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Towards a Europeanised Public Sphere? Comparing Political Actors and the Media in Germany

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Abstract

The paper argues that European integration from above must be accompanied by a Europeanisation of public communication in order to overcome its lack of legitimacy and popular involvement. It relates to the emerging scientific discussion on the Europeanisation of public spheres as a start for inquiry and presents findings on the contents and nature of public claim making and debate on European issues in Germany. The media are seen as prime actors in the public sphere that not only convey the issues of other actors in public debate but also speak in their own voice and thus possess the potential to influence the public agenda towards favourable European frames and positions. We investigate whether the media, in comparison with other actors, operate as a motor of Europeanisation or rather slow down the process. For the empirical part of the paper, we draw on data from the project „The

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Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres” (Europub.com). We analyse the communication through which political actors and the media make public demands on European issues on two levels: First, all claims made by collective actors that appear in the news section are content analysed for four German print-media outlets, which reach different types of publics. Second, the claims made by media themselves in the commentary section are retrieved and analysed. The findings show that the claims made by the media and the frames that are advocated by them are generally more European in scope and more positive towards European governance than those by other political actors, which tend to deemphasise European dimensions of issues and take more critical positions on European integration and EU institutions.

Introduction

Against the background of the alleged democratic deficit of the European Union, scholars have begun to recognise that successful European integration requires more than the implementation of efficient institutions and the harmonisation of national and European policy making. It also involves processes of communication and the emergence of a public sphere that allows citizens to get involved in public discourse about European politics. In the discussion on the democratic deficit, it is widely acknowledged that European integration from above must be accompanied by a Europeanisation of public communication in order to overcome the EU's lack of legitimacy and popular involvement. The request for public communication as an indispensable prerequisite for the democratisation of Europe has triggered a vivid scholarly debate on the nature of such a European public sphere and the conditions of its emergence (Neidhardt et al. 2000). While the German debate is inspired by quite controversial views on whether a potentially emerging European public sphere must be conceptualised along the lines of a representative liberal model of public sphere or follow the notion of a deliberative public sphere (Eder et al. 1998), qualified empirical evidence is still rare. Theorists and empirical researchers however seem to agree that it is the mass media that constitute the main forum for the public representation of such a European public sphere. Moreover, since for various reasons – such as language, cultural heterogeneity, and the national make-up of media systems – the emergence of a transnational European media system seems rather unrealistic, most studies refer to a model of a European public sphere in terms of a Europeanisation of national public spheres. It is not surprising therefore, that the ambitions of projects that aim at identifying a potentially emerging European public sphere focus on the mass media as prime object of study and try to establish the prominence of European issues and actors in media coverage over time (Gerhards 2000, Eilders/Voltmer 2003), or across countries (Peter/de Vreese 2003, Kevin 2003, Eder/Trenz 2000).

The empirical findings of the few studies are rather sobering compared to the enthusiastic expectations and speculations that European issues and actors might stand out as visible and ever growing components of national public spheres. Thus, Gerhards (2000, 2002) maintains that the Europeanisation of the public sphere is lagging far behind the well-documented tendencies of economic and political

integration. Interestingly enough, the studies of media coverage – explicitly or implicitly – share the assumption that the Europeanisation of national public spheres is in the interest of the majority of political and economic elites in EU member states, whereas the media for various reasons appear as one of the prime obstacles to Europeanised political communication. It is argued that the logic of the media and in particular the rationales of news making – for instance the professional news values as selection criteria of messages, the goal of attracting large national audiences by personalised, conflictive and event-driven coverage and their disinterest in administrative, policy-driven information – result in a lack of interest in European issues and actors, and eventually keep public political debate within the boundaries of the nation state (Gerhards 1992, 1993). Thus, the media are held responsible for the resilience of largely nationally focused public spheres.

The theoretical assumptions these studies make about the role of the media cannot be taken for granted, and the empirical approaches that are used to test them are not always appropriate. If only the news coverage is analysed, it may be argued that the low representation of European issues and actors is not necessarily an indication of a reluctance on the side of the media to sponsor European politics. News coverage is strongly bound to the information sources and news-generating events, which in turn depend on the public strategies of political and economic elites, and their competition with one another for public visibility, resonance, and legitimacy.³ Thus, news reports rely to a large degree on the input from the (predominantly national) political elites, who have their own interests and publicity goals. These interests and aims of national elites are not necessarily served well by emphasising European dimensions of political issues. If studies demonstrate that media coverage largely neglects European politics, the blame must not necessarily lie with the media themselves, but may lie with the information input that is provided by their sources. Since the media as institutions have – in contrast to national political elites – hardly any vested interests in European politics, one might alternatively speculate that they are in favour of a free flow of information across national boundaries. Thus, the media's role as scapegoats for the lack of a European public sphere must be challenged, as long as their specific role in this picture is not more precisely assessed.

According to theories of the public sphere, the mass media are the institutionalised forum of debate, which serves as a central linkage between the public and the institutional 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 voice in their own right (Page 1996). If we introduce this dual role into the reasoning of the media's role in the European public sphere, the media's genuine voice in political communication about European issues and actors is still a desiderate. The effects of both roles must not necessarily coincide with reference to the issue of Europeanisation of political communication. The media's "own voice" may well emphasise European issues very strongly, while at the same time the media's coverage of other actors' public acts may reveal a predominantly national perspective.

In this paper, we aim to determine whether the media are rightly or falsely accused of counteracting the Europeanisation of national public spheres. Our empirical basis is an analysis of the structure of public claim making on several issues in Germany in the year 2000, which allows us to compare claims by the media themselves to those of other collective actors, both state and party elites, and actors from within civil society. The paper divides in three sections. In the first section, we shall briefly discuss the role of the media in the Europeanisation of public spheres and review the findings of current research. The criticism of these studies leads us to introduce our own approach, which maintains that Europeanised public communication should be studied with reference to the structure of claim making in specific policy areas, taking into account fields with both high and low degrees of political integration on the EU level. For the empirical part of the paper, we draw on data from the project „The Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres” (Europub.com)⁴ and analyse the communication through which political

³ For a theoretical elaboration of the competition for these three scarce resources in the public sphere – which can be conceptualised as „discursive opportunities“ – see Koopmans forthcoming.

⁴ This project is coordinated by Ruud Koopmans, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB). Project partners are Paul Statham, University of Leeds; Donatella della Porta, Università degli Studi di Firenze; Hanspeter Kriesi, University of Zurich; Jos de Beus, Universiteit Amsterdam; Juan Díez Medrano, ASEP Barcelona, Virginie Guiraudon, CRAPS Lille and Barbara Pfetsch (Universität Hohenheim). For further

actors and media actors make public demands on selected issues. We will compare claims made by collective actors that appear in the news sections of a selected sample of German print media and compare them with claims that are made by these media themselves in the news sections as well as in the commentaries.

The Media's Role in the Europeanisation of the Public Sphere

Starting out from the problematic of the EU's – real or alleged – democratic deficit, there has been a vivid debate in Europe on the necessity to link the EU institutional structure and decision-making process with active involvement, acceptance, and legitimacy among the citizenry. The public sphere is at the core of these processes. While the necessity of a Europeanised public sphere is widely agreed upon, the scholarly debate (at least in Germany) has focused on controversies about how it should be theoretically conceptualised. Eder et al. (1998) propose a theoretical approach to a Europeanised public sphere that draws on deliberative democratic theory. Their view of a common European communicative space emphasises deliberative issue networks between the institutional sphere of power and organised interests and civil society actors. The authors illustrate their approach by pointing at the existence of transnational communication networks in the field of migration politics, which link EU institutional actors to actors in civil society. Their optimistic conclusion is that a European public sphere already exists. In doing so, they explicitly challenge the view of Gerhards (2000), who objects to such a notion of a European public sphere, because the supranational communication networks of civil society actors are highly selective and not inclusive as far as the whole political public is concerned. The findings of Rucht (2000) who demonstrates for Germany that social movement actors have considerably intensified their lobby activities in Brussels while protest mobilisation directed to the European level has not increased, point in the same direction. Likewise, Imig and Tarrow (2000) show that mobilisation on the European level by transnationally organised European actors has so far been rare. Thus, while potentially civil society actors may have an important role to play in the Europeanisation of public spheres, the participation of a limited network of transnational NGO's in the Brussels and Strasbourg lobbying circuits cannot be taken

information, see the project proposal (Koopmans and Statham 2002), which along with other materials from the project is available at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>. The project is funded by the European Commission in the context of its Fifth Framework Programme (grant number HPSE-CT2000-00046).

as a sufficient manifestation of a transnational public sphere, as long as such activities are not linked and made visible to the larger public at the level of the member states.

From the perspective of a liberal representative concept of the public sphere, Gerhards (1993, 2000) argues that a European public sphere must be a mass-mediated public sphere. In the meantime, there is a significant strand of research that emphasises the centrality of media to the notion of a European public sphere (Schlesinger 1997, Schlesinger/Kevin 2000, Kunelius/Sparks 2001, Kevin 2003, Koopmans/Erbe forthcoming). Even more than on the national level, the communication flow between Europe and the public depends crucially on the mass media, as Eurobarometer data show that “two-thirds of EU citizens consistently identify the media in general and television in particular as their most important source of political information” (Peter/de Vreese 2003: 3).

Scholars have come to agree that the emergence of a genuinely transnational mass media system in Europe is rather unlikely. If there are supranational media to be detected, they are confined to a limited audience of political and business elites, who communicate in English, or they take the form of non-political media that specialise in sports and music (Kevin 2003: 38-41). Linguistic boundaries, cultural heterogeneity, and the fact that media systems are strongly bound to national mass audiences are crucial and perhaps insurmountable barriers to the formation of a unified European public sphere, which would be a replication on the European level of the structure we know from national media systems.

Several scholars (e.g., Gerhards 1993, 2000, Schlesinger/Kevin 2000) have therefore come to argue that the potentially emerging European public sphere must be sought within the national public spheres of the various European countries. This perspective maintains that Europeanisation “is for the most part dependent on the output of the national media” (Kevin 2003: 52). Such a Europeanisation of national public spheres would occur when nationally-based mass media shift their focus away from the national political arena towards the European level. Thus, if one is to find an increased proportion of media coverage on European issues and actors and if those were evaluated with references to transnational contexts, these authors would speak of a Europeanised public sphere.

Thus far, much of the work on such forms of Europeanisation of national public spheres has remained rather speculative. Empirical evidence is still rare and the few available studies concentrate on rather simple measures, such as the amount of European issues and actors in national news coverage (Peter/de Vreese 2003, Kevin 2003). 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). For example, Gerhards (2000: 294-295) finds that European issues comprise about seven percent on average of all issues in the news sections of the German quality press between 1961 and 1990. The proportion remains largely stable over time and only increases marginally in the early 1990s. Moreover, European institutions make up only about one percent of all publicly visible actors in those media. The marginality of European issues and actors is corroborated by Eilders and Voltmer's (2003: 16-17) analysis of commentaries in the German quality press between 1994 and 1998. They find that only six percent of the commentaries deal with European issues, and a mere two percent mention actors and institutions on the European level.

Such marginal levels of visibility of European issues and actors in the German print media hardly allow us to speak of the development of a Europeanised public sphere. This finding seems to hold also when we broaden the scope of investigation to other types of media, or to other countries. Thus, Peter and de Vreese (2003) analyse the representation of EU stories in the television news of five European countries over eleven months in the year 2000. Except for Denmark, the proportion of EU-related stories in television news in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom is less than five percent during periods of routine news. The visibility of Europe increases to about ten percent around European summit meetings in all countries under study, again except for the news in Denmark, which stands out by a remarkable EU coverage prior to and after a referendum on the Euro held in September 2000.⁵ Peter and de Vreese (2003: 23) confirm that "in terms of its officials, the EU is faceless. Given the power of an institution such as the European Commission, it is amazing how absent its officials were in the television coverage of

⁵ The Danish level of television coverage of EU affairs amounts to 19 percent of all news stories in routine periods, and 25 percent in summit periods.

EU (!) affairs.” As far as the debate of a European public sphere is concerned, the authors’ conclusion is rather sobering: “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).

The lack in visibility of European issues and actors in the media is attributed to a number of reasons related to the contradictory incentives underlying the political logic of the EU and the logic of national media organisations (Gerhards 1992, 1993). First, the institutional structure of the EU, the nature of European decision-making and the absence of citizens’ involvement in the legitimisation of European actors are held responsible for the fact that EU politics is dominated by largely administrative politics and complex and intransparent negotiations. It is argued that such a decision-making process does not produce enough newsworthy messages and events on a regular basis, which can be tailored to the news values of the media – such as conflict, prominence, or drama. Moreover, European actors are not dependent on public legitimacy and support of the European citizenry, and therefore have no incentive to go public on the European level. This mechanism reduces the opportunities for the media of personalising European politics. Hence, the general argument is that European politics does not cater to the attention rules of the media, which undermines its public visibility⁶.

The second argument refers to the preferences and resources of the media, which are held responsible for the fact that EU politics is widely neglected (Gerhards 1992, 2000). Media organisations must attract large audiences. Due to the lack of public involvement and the lack of inherent newsworthiness of EU politics, the media cannot achieve this goal by covering European issues and actors. However, the situation of media audiences may have dramatically changed at least concerning one crucial European issue. The introduction of the Euro has introduced a symbol of Europeanness into the everyday lives of a wide audience, and therefore the argument

⁶ This argument is corroborated by the findings of Peter and de Vreese, who show that more spectacular European events such as summit meetings do receive slightly higher levels of coverage, and that public mobilisations or referendums about European issues create a significant visibility of EU politics. This visibility however does not contribute to the visibility of European actors, but helps national actors to gain prominence on European issues.

concerning the public's detachment from European policies may no longer be as valid as it used to be.

It has further been argued that national media organisations devote rather limited resources to their news infrastructure in Brussels, and that Brussels correspondents face tough competition with other foreign correspondents for the limited available space for international news. Moreover, information flows in Brussels and the networks of EU-correspondents tend to be organised along national lines. This argument, too, may have lost some of its validity more recently. Meyer (1999) shows that the resources of media in Brussels have considerably increased, and that transnational networks of journalists have emerged. Thus, regarding the media's genuine preferences and resources, the opportunity structures and incentives for covering European politics have probably improved considerably in recent years. In combination, the logic of EU politics and the logic of media organisations seem to constitute mutually reinforcing factors that fuel a vicious circle, which continuously reproduces the visibility deficit of Europe in the media. In this view, the media fulfil a central role as scapegoats for the lack of attention for Europe.

Against this background, one of the problems in the present research on the Europeanisation of public spheres is that the role of the media is not qualified and set apart from the role of other collective actors, whose actions constitute the input of the news production process. Instead, most studies fail to differentiate the actions of media from those of their sources and therefore reflect a rather one-sided approach that Schulz (1989: 140) has labeled as "the Ptolemean view". This perspective takes as its normative standard the view that the media should mirror an existing objective reality and be neutral channels of information. The observation that in contrast to this prescription, the media function according to their own news values and production rules, leads to accusing them of cultivating a "wrong" picture of reality. From this point of view, the media fail to fulfil their information function adequately (Kepplinger/Mathes 1988). The contrasting approach to the media, which is labeled as the "Copernican view" by Schulz (1989: 141-142) takes a different perspective. It does not regard the media as passive purveyors or mirrors of any objective reality, but pictures them as active constructors of reality. In this perspective the media reality is seen as a legitimate product that relates to information from external sources, such as

the objective events and messages from the environment that are processed according to selection rules following the norm of journalistic objectivity. In addition to conveying information from external sources, it is granted in this perspective that the media may stand out as actors in their own right. Thus, the media are acknowledged as actors in the public sphere that legitimately contribute to the political discourse by adding their own voice (Page 1996). If this “pragmatic” (Schulz 1989: 143) approach is applied, the media must not be accused of distorting any objective or wishful reality, but are viewed as actors that fulfill a dual function. On the one hand they act as mediators of information from external sources. In this function, they shape information flows that are of most crucial importance for the national as well as supranational polities, which rely on a free flow of information as the basis of processes of democratic legitimisation, responsiveness, accountability and participation (Koopmans/Erbe forthcoming). On the other hand, they are granted a role as actors in their own right, which are to contribute to opinion formation by commenting on political issues and events.

From this point of view, the mass media fulfil some crucial functions in the European public sphere, 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 on those issues, as well as evaluations of actors. In their function as agenda setters the media select issues from external sources and present them as topics for public deliberation (Dearing/Rogers 1996, Protess/McCombs 1991). In their agenda-setting role the media shape the news coverage, which is particularly dependent on the external flow of information. However, within the recognised formats of commentary sections, they may introduce their own salencies in the issue agenda. The same duality applies to the so-called “second-level agenda-setting” function (Ghanem 1997, McCombs et al. 2000). This notion refers to the process that scholars in research on public discourse term “framing”. Framing refers to the contextualisation of issues, namely the construction of a framework of interpretative meaning around an issue, which then is taken as a basis for collective opinion formation. Again, publicly visible frames can be rooted either in the communicative actions of external actors that are conveyed by the media, or stem from the interpretations of the media themselves. If the media’s role is qualified in this way, one can expect that the publicly visible issue agendas and frames that are

promoted by the media, on the one hand, and by other socio-political actors, on the other, must not necessarily coincide. The media's own agenda may well emphasise European issues strongly, while at the same time the agenda and frames of other actors as covered by the media may adhere to a predominantly national perspective.

The most genuine and specific media function refers to their active role in opinion formation. This implies that the media not only report about others' opinions, but take legitimate positions on issues by commenting on the opinions and actions of non-media political actors. This function is institutionalised in commentaries, where the media enact their role as opinion makers. Eilders/Voltmer (2003: 11) point to the fact that in most national public spheres, the media follow patterns of political preferences, which form a more or less stable commentary line. The commentary line contributes to the identification of a media outlet, and situates it within the spectrum of political cleavages. However, in many countries European politics is not strongly linked to the traditional left-right spectrum, so that the national cleavages cannot be transferred easily to European politics. The media may therefore have more room to manoeuvre politically where their opinion on European issues is concerned. In such circumstances, the media may choose to follow the opinion of the political elite, but they may also side with other interests such as civil society organisations, or speak in line with general public opinion. Another function that comes with the notion of media as political actors and which is institutionalised in the media format of commentaries, refers to their legitimate potential to evaluate and criticise other actors. Thus, the media may be favourable towards European integration and yet present critical opinions on the performance of European or national actors.

If the media's role in the Europeanisation of public spheres is conceptualised according to their dual role as conveyors of external information and as active participants in political discourse, we must conclude that the studies that were discussed above are of rather limited value conceptually as well as empirically. They confuse the role of the media and the role of information sources in political communication in general, as well as more specifically in a potentially emerging European public sphere. The particular media voice can only be detected if the genuine messages by the media are distinguished from those of other actors in the news coverage. The media's own voice can be derived from editorials and press

commentaries, which constitute the institutionalised and legitimate format for journalists and editors to explicitly take stands in actual controversies.

Conceptual Framework: European Public Spheres as Diversified Structures of Claim Making

Against this background we aim to introduce an alternative approach for studying the Europeanisation of public spheres and for assessing the role of the media compared to political and civil society actors. Three aspects are of crucial importance to our conceptual approach and the design of the empirical analysis.

First of all, we generally do not conceive of a European public sphere by restricting the perspective to either national public spaces per se or to the supranational media system. Instead we speak of a Europeanised public sphere in a relative sense. Following the work of Koopmans and Erbe (forthcoming), 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. Since we look at the German case, the centre of this communicative space is the German public sphere. 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. Thus, we speak of a Europeanised public sphere to the extent that a substantial – and over time increasing – part of public communication does neither stay confined to the own national political space nor extends beyond Europe without referring to it.

It follows from this notion that where the Europeanisation of national public spheres is concerned, the media – as well as other actors – may engage in two basic forms of geo-political and spatial contextualisation of their public communication:

1. *Vertical Europeanisation*, which consists of communicative linkages between the

national and the European level. There are two basic variants of this pattern, a bottom-up one, in which national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues, and a top-down one, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests;

2. *Horizontal Europeanisation*, which consists of communicative linkages between different member states. We may distinguish a weak and a strong variant. In the weak variant, the media in one country cover debates and contestation in another member state, but there is no linkage between the countries in the structure of claim making itself. In the stronger variant, actors from one country explicitly address, or refer to actors or policies in another member state.

In previous research, only vertical Europeanisation has been considered. By adding the dimension of horizontal Europeanisation, our study is better equipped to capture the flow of politically relevant communication within the common European space.

Second, in order to assess the role of the media as compared to other actors, we move beyond the usual article-level types of content analysis to consider individual public claims by different collective actors. Our units of analysis are thus individual acts of political communication, which we label as public claims. 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.). Statements by the media are recorded if a journalist makes a claim in an explicit way in the news coverage, either in articles in the news section or in commentaries and opinion pieces.

An act of claim making usually consists of the following elements:

- 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).

By taking instances of claim making as the units of analysis, we are in a position to exactly identify who speaks publicly to whom, in whose interests, and with reference to which issues and argumentative frames. Thus we are able to provide much more detail on the interactive and argumentative structure of public communication than traditional methods of media content analysis. The latter may give us information about the frequencies and co-occurrences of different actors, issues, and frames, but do not allow us to establish the linkages between them. Our data allow us to analyse the claim making of detailed actor categories (e.g., German farmers, or the European Parliament), but most of our analysis in this paper will focus on the characteristics of the claim making of three broad actor categories. Next to the media, we look at state and party actors, which can be regarded as the actors at the centre of the political system, and interest groups and civil society actors, who try to influence the system from the periphery.

Third, one of the major shortcomings of previous studies is that they look for a Europeanisation of public communication on a very general level, gathering data across all possible political issues. Contrary to this approach, we do not expect Europeanisation to emerge as a phenomenon that penetrates the national public spheres 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 relatively meaningless to compute a summary measure of the degree to which European institutions and policies are mentioned across all political issues and to derive conclusions about the presence or absence of a “public sphere deficit” on this basis. Such averages may hide considerable differences between issue fields, some of which may be highly Europeanised, while others may be debated largely in a national context. Moreover, a meaningful interpretation of results is only possible at the issue-specific level. Whereas we might legitimately conclude that a public sphere deficit exists if the coverage of agricultural politics contains hardly any reference to the EU and its policies, a similar finding for education politics would have a

completely different meaning, simply because the EU is objectively a more important actor in agriculture than in education politics.

Following a political opportunity structure perspective (e.g., Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995), we expect patterns of claim making to reflect the actual distribution of power between the European and the national level, as well as whether the European decision-making process is primarily intergovernmental or primarily supranational in nature. In order to test this assumption, our analysis focuses on seven issue fields. In addition to the meta-field of European integration, six substantive policy domains were selected systematically according to their level of formal Europeanisation, 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) Troop deployment mark the policy areas in which we observe increasing EU competencies (or at least 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 pensions 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.

To sum up, our study on the media's role in European integration is based on a notion of Europeanisation that extends beyond the usual simple frequency measures of European actors and issues in national media. In contrast, we maintain that Europeanised public communication must be studied with reference to the interactive nature of public communication, and the horizontal (between member-state) and vertical (between member-states and the EU level) linkages that are made by actors intervening in the public sphere. We apply the analytical approach of claim analysis and use this tool to study processes of agenda setting and framing as well as policy positions and evaluations by media as compared to other actors. We further aim to draw a more realistic assessment of patterns of Europeanisation of public communication by showing how the nature and degree of Europeanisation varies among policy areas. Our expectation is that Europeanised communicative linkages

appear particularly in those policy domains in which EU actors and policies have real and substantial powers.

Data Basis and Methodology

Although the larger project of which this paper is a part includes seven European countries, we will here draw only on data for the German case. For the analysis of political claims by media and non-media actors, we draw on the news coverage and editorials of four daily newspapers of different types that were selected to represent the national German print media landscape: a centre left (the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) as well as a centre right quality newspaper (the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), a tabloid paper (the *Bild-Zeitung*), as well as a regional newspaper in a region with a specific regional identity (the East German *Leipziger Volkszeitung*). Although eventually our data set will include a broader time frame, the data in this paper refer to the year 2000, for which we have completed the coding of both news articles and editorials. In order to restrict the coding effort to manageable proportions, we used a sampling strategy. For each of the two quality newspapers, one issue per week was coded, for the tabloid and regional paper one issue every two weeks. The newspapers were alternated in such a way that we coded one of the newspapers for every second day of the year. In order to obtain sufficient cases to analyse the own voice of the media, we took a larger sample of editorials. In this case, all four newspapers were coded for every second day of the year. Altogether, our analysis draws on the news articles from 156 newspaper issues, and the editorials from 624 issues.

As already indicated above, our coding of claims records the actor or claimant, the actors or institutions at which demands, criticism, or support is addressed, the object actors in whose interests the 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 code the geographical or polity level at which the different actors and institutions that are mentioned in the claim (claimants, addressees, object actors) are situated (e.g., European or national), as well as, in the case of national or subnational actors, the country where they are based (e.g., Germany, France). To give the reader an idea of how this coding works, consider the following example of a claim in the field of troop deployment:

“Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer criticised Britain and Spain’s support for the USA’s military campaign against Iraq, saying that this had undermined the search for a common European position on the issue”.

The claimant is Fischer, whose scope is coded as national, Germany; Britain and Spain are the addressees (with negative evaluation), the USA and Iraq are the object actors. Although these are all national actors, the issue is framed by Fischer in a European context. Thus, the issue scope in this case would be “European”.

Findings

The salience of European issues

We begin our analysis by looking in Table 1 at the issue agendas of our four newspapers, in comparison to those of state and party actors, on the one hand, and civil society actors, on the other. In order to correctly assess the role of the German media we compare them only to other German actors, and ignore for this analysis any claims that were made by non-German actors.

Table 1: Issue agenda in claim making of German news media and political actors

	SZ	FAZ	LVZ	Bild	Total German media actors ⁷	German state and party actors	German civil society actors	All German non-media actors	All German actors
Monetary politics	27.3	12.7	13.6	33.3	19.0	5.5	28.0	12.6	15.0
Agriculture	7.8	8.2	13.6	14.3	9.0	12.1	7.1	10.5	10.0
Immigration	7.8	10.9	6.8	14.3	10.8	18.7	17.3	18.2	15.4
Troop deployment	2.3	5.5	0.0	0.0	3.0	1.6	0.0	1.1	1.9
Pensions/retirement	15.6	13.6	22.7	19.0	17.5	28.3	21.4	26.2	22.8
Education	2.3	18.2	6.8	0.0	9.0	12.6	19.6	14.8	12.6
EU integration	36.7	30.9	36.4	19.0	31.6	21.2	6.5	16.5	22.3
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	128	110	63	21	332	364	168	532	864

⁷ In addition to the 303 claims by our four newspapers, this includes 29 claims by other German news media that were cited in our four source papers.

Compared to non-media political actors, the German media pay considerably more attention to the issue of European integration. Only the Bild-Zeitung comes close to non-media actors in this regard. By contrast, the two issue areas that are most clearly institutionalised on the national level, education and pensions, are underrepresented among the media claims. Attention for European integration is particularly low among German civil society actors. These actors are distinguished especially by a strong focus on monetary politics and to a lesser extent also pensions and retirement. This is linked to a predominance of socio-economic actors among the civil society actors in our data: unions, employers, professional groups, as well as economists and financial experts. Among the four newspapers, there are some noteworthy differences of emphasis regarding attention for the six substantive issue fields. Bild and SZ report more on monetary politics, while education is particularly emphasised by the FAZ. These differences among the newspapers notwithstanding, the remarkable finding in this table is that in sharp contrast to what much of the literature on European public spheres would have us believe, the media seem to have a rather strong interest in the issue of European integration.

Of course, Europeanised political communication must not take the form of debates on the meta-issue of European integration itself, but may occur in the form of emphasising European dimensions when discussing the other six, more substantive policy issues. According to the predominant view on the role of the media in Europeanised political communication, the media are particularly prone to frame issues in a purely national perspective. Table 2 allows us to test the validity of this argument for the vertical form of Europeanisation, which consists of references to EU-level policies, actors, institutions, norms and values.

Contrary to the predominant view in the literature, media actors are somewhat more likely than other actors, and especially than state and party actors, to frame issues in a way referring to the European level. However, if we control for differences between the issue fields, the tendency is weak, and in general it does not hold to the same extent for the FAZ. The higher overall percentage of Europeanised claims for the media is largely a result of the way in which they treat agricultural issues, which are framed much stronger in a Europeanised way by media actors than by German state, party, and civil society actors. Even though the evidence does not unequivocally show

that the media are more inclined to emphasise vertical European dimensions of issues, the results certainly do not suggest the received position that the media would be inclined to de-emphasise the European dimension and to treat issues preferably in national terms.

Table 2: Percentage of claims by German actors with a vertical European frame of reference, by actor and issue field⁸

	SZ	FAZ	LVZ	Bild	Total German media actors	German state and party actors	German civil society actors	All German non-media actors	All German actors
Monetary politics	91.4	57.1	66.7	71.4	77.8	70.0	95.7	88.1	83.2
Agriculture	80.0	77.8	83.3	(100.0)	76.7	29.6	33.3	30.4	46.5
Immigration	0.0	8.3	(33.3)	(0.0)	8.3	11.8	0.0	8.3	8.3
Troop deployment	(0.0)	16.7	-	-	20.0	16.7	-	16.7	18.8
Pensions/retirement	0.0	6.7	0.0	(0.0)	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.7	1.0
Education	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)	-	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.3	0.9
Total	49.4%	23.7%	35.7%	47.1%	34.4%	13.2%	31.2%	19.6%	24.6%
N	81	76	28	17	227	287	157	444	671

Note: percentages based on five or less cases are in brackets.

Comparing the issue fields, we see that across actor types the tendency to refer to European policies and institutions is highest for the issue fields of monetary and agriculture politics, where the EU has strong supranational competencies. The level of vertical Europeanisation is intermediary for immigration and troop deployment, where EU competencies are more limited and primarily intergovernmental. Finally, vertical Europeanisation of claim making is virtually non-existent in the two issue fields that have remained almost fully in the national sphere of influence and where EU competencies are very limited, education and pensions. This result closely fits a political opportunity structure explanation of patterns of claim making. The results seem to indicate that where Europeanisation takes the form of supranational transfers

⁸ The European integration issue field is not included here, because it by definition has a European frame of reference in the vertical sense because claims in this field always implicate the EU or other forms of European integration, and would therefore not differentiate between actors. The presence of a vertical European frame of reference is measured in the most inclusive way possible. It suffices that either the addressee, the supported actor, the opponent, the framing of the first, second, or third issue, or the first, second, or third object actor have a European scope (EU or other European). In other words, a claim that refers in only one out of these nine aspects to the European level would be classified as a claim with a European frame of reference, even if all other aspects would refer only to the national German level.

of power to EU institutions, this leads to a concomitant shift in patterns of claim making addressing European policies and institutions. However, the intergovernmental forms of decision-making that predominate in the troop deployment and immigration fields have only weak effects on patterns of claim making. In fields characterised by such decision-making processes, addressing national institutions and policies remains the most efficient way for collective actors to further their interests.

However, as we have argued it is necessary to also consider a second, horizontal form of Europeanisation of claim making, which consists of references to policies, actors, and institutions in other member states, and that does not necessarily have to refer to the EU level. Table 3 gives an overview of the extent of such horizontal Europeanisation.

Table 3: Percentage of claims by German actors with a horizontal European frame of reference, by actor and issue field⁹

	SZ	FAZ	LVZ	Bild	Total German media actors	German state and party actors	German civil society actors	All German non-media actors	All German actors
Monetary politics	17.1	14.3	0.0	0.0	12.7	25.0	0.0	7.5	10.0
Agriculture	30.0	11.1	0.0	(33.3)	16.7	20.5	8.3	17.9	17.4
Immigration	10.0	0.0	(0.0)	(0.0)	2.8	5.9	3.5	5.2	4.5
Troop deployment	(0.0)	0.0	-	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0
Pensions/retirement	0.0	6.7	0.0	(0.0)	1.7	1.0	0.0	0.7	1.0
Education	(0.0)	5.0	(0.0)	-	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
EU integration	55.3	50.0	68.8	50.0	57.1	39.0	18.2	36.4	47.7
Total	28.1%	20.0%	25.0%	14.3%	22.9%	13.5%	2.4%	10.0%	14.9%
N	128	110	44	21	332	364	168	532	864

Similar to the findings in Table 2, horizontal Europeanisation is strongest in monetary and agriculture politics, intermediary in immigration politics and low in education and pensions politics. Troop deployment, however, occupies a somewhat different position

⁹ Like its vertical counterpart, the presence of a horizontal European frame of reference is measured in an inclusive way. It suffices that either the addressee, the supported actor, the opponent, the framing of the first, second, or third issue, or the first, second, or third object actor refer to another EU member country or to one of the candidate countries – either to these countries as a whole, or to specific actors within them.

in this table since no references at all were made in claim making on this issue to other members states or candidate countries. Generally, the level of horizontal European framing is much lower than the level of vertical European framing. This once more suggests that genuinely European institutions and policies, rather than intergovernmental cooperation and cross-national diffusion create incentives and opportunities for claim makers to frame their public communication and mobilisation in ways that transcend the boundaries of the nation-state.

Regarding the six substantive issue fields, we do not find strong and consistent differences between actor types in the degree to which issues are framed referring to other member states or candidate countries. However, media are clearly more likely to frame the European integration issue by referring to other EU members states and candidate countries, whereas non-media actors, and civil society actors in particular, have a tendency to frame their claims only in terms of Germany's relations to EU policies and institutions. Thus again, our results strongly disprove perspectives on the problematic of European public spheres that attribute the blame for a lack of Europeanisation of public communication to a lack of attention of the media for Europe and to the media's alleged tendency to frame issues in purely national terms. The results of tables 2 and 3 indicate quite to the contrary that the news media are more likely than other political actors to pay attention to European integration and to emphasise vertical and transnational European aspects of issues. If a particular actor category can be singled out whose contributions to public communication on issues of European relevance lag behind institutional developments, this holds for civil society actors. Seen from this perspective, Europe's democratic and communication deficits may lie not so much in a reluctance of the media to cover European issues and aspects, but in the lack of a Europeanised civil society, perhaps linked to a lack of access of civil society groups – except powerful socio-economic actors – to the European decision-making process.

The evaluation of European integration and European institutions

Even though the previous section has shown that the mass media pay considerably more attention to European (dimensions of) issues than other actors, this still leaves open the possibility that such attention for Europe is primarily negative. This, too, is a frequent assumption about the role of the media in the European integration process.

In this view, if the media pay attention to Europe at all, they would tend to depict European policies and actors as conflicting with national interests, as inefficient, bureaucratic, and undemocratic, while national actors and policies would receive (at least in a relative sense) a more positive treatment. We begin our investigation of the validity of this thesis in Table 4, which shows the average position taken in relation to the European integration process by different actors. Position scores were coded and computed in such a way that a score of -1.00 indicates that an actor's claims always take a negative position with regard to European integration, while an actor with a score of +1.00 would without exception express a positive stance towards the integration process.

Table 4: Average position of German actors regarding the European integration process

	General position regarding European integration
Federal government	.58
Green Party	.50
German EU Parliamentarians	.50
SPD	.49
German EU executives	.43
CDU	.42
Labour unions	(.40)
Leipziger Volkszeitung	.38
All state and party actors	.34
Süddeutsche Zeitung	.33
All German media actors	.26
Bild-Zeitung	.18
Experts and professionals	.16
All civil society actors	.15
Bundesbank	.15
FDP	.13
Regional and local governments	.09
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	.08
Employers	.06
Bundestag	.00
CSU	-.07
Farmers	(-.50)
Overall average	.28
N=	540

Note: Averages are given only for actors with at least 3 cases, averages based on 3-5 cases are in brackets. Categories with less than 3 cases are indicated with -.

As table 4 shows, the news media in Germany are neither particularly pro-European nor particularly anti-European integration compared to other collective actors. The average valence of the media's position regarding European integration is very close to the average for all actors. There are important differences between the four papers,

though, with the LVZ and SZ being more clearly pro-European integration, and Bild and even more so FAZ more critical and sceptical. Nonetheless, pro as well as anti positions are much less outspoken among the media than among political actors. In other words, the degrees of polarisation and difference of opinion on European integration are much larger among political parties, with the Greens and the CSU in the extreme positions, than among the four newspapers. In the German context, then, media communication on Europe seems a centripetal, rather than a centrifugal force.

There are some remarkable findings on the other actors that we want to briefly refer to. The German federal government takes the most pro-integration position of all. This may be a German peculiarity, or due to the fact that a left-wing government of pro-European parties is in power. Cross-national and longitudinal comparisons will have to show whether this is a pattern that more generally holds. Further, there is an important difference between the two main socio-economic actors, with the labour unions being clearly in favour of further European integration, and the employers being among the most sceptical actors. This is quite remarkable, given the fact that employers have thus far profited much more from common market policies than the labour unions. This result may be due to the fact that at present discussions about further integration are mainly about social and political forms of integration that go beyond the common market. Employers organisations are perhaps sceptical about such further-reaching forms of integration and would prefer to retain a purely economic conception of integration, whereas labour unions might have the exact opposite interest. This is an issue for further investigation that, however, does not play a crucial role for the questions that are central to this paper.

Contrary to a predominant imagery in the literature, which suggests an opposition of interests between EU and national actors, and an alliance between supranational actors and regional and local actors against the influence of the nation-state, the results indicate that regional and local governmental actors are *less* inclined to be supportive of European integration than their national counterparts. Again, without further longitudinal and cross-national comparison, we cannot determine whether this finding can be generalised, or that it is perhaps just a result of the present composition of the German federal government (the low score for regional and local governments, by contrast, does not seem to be caused by the party composition of governments at this

level, because regional SPD-led governments also tended to be more critical toward the European integration process than the national government).

Farmers occupy the most negative position regarding European integration, which is remarkable given the fact that this is one of the social group that profits most from EU policies. This (together with the reluctant support from regional and local governments which are also preferentially targeted by the EU's structural funds) may be an indication that client politics are not the most conducive way to deepen support for European integration. To the contrary, this may create a purely instrumental and particularistic attitude toward the EU that does not translate in wider support for European integration.

Table 5: Evaluation by German actors of European institutions and actors

	Evaluation of European institutions and actors
Employers	.17
SPD	.07
Federal government	.05
Süddeutsche Zeitung	.00
All civil society actors	.00
Experts and professionals	-.02
German EU executives	-.10
Bundestag	-.14
All state and party actors	-.15
All German media actors	-.16
Green Party	-.17
Bundesbank	-.20
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	-.24
Bild-Zeitung	-.25
CSU	-.37
Regional and local governments	-.38
Labour unions	(-.40)
Leipziger Volkszeitung	-.41
CDU	-.47
German EU Parliamentarians	-.50
FDP	-.50
Overall average	-.13
N=	355

Note: Averages are given only for actors with at least 3 cases, averages based on 3-5 cases are in brackets.

In Table 5, we look at support for European integration from a somewhat different angle, namely that of the evaluation not of the integration process in a general sense, but of concrete European actors and institutions. These two may well diverge. For instance, an actor may be supportive of a deepening of European integration, while

being at the same time highly critical of the way in which European institutions function at present.

Table 5 shows that such a discrepancy between general support for European integration and specific support for European institutions and actors is indeed widespread. While on average the European integration process is moderately positively evaluated (an average valence of .28, see Table 4), European actors and institutions are on average evaluated in a slightly negative way (average valence -.13). However, this is probably less a specific characteristic of the public debate on European integration, than a general feature of democratic public spheres. Public communication is predominantly a communication of conflict, in which actors criticise other public actors. Because of this general tendency for public claim making to have a negative bias with regard to other actors, we need a standard of comparison to interpret the results for the evaluation of EU actors and institutions. The average evaluation of national German (including regional and local) actors is with -.38 clearly lower (not displayed in the table) than the evaluation of EU institutions and actors (-.13). For state and party actors, the average evaluation of national actors is -.30 (EU -.15), for civil society actors -.44 (EU .00), for media actors -.29 (EU -.16). Civil society actors therefore not only have the most positive (or better least negative) attitude with regard to EU institutions and actors, but the contrast with the evaluation of national actors is also strongest for this category. For all three actor categories, however, European actors and institutions are seen less critically than national actors and institutions – once more a finding that contradicts the pessimistic tone that predominates in the literature on political communication in relation to European integration.

There are significant differences in the evaluation of different EU institutions (not displayed in the table). The European Parliament is on average evaluated positively, followed by the European Central bank, which also still scores a positive average. The Commission receives a moderately negative evaluation, while the European Council (and its subcouncils) is viewed most critically. These differences seem to hold largely across actor categories, although the numbers of cases per actor become too small to get a reliable picture at this level of detail. This, too, is a remarkable finding, since it suggests that there is more public support for supranational forms of European

institutionalisation, whereas the intergovernmental arena of the Council is seen much more critically. This fits with the results from tables 2 and 3, which showed that a lagging of public communication behind institutional Europeanisation is most clearly found in issue areas characterised by intergovernmental forms of decision-making.

Although there is some correlation between the general position regarding the European integration process and the evaluation of EU actors and institutions, this relation is far from perfect. If we combine the results from tables 5 and 6, we see that some actors have a comparatively high evaluation both of the integration process and of EU institutions. The clearest representatives of this pattern are the Federal government and the SPD. Another group of actors are both lukewarm to critical about the integration process and highly negative about EU institutions. This is true for the CSU and the FDP, as well as for regional and local governments. There is also a group of actors who are highly positive about the integration process, but are very critical of EU institutions and actors. This holds for the CDU, the labour unions, as well as for German members of the European Parliament. Interestingly, employers show exactly the reverse pattern from labour unions. They are comparatively negative towards the integration process, but have the highest evaluation of EU institutions of all actors. Probably, this indicates an instrumental attitude toward the EU, which values the role of EU institutions in market deregulation, but is coupled to a very critical attitude toward further-reaching political and social forms of European integration. The low numbers of cases for the one year of data we analyse here do not allow us to test this and similar hypotheses for individual actor categories. Future analyses including a broader data basis will allow us to go into greater qualitative detail on the position of different collective actors.

The positions of the four newspapers are less clear-cut than those of most non-media public actors. The FAZ takes a position between the CSU and FDP on the one hand, and the employers, on the other. In other words, they do not value the integration process very highly, and are ambivalent about EU institutions. The LVZ takes a position in between CSU and FDP, on the one hand, and CDU and labour unions, on the other: they are highly negative about European institutions and relatively ambivalent about the integration process. SZ is in between the employers' position and that of the SPD and the federal government: ambivalent about the integration

process, but relatively positive about EU institutions. Bild, finally, represents the mainstream, taking an average position on both dimensions.

Table 6: Frames used in relation to European integration and European institutions, by claimant category

	State and party actors	Civil society actors	Media	All German actors
Principles, norms, values	16.5%	7.7%	31.4%	21.8%
<i>Community of values</i>	3.8%	2.6%	9.8%	6.4%
<i>Modernisation</i>	2.3%	-	2.9%	2.3%
<i>Racism/xenophobia/nazism</i>	1.5%	2.6%	2.0%	1.9%
<i>Social justice and equality</i>	1.3%	-	2.9%	1.8%
<i>International understanding</i>	-	-	2.9%	1.4%
<i>Peace</i>	1.3%	-	2.0%	1.4%
<i>Unity</i>	1.3%	2.6%	1.0%	1.4%
<i>Other</i>	5.0%	-	7.9%	5.2%
Constitutional and institutional principles	32.9%	7.7%	18.6%	21.8%
<i>Democracy</i>	6.3%	-	9.8%	6.8%
<i>Equality among member states</i>	8.9%	-	4.9%	5.5%
<i>Subsidiarity, federalism, centralisation, separation of power</i>	7.6%	2.6%	-	3.2%
<i>Human rights</i>	3.8%	-	1.0%	1.8%
<i>Rule of law</i>	1.3%	2.6%	1.0%	1.4%
<i>Other</i>	5.0%	2.6%	0.9%	3.1%
Governance	20.2%	20.5%	13.7%	17.3%
<i>Acceptance/legitimacy/credibility in the eyes of the citizenry</i>	7.6%	7.7%	2.9%	5.5%
<i>Transparency</i>	3.8%	7.7%	3.9%	4.5%
<i>Efficiency</i>	6.3%	2.6%	3.9%	4.5%
<i>Bureaucracy</i>	1.3%	2.6%	2.0%	1.8%
<i>Other</i>	1.2%	-	1.0%	1.0%
All identity frames	69.6%	35.9%	63.7%	60.9%
General instrumental frames	3.8%	5.1%	2.0%	3.3%
<i>National interest</i>	2.5%	2.6%	1.0%	1.8%
<i>Other</i>	1.3%	2.6%	1.0%	1.5%
Political (dis)advantages	8.9%	5.1%	5.9%	6.8%
<i>Security</i>	5.1%	2.6%	-	2.3%
<i>Influence in international relations</i>	-	2.6%	2.9%	1.8%
<i>Coping with transnational social problems</i>	1.3%	-	2.0%	1.4%
<i>Other</i>	2.5%	-	1.0%	1.3%
Economic (dis)advantages	16.7%	53.8%	28.4%	29.1%
<i>Economic stability</i>	3.8%	10.3%	6.9%	6.4%
<i>Inflation and prices</i>	2.5%	12.8%	5.9%	5.9%
<i>Economic growth</i>	3.8%	10.3%	2.9%	4.5%
<i>Strength in global competition</i>	2.5%	12.8%	2.0%	4.1%
<i>National economy and exports</i>	-	7.7%	2.9%	2.8%
<i>Consumer protection</i>	1.3%	-	3.9%	2.3%
<i>Other</i>	2.8%	-	3.9%	3.1%
All instrumental frames	30.1%	64.1%	32.3%	39.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N	79	39	102	220

Note: Separately listed are those frames that have at least 3 mentions for all actors taken together. Note also that a frame may be used both negatively and positively with regard to the EU. E.g., some actors argued that European integration furthers economic stability, whereas others emphasised destabilising impacts; both were coded in the category “economic stability”. We have of course also coded the direction in which a frame is linked to the EU, as well as whether it is used as a characterisation of the present state of affairs (e.g., the EU

is inefficient”) or a statement about what the EU should be “e.g., the EU *should become* less bureaucratic”). However, for the present analysis we ignore these differences, also because with our present data limitations the numbers of cases would quickly become too low for such more detailed analyses.

Finally, we look in Table 6 at the way in which European integration is framed. Here the question is the arguments that actors use to back their position on European integration. Such legitimisation of an actor’s position with regard to European integration can refer to certain values and norms, to constitutional and governance principles, or to the EU’s instrumentality for reaching other valued goals. The largest difference in Table 6 is between civil society actors on the one hand, and state and party as well as media actors, on the other. Civil society actors – which in our data are predominantly socio-economic groups and organisations – strongly emphasise the instrumental side of European integration, particularly socio-economic advantages and disadvantages. Strength in global economic competition, economic stability, and economic growth were most often mentioned as advantages of European integration, while inflation and high prices, as well as adverse effects on the national economy (particularly linked to the introduction of the Euro) predominated among the disadvantages that were mentioned by civil society actors.

By contrast, both state/party and media actors emphasise immaterial aspects of the European integration process. Within that category there are important differences of emphasis, however. State and party actors are comparatively strongly preoccupied with constitutional issues and institutional principles such as equality among member states, the future institutional structure of the EU (subsidiarity, federalism, etc.), and the EU’s democratic quality. The latter aspect is the only constitutional/institutional aspect that is more often emphasised by media actors than by state and party actors. Differences among the three actor categories are smaller regarding the relevance of governance frames. Legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the citizenry are considered important by all, and the same is true for efficiency and transparency.

Media actors are distinguished by a comparatively strong emphasis on general identity frames referring to principles, norms, and values for which the EU stands or to which it should adhere. Such frames are twice as frequent in media claims than among state and party actors and more than four times more frequent than in claim making by civil society actors. The idea of Europe as a “community of values” is the most prominent

among such frames, and arose particularly within the context of the debate on Jörg Haider and his party's participation in the Austrian government. In addition, the media more frequently referred to other values such as social equality, peace, and the promotion of international understanding (*Völkerverständigung*) in relation to the process of European integration.

Summarising, one might say that where civil society actors emphasise the instrumental, economic side of European integration, and state and party actors emphasise constitutional principles and governance, the media emphasise the collective identities, norms, and values that Europe should stand for. More than any other actor category, the German media therefore promote an idealist conception of Europe. This result is a far cry from the caricature that is often depicted of media coverage of Europe, which suggests that it is the media in particular who emphasise instrumental and particularistic framings of Europe.

Conclusion

Starting out from the existing research on the media's role in the Europeanisation of public sphere, our empirical results challenge the notion that the media are responsible for the resilience of largely nationally focussed public spheres. Quite the contrary is the case, at least according to our findings on Germany for the year 2000. The German media turn out to pay more, and more favourable attention to the issue of European integration, as well as to the European dimensions of other political issues than other actors. Moreover, the media put a much stronger emphasis on Europe as a political community that rests on common values, and less strongly emphasise instrumental and particularistic reasons for their support for the European integration process. Our study therefore does not yield evidence for the caricature of media as scapegoats for the lack of a European public sphere. Instead, in our perspective, if the media speak with their own voice, they rather act as motors of Europeanisation and thereby contribute to the opening up of spaces for transnational communication. In contrast, the national political elites of the state and political parties, and even civil society actors are much more inclined to keep the public debate within national boundaries.

Whether this is typical for the German media or a more general trend in Europe of course remains to be investigated by way of cross-national comparative analyses. At any rate, our results show that lacking public attention and support for European integration cannot be attributed to general characteristics of the news media such as the lack of “news value” of European policies and actors, or the presumed national perspective that dominates among journalists and editors. It may of course be that in some other members states (e.g., the UK) the news media are distinguished from other actors by paying less attention to European issues, being more critical towards the EU, and framing integration in instrumental and particularistic terms. However, if this were true, we would have to look for a context-sensitive explanation rather than general, de-contextualised assumptions about how “the media” work that have thus far predominated in the debate on the Europeanisation of public spheres.

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