. Furthermore, the Commission's favoured way of communicating is through white papers, green papers and other reports, which are essentially preparatory documents in the legislative process. None the less, there is a substantial amount of policy resonance throughout networks around the Commission. In particular the decision to share its proposal-making prerogative and stay open to policy-suggestions – albeit by organised interests – is important in this respect. That said, the Commission has in fact resolved to improve its communicative capacity, partly as a response to earlier critical voices (Meyer 1999), which has resulted in campaigns such as "Citizens first", "Building Europe Together" and the "Euro-Campaign".

In addition, the Commission does figure in the national mass-media. In fact, one study suggests that the Commission receives the most attention in Danish quality news papers (Ørsten 2004). It is less prominent on TV, which is in no small part due to the lack of good image opportunities. In Denmark at least, the same faded still of the Berlaymont-building has probably served as background for a reporter – perhaps even just by telephone – in almost any story making reference to the Commission. Some would point to the fact that the Commission figures prominently in conflict stories based on national frames, i.e. "EU threatens this and that". However, if the substance of the story is in fact concrete policy initiatives and programmes, national framing or negative evaluation is not in itself evidence against transnational resonance contributing to a European public sphere. The corruption scandal of 1999, on the other hand, should rather be considered a polity event generating substantial resonance, which did in fact lead to intense and fairly synchronous

coverage in the national media (Trenz 2000).

The Council of ministers is not any easier to evaluate in terms of its capacities for institutional anchorage of transnational resonance. For one thing, the Council is not a clear and coherent institution, but rather an ongoing series of policy-specific meetings between the relevant ministers of the member states. Furthermore, the Council is in fact fairly closed in terms of dealing with publicity both at the political level and the administrative levels of Coreper and the Council work-groups. On the other hand, the Council does provide anchorage for debate about policy initiatives within a discourse about national positions and interests, which has some appeal in the national media. National ministers entering or returning from, or simply referring to, negotiations in the Council is clearly one of the ways that policy resonance moves into national media. In national TV, the Council is preferred over the Commission; this has to do in no small measure with the possibility of “photo-ops” for national ministers in attractive surroundings. In quality papers, the Council seems to come in second (Ørsten 2004).

Transnational political resonance

As mentioned above, the concept of politics is clearly the most complicated in the distinction between the three domains of the political system. More specifically, to what extent the political can in fact be considered a realm in itself or whether it is in fact engrained in polity and policy is an open question. Remaining with the idea that the resonance of politics can be analytically separated from polity and policy, however, we can conceive of politics as communication driven by identity formation and identity conflict. The archetypical example of politics in this sense is of course economically defined classes transformed into parties and clearly defined ideologies in the hey-day of party politics and parliamentary governance. However, party politics has moved into the realm of polity and policy and political identities tend rather to emerge as the cultural identities of “identity

politics”, i.e. gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion etc., organised in loose networks, new social movements or simply not organised at all. In terms of media, these new identities are also marked by changing patterns of media consumption, moving from conventional mass media to the “new media landscape” of internet and mobile phones.

If there is indeed a European public sphere missing, it seems to be the public sphere of transnational resonance of politics. But before pointing to the deficiencies of the EU in this regard, we would do well to remember that we are dealing with a problem common to most political systems. It is generally acknowledged that the reconfiguration of politics constitutes a problem for most political systems since they have not been able to adapt to this reorientation of political identities, mobilisation and motivation. To some extent, politics has been considered the domain of “counter-publics” or “weak publics” constituted outside the formal political system. But the fact remains that even those publics generated “bottom-up” need some level of institutional anchorage if they are indeed to be “publics”, meaning social formations driven by the notion of influence and recognition. This anchorage point used to be the parliament, but parliaments seem no longer to do the job, in the case of either the EP or national parliaments.

Adding insult to injury the EP fares even worse than national parliaments due to low voter turnout (in spite of direct elections since 1979), low esteem and a lack of interest in the national media (Anderson & McLeod 2004). Even in two weeks of attention-span usually allotted to campaigning prior to EP-elections in the national media, interest remains half-hearted at best (Esmark & Ørsten 2005). In short, the EP seems to be unable to generate resonance, be it the old-fashioned way or as an anchorage point for new political identities. It remains to be seen whether the EU will be the first political system to resolve the riddle of how to adapt to the reorientation of political identities. The resurgence of “values” could in fact be interpreted as a step in such a direction. Campaigns about Europe as an alternative to American imperialism, a strong focus on gender equality, and the heated

debate on whether or not to include references to the “Christian heritage” in the Constitutional Treaty could all be interpreted as cases that do have some resonance in terms of political identities.

Conclusion

This article has provided an argument about the existence of a European public sphere constituted by transnational resonance in national media within three overall structures of resonance: polity, policy and politics, anchored by the different institutions of the political system of the EU. Although certainly not proposing a “best of all worlds” argument, the article thus opposes the conclusion that a European public sphere is non-existent due to the absence of a European people and common European media. Firstly, it is possible to observe a level of transnational polity resonance in relation to the EU which is both more vibrant and more frequent than in most national systems. Polity resonance is “event-driven” and the EU has been marked by a striking number of major polity events during the last two decades. Secondly, policy resonance seems well developed, but varies from one policy area to the next and is obviously also limited to the array of policy areas included in the portfolio of the EU. The Achilles heel of the European public sphere thus seems to be the resonance of politics. However, this is not specifically a problem within the European public sphere, but is commonly regarded as an overall crisis of politics.

Notes

¹ We should of course not forget Dewey or the importance of the Rawls-Habermas debate in the American debate on the public sphere.

² Furthermore, Europeanization usually implies observing the level of EU as the independent variable and national or local institutions as the dependent variable (more or less systematically),

as opposed to the study of European integration, which tends to explain the outcome of critical junctures in the history of the EC/EU by reference to national interests or positions. Even though Europeanization research has so far focused on national institutions, there is no a priori reason to exclude other institutions.

³ The quote reflects the original terminology of Fraser, which tends to treat a strong public as synonymous with the institution itself. I find this definition overly restrictive in a double sense: it limits institutions to concrete organisational settings and limits the public sphere to activities in this organisational setting. The term institutional anchorage acknowledges the importance of institutions without limiting the public sphere to the spatial and temporal boundaries of these institutions.

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Chapter 11

Eurosceptics or Critical Europeanists? Social Movements and Europe¹

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We are not in favor or against more European integration, but for a different EU integration. We do not want an EU superstate (Euromärsche, 216).

European integration is good if the EU constitution is democratic, participative and the decisions are supranational. But it depends on its content (SOS Racismo, 332).

We aren't unconditional Europeanists, but Europeanists conditioned to the fulfillment of the social part in which there is presently a deficit. If this is fulfilled we will be with Europe (Red con Voz, 313)

“Our wish is for the European level to become always more important. The European Social Forums, for example, are opportunities for this. One of the fundamental points of the first European Social Forum in Florence was to bring civil society from European countries” (Beati i Costruttori di Pace, 535).

1. Eurosceptics or critical Europeanists? An introduction

Are social movement organizations euro-sceptic, euro-pragmatic, or Euro-opportunist? Or do they accept the EU as a new level of governance they try to put pressure upon? Do they provide a critical capital, necessary for the political structuring of the EU (Bartolini 2005), or do they disrupt the process of EU integration?

This paper addresses these issues, locating social movements in a larger scenario of political conflicts on European integration. Many studies on the subject reveal increasing levels of scepticism, underlining the end of the *permissive consensus* based on the assumption that European policies need only be efficient to be legitimate. The design of the European institutions, as well as the EU's policy choices, are more and more often the target of severe criticism from a plethora of local, national, and supranational actors. European integration is no longer operating under "technocratic cover" – or by tacit consensus (Hooghe and Marks 1995). On the contrary, open and ongoing conflicts between coalitions of governments and various collective actors – not always acting on the basis of national interests – are taking place. Along with increasing numbers of protests against European targets (Imig 2004), opinion polls repeatedly confirm a growing impatience with European institutions, which around half of Europe's citizens are unsatisfied with (Pache 2001; Mechet and Pache 2000). Accompanying this lack of faith in the European institutions in many countries is a fall in turnout at European elections (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999). Even before the clear rejection of the constitutional treaty in the French and Dutch referenda, the 2004 European Parliament elections had seen the lowest turnout since voting began in 1979 (45.5%). Qualitative research on conceptions of Europe finds frequent references to the benefits of European integration in terms of affluence and economic growth, but also misgivings about a level of decision-

making seen as opaque, distant, irresponsible, and inefficient (Diez Medrano 2003, ch. 2). In fact the European institutions are usually criticised for being bureaucratic, inefficient, and not very transparent (Le Torrec et al. 2001, 8).

The term *eurosepticism* emerged during the last decade precisely to underline the end of the permissive consensus in the EU, indicating attitudes critical of the process of European integration. Not that Europe's construction had been an area of consensus in the past: within these same institutions two visions of Europe have long been pitted against each other – sometimes the intergovernmental vision took the upper hand, sometimes the federal one. The governments of the various member states have also put forward contrasting positions on the characteristics, speed, and intensity of the integration process. Yet until the end of the 1990s the debate on Europe rarely involved public opinion or, at least, non-institutional actors. In fact, a consensual approach based on weak preferences prevailed, although to differing degrees. Eurosepticism has been especially used to define those who oppose (with different degrees of radicalism) the building of supranational institutions at the European level.

Most social movement organizations, however, proclaimed their Europeanism, as resonating with their general orientation towards supranational multilateralism (Smith 2005) and rooted cosmopolitanisms (Tarrow 2005). Scholars also pointed to a positive role played by critical civil society actors. The presence of a critical social capital works as a challenge and a resource for European institution building in a similar way to what happened in the construction of the Nation-State (della Porta 2005).

As well as discussing the degree and form of scepticism or criticism of social movement organizations towards Europe, we shall also investigate cross-national differences. Analyses of political conflict over the European Union have concentrated on the reasons behind widespread euro-septicism in a few countries (Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries), or in some parties (defined, or self-declared, as “anti-European”) or social groups. We shall focus on the impact of political opportunities – that is the set of

constraints and facilitators available in the political system. First of all, we will put forward the hypothesis that civil society actors in the different countries tend to adapt to the national political attitudes towards Europe. Comparative research on support for European integration has indeed stated that support for Europe increases with the length of participation in EU institutions (Niedermayer 1995; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993) due to learning processes as well as the acknowledgment of the material advantages of adhesion (Carey 2002). Geopolitical interests have been cited to explain the different levels of support for Europe. Trust in European institutions has, however, also been presented as compensating for mistrust in national institutions², and identification as European as being jeopardized by a strong and exclusive national identification (Carey 2002; for a review see Hooghe and Marks 2004).

We have to add, however, that positions towards Europe also vary according to the material and symbolic resources available for the different actors. Social gains or losses stemming from the European integration process have been mentioned with reference to winning and losing social groups (Hooghe and Marks 2004). Positions towards European integration are, however, influenced by the way in which Europe is framed – considering frames as reference schemes that allows for the development of specific expectations and for giving sense to external reality (Snow *et al* 1986, 464; Donati 1992, 141-2). This is all the more relevant for multilevel governance, in which actual responsibilities are difficult to assign (Klandermans *et al.* 2001). As happened for the building of national identities, images of Europe are linked to different values and cleavages.

A central question for this theme is the interaction of socio-economic and cultural dimensions with more directly political ones. The fact that national actors assigned to the integration process have responsibilities for economic policies or rigorous environmental policies has contributed to increased worries about the consequences of the European construction. A more visible amount of European intervention not only on regulatory but also

on distributive matters contributed to politicising the debate, while attention to the effects of globalisation sensitised the national publics to supranational themes. Euroscepticism was considered by various studies as a characteristic of opposition parties, and above all of extremist parties, but at the same time was difficult to place on the traditional left-right continuum. Reasons explaining euroscepticism on both the left and the right existed: ideological nationalism of the right, and, on the left, welfare and the nation state, could motivate diffidence towards Europe. On the other hand, the right's belief in the free market, or the left's belief in international solidarity, could also reinforce support for the European project. Recent research based on analyses of the positions of European parties has in fact identified a tension between a model of regulated capitalism, foreseeing further integration through more interventionist European policies, and a neo-liberal model, which would limit integration to free exchange and push for deregulation and the reduction of public spending (Hooghe and Marks 1999). As we are going to see in what follows, positions on the territorial level (of the polity) are more and more intertwined with those on policy choices (especially on what Stein Rokkan used to call "class cleavage") and the political assets of Europe for social movement organizations and NGOs as well.

We shall discuss these questions on the basis of a systematic analysis of seven European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland) based upon both claims making and interviews with actors in order to understand not only the degree of "Europeanism" of social movement organizations and NGOs, but also their image of Europe. The data have been collected within the framework of a project on "The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres" (EUROPUB.COM). The research design includes in a cross-time (1990, 1995, 2000, 2002), and cross-issue (monetary policy, agriculture, education, troop deployment, pension, immigration, as well as the issue of European integration itself) perspective. Especially in the cross-time perspective, we shall assess the extent to which

changes in the multi-level political opportunity structure influence the degree and form of Europeanization: if from 1990 to 2002, the EU has increased its influence in several domains, is this reflected in an increasing Europeanization of the public discourse of the actors? In the cross-issue perspective, we will address the effect of EU formal competences in different policies on patterns of Europeanization in the mass media debate. The selected policy domains have, in fact, very different degrees of EU competences: whilst education and pension policies remain well anchored at the national level, immigration and troop deployment policies are based on national decision making but are discussed in intergovernmental forums such as the European Council (as well as the NATO and the UN); as part of the European “first pillar”, agriculture and monetary policies have the highest degree of institutional Europeanization. In addition, we selected the meta-field of European Integration³.

The methodology used is first of all political claim analysis, a quantitative method that takes individual political claims as units of analysis (see Koopmans and Statham 2002). A claim is defined as an instance of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion by some form of physical or verbal action, regardless of the form this expression takes (statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc.) and regardless of the nature of the actor (media, governments, civil society actors etc.). An act of claims-making can normally be broken down into the following elements and variables (Koopmans and Erbe 2002): Who makes the claim (claimant), to whom is the claim directed (addressee), who would be affected if the claim was realized (object actor), what is the substantive content of the claim (issue, stating what is to be done and why). In order to investigate whether or not we are dealing with Europeanised claims, we code the information concerning the scope of the abovementioned variables, namely the geographical or polity level at which the different elements of the claims (e.g. claimants, addressees, object actors, etc.) are situated: United Nations (UN), other supranational, EU, other

supranational European, national, local, regional, as well as (in the case of local, regional, and national actors) their nationality (e.g. Italian Government; French Parliament)⁴. In order to reduce the “description bias” related to media distortion, we not only focussed on “quality newspapers” but based our coding only on the factual coverage of events in newspaper articles, without taking into consideration comments or evaluations made by the journalist.

For this part of the research, the data have been mainly retrieved from the news coverage of two quality national newspapers per country (plus either regional or boulevard press which have been consulted for one year). For the sample, articles relating to our six policy domains (plus the topic of European integration) were collected from two issues per week for the years 2000 and 2002 and for one issue per week for the years 1990 and 1995⁵.

We also refer to an additional part of the research, where semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the most important collective actors (state actors, parties, interest groups and social movements) involved in claim-making in the fields of European integration, agriculture and immigration were conducted. In each country, 48 organisations were identified for interview – 16 in each of the three policy fields. Interview partners were selected from four categories of collective actors (government/administration, political parties, economic interest groups and social movements groups and associations), in each policy field. For each actor category, the selection of the four most influential organisations in the field in recent years was done according to two criteria. First we selected actors on the basis of their frequency of appearance in the media, according to a dataset of political claims made on the issues of European integration, immigration and agriculture for the most recent years. Second, we integrated this information with our knowledge of the actors active on the policy domain under study and consulted academic experts in each field for additional suggestions.

In what follows we shall present some results of the Europub project on both claims' making and interviews with actors in order to understand the degree of "Europeanism" of social movement organizations and NGOs (part 2), but also their image of Europe (part 3).

2. How much Europeanists are social movements

The analysis of claims-making shows a low presence of social movement organizations and NGOs in the Europeanized debate (Koopmans 2004, on Italy, della Porta and Caiani 2005) as well as, as we are going to see in this paragraph, a more critical attitude towards Europe. Overall, in the European countries under study (Table 1), when looking at the evaluation of the process of European integration on the press by different type of actors, the actors with more clearly positive attitudes towards Europe are state and party representatives, followed by trade unions, social movement organizations (SMOs) and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)⁶ and other actors in civil society (among which the most critical ones are farmers' organisations). Below average support are religious associations and educational professionals and organizations as well as environmentalists, consumers, and welfare and human rights associations.

In a cross country perspective interesting differences emerge (Table 2, first column). If overall SMO-NGOs show a moderate level of support for Europe in public debates (0.13), social movements and NGOs in Germany, France, and Netherlands are distinguished by higher levels of European support (above the average), while those in Spain, Italy and the UK, are the more sceptical, with Swiss movements and NGOs in a middle position. Overall, considering all actors, the most pro-European countries are Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (all above the general average); the most critical ones Spain, Italy and the UK. Comparing social movements and NGOs' support towards Europe with the trend emerging from their respective countries, it is worth noticing that civil society

associations in Germany, France and the Netherlands follow the pro-European attitude of their own countries, and SMO-NGOs in Spain, Italy and the UK follow the trends of their respective countries in being more critical towards Europe. Only Swiss social movements and NGOs differ for the pattern of support of their country, showing little more criticism in comparison with the general orientation towards Europe in Switzerland.

Table1. Evaluation of the European integration process, by actor type (mean values, n. of cases in parentheses)

Actor type	Mean	(N)
State & party actors	0.27	(9929)
Unions	0.17	(105)
SMOs-NGOs	0.13	(688)
Churches and religious organisations and groups	-0.02	(45)
Other scientific and research professionals and institutions	0.29	(219)
Students, pupils, and their parents & educational professionals and organisations	0.12	(53)
Other professional organisations and groups	0.27	(44)
Consumer organisations and groups	0.09	(34)
Migrant organisations and groups	0.23	(13)
Pro- and anti-European campaign organizations & groups	0.01	(116)
Solidarity and human rights organizations & welfare organizations	0.06	(22)
Environmental organisations and groups	0.08	(12)
Other civil society organisations and groups ⁷	-0.06	(58)
The general public	-0.09	(43)
Unknown/unspecified actors	0.17	(29)

Other civil society actor	0.12	(2230)
All actors	0.24	(12952)

If we compare each national SMOs/NGOs average with, respectively, their country's average and the 7-countries average for civil society actors, we see that the latter appear as more critical on both measures in Spain, Italy and the UK, and more supportive on both in the Netherlands, France and Germany.

Table 2. Evaluation of the European integration process (in general and concerning six substantive policy areas), by actor type and country (mean values, n. of cases in parentheses)

		General position on Europe		6 policies		Eu integr.	
		mean	(N)	mean	(N)	mean	(N)
Germany	SMO-NGO	0.19	(110)	0.12	(43)	0.24	(67)
	All	0.29	(2999)	0.16	(1303)	0.38	(1696)
Spain	SMO-NGO	0.03	(38)	0.00	(13)	0.04	(25)
	All	0.12	(1368)	0.09	(520)	0.14	(848)
France	SMO-NGO	0.17	(102)	0.12	(34)	0.19	(68)
	All	0.34	(1743)	0.28	(744)	0.38	(999)
Italy	SMO-NGO	0.09	(91)	0.00	(41)	0.16	(50)
	All	0.19	(1935)	0.10	(1047)	0.30	(888)
Netherlands	SMO-NGO	0.21	(99)	0.06	(49)	0.36	(50)
	All	0.28	(1366)	0.23	(608)	0.33	(758)
United Kingdom	SMO-NGO	0.03	(119)	0.01	(83)	0.06	(36)
	All	0.10	(1644)	0.07	(960)	0.14	(684)
Switzerland	SMO-NGO	0.12	(129)	-0.03	(29)	0.17	(100)
	All	0.29	(1897)	0.17	(541)	0.33	(1356)
All countries	SMO-NGO	0.13	(688)	0.04	(292)	0.19	(396)
	All	0.24	(12952)	0.15	(5723)	0.31	(7229)

In more detail, when talking about European issues⁸ (Table 2, second and third columns), claims explicitly expressing a positive attitude toward increased Europeanization are at a high level on European integration, while the support on the other six substantive policy fields (monetary policies, agriculture, migration, defence, pension, education) decreases (0.31 vs. 0.15). This holds particularly true for civil society associations whose support decreases from 0.19 on European integration in general to 0.04 when Europe is addressed while debating the six policy fields (the sharpest decrease is for the trade unions, from 0.36 to -0.02).

In a cross-country perspective, social movements and NGOs whose support for Europe decreases most when the debate on Europe shifts from the general process of EU integration to the substantive policies are those from Switzerland (-20 scores), Italy (-16), the Netherlands (-30) (but in this case the score for support when the debate is on European integration in general is very high) and Germany (-12) (but here, in spite of this decrease, the level of support remains quite high even on the debate on the six policies, 0.12). The decrease in EU support is less significant in the UK (-5), Spain (-4) and France (-7) (also in France as in Germany the support remains at high levels).

We can go to greater depth in our analysis by building a combined index of the content and the form of claims-making. In Table 3, we show the distribution of *contentious claims* by civil society associations vs. all the actors, in both domestic and 'European' claims-making. We have aggregated action forms in the following broad categories: political decision/executive actions, verbal actions (e.g. communication events such as press releases etc.), and protest/direct democratic actions. We considered as *contentious claims* all those claims in which the latter form was used, plus all those accompanied by criticism of the targets. Indeed, calls and appeals for specific targets may be made in a neutral sense, or with expressions of criticism or support for the

actors they target⁹. In the operationalisation of ‘domestic claims’ we consider only those with a national issue scope; as ‘EU based claims’ we consider only those on the issue of European integration and /or with an European issue scope.

Overall the amount of contentious claims is lower in European (45%) than in domestic claims-making (55%). Nevertheless we may add that civil society associations are much more contentious than all the other types of actors, even in claims-making with reference to Europe: 62% of contentious claims by SMOs/NGOs vs. 45% of those by all actors (42% state and party, 50% trade unions, 53% other civil society actors). If contentious politics is more present in national than in European politics, the degree of conflict in claims-making increases across the years in Europeanised policy fields (data not shown)¹⁰. Contrary to the expectation that channels for the inclusion of “civilised” actors in EU policy-making would tame civil society organisations (for instance, Mazey and Richardson, 1993), non-institutional actors remain more contentious than institutional actors even when addressing issues with a EU scope, and they do not appear to moderate their criticism.

Focusing on social movements and NGOs across countries (data not shown), it is worth noticing that in ES and UK civil society associations are the most conflictual ones (the percentage of conflictual claims in the European debate is above the general average), while French social movements and NGOs are the least conflictual, with those Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland occupying an intermediate position.

Table 3. Conflictual claims in European and domestic debate (% , n. of cases in parentheses)

	Conflictual claims, national debate %		Conflictual claims, EU debate %		Difference EU- Nat. Conflictual claims
State and party	49.4	(1845)	42.6	(6570)	-6.8
Union	66.3	(279)	50.6	(87)	-15.7
SMO-NGOs	67.3	(744)	61.7	(499)	-5.5
Other civil society	50.8	(522)	53.8	(1459)	+3.0
All actors	55.0	(3390)	45.7	(8615)	-9.3
	Cramer v 0.16***		Cramer v 0.12***		

Note: in order to interpret the data shown in the third column (difference EU-national conflictual claims) consider that the higher the value of the difference, the higher is the conflictuality in the EU debate in comparison with the national debate.

Looking at the different presence of conflictual claims in EU and national debates per actor type, we notice that trade unions are much more conflictual in the domestic than in EU debate (the difference between their conflictual claims in EU minus those in national debate is -15.7), social movements and NGOs remain much more conflictual than all the other actors (with the exception of the category of other civil society actors, where farmers organizations are particularly critical) in the EU debate (the difference between EU and national claims is -5.5 , namely they are only a bit less conflictual in the EU debate than in national one).

The analysis of how Europe is presented in the debate in the media is, at least partly, confirmed by the interviews conducted with social movements. The interviews with representatives from SMOs/NGOs reveal that, before the French Referendum, several organisations already conceived the current development of the process of European integration as being characterized by tensions. In Table 4 we examine attitudes towards Europe among social movement organisations across countries, using four indicators: a) *position*

towards Europe which refers to the position (for or against) of the organisations or institutions concerning an increase in the EU's influence and competences; b) *level of involvement* of the organisation in the European policy (immigration, agriculture, etc.); c) position on the *current importance* for the organisations/institutions of European policy at the national level; d) expectation on the *future importance* for the organisations/institutions of European policy at the national level¹¹.

Concerning positions towards Europe (first column), we notice an overall supportive attitude towards European integration (0.77 for both SMOs and NGOs and other actors). Indeed differences in the degree of support for Europe emerge above all according to country: the euro-attitudes of social movements and NGOs tend to resonate with the positions of their own countries toward Europe. If overall (without focusing on social movements), Great Britain and Switzerland show the lowest levels of support for Europe (both under the European average) and Italy, Spain and Netherlands the highest ones, with France and Germany in a middle position, it is worth noticing that British and Swiss social movements and NGOs appear as the most lukewarm in their support for the EU, while SMO-NGOs from Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany are the most 'Europeanist' ones.

Table 4. Positions of social movements and NGOs towards Europe (mean values, n. of cases in parentheses), across country and at EU level

		Support for EU		Level of involvement in EU policy		Importance of EU policy (present)		Importance of EU policy (future)	
		Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
National level									
Switzerland									
	SMO-NGO	0.62	(9)	0.67	(9)	0.44	(9)	0.93	(9)
	All actors	0.58	(44)	0.61	(44)	0.43	(33)	0.92	(41)
Germany									
	SMO-NGO	0.82	(9)	0.91	(11)	0.83	(10)	1.00	(10)
	All actors	0.75	(35)	0.81	(12)	0.79	(32)	0.95	(43)
Spain									
	SMO-NGO	0.78	(10)	0.54	(12)	0.66	(11)	0.97	(12)
	All actors	0.87	(39)	0.73	(43)	0.66	(28)	0.92	(38)
France									
	SMO-NGO	0.84	(5)	0.57	(7)	0.79	(6)	0.90	(7)
	All actors	0.78	(27)	0.65	(30)	0.77	(21)	0.94	(30)
Italy									
	SMO-NGO	0.88	(12)	0.71	(12)	0.79	(12)	0.92	(12)
	All actors	0.91	(47)	0.77	(48)	0.78	(35)	0.96	(37)
Netherlands									
	SMO-NGO	0.87	(9)	0.63	(10)	0.70	(10)	0.90	(10)
	All actors	0.84	(39)	0.68	(42)	0.65	(34)	0.93	(38)
United Kingdom									
	SMO-NGO	0.60	(11)	0.65	(10)	0.67	(9)	0.83	(10)
	All actors	0.63	(35)	0.72	(35)	0.71	(21)	0.84	(29)
All countries									
	SMO-NGO	0.77	(65)	0.66	(72)	0.70	(67)	0.92	(70)
	All actors	0.77	(266)	0.73	(286)	0.68	(204)	0.93	(256)
European level									
	SMO-NGO	0.83	(7)	-	-	0.83	(3)	0.89	(3)
	All actors	0.83	(20)	-	-	0.75	(5)	0.96	(8)

If we compare national civil society actors with social movements and NGOs averages, and with other national actors we can observe that the British SMSs/NGOs appear as adapting to their country's pessimism towards Europe, and, vice versa, the French, Dutch and German SMSs/NGOs adapt

to the general pro-European consensus, but Swiss civil society seems more pro-European than the other Swiss actors while the Spanish and Italian ones seem more pessimistic. This means that, although civil society actors are certainly influenced by the general climate in their own countries, the more protest oriented tend to be also more critical of the EU.

The less supportive positions on Europe among social movements and NGOs are not accompanied by neglect of the European level (as far as involvement is concerned –even if in this case the obstacles are major for powerless actors) or by the perception of the latter as less important (in the present and the future) than other territorial levels of governance. As far as involvement in EU policies is concerned, Italian and German social movement are characterized by a high level of engagement at the EU level (0.71 and 0.81 versus an European average of 0.66), while French, Spanish and Dutch movements and NGOs are characterized by a slightly lower degree of involvement. Compared with the general trend of their countries, social movements and NGOs from Germany and Switzerland are more involved in EU policy.

Overall, the expectations that social movements have about the future EU's importance are high (reaching the value of the general European mean), and the evaluation of the current importance of the EU is even more optimistic among social movement organizations and NGOs than in the other collective actors (0.70 vs. 0.67). Especially in the Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany social movements appear more convinced of the current importance of the EU compared to the trends in their respective countries. Social movements in Spain and Germany appear to be the most convinced among European social movements (more than other actors in their countries) of a growing importance of European policy in the future.

At EU level overall, the degree of support by EU level actors for the process of European integration is very high (0.83) – even higher than for national level actors (see above). Moreover, as was already said for the general trend in the European countries under study, social movements and NGOs

do not differ from the general mean of support (0.83). Further, if national social movements and NGOs reached a slightly higher score on the perceived importance of the EU than did other actors, this emerges even more for European social movements and NGOs (with a score of 0.83 vs. 0.75 on this dimension of attitude towards Europe). The pattern concerning the evaluation of the future importance of the EU level is different: here SMO-NGOs remain at a lower score than the other actors. In conclusion, the criticism focuses not on integration per se, but on its forms and contents.

3. Which Europe? What do social movements mean when they talk about Europe

Positions on European institutions are, however, related to the “imagined Europe(s)”. First of all, it is often said that the European integration process has been, from the very beginning, justified either in *instrumental* terms, underlining the necessity of widening the market and avoiding bloody but, more importantly, economically damaging, wars or in *symbolic* terms, supporting the foundation of a supranational identity and peaceful interactions.

Looking at the way in which Europe is framed is a means to analyse the motivations used by the actors to support their claim-making related to European integration. We have coded the arguments used to frame Europe in four categories: identity frames (referring to the question: what is the EU and what does it stand for?), instrumental frames (that answer the question: what is the EU good or bad for?), historical frames (which are about positive--e.g. Enlightenment or classical antiquity--or negative--e.g. past national isolation or the Cold War--linkages of the EU to historical periods or experiences), and frames internal to the European integration process (which are frames about causal linkages between one aspect of European integration and another, e.g. between enlargement and institutional reforms). Distinguishing

between the different categories of actors, we observe that overall, in the European countries under study, interest groups tend to underline the instrumental side of European integration, emphasising its socio-economic dimension; state actors and political parties refer frequently to values, constitutional principles and the economic effects of European integration (see Table 5, data for specific categories of actor other than SMO-NGOs not shown). On the other hand, social movements and NGOs use identity frames (norms and values) more than all the other actors and instrumental ones less than the others do. Social movements and NGOs pay closer attention to the immaterial aspects of the integration process, others referring to an identity discourse (such as references to Europe as a community of values) and constitutional principles (especially democracy).¹² The representative of the Italian environmental association Legambiente (557) argues, for instance, that enlargement is useful in that “it brings certainty and security for all: peace, work, and food safety”.

In a cross-national comparison, social movements and NGOs in Switzerland and the UK (but also in the Netherlands and Germany) use identity frame concerning Europe less frequently (under the general average for SMO-NGOs; but social movements and NGOs in the Netherlands and Germany are very close to the average), while those in Italy, France and Spain recur to these types of frames much more than the others (above the general mean). The opposite appears true for instrumental frames. When looking at the types of frames mainly used in the various European countries under study, it is worth noticing that, overall, identity frames about Europe are used more frequently in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands, while in the other European countries the use of frames of this type is less frequent (but Germans and Dutch are very close to the general mean). On the contrary, in the UK (and to some extent in Germany) we notice a more frequent use of instrumental frames about Europe (above the general mean), while Spain, France and Italy are characterized by a less frequent use of this types of frames (with Netherlands and Switzerland in a middle position for what concerns the

use of instrumental frame about Europe).

Table 5. Frame on European integration, by social movements and NGOs, by country (% , n. of cases in parentheses)

Country		Type of frame					(N)
		all identity	all instrumental	historical	internal		
DE	SMO-NGO	55.3%	34.0%	6.4%	4.3%	(47)	
	All actors	50.5%	37.6%	7.1%	4.9%	(1046)	
ES	SMO-NGO	83.3%	11.1%	-	5.6%	(18)	
	All actors	70.9%	14.3%	4.5%	10.3%	(223)	
FR	SMO-NGO	64.5%	19.4%	12.9%	3.2%	(62)	
	All actors	49.3%	32.1%	7.9%	10.7%	(722)	
IT	SMO-NGO	78.6%	16.7%	2.4%	2.4%	(42)	
	All actors	56.5%	32.1%	1.6%	9.7%	(626)	
NL	SMO-NGO	55.7%	34.4%	6.6%	3.3%	(61)	
	All actors	53.9%	34.0%	8.0%	4.1%	(627)	
UK	SMO-NGO	48.7%	46.2%	5.1%		(39)	
	All actors	46.9%	45.5%	4.3%	3.3%	(486)	
CH	SMO-NGO	46.9%	40.6%	6.3%	6.3%	(32)	
	All actors	49.7%	34.3%	4.4%	11.6%	(362)	
All countries	SMO-NGO	60.5%	29.6%	6.6%	3.3%	(301)	
	All actors	52.3%	34.6%	5.8%	7.2%	(4092)	

If we build a typology confronting the civil society actors in each country with the country average as well as the SMOs/NGOs overall average, we see that civil society actors in the UK, Switzerland and Germany indeed conform to the (national) dominant pragmatism, and vice-versa in Spain and Italy, while the French are more identity oriented than the average French actors and the Dutch more so. Therefore, the more “ideological” Italian, French and Spanish civil society actors use the most identitarian framing; the

pragmatic Dutch, British, Swiss and Germans use a more instrumental one. The many images of Europe are confirmed, and actually deepened, by our interviewees, both in relation to perceptions and evaluations of the present state of affairs in the European integration process, and to possible future scenarios.

Support or opposition to Europe are positions usually considered as pertaining to territorial identity, pitting nationalists against Europeanists – or intergovernmentalists against federalists. It should be added, however, that at various points in time and on various policies, national actors have symbolically intertwined their position on Europe with those held on other issues, some using their veto powers, other fashioning themselves as Europe's "entrepreneurs". This complex process of symbolic appropriation of Europe as a theme has also brought about an extension of the definition of the 'conflict over Europe', layering various other cleavages over the original territorial ones (concerned with the boundaries of the *polity*). As in the formation of the nation state, the subject of territory is articulated alongside others: support for Europe is linked to different images of Europe as built by different actors. Support and opposition thus tend to refer not only to (or not very much to) the integration process itself. They address, rather, its form and content. In this too our data help us to detangle these hazy, overlapping – sometimes clashing – images of Europe within public discourse.

If our interviews confirm that the identitarian vision of Europe predominates in the civil society, they also show an emerging critique – not of 'too much' Europe, but of not enough social Europe. There are objections among the SMOs/NGOs that specifically address a few political choices of the EU, in particular the prevalence of "neo-liberal" policies and weak solidarity policies. Even while expressing their support for European citizenship, they criticise the European institutions' policy choices, seen as designed to protect the market rather than the citizens. Criticism of EU policies is very severe, addressing in particular what is perceived as scarce attention to positive integration, especially in terms of social rights. The

instrumental dimension of Europe is considered to be insufficient. The speaker for the Swiss Pro Natura (138) does not agree with the actual development of EU integration, since socio-ecological and democratic questions are not being addressed sufficiently, and hopes that this will take place in a second step, once economic integration has taken place. The German Attac (213) states that “in principle, we have a critical position: even those who see the process positively, note clear failures, and others feel that EU type integration is not really corresponding to a pan-European integration/unification/agreement. I perceive the European integration process as an economic process, where the role of the EU is to improve competitiveness of member states versus other competitors. And this is the direction where it'll go in the future)... We want alternative European integration, which is not dominated by economic interests”. According to the Spanish Amnistia internacional (329) the EU “has focused on market elements and the economy, and very little on political and citizenship elements... this leads to the resources not being focused on essential issues: sanitary, educative, social action for diversity, human rights”. European integration would enhance the neoliberal process (Espacio alternativo, 315); while “there isn't a development of social rights and citizenship” (Amnistia internacional, 329).

Present EU policies on social rights, immigration, and consumer protection are bitterly criticised. NGOs and SMOs criticize the weakness of a social Europe. European integration raises fears “that the neoliberal economic model will gain influence in even more countries and thus in the EU. I fear that there will be a deterioration of social rights, of democracy and in the rights of free movement of non-EU” (Attac Germany, 213). The increase in the competence of the EU is perceived as producing “a minimum standard that is very low” (Euromärsche, 216). Also, according to the Spanish Espacio Alternativo (315), European integration “has had a modernizing impact, but with social deficits. There is more wealth, but it is worse distributed”. The interviewee for the Swiss SSF Solidarité sans frontières (132) believes that the actual developments in the EU are quite negative; monetary union and

stability pact are being used to undermine the welfare state (with monetary union the EU has given to its member states an instrument to undermine the welfare state). Also the British Democracy Movement (714) believes that European institutions are gradually being moulded to meet the needs of international global capitalism, and to enable the much freer flow of capital around the world and around Europe in particular.

Movements and organisations active on issues of immigration criticise the construction of “fortress Europa” and the absence of any recognition of migrants’ political and social rights more specifically. According to the representative of the (catholic) *Comunità di Sant’Egidio* (563), “the present direction that the European integration process is taking places great emphasis on security to the detriment of solidarity”. Also, according to moderate associations, the EU policy “has the defect of paying too much attention to the regulation of illegal immigration and immigration flows, and not enough to solidarity” (Foundation ‘Migrants’ of the Italian Episcopal Conference, 509). Similarly, the interviewee for the Swiss Aid for Refugees (SFH) (131) stresses the necessity of a common policy, but also criticizes the choices made until now: “the EU is absolutely central; it is very important to reach a harmonization of asylum policy at a very high standard; at the moment one can observe a negative competition in order to become the worse place to go to as a refugee (becoming unattractive)”. In these circumstances, the consequences of Europeanization are described as dangerous—the representative of *SSF Solidarité sans Frontières* (132) expects very negative consequences in the domain of asylum (e.g. the UK’s proposals for refugee camps in regions of origin of asylum seekers), and according to the Swiss Aid for Refugees (SFH) (131) a great danger is that stronger border controls will close off Europe more and more. The Spanish *Amnistía Internacional* (329) also considers the impact of EU policies as “Bad. First it has meant a raise in immigration control policies. Second, harmonization in asylum has meant a loss of guarantees for people, it has tended to eliminate asylum seekers’ rights”. The EU is accused of raising a fortress: “The EU has consolidated and

normalised apartheid. There's a contradiction: the EU knocks down borders and raises them. Open to free circulation and installing citizenship on a EU level. But there are 13-15 million non-EU citizens who don't have social rights... the EU isn't helping social integration nor civic attitudes and commitments, access to citizenship and rights" (Spanish SOS Racismo, 332). The risk, perceived by the French Amnesty International (30), is that "instead of one repressive minister, we have 15 repressive ministers". Similarly, the German Unterstützerguppen für abgewiesene Asylbewerber (268) considers that "the integration process allows for better control possibilities by the cooperation of the ministries of Interior and the police. The standards of social security will be lowered". And the British Asylum Aid (734) interviewee expresses similar fears – assessing a negative impact of European integration "in terms of giving real meaning to the phrase fortress Europe, so making it much more difficult for immigrants in general and asylum seekers in particular to get into Europe in the first place".

In addition to those debates concerning specific policies, an open – and partly interlinked with the previous – discussion develops on the issue of what the European *polity* should look like, on its competences and decision-making procedures. If SMOs and NGOs express a criticism of the perceived democratic deficit (especially the Parliament), a more radical position also emerges among the civil society actors, who see an opportunity to move towards a politics "from below" at the European level.

While on the right there is fear of excessive regulation, on the left there is a tendency to underline the EU's weakness in terms of democratic accountability, by proposing a model of supranational European integration with strong support for the Parliament. Social movement organisations and associations also tend, in general, to prefer the European Parliament, the only elected body, over the Commission and, above all, the Council". In general, SMOs and NGOs trust the European parliament more than the other EU institutions – "The European parliament (if they represent a European interest at all) does not have enough influence" (Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz

- BUND, 252), and “The EP should be more important; the commission is not transparent enough and has too much influence” (Euronatur 255). In fact, the representative of Andalucia Acoge (331) states that the European Parliament should play the central role in the democratization of Europe (see also 615), and that of the French GISTI praises good contacts with the Europarliamentarians (29, see also L’Union des Federalistes Europeennes, 8). A strengthening of the European parliament is perceived as a main step towards participation – “To get the public more involved, we have to strengthen the European Parliament” (European movement, 750). And electoral accountability as facilitating responsiveness also demands politics “from below”. The representative of Beati i Costruttori di Pace (535) underlines that “we have much more belief in our capacity to influence elected bodies, like parliaments and administrations, than in governing bodies”, but in the EU “the only institution that expresses democracy, the Parliament, has ever smaller powers and we would like to see a reorganisation that moves democratically elected and much more powerful structures to centre stage”. The representative of the Italian ATTAC (534) mentions the “democratic deficit” in connection with the limited powers of parliaments (both national and European), criticising in particular the fact that the European constitution gives more power to the executive than the parliament.

The “democratic deficit” is in fact perceived and stigmatized (Europese Referendum Campagne Nederland, 616; Amnistia Internazionale, 329). The EU is considered not to be transparent for citizens” (Euronatur, 255) and “out of touch with NGOs” (Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek, 615). In the explicitly anti-EU view of the British Democratic movement, European institutions “are overtly constructed to be illiberal. Primarily designed to be elite institutions which are kind of hermetically sealed and protected from popular engagement”. But also, according to the German Pro Asyl (266), convinced that “There is no alternative to Europe: EU institutions should principally be strengthened”, “Unfortunately, very often the smallest

denominator is shaping the process. Further integration is moving forward slowly. To stop the spiral of weakening standards of international law, we need harmonisation, a stronger commission and democratization. Also, according to the Spanish SOS racismo (332), "There should be a bottom level debate, not just of the experts, but with referendums and more participation, as there is little participation". Even in the view of the more Euro-optimist EU-level NGOs, there is a general "critique on the lack of democracy and need for more political scrutiny of decision-making by the EU parliament" (Friends of the Earth Europe, 584), with the belief that "Europe should be a public thing, not just for diplomats and specialists, language (jargon) is also important, it should be more accessible for citizens" (Union of European federalists, 751). Among the others, the representative of the Movimento Federalista Europeo (501) proposes a "federalism of diversity. It's not about destroying nations, but doing what can no longer be done at the national level at the European level."

It is indeed not Europe which is rejected, but specific EU policies: the criticism does not target the construction of a European level, but the specific direction of the process. The representative of the network of associations active on global justice issues explains that "Rete Lilliput is in favour of the integration process, but does not share the political direction that is being taken" (564), hoping for an "expansion of global integration and a higher level of protection of rights". The spokesperson of the eco-pacifist organisation Rete Lilliput (564), for example, declares herself to be "optimistic" about the effects of European integration. The Italian Attac representative is "strongly in favour of Europeanization" and even the interviewee from the Disobbedienti (542), often presented as the most radical wing of the new global movement, declares that "we are profoundly Europeanist". In a similar direction the representative of Uniterre (146) states that "the European Union includes elements with which I am not at all happy such as the great market, the competition or the dismantling of public services; but leaving apart this negative elements, it is important that the

countries come together.” And the Spanish *Espacio Alternativo* (315) declares: “We feel more European. This question is discussed less and less, in fact that isn't so in Northern countries; that debate nearly doesn't exist in Spain. We are more concerned with “another Europe” than with thinking about exiting Europe... But a different Europe to the one that is being designed by conservatives and neoliberals... It will be negative if the process ends constitutionalising neoliberal processes which delay social and public issues”.

Despite even the most radical criticisms levelled at the “Europe of markets”, most of the social movement organisations we interviewed expressed support for the construction of “a different Europe” – a Europe built from below. In fact, according to the spokesperson of the Italian *Tavolo della Pace* (547), “the EU, from an institutional point of view, still remains distant from a willing civil society. We can make proposals, and use funds, but there is no listening”. The movement organizations present themselves as belonging to “a European movement” (*Attac Germany*, 213). The concept of a “Europeanization from below” emerges during the protests that address the EU – as the German speaker for the *Euromärsche – Euromarches* (216) recalls, European integration had a large impact on his organization. “but not in an institutionalised way. *Euromarches* were the first to have the concept of Europe from below and want others to take over this concept. We have a pioneer role because, for the first time, criticism is brought forward not only at a national level”. In the language of the Italian *Disobbedienti*, the “constituent praxis” “has the merit of posing the constituent problem of Europe and the European political space as a space that is unavoidable for new democracy”. The necessity of building a Europe from below is also underlined by the *Movimento federalista europeo* (501), which, while declaring itself to be highly in favour of European integration, also affirms its mobilisation “for participation from below in European life, considering this the only way to build the European Union”.

The attitude towards the European institutions is, however, quite pragmatic, in the sense that they are judged on the basis of their perceived performance towards specific values. This is underlined by the representative of the Italian Tavolo della Pace (547): “If we must build a Europe that is equivocal on the question of peace and conflict in the world, which reduces spaces for democracy instead of increasing them, that type of Europe will not help”. European integration is pragmatically evaluated on the basis of its perceived effects. In the words of the representatives of Spanish NGOs, “The current influence is quite negative and only partial. But the increase in influence is natural and the way it should be because immigration is no longer a local issue” (Andalucía-Acoge, 331); “we don't care which is the EU's or national weights, as long as those weights have to do with respect for Human Rights; at the moment this focus is happening on neither level” (Amnistía Internacional, 329). The representatives of social movement organisations that we interviewed called for a European Constitution comprising the rejection of war (Rete Lilliput, 564 and Beati i Costruttori di Pace, 535), recognition of “the centrality of people, not profit” (Rete Lilliput, 564), including “residential citizenship, not European or national, where migrants may move freely” (Disobbedienti, 542).

A form of Europeanization from below emerges through what neo-functionalists would call the spill-over effect (Schmitter 1971). In a certain sense, the representatives of the social movement organisations thus present themselves as “Europeanization entrepreneurs”, declaring that against “a profoundly anti-European Berlusconi”, “the movements have worked hard to get these [European] themes into the common parlance, even if, to be honest, they do not rouse much interest in themselves alone” (Disobbedienti, 542); “the public is not very interested in the theme of the European Convention and we seek to make them more interested” (Beati i Costruttori di Pace, 535). In fact, protest campaigns are perceived as occasions to build a European identity.

4- Eurosceptic or critical Europeanists? Some conclusions

“One can be against a Europe that supports financial markets, and at the same time be in favour of a Europe that, through concerted policies, blocks the way to the violence of those markets... Only a social European state would be able to contrast the disaggregative effects of the monetary economy: so, one can be hostile to a European integration based only upon the Euro, without opposing the political integration of Europe” (Bourdieu 1998, 62).

“Contestation is a crucial pre-condition for the emergence of a European public sphere rather than an indicator of its absence. The more contentious European policies and politics become and the more social mobilization occurs on European issues, the more we should observe truly European public debates. If political issues are not contested, if European politics remains the business of elites, the attention level for Europe and the EU will remain low. European issues must become salient and significant in the various public debates so that a European public sphere can emerge” (Risse 2003, 6).

The Europeanization of the public sphere is a polymorphic term that refers not only to different processes, but also to different Europes. In our research, we have measured and discussed different indicators of support for Europe, and the different imaginings of Europe: as it is, and as it should be according to our interviewees. A first finding we think is worth stressing, is that if European integration has long been an elitarian project, its evolution involves pressures “from below” – from social movement organizations and NGOs. The ideology of a regulatory Europe, legitimized by good performances, appears less and less convincing: producing policies, the EU became target of claims and protest. In this process, national actors of different types started to address the EU. If those richer in resources have been the first

to open headquarters in Brussels, resource-poor actors also started networking supranationally and framing European issues. Vertical integration created horizontal processes that, at the same time, legitimate the European institutions by recognizing them, but also politicize the European public sphere by contesting public decisions.

As happened during the construction of the nation state, the focusing of protest at the national level followed the centralization of the decision making power (Tilly 1978). Then social and political actors also moved on more territorial levels: alliances with the *state-builders* targeted local governors, but there were also alliances with the periphery against the center (Tarrow 2005). The construction of the nation state has, however, been a conflictual process: citizens' rights are the results of social struggles (Bendix 1964; Marshall 1950). Democracy emerged with the contestation of public decisions: criticism of national governments contributed to legitimize the state as the main decisional level. Even if we avoid the parallel between the building of the nation and the building of peculiar and anomalous supranational institutions, such as the European Union, our research seems to confirm the development of a Europeanization by contestation.

As observed in the two quotes reported at the beginning of this study, the support for the process of European integration cannot be measured in terms of (more or less permissive) consensus on the decisions of European institutions. Even supporters of the construction of supranational institutions might stigmatize, even radically, a community treaty they consider as too intergovernmentalist or too neoliberal. Those who criticise free market Europe could support, as Bourdieu did, a social Europe. A contested public sphere is indeed, as Thomas Risse recalled, the only path towards the creation of a supranational democracy. It is indeed not a silent consensus with the governors that signals a democratic process, but instead the submission of their decisions to the "proof of the discussion" (Manin 1995). Not the agreement upon borders, ideologies and various cleavages, but the public debate about them indicates the existence of a European public sphere (Risse 2003, 6-7;

also Risse 2000; Habermas 1981).

The discourse “from below” about Europe appeared more oriented to social and political rights than to territorial politics. We may distinguish types of Europeanization by considering actors’ positions on the construction of the European institutions and their support for the EU’s current policies, differentiating between *Euro-sceptics*, who want to limit European competences and are critical of the EU’s specific policies; *critical* Europeanists, who want more competences for Europe, but are dissatisfied with its present policies; and *identity* Europeanists, who are in favour of the extension of the EU’s competences and satisfied with the Union’s current policies. The NGOs and SMOs tend to defend identitarian positions more openly, with strong support for the deepening of European integration. Social movements appear in this frame as critical Europeanists, in favour of deeper integration but with policies very different from those that have so far characterised the “negative integration” dominant in the EU.

In line with the results of other research – departing from an analysis of party positions based on expert evaluations – our data confirm a (leftist) call for more integration on environmental, labour, and cohesion policies (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2004)¹³. On the left, criticisms are directed toward what is perceived as the survival of the prevalently economic nature of European integration, linked to the idea of Europe as part of the Western world, thus emphasising Western values. The stability pact in particular is criticised as being one of the main examples of the neo-liberal policies favoured by already privileged groups, which reduce welfare for the poor and disadvantaged. They do not call, however, for a return to the nation state, but for a process of Europeanization from below.

Notes

¹ The paper reports the results of a cross-national project on “The Transformation of Political Mobilization and Communication in European Public Spheres” (EUROPUB.COM) coordinated by Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham. The project was sponsored by the European Commission in the context of its 5th Framework program (project number HPSE-CT2000-00046). For an outline, see Koopmans and Statham (2002), available on the project website at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>. The project included eight teams, directed by Ruud Koopmans, Paul Statham, Joos de Beus, Donatella della Porta, Juan Diez-Medrano, Virginie Guiraudon, Barbara Pfetsch. We are grateful to senior and juniorscolleagues involved in the project for a stimulating collaboration.

² Cfr. Sanches-Cuenca [2000]; but different results in Anderson [1995] who states that economic crises reduce institutional support.

³ We are not primarily interested in these substantive topics for their own sake, but in the role which European institutions and policies play in public debates and political mobilisation in these issue areas, and in actor type differences and temporal developments in this respect.

⁴ For more detailed information on the coding rules and variables, see the codebook as well as the other information published in the project websites (<http://europub.wz-berlin.de>).

⁵ In order to overcome this bias we balanced, in the analysis of the data, this reduced sampling by giving a double weight to the 1990 and 1995 samples. Further, since only half of the sample (namely 26 days when claims were coded for 1990 and 1995 and 52 when they were coded for 2000 and 2002) contains all articles found on the selected issues, while in the other half of the sample (again 26 days for historical years, and 52 for the most recent ones) only those articles that had a European reference were selected, we based most of our analyses on the sample which includes all articles and claims on the issue. By doing this we avoid over representing claims with a European dimension, and get a fair picture of the degree of ‘Europe’ present in the national public sphere. We shall indicate in the text when analyses are based on a different sample. For a period of five single years (from 1990 to 2002), a total number of 1669 articles were coded. The dataset for the following analyses is composed of 3541 claims: 2584 found in articles selected according to the ‘all claims sample’ and 957 found in articles in the reduced sample (‘European sample’), wich included only articles with an European dimension in either the claimant, the addressee, the issue, or object.

⁶ Among social movements and NGOs, those most critical ones of Europe are religious groups, consumers associations, pro- and anti-EU groups, welfare organizations (but the low number of cases for this category requires caution), extreme right organizations (same problem of low number of cases), environmental associations, other civil society associations and the general

public.

⁷ We have inserted in this category 'Racist and extreme right organisations and groups'.

⁸ The attitudes towards increased European integration are only registered for issues which had a European dimension .

⁹ We measured the evaluation of addressees, giving a score of -1 for negative judgments, and +1 for support, with zero for a neutral position.

¹⁰ Overall contentious claims in Europeanized debate increased from 36.4% in 1990, to 44.2% in 1995, to 49.5 in 2000, 42.8 in 2001, 45.9 in 2002. For social movements the increase is even more remarkable: from 42.9% of contentious claims in the debate over Europe in 1990 to 63.6 in 2002. State actors pass from 33.6% in 1990 to 42.6 in 2002, unions from 28.6% in 1990 to 46.2% in 2002 and other civil society actors from 51% to 55%.

¹¹ The first indicator refers to the question: "Is your organization generally in favor of an increase in European influence in _____(e.g. immigration) policy or is it against it? Scale: 1 strongly against - 4 strongly in favour. The item used for the second dimension of European attitude is: "How involved has your organization been in European_____ (e.g. immigration) policy? Scale 1 not at all - 4 a lot. As for what concerns the third dimension, the question is: "How important would you say is the European_____ (e.g. immigration) policy for your organisation compared to _____(e.g. immigration) policy at the national level today?" Scale 1- 4. Fourth question: "And thinking about the role of the European _____(e.g. immigration) policy for your organisation relative to _____(e.g. immigration) policy at the national level: is its role becoming increasingly important compared to the national level, less important compared to the national level, or does it not change at all?" Scale 1-3. The four indicators have been thus standardized (min= 0/max =1).

¹² Cramer' v between type of actor and type of frame 0,08***.

¹³ One cannot speak of Euro-scepticism as typical of opposition parties in Italy however, nor of New Politics or the Old Hard Left (Sitter 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000; Taggart 1998). If peripheral parties emerge as the most critical of the EU, their position in respect of government plays no relevant role in this (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002).

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Appendix

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132. Solidarité sans frontières (SSF); Secretary for Political Affairs ; 27 August 2003

138. Pro Natura; Head of Section “Politics and International Affairs”; 9 May 2003

146. Uniterre; Speaker; 18 June 2003

213. Attac Deutschland; Member of Ko-Kreis, Expert in EU affairs; 3 Jun 2003

216. Euromärsche (Euromarches); Activist; 8 May 2003

252. Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz (BUND); Abteilungsleiter Pressearbeit; 22 Aug 2003

255. Euronatur; Präsident; 2 Jun 2003

- 266. Pro Asyl; Europareferent; 3 Jul 2003
- 268. Unterstützerguppen für abgewiesene Asylbewerber: "Kein Mensch ist illegal"; Mitarbeiter; 30 Jun 2003
- 29. French GISTI
- 30. French Amnesty international
- 313. Red Voz
- 315. Espacio alternativo
- 329. Amnistia internacional
- 331. Andalucia Acoge
- 332. SOS racismo
- 501. Movimento federalista europeo, segretario generale, Pavia, 03.12.03
- 509. Migrantes - Conferenza episcopale italiana, direttore dell'ufficio nazionale pastorale per gli immigrati in Italia, Roma, 10.12.03
- 534. Attac (Italy), membro del consiglio nazionale, Roma, 13.05.04
- 535. Beati i costruttori di pace, portavoce nazionale, Roma, 02.06.04
- 542. Disobbedienti, portavoce nazionale, Roma, 21.05.04
- 547. Tavolo della pace, portavoce nazionale, Perugia, 23.06.04
- 557. Environmental association Legambiente, responsabile temi agricoli, Roma, 25.09.03
- 563. Comunità di Sant'Egidio, portavoce nazionale, Roma, 21.10.03
- 564. Rete Lilliput, portavoce nazionale, Firenze, 24.10.03
- 584. EU level interview_Foee (*Friends of the Earth Europe*), Office in Brussels, Brussels, Mr.Knecny, 02.12.03
- 615. Instituut voor Publiek en politiek, Project leader, 9 October 2003.
- 616. Europese Beweging Nederland, Director, 16 July 2003.
- 714. Democracy Movement; Campaign Director; 4 Jun 2003
- 734. Asylum Aid; Co-ordinator; 9 Oct 2003
- 750. European Movement; Director; 7 May 2003
- 751. EU level interview_Union of European federalists
- 8. Union des Federalistes Europeennes

Chapter 12

National Media in Europeanized Public Sphere: The Openness and Support of the Press for European Integration

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Abstract

This paper aims to assess the role of national press with respect to emerging Europeanised public sphere. It introduces the approach of the “Europub.com” project which set out to study Europeanization in terms of communicative linkages in the public space of seven countries. Within the framework of this research, the paper focuses on the role and the voice of the press by looking at the claims that are made in editorials. The empirical analysis first investigates the openness of 28 newspapers in 7 countries to European perspectives by assessing the degree to which their editorials feature European scopes. Secondly, we also examine the media’s opinion about European integration. The overall picture that one can draw from the findings is that the level of Europeanization of national media depends on the salience of Europeanized issues in public debate, while the support for European integration varies across countries. Thus, we find high levels of Europeanization and high support of EU integration in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The media in the Netherlands and Switzerland are more cautious about opening the debate, even if they support European Integration

as an issue. We also see that the UK media deviate substantially from the patterns of communication found in the press on the continent, since the British press excludes European scopes and opposes European integration.

1 Introduction

In the discussions of the democratic deficit in the European Union, scholars have come to acknowledge that European integration from above must be accompanied by a Europeanization of public communication in order to overcome the EU's lack of legitimacy and popular involvement. The request for public communication has triggered a scholarly debate about the emergence of a European public sphere. Discussing the conditions for such a forum for communication (Neidhardt et al. 2000), most scholars agree that the mass media play a crucial role in the public representation of a European public sphere.

According to theories of the public sphere, the mass media form the institutionalised forum for debate, which serves as a central linkage between the public and the political structure. In this function, they are conveyors of information about issues and actors according to their professional norms and values. However, the media are not merely serving other actors as a channel of communication, forum for exchange, and medium of self observation of society. The media must also be seen as political actors in the public sphere who legitimately raise their own voice (Page 1996). They do so in particular by assigning relevance to issues for public debate and by expressing their own opinion.

This paper starts out with a sketch on the current literature, thereby pointing out some theoretical and empirical shortcomings in defining Europeanization and in sorting out the role of the media therein. In its second part it introduces the approach to Europeanization by the Europub.com project¹ which set out to study political communication in terms of European communicative linkages in, within and across EU-member states

(Koopmans/Erbe 2004). Within the framework of this research, this paper investigates the role and the voice of the media in Europeanised public communication. Empirically, the media's voice is analysed on the basis of claims that are made by the press in their editorials². Two aspects are analysed: we first study the openness of the press to European perspectives by looking at the degree to which the press features European scopes and also investigate the media's support for European integration.

2 Conceptualising Europeanization of the Public Sphere and the Role of the Media

In the debate about a potentially emerging European public sphere, scholars have come to emphasize that the communication flow between Europe and the public depends crucially on the mass media³. Thus, a significant strand of research highlights the centrality of the media in a potentially emerging European public sphere (Gerhards 1993, 2000, Schlesinger 1997, Schlesinger/Kevin 2000, Kunelius/ Sparks 2001, Kevin 2003, Koopmans/Erbe 2003). Concerning a mass-mediated European public sphere, scholars agree that a genuinely transnational mass media system, that could maintain the political functions of a democratic European public sphere, is quite unlikely. Hence, Europeanization "is for the most part dependent on the output of the national media" (Kevin 2003: 52). Such Europeanization of national public spheres would occur when nationally based mass media shift their focus away from the national political arena and towards the European level.

Thus far, empirical evidence on such forms of Europeanization of national public spheres concentrate on quite simple measures, such as the visibility of European issues and actors in national news coverage⁴ (Peter/de Vreese 2003, Kevin 2003, Gerhards 2000, Eilders/Voltmer 2003). The vast majority of the studies demonstrate marginal levels of visibility of European issues and actors in the print media that hardly allow us to speak of the

development of a Europeanised public sphere. Likewise Peter and de Vreese (2003) conclude, when discussing television news: “Although such notions may be desirable and theoretically challenging, the data presented in this article tell us this: there is no European public sphere. (...) Television, it seems, has never left the nation state” (Peter and de Vreese 2003:25). Contrary evidence is provided by Sievert (1998) and Trenz (2004), who found quite a high level of European aspects in national media.

Given these substantial discrepancies in the empirical findings and their interpretations, Neidhardt (2006) concludes that there is hardly any generalizable state of the art in research about European public spheres nor any methodological reflexion⁵.

This paper deviates from the previous research, since it argues that the visibility of European issues and actors in the national media as an indicator of the European public sphere is too simple in concept and measurement⁶. In addition, we claim that the role of the media in previous research is underspecified. If Europeanization is so dependent on the mass media, their role and functions, as well as their positions on the EU, need to be assessed in their complexity. It therefore seems indispensable that we distinguish sharply between the media’s function in serving other collective actors as a forum of exchange and the media’s role as political actors which speak in their own right.

2.1 The Media’s Role in the Europeanised Public Sphere

In the European public sphere, the mass media fulfill crucial functions, which Eilders/Voltmer (2003: 9-10) discuss as (1) agenda setting and second level agenda-setting (or framing); and (2) opinion formation which refers to presenting own positions and evaluations of actors. In their agenda-setting role the media shape the news coverage, which is dependent on external sources and their information. However, if the media act on their own account, they may take the liberty of deviating from the news agenda of other

actors. Within the recognized format of editorials and commentaries, they select issues and assign relevance to them as topics for public deliberation (Dearing/Rogers 1996, Protess/McCombs 1991). Thus the issue agenda of the media in the editorial section introduces their own salience in the issue agenda and may not follow the rank order of issues by non-media actors. The same argument applies to the so-called “second-level agenda-setting” function (Ghanem 1997; McCombs et al. 2000) which refers to a process that scholars of public discourse call “framing”. With regard to Europeanization, one specific question regarding media framing of issues is crucial: Do the media select issues that allow for an opening up of the discourse for transnational scopes? Hence, a significant density of references to European aspects might be an indicator of the readiness of the media to overcome the boundaries of national public debate which might be regarded as a first step towards a European debate beyond the nation state.

The most genuine and active function of the media as political actors refers to opinion formation. This implies that the media take their own stance on issues by commenting on the opinions and actions of non-media political actors. This function is the predominant purpose of editorials. Eilders et al. (2004) demonstrate with the German case that national newspapers express their political preferences insofar as they expose a more or less stable and coherent editorial line. While media are usually bound to the left-right spectrum of politics as regards national policies and debates, their positions and stakes as regards European politics leave more room to maneuver. Therefore one would expect that the freedom of the media to come up with their own position may be higher for European issues than for national ones. Thus, the extent to which the national media support European integration and whether these positions reflect national attitudes towards this issue to some degree is an open question.

Following these two media functions, the remainder of this paper aims at two research questions: (1) we ask to what degree the national media are open to European perspectives which we view as a crucial condition for the

long term Europeanization of national public spheres. (2) we want to know to what extent the national media support European integration, which we see as a condition for the democratic legitimization of the EU politics within and across EU member states.

2.2 The European Public Sphere as a Diversified Structure of Vertical and Horizontal Communicative Linkages

To study the Europeanization of public spheres and assess the role of the media therein the Europub.com-project⁷ refers to the interactive nature of public communication. We propose to investigate the horizontal (between EU member-state) and vertical (between EU member-states and the EU level) communicative linkages that are made by the various actors intervening in the public sphere. Further, we recognize and take into account that the level and degree of Europeanization might vary across policy areas. Finally, we are able to assess the media's position by analyzing their claims in editorials.

As regards our notion of Europeanization, the Europub.com-project conceives of a Europeanised public sphere in a relative sense. Following the work of Koopmans and Erbe (2004), we propose that the spatial reach and boundaries of public communication can be determined by investigating patterns of communicative flows and assessing the relative density of public communication within and between different political spaces. The center of this communicative space is the national public sphere of each country. The next level of communication refers to other national European public spaces, which comprise the EU member countries and those countries that are candidates to enter the EU. The third level comprises the transnational, European political space, in which the European institutions and common policies are situated. The degree to which public spheres can be deemed "national", "transnational", or "European" depends on the density of communicative linkages within and between these spaces.

It follows from this notion that, with regard to the Europeanization of national public spheres, the media may engage in two basic forms⁸ of geopolitical and spatial contextualisation of their public communication: (a) *Vertical Europeanization* consists of communicative linkages between the national and the European level. (b) *Horizontal Europeanization* includes communicative linkages between different EU-member states.

In contrast to previous research, which considered only vertical Europeanization, our approach includes the dimension of horizontal Europeanization. We argue that, by looking at vertical and horizontal modes of Europeanization, our study is well equipped to capture the flow of politically relevant communication within the common European space. Regarding the level and intensity of Europeanization, we do not expect Europeanised public communication to penetrate national public spheres on a general level with regard to all themes of public debate or all policy fields. Considering the large differences in the actual competencies of European institutions among different policy fields, it is unrealistic to expect an overall high and stable degree of European debate across all policy fields and issues. Instead, we expect patterns of public communication to reflect the actual distribution of power between the various European and the national levels, as well as whether the European decision-making process is primarily intergovernmental or primarily supranational in nature.

Therefore, the Europub.com-project chose to analyse public communication with respect to seven issue fields that represent various settings and levels of national and European governance. In addition to the meta-field of European integration, six substantive policy domains were selected for analysis. The issue fields vary systematically according to their level of formal Europeanization, reaching from fully integrated to merely coordinated domains. (1) Monetary politics: currency politics and interest rate, and (2) Agriculture: subsidies, livestock and dairy quotas, animal disease control represent issue areas that are characterised by a high degree of EU involvement in national politics, which to an important extent entails

supranational powers for EU institutions. (3) Immigration: entry and exit, and (4) Troops deployment mark the policy areas in which we observe increasing EU competencies (or at least an attempt to increase the EU's role), but where national decision-making is still predominant and the EU political process is dominated by intergovernmental negotiations. Finally, (5) Retirement and pension schemes and (6) Primary and secondary education are domains that have largely remained under the umbrella of national or regional decision making, and where the role of the EU is very limited. A research design that varies policy areas with respect to EU competences allows us to test whether the shift of decision making and responsibility away from the nation state is followed by the opening up of communicative space to supranational angles, actors and interpretations.

2.3 Methodology and Data

The Europub.com project, of which this paper is a part, includes seven European countries: the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. For our analysis of the voice of the press, we draw on 5294 editorials in four daily newspapers in each country over a three years period between 2000 and 2002. For the distribution of commentaries, we analysed between 595 and 1004 cases per country⁹: United Kingdom 910, France 678, Netherlands 732, Germany 1004, Switzerland 681, Spain 595, Italy 694.

The general approach to data collection was quantitative content analysis of newspapers, which is based on claims as unit of analysis. A claim is defined as an instance of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion by some form of physical or verbal action, regardless of the form this expression takes (statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc. etc.).

An act of claims making usually consists of :

- a subject actor, or *claimant*, who makes a demand, proposal, appeal, or criticism;
- an *addressee*, who is held responsible for implementing the claim, or is the target of criticism or support;
- an *object actor*, whose interests are or would be positively (beneficiary) or negatively affected by the claim;
- the *substantive content* of the claim, stating what is to be done (aim) and why (frame).

In the editorial analysis we treat the commentator as claimant and the main message of the editorial as one claim by the newspaper. Thus, the coding of media claims¹⁰ recorded the commentator who addressed his demands to actors or institutions (addressees) in criticism or support. We also qualified the initiating event of the commentary, the object actors in whose interests the press claim is made, and the content of the demand and the argumentative framing that supports it. Importantly for determining whether or not we are dealing with Europeanised claims, we coded the geographical or polity level at which the different actors and institutions that are mentioned in the claim are situated (e.g., European or national scope), as well as, in the case of national or subnational actors, the country where they are based (e.g., Germany, France). In addition, we also recorded the scope of the event that triggered media commentary.

We only recorded claims that were explicitly expressed in the editorial. Thus, in the 5294 editorials we found 4739 claims, that is 89.5% of all editorials. Since one can assume that the editorials represent the political and ideological commentary line of each newspaper, we take the aggregation of claims by individual commentators as the position of the media organization. In order to capture the range of ideological positions in the media system of each country, the variation in styles of addressing the political public and the regional aspect of the media system, we draw on four daily newspapers of

different types in each country under study: a centre-left as well as a centre-right quality newspaper, a tabloid newspaper, and a regional newspaper in a region with a specific regional identity.

Since not all media systems are able to fit into such a clear cut set of the theoretically defined dimensions, we had to make compromises in the selection of newspapers for the study¹¹. Thus in countries where the media landscape does not feature a clear cut yellow press, we tried to select newspapers for the study that can be regarded as functional equivalents to the tabloid press. In countries where we could not identify such a functional equivalent newspaper, we chose a second regional press title. For analysis, we chose: in the UK *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, *The Sun*; in France *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Ouest France*, *L'Humanite*; in the Netherlands *De Vokskant*, *Het Algemeen Dagblad*, *De Limburger*, *De Telegraaf*; in Germany *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Bild-Zeitung*; in Switzerland *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Le Temps*, *Le Matin*, *Blick*; in Spain *El Pais*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*; in Italy *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Mattino*, *La Nazione*.

3 The Openness of the Press for European Scopes

The central question of Europeanization in press claims is addressed in this study by analyzing the degree to which the editorials contain communicative linkages that transcend the national public and political arena. Thus, we try to identify whether the media open up to European scopes in their editorials. In the analysis, we collapse all vertical and horizontal European scopes into one category of European scopes which is contrasted either with only national references or with supranational linkages¹². As a measure of the openness of the media to European perspectives we computed a summary score for the European references on four dimensions of each claim. Thus, the variable Summary EU scope takes the value of 4, if a European scope is present (1) in the initiating event of the editorial, plus (2)

the most important (“first”) issue in the editorial, plus (3) the most important (“first”) addressee, plus (4) the most important (“first”) object actor. By contrast, the value 0 indicates that none of the claim dimensions refers to horizontal or vertical EU linkages.

Table 1: Summary EU Scope per country

	DE	CH	ES	IT	UK	FR	NL	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
No EU-Scope	47.0	48.6	41.2	41.3	63.0	42.5	56.3	50.2	1970
1 EU-Scope	8.4	21.5	9.9	4.7	14.1	7.8	10.0	10.7	421
2 EU-Scopes	8.9	5.7	11.5	12.3	10.3	8.0	6.1	8.9	351
3 EU Scopes	12.0	6.1	14.4	17.7	7.2	13.3	7.6	10.8	426
All EU-Scopes	23.6	18.1	23.0	24.1	5.3	28.5	20.1	19.3	759
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Means (1-4)	1.56	1.23	1.68	1.79	0.77	1.77	1.25	1.38	
N	593	442	243	644	806	527	672		3.927

Table 1 depicts the distribution of Summary EU scopes in all seven policy areas across countries. In a nutshell it demonstrates that the UK press is by far the least European voice in the chorus of national newspapers: 63 percent of all claims refer to non-EU dimensions. Thus the vast majority of public media statements exclude any European dimension and feature national and, to a small degree, supranational aspects. The outsider role of the UK media is also corroborated if we look at the share of claims that contain all European dimensions. Only 5% of the press claims are fully Europeanised. Next to the UK, though at a big distance from it, we can position the Dutch media. However, they are not as self referential as the British press, since 20% of their claims feature all EU scopes. However, 56% of all claims in the Dutch newspapers are restricted to non-European aspects. A pretty similar pattern is evident for media in Switzerland where 49% of all claims are self contained and the all EU scopes score 18%.

A sharp contrast appears between this group of national media and the press in France. The French media are by far the most open to European dimensions of claims making. 29% of all claims in French editorials contain all

four EU scopes simultaneously, followed by the press in Italy (24%), Germany (24%) and Spain (23%), all of whose share of fully Europeanised claims dimensions is about the same. Thus, we see clearly that France, Italy, Spain and Germany maintain print media that are prone to register what is happening on the EU level and in other EU countries. At least one in four claims is fully Europeanized.

Our conclusions about the prominence of EU aspects in media claims across country to some degree mirror the salience of the issue field of EU integration in the press. In order to get a picture of the level of Europeanization in policy fields that are not a priori defined by a high EU reference, we compare the Summary EU Scope across countries for all issue fields except EU integration.

Table 2: Summary EU Scope per country (without EU integration)

	DE	CH	ES	IT	UK	FR	NL	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
No EU-Scope	65.8	80.5	54.6	58.5	74.8	61.0	70.2	67.6	1968
1 EU-Scope	7.8	5.6	10.4	6.2	12.4	7.9	9.5	8.9	259
2 EU-Scopes	6.1	1.5	10.9	11.7	6.2	6.5	4.8	6.7	195
3 EU Scopes	7.1	3.4	11.5	9.7	4.3	10.1	5.0	6.8	197
All EU-Scopes	13.2	9.0	12.6	13.9	2.4	14.4	10.4	10.0	291
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	
Means (1-4)	.94	.55	1.17	1.14	.47	1.09	.76	.83	
N	424	267	183	453	679	367	537		2910

Table 2 gives the results which yield the same structure of claims making across the newspapers in the various countries except for the fact the level of European scopes is lower. Whereas the level of Non-European scopes is on average 50% if EU Integration is included, it is 68% if this issue is excluded. At the other end of the scale, claims with all EU-scopes make up about 20% if EU Integration is contained in the picture, while it is half as much if EU integration is not assessed. Again the UK, the Netherlands and Switzerland form the group of countries where non-EU scopes are most prominent. On the other hand, Spain, Italy, France and Germany feature a

considerable share of EU scopes in the media debate, even if EU integration is excluded from the picture.

Table 3: Summary EU Scope per issue field

	Monetary	Agriculture	Immigration	Troops	Pension	Education	EU-Integration	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
No EU-Scope	16.6	45.1	73.9	85.3	91.3	96.0	0.2	50.2	1970
1 EU-Scope	17.9	13.1	10.1	6.7	3.4	2.0	15.9	10.7	421
2 EU-Scopes	15.1	10.1	5.8	5.2	1.5	1.2	15.3	8.9	351
3 EU Scopes	17.9	12.8	5.8	2.6	1.1	0.3	22.5	10.8	426
4 EU-Scopes	32.4	18.9	4.5	0.3	2.6	0.5	46.0	19.3	759
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Means (1-4)	2.32	1.47	.57	.26	.20	.07	2.98	1.38	
N	614	328	398	659	265	646	1.017		3.927

If we compare the EU summary scope across issue fields, we see the texture of the press debates: In Table 3 we notice that pension and education in newspaper claims are completely contained within the national debate. Immigration and troop deployment are high in non-EU scopes as well. Yet this does not mean that the debate in these issue fields is contained within national boundaries. We know from other analyses that the level of supranational and multilateral references is comparatively high in troop deployment and still above average in immigration. The most critical issue with respect to EU scopes is agriculture, since the press claims are equally split between national only scopes and EU scopes. Although EU competences in the political decision making are pretty high in agriculture, still every second claim is confined to the national debate. On the other hand, almost 20% of claims are completely Europeanised. Table 3 further stresses that monetary policies and European integration issues cannot but be debated with a European frame of reference.

Table 4: Summary EU Scope per newspaper type

	Quality press	Regional and Tabloid Press	Total	N
	%	%	%	
No EU-Scope	48.4	52.9	50.2	1970
1 EU-Scopes	9.8	12.1	10.7	421
2 EU-Scopes	8.7	9.4	8.9	351
3 EU Scopes	12.0	9.0	10.8	426
All EU-Scopes	21.2	16.5	19.3	759
Total	100	100	100	
Means (1-4)	1.48	1.24	1.38	
N	2378	1549		3927

Regarding the variation of European scopes across newspaper types Table 4 shows that the differences between the newspaper titles are moderate. The national quality press seems to be more inclined to stress European dimensions than the regional newspapers and the tabloids, but the discrepancy is quite moderate. Thus, we can assume that the differences in terms of country and issue fields by far outweigh the variation across newspaper types.

The same conclusion holds true if we look at the variation over time. Table 5 shows that Non-EU Scopes have increased between 2000 and 2002. Additional analyses reveal that the increase of Non-EU Scopes over the the three years does not mean that claims making has become more national in this period. Instead, the decrease of EU-scopes was compensated for by an increase of supranational scopes, especially with regard to the issue field of troop deployment after 9/11.

Table 5: Summary EU Scope per Year

	Year			Total	N
	2000	2001	2002		
	%	%	%		
No EU-Scopes	44.2	57.1	49.1	50.2	1970
1 EU-Scopes	11.8	10.4	10.1	10.7	421
2 EU-Scopes	7.7	8.4	10.7	8.9	351
3 EU Scopes	9.8	10.8	11.9	10.8	426
All EU-Scopes	26.5	13.4	18.3	19.3	759
Total	100	100	100	100	
Means (1-4)	1.63	1.13	1.40	1.38	
N	1284	1310	1333		3927

Our findings so far clearly show that the level of Europeanization in the press strongly varies across the countries and issue fields. Since we described the data in bivariate terms, we have only been speculating which one of the factors yields the more powerful effects on the Europeanization of press claims making. In order to assess the strength of the factors that lead to variation in the level of European scopes, we computed a multivariate analysis of variance with country, issue-field, newspaper type and year as independent variables and EU summary scope as dependent variable. The results reveal the general nature of references in newspaper claims, since our model explains 60% of the variance of the level of European scopes. The strongest and highly significant effect is caused by the issue field (Beta .745). This means that Europeanization is highly dependent on the issues discussed in the media. Yet we also find quite a strongly significant effect of the country (Beta .230) in which press claims making is observed. Compared to these two main sources of variation of levels of European scope, the newspaper type (Beta .072) and the year (.125) hardly yields an effect on European scopes. This means that the national press within each country tend to share their reference framework of political issues in public debate. Moreover, the newspaper's voice was pretty stable over time in all countries.

4 Evaluation of European Integration

The second dimension of the role of the print media in public sphere refers to whether they support European integration. For each claim we recorded whether the commentator is sympathetic overall to European integration, which we regard as an indicator for the overall editorial line regarding this issue and its potential implications. Table 6 shows that in a majority of claims (55%) which are published the writers definitely support European integration. Except for the UK, the average of negative claims about European integration is below five percent. If we compare across countries, the most positive attitudes towards European integration are found in Italian and French media. More than 80% of the media claims in Italy and 78 percent in France are favourable towards EU integration. It seems that in these two countries there is a strong consensus in the press that EU integration is an overall positive project. By contrast, British journalists seem to dislike European integration. The majority of claims in the UK press (49%) stand out by an overt negative attitude.

Table 6: Editorial Position towards EU integration per country

	DE	CH	ES	IT	UK	FR	NL	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Negative (-1)	2.9	4.0	0.3	1.1	49.0	3.0	6.7	9.0	200
Mixed/ambivalent	30.9	45.7	69.0	14.4	34.8	18.7	41.4	35.6	794
Positive (+1)	66.2	50.4	30.7	84.5	16.2	78.3	51.9	55.4	1,234
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Positive – negative (%)	63.3	46.4	30.4	83.4	-32.8	75.3	45.2	46.4	
Means	0.63	0.46	0.30	0.83	-0.33	0.75	0.45	0.46	
N	385	278	316	368	296	300	285		2,228

The attitudinal space between the most positive and most negative national media is filled by the press in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. In the Swiss and Dutch media the positive voices override the negative ones by 46 percentage points; in the German press the difference

amounts to as much as 63 percentage points. Finally, the Spanish newspapers are most idiosyncratic regarding the attitudes of the commentators towards European integration. Although the media in Spain rank among the most Europeanised in terms of scopes, the vast majority of opinions (69%) are mixed, undecided or ambivalent. In addition, the 31% share of claims with positive attitudes is moderate in the Spanish press if we compare it with other national media.

Table 7: Editorial Position towards EU integration per issue field

	Monetary	Agriculture	Immigration	Troops	Pension	Education	EU-Integration	Total	N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Negative	12.2	8.8	3.4	2.0	5.0	0.0	8.2	9.0	200
Mixed/ambivalent	42.5	55.8	48.3	31.4	60.0	50.0	27.9	35.6	794
Positive	45.3	35.4	48.3	66.7	35.0	50.0	64.0	55.4	1.234
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Positive – negative (%)	33.1	26.6	44.9	64.7	30.0	50.0	55.8	46.4	
Means	0.33	0.27	0.45	0.65	0.30	0.50	0.56	0.46	
N	640	181	89	51	20	12	1.235		2.228

It is hardly surprising that positive evaluations by journalists predominantly concentrate on the debates in the issue field of European integration. As Table 7 indicates, two thirds of claims here are accompanied by positive opinions. It is also quite plausible that the issue fields that are typical for a predominantly national debate, namely pension and education, are characterized by a high level of mixed or undecided attitudes regarding European integration. The highest levels of claims featuring positive sentiments are discovered in monetary policies, immigration and troop deployment. Particularly in the latter issue field journalists agree with the involvement of the EU. Regarding the evaluations in editorials, the most critical issue field is agriculture. In this issue field, which has far reaching EU competences, we see almost 60% of undecided or ambivalent sentiments of

journalists. Moreover, facing 9% of claims with negative media attitudes, the critical potential is comparatively high.

Table 8: Editorial Position towards EU integration per newspaper type

	Quality press	Regional and Tabloid Press	Total	N
	%	%	%	
Negative	4.6	16.4	9.0	200
Mixed/ambivalent	35.1	36.6	35.6	794
Positive	60.3	47.0	55.4	1.234
Total	100	100	100	
Positive- negative (%)	55.7	30.6	46.4	
Means	0.56	0.31	0.46	
N	1.403	825		2.228

The journalists who speak up in support of European integration are predominantly based in the quality press. We see in Table 8 that the majority of journalists' claims in the quality press is positive (60%) and only 5% are negative. In contrast, the proportion of negative claims in the regional and the tabloid press is four times as high, as we see 16% of claims opposing European integration compared to 47% supporting it.

Our aim was to assess which factors determine the media positions on European issues. Hence, we conducted a multivariate classification analysis in which the country, the issue field, the newspaper type and the year were introduced as independent variables. The findings reveal that the position of the media can be sufficiently explained by our model. The four independent variables in our model account for 32% of the variance (R-square). Interestingly enough, the effect of the country (Beta .506) is by far the strongest and most dominant source of variation. The issue-field (Beta .189), newspaper type (Beta .128) and year (.061) had very weak effects. This means that the attitudes of the editorial towards European integration depend predominantly on the country in which the newspaper is published. Thus, if

we see that UK journalists hate European integration while French journalists support it, we capture a crucial cleavage in the media-induced public sphere in Europe.

5 Summary and Conclusion

Our study allows us to identify the role and the position of the national press as actors in public communication who have the potential to open up the debate for Europeanised scopes. Moreover, the press is seen as an actor that holds its own idiosyncratic positions about European issues. This paper presents a comparative analysis of newspaper editorials across seven countries and issue fields thereby aiming at discerning the voice of the print media in 2000-2002.

The overall picture that we can draw from our findings is that - contrary to previous research -there is a remarkable level of European debate in the press of the countries under study and an even greater potential to further develop transnational communicative linkages within the public space of the European Union. This conclusion can be reached not only from the salience of European integration compared to other issues on the newspaper agenda, but also from the analysis of European scopes in media claims making. Moreover, the evaluations of European integration show that the European political project is supported by the media of most countries under study. While this general conclusion is true for the majority of countries under study, there is one exception. The British press deviates in all dimensions from the general picture, as European integration is played down on the issue agenda, as European scopes are neglected, as European integration is utterly opposed.

Against the background of this general conclusion, we find, of course, more or less obvious contrasts between national media which point to the fact that each media culture has idiosyncrasies that are also prevalent in its voice about Europe. For instance, we find that the propensity to open up to

European scopes depends largely on whether the media engage in the debates about issue fields that are characterised by strong political competences of the EU. Thus, if the media concentrate on issues like education or social policy, which are decided foremost at the national level, there is not much room left for representing European perspectives. On the other hand, if the press is eager to engage in discussing monetary politics or the issue of European integration, there is space to overcome the parochial perspective. What we can conclude from the analysis of EU scopes is that the more national debates recognize issue fields with strong EU political competences, the more the media open up to transnational perspectives.

While the openness of mediated political debate to EU scopes is largely a residual of the issue fields under discussion, the evaluation of EU integration depends on the country where the newspaper is published. It seems that the media's opinions about Europe resonates with the position of the national political elites and at the same time reinforces it. For instance, the media in France and Germany are most open to EU scopes and most supportive of the integration and the deepening of the EU, while the British press opposes the political project of Europe strongly. Even the Dutch and the Swiss media, which turned out to be quite reluctant to open up to European scopes, are in favour of EU integration. And while the Italian and Spanish media are most open to European perspectives in their editorials, their opinions about European integration are either mixed or indifferent. Finally, we see that the British press is not only most parochial in scope, but seems to utterly hate European integration and EU-actors.

As we have emphasized many times, the British media are the clear outsiders in the chorus of the national media studied in the Europub.com project. The British press seem to try hard to ignore European scopes whenever possible. The UK press is opposing the political project of Europe and the attitudes of journalists towards European integration are overwhelmingly negative. Not surprisingly, we find that the frontrunners in negativism are the British tabloids. There could be no stronger contrast in our

data than the contrast between the British and the French press. Our analysis clearly shows that French editorials are most open to European scopes from all national media. Moreover, there is strong support for the enlargement of EU political competences and for EU integration in general. The German newspapers resemble the French media voices insofar as they are quite open to transnational EU perspectives. They also support the deepening of the political EU and a very large majority of commentators hold most favourable opinions about European integration. The Italian media share with the French and the German media their proneness to include European scopes in their editorials. Moreover, Italian journalists seem to be quite supportive of European integration.

Like the Italian press, the newspapers in Spain are among the national newspapers that most eager to represent European perspectives. We find a quite high level of completely Europeanized claims. However, concerning European integration we find a widespread indifference or mixed feelings among Spanish journalists. By contrast, half of the claims in the Dutch press are supportive of EU integration. Yet the Dutch media rank surprisingly low in European scopes. The reason is that the media in the Netherlands in the period of 2000–2002 were strongly occupied with issues in the national political domain. Finally, the Swiss media share with the Dutch media a reluctance to include EU scopes. The vast majority of claims in the Swiss media do not contain any reference to the EU. The quite strong focus on national matters is all the more understandable as Switzerland has not decided yet to join the EU. On the other hand, regarding opinions about European integration, we find that every second commentator in the Swiss press under study is favourable towards European integration.

Notes

¹ The Europub.com project is coordinated by Ruud Koopmans Free University Amsterdam. Project partners are Paul Statham, University of Leeds; Donatella della Porta, European University Institute Florence; Hanspeter Kriesi, University of Zurich; Jos de Beus, Universiteit Amsterdam; Juan Diez Medrano, ASEP Barcelona, Virginie Buiraudon, CRAPS Lille and Barbara Pfetsch, University of Hohenheim, cf. <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>.

² We concentrate on the press and press editorials since by focussing on this format, we can expect to capture the discursive contribution of media (Kleinen-von Königslöw et al. 2005).

³ According to Eurobarometer data, two-thirds of EU citizens consistently identify the media as their most important source of political information (Peter/de Vreese 2003:3).

⁴ Often also, conclusions are drawn from secondary analyses of data that were gathered for other purposes and are not always suited to grasp the intricacies of the European multi-level polity (e.g., Gerhards 2000, Eilders/Voltmer 2003).

⁵ The citation is taken from page 6 of the typeset manuscript of the Neidhardt (2006) chapter.

⁶ For a detailed discussion and criticism of previous studies see Koopmans/Pfetsch (2003).

⁷ For details see: <https://europub.wz-berlin.de>

⁸ These two forms of Europeanization are the most basic ones. If all possible linkages and constellations are taken into account, there are at least five forms of Europeanization (Koopmans/Erbe 2003).

⁹ In order to restrict the coding effort to manageable proportions, we used a sampling strategy: In those countries with a low number of commentaries – France, the Netherlands and Switzerland – we selected every day of the year. In the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain – countries that yield a medium number of commentaries – we registered the commentaries on every second day. For Germany, we sampled every fourth day. On the days of the sample we looked through all newspapers and selected all commentaries related to our seven issue fields.

¹⁰ The Codebook for content coding of commentaries was developed by Adam et al. (2002). It is available at <https://europub.wz-berlin.de>.

¹¹ While we were able to detect a left and a right quality paper in all countries under study, we faced some difficulties with regard to the tabloids. As the country reports show, there are different cultural notions about tabloids in the various countries and some media systems hardly include newspapers that would fit in the category at all. For instance, not all national media systems reveal such a sharp contrast between quality newspapers and tabloids as the UK.

¹² Supranational linkages here include references between EU-countries and International Organisations or bilateral references of EU-countries to Non-EU-countries like the US or Russia or references between Non-EU-countries.

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