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Media coverage on European governance

Testing the performance of national newspapers[*]

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The conditions for the emergence of a European media public sphere shall be tested by analysing news coverage on European governance and policy-making of the year 2000. The sample includes 11 daily newspapers in six EU-member states. On the basis of a systematic content analysis three types of news shall be distinguished: First, European news characterised by the shared meaning of European events and issues. Second, Europeanised news characterised by the secondary impact of European events and issues on national news coverage. Third, national news on domestic events and issues characterised by evolving forms of European monitoring and rhetorics. By unfolding and comparing these three cases in the different national media, the theoretical argument will be made that a European public sphere can be identified which is based on the mutual observation of issues and events of common relevance and on the parallel development of communicative styles and discourses.

1   Mapping the news geography of the political Europe

Investigations into the social and normative foundations of European integration are based on the widespread assumption of a deficit of communication and understanding among the Europeans (Cederman/Kraus 2002; Kleinsteuber 2001; Weiler 1999: 349-52). The public sphere deficit translated into a public communication deficit basically implies two things: first, in quantitative terms, that there is too little public communication in Europe; second, in qualitative terms, that public communication in Europe lacks the basic understanding and agreement which distinguishes a political community and marks its competence for democracy.

The primary purpose of this paper is to test the quantitative assumptions about the deficit of public communication in Europe. In doing so, the European public sphere will be analysed as an empirical artefact and not as a normative projection. The question how such a European public sphere *should* look like to work in a proper will be put aside. Instead, data will be pro-

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vided about how much and what kind of communication actually takes place in the public sphere.[1] The empirical question is most simple as possible: it is: who communicates at what time and about what in Europe?

There are two analytical elements of such a public sphere: the visibility of communication and the connectivity of communication within a given (but changeable) communicative context (which, as it is the case in the EU, can be institutionally circumscribed).[2] Visibility of communication is the necessary pre-condition of the public sphere: it means that European media and publics observe communication about European politics. Connectivity is the sufficient condition of a European public sphere: it means that European media and publics observe communication about the same political issues and that these observations take place reciprocally with a specific chance to be continued by the relevant others (those who are addressed by communication).[3]

To make our analytical approach more explicit, the European public sphere can be most appropriately conceived as a map, which illustrates the geography of the political Europe. For most of us, the landscape, to which this map refers, is still a largely unknown territory. As the basic requirement for initiating our journey we must arrange for the visibility of actors, institutions and issues of political communication. They constitute the general points of references and signals that organize our journey through Europe and help us to coordinate it with others. Quality newspapers are the vehicles we have chosen for travelling through the political landscape of Europe. Our journey will last one year (the year 2000).[4] It is important to keep in mind that the choice of the vehicle entails already the first bias of what becomes visible throughout the journey. Through the windscreen of the quality press the political landscape of

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[1] This does not exclude that the public sphere can produce communication about its own normative grounding. Such self-description of the ideal functioning of the public sphere is only relevant in so far that it produces even more communication within the public sphere and lays the grounds for its own reflexivity (Trenz/Eder 2003).

[2] The basic reference to such a minimum model is Niklas Luhmann (1997) although he has never fully developed his theory of the public sphere. For a synthesis and elaboration of the system-theoretical approach towards *politische Öffentlichkeit* see instead Marcinkowski (2002).

[3] Note that this conception does not imply any form of discursive interchange according to the scheme of answer/reply which is attributed to particular actors. It is not discourse what counts here but flows of communication which are transmitted or absorbed from one arena to the other. Public communication is always contingent communication which goes beyond the rational of consensus and mutual understanding. In similar terms, even Jürgen Habermas seems to dismiss the idea of discursivity as a condition for the European public sphere when he speaks of the „osmotic absorption of the different contributions between the different national arenas in a network-like arrangement" (Habermas 2001: 120).

[4] Empirical research is based on a double selective sampling and coding procedure of the following newspapers: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) (Germany), Le Monde (LM), Libération (Li) (France), Guardian (Gu), Times (Ti) (UK), La Repubblica (Re); La Stampa (Stp) (Italy), Die Presse (Pr), Der Standard (Sta) (Austria), El Pais (Spain). Our sampling includes the full European news coverage of every third day (underlying a five days week from Tuesday to Saturday). Our coding selects every third article of the relevant days.

Europe looks different than, let's say through the windscreen of the tabloid press or television. Different media do not always travel on the same roads (as the assumption of a unitary national public sphere seems to suggest). Instead, there are different ways to explore the political landscape which also open different panoramas on Europe.

A second bias is opened by selecting political communication as the general point of reference in the European landscape. We are aware of the fact that there are many other ways of mapping the European landscape, e.g. by choosing cultural or economic communication and exchange. We have chosen political communication for two good reason: first, because it refers to *institutions* that bind actors to rules and procedures of decision-making. Second, because it refers to the *collectivity* of those *collective* actors who prepare *collective* decisions and those who are affected by it. The political public sphere is exactly this space of visible communication between collective decision-making actors and their publics. Accordingly, European political communication is loosely defined as any form of communication which refers to European governance in the wide sense, expressing consensus or dissensus with regard to particular issues and debates in a European decision making context.

The road network that is needed for this mapping exercise of the European political landscape is constituted by the issues and debates that are selected for communication by the media. We do not participate actively in these debates but only follow the tracks that have been left behind by the newspapers. These tracks can run cross or they can follow the same path. European newspaper can also decide to stay longer at particular locations or they can decide to go for some time on a joint trip.

The European public sphere unfolds simultaneously as a form and as a process of mapping the political landscape of Europe. The focal points of communication that structure the political landscape are already well established. These agglomerations are known as the national public spheres. The map indicates also roads of communication connecting these single agglomerations. This intermediate road network has different constructors. Most important, the channelling of the flows of communication is achieved by the emergence of a shared infrastructure of issues which are partly predetermined by the European Treaties and partly follow the decision-making paths of European political institutions. In addition, private streets can be constructed by other (non-institutional) actors who set the agenda for their own issues of relevance. We analyse to what extent and by whom these interconnections between the different agglomerations on the map are used, how intensive the traffic runs and what time schedule is applied for the journey. It will become clear that the European road network is not only used by one vehicle with a given destination but by different vehicles with changing and often un-

known destinations. This does not exclude the possibility to regulate the traffic on these roads and to use the cartography for joint trips with common destinations (in the sense of facilitating a kind of stable discursive interaction, see Risse 2002; van de Steeg 2002).

To avoid misunderstandings; this paper does not provide a quality test of newspaper performance about European governance. The map that is drawn should not be taken for the territory. Neither should the paper be read as a lamentation about the malfunctions of national media or as a manifesto to tell them how to do things better. Instead, the simple purpose of the paper is to investigate the patterns of national newspaper coverage about the EU (and broader Europe). The most trivial hypothesis is that newspaper communication about Europe is patterned. The more sophisticated hypothesis is that there is a specific constellation of divergent and convergent patterns of European newspaper communication which indicate the properties of a European media public sphere. The empirical task ahead of us is thus to describe such patterns and their diverging or converging effects.

2 Measuring the relationship between governance, the media and the public sphere in the EU

A public sphere cannot be observed directly. What is empirically measurable are the effects of public communication that takes place within the public sphere. We will talk of a European public sphere whenever and wherever we can identify an institutional setting of mediation of public communication between particular communicators, the media and the public.

The minimal requirement of such a public sphere is that communication is *structured*. These structuring effects of public communication will be measured in terms of public resonance. Public resonance refers to communication which, first, mirrors the regularity of actors, events and issues in a transnational environment; which, second, can be heard by an external and undetermined audience; and, which, third, constitutes a situation of mutual observation between the institutionalised actors and their audiences. As it is expected, the public resonance of communication creates specific reactions (or expectations) on each side thus determining the forms and contents of the continuing communication (Eder/Trenz 2002).

More specifically, we will distinguish between the absolute degree of resonance of European political communication and the degree of reciprocal resonance of European political communication in the media (Tobler 2002: 72)). The first is a purely quantitative indicator which measures the share of European political communication in relation to other forms of political

communication in the newspaper. The second is a qualitative indicator which measures the degree of convergence and synchronicity of communication between the different media.[5]

Both indicators correlate with the theoretical model of the public sphere which has been developed above. Absolute resonance is indicative of the visibility of European political communication. This can be regarded as the necessary pre-condition for the existence of a European public sphere. Reciprocal resonance is indicative of the connectivity of European political communication. This can be regarded the sufficient condition for the existence of a European public sphere.

3 Empirical findings

3.1 Which forms of European political communication can we distinguish?

The keyword strategy of data selection which has been applied for the purpose of this research is as inclusive and encompassing as possible.[6] In contrast to most other media studies the sampling of the articles is not narrowed by qualitative criteria. Political news articles are selected independently of the length and depth in which they discuss European contents.[7] A classificatory scheme will be developed only afterwards which encompasses the whole range of European political communication to be found in the media. The classification we propose distinguishes between three types of newspaper articles which take up or push forms of European political communication:

a) *European articles*. European articles discuss European topical issues. They are the most relevant indicator for the visibility of Europe in the national media and for the particular attention that is paid to European issues. European topical articles amount to about 40% (Italy, GB, France) and 50% (Germany, Austria; Spain) of the total sample.[8] In this way, they give clear evidence of the broad interest of all national quality papers in European news

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[5] Tobler (2002: 72) restricts the structuring effects of reciprocal resonance to the case of a communicative exchange between actors. The measuring of reciprocal resonance would then imply a similar procedure to the one proposed by van de Steeg (2002), who develops several indicators for direct or virtual contacts between actors of different origin (transplantation of public opinion through the appearances, statements and quotations of outside actors in the national arena, inclusion of the other under a collective identity). This is an appropriate but narrowed view on the structuring effects of reciprocal resonance. From our view, it is not actors who resonate but communication and particular meaning and expectations linked to it (see below).

[6] The keywords that are used for the sampling of electronic media resources are: "Europe, "European", "EU", "Brussels" and all kind of possible combinations in the single languages.

[7] The major disadvantage of this clumsy procedure of data selection is its pure quantity. The total of about 45.000 news articles can only be handled by applying further selection procedures which restrict the prognostic value of its single variables. Its major advantage is that it allows to avoid any biased view on selected aspects of public communication in Europe.

[8] The total sample that results from the double selection procedure comprises 2655 coded articles for the period of July-December 2000. Data for the whole year 2000 will be ready in April 2003.

coverage. European topical articles are the mirror through which national publics can follow the policy and decision-making agenda of the EU. The process of selecting and proceeding European news does not necessarily lead to convergence of the national media agendas and debates but, at least, assures a minimum degree of information about the EU-policy-process and constitutes a background reality about a political world that is known and shared among the Europeans. On the basis of our data, we can deliver general descriptions about the particular style of European articles, their authors and the section of the newspaper they appear in. We can also make comparative statements about the kind of actors who are successful in media agenda setting, about the forms of action that lead to media agenda setting, about the preferential policy fields which are chosen for news coverage and about the particular policy issues which are taken up at one particular moment in time.

b) *Europeanised articles.* Europeanised articles discuss national topical issues with reference to one or several European sub-issues. They amount to about one fifth of the total sample. Europeanised articles demonstrate that European news coverage is not sufficiently analysed by referring only to European topical articles. Quite often, European issues enter the national media sphere through the backdoor and hide behind national news. In this way, Europeanised articles give evidence of a trend towards the domestisation of European issues. This trend is slightly more pronounced in Italian and British newspapers. Europeanised articles concentrate also on particular issues, such as the Euro or Eastern enlargement.

c) *Articles with a European referential frame.* This last residual category which results from our sampling is defined as articles which discuss no European issue at all but only include different rhetorical references to Europe. Such generalising use of the word "Europe" refers to a shared world beyond the particular phenomenon. The visibility of Europe is not only restricted to common issues and debates among the Europeans. In addition, we find a wide spread rhetoric use of Europe which penetrates national newspaper through general references, comparative statements, the simple nomination of European events, actors and institutions or the reference to European law. Articles with a European referential frame amount to about one third of the total sample. Italian, French and Spanish journalists make more often use of this rhetorical style than their colleagues in Northern European countries.[9]

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[9] This might reflect two distinct „Mediterranian" and „Germanic" journalistic cultures in Europe (Kriesi 2001: 45).

3.2 How much European political communication can we discover?

One of the most promising results of our survey is that there is already a considerable degree of European political communication to be found in the quality press of the selected EU-member states. The sample that results from our keyword research includes around 33,4% (in the German FAZ up to 49%) of the total of political news articles of the single newspapers (Table 1). In detail, we find an average of 8,3 European topical articles, 3,5 Europeanised articles and 4,9 articles with a European referential frame in each edition of a European quality paper. By simply adding these figures we must concede an astonishingly high level of Europeanisation of national newspapers which contradicts all previous findings on the scarce visibility of Europe in the media.[10]

Table 1: European news coverage: quantitative distribution

	FAZ	SZ	Gu	Ti	St	Pre[11]	LM	Li	Ep	Re	Sta
European new articles (total coded Dec-Jul 2000)	230	151	72	79	209	101	128	75	135	56	75
Average day	16	10,5	5	5,4	14,1	7	8,9	5,2	9,4	3,9	5,5
% of average/day political news articles	26,8	20,1	13,8	13,2	25,1	20,2	15,9	10,4	15,1	7,5	13,5
Europeanised news articles (total coded Dec-Jul 2000)	65	52	70	26	56	33	41	42	53	38	44
Average day	5,3	3,8	5,1	2	3,9	2,4	2,9	2,9	3,7	2,7	3,6
% of average day political news articles	8,7	7,3	14	4,9	6,9	7	5,2	5,7	5,9	5,2	8,8
Articles with European rhetoric (total Dec-Jul)	114	90	35	58	106	32	104	47	69	75	46
Average day	8	6,3	2,4	4	7,4	2,2	7,3	3,3	4,9	5,2	3,2
% of average day political news articles	13,4	12,2	6,7	9,8	13,1	6,4	13	6,5	7,9	10	7,9
Total news articles/day	29,3	20,5	12,5	11,4	25,4	11,6	19.1	11,4	18	11,8	11,3
%	49	39,4	34,5	27,9	45,2	33,6	34.1	22,7	28,9	22,7	30,2

Taking a closer look at the quantitative distribution of European and Europeanised news articles, some newspapers appear to be more specialised in European news coverage than others. In absolute numbers, the German *FAZ* has around five times more European news articles than the Italian La *Repubblica*. Newspapers also put different focus on European governance. German newspapers, and in particular the *FAZ*, are particularly devoted to economic news coverage. Italian and French newspapers are more inclined towards political news.

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[10] Gerhards (2000: 294) concedes only 6,9% of Europeanisation to German quality papers with regard to European primary news. He further assumes that Europeanisation might take place instead with regard to secondary issues in the article. Our own results prove, however, that the average of Europeanised articles is considerably lower.

[11] Economic and financial news not yet included

In spite of all country specific and newspaper specific differences, our data provide a positive indicator for the absolute degree of resonance of European political communication to be found in the national media. All newspapers examined fulfil the necessary condition for the existence of a European public sphere. What we do not know yet is whether and how this public resonance is reciprocally structured.

3.2. Who communicates about Europe?

Authors

European quality newspapers have a high editorial autonomy in selecting and proceeding European news articles. Most of the articles are signed by leading political journalists of the relevant newspapers. External authorship, e.g. in the form of guest comments, or the reliance on news agencies as the source of information are rather exceptional. Among the authors of European articles, the role of the EU-correspondents is salient. The newspapers examined employ among two and eleven (the FAZ) permanent correspondents in Brussels. EU-correspondents write around one third of the European news articles that appear in the national newspapers. This proportion is even higher with regard to particular issues and debates which often fall under the competence of one single correspondent. This unbalanced authors' relationship should be a warning for media analysts who expect a national bias or a left-right bias with regard to particular debates on European issues. Instead of the expected outcome, they often measure involuntarily an author's bias which cannot be representative for the whole country or newspaper under examination.

The competence of the editorial board, and in particular of the EU-correspondents of the quality newspapers lies not only in transmitting European news and information from the political arena of the EU to the audience but also in doing their own investigations and pushing European debates. Newspapers should be considered rather as partners who participate in European political communication than as passive mediators who simply transmit communication by the others. This expectation should be further corroborated by a qualitative analysis of authorship which would most likely put right some widespread misconceptions about the role of newspaper journalists who are not nationalistic chauvinists but in most cases are convinced Europeans and quite often even entrepreneurs for the European cause.

Agenda-setting

This quantitative survey of European political communication does not analyse claims-making with regard to European issues. We can only make comparative statements about the kind of actors who are successful in media agenda setting and about the forms of action that lead to media agenda setting about European issues. Again, we have good news for those who

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doubt about the communicative capacities of European supranational institutions. In European news agenda setting, European actors account for over 50% of all articles (figure 1). Governments remain the principal agenda-setter only if one considers their double role as a national and a European actor. Among the supranational institutions the European Commission comes off better than the Council of Ministers. The European Central Bank too, has no reason to complain about lacking media attention and has already well established as a new actor in the European arena in the year 2000.[12] Other EU-Agenda-Setter appear, above all, in their role as foreign policy actors (The High Representative of the CFSP Solana, the Special Representatives in former Yugoslavia and Kosovo and the Committee of Wise Men which deliberated the sanctions against Austria).

Figure 1: Agenda Setting of European news articles
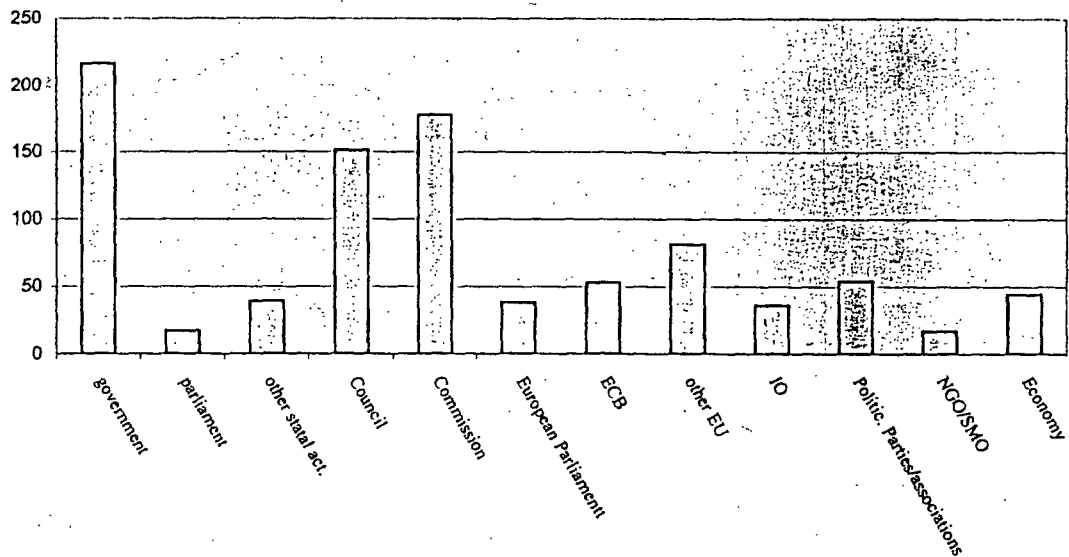
Apart from these successful actors, the data allows also to draw conclusions about unsuccessful strategies of agenda setting. The European Parliament is certainly the most prominent victim among those who are highly underrepresented in agenda-setting. Also national parliaments do not step forward as agenda-setters of European issues. There are a number of well known reasons for this low salience of parliamentarian actors: lacking competencies in pushing and controlling European policies, no centralised media policies, low impact and visibility of Parliamentarian debates, no collective appearance towards the outside (such as the Commission), very few VIP's among the Parliamentarians.

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[12] In particular, if one considers that the ECB is rather hesitant in calling too much media attention.

Finally, the remarkable absence of non-institutional, non-statal actors, be it from the transnational or from the national and local level comes to the eye. Economic actors are more likely to set the media agenda for European issues than partisan actors or trade unions. There is a clear media bias towards institutional and governmental actors and not towards civil society. Although NGOs and civic associations have become progressively included in European governance and quite often play a decisive role in EU policy deliberation and decision-making. this activity is not documented in news coverage.

There are only slight differences in the modes of agenda setting among the countries and newspapers under examination. Italian and British newspaper rely most on their own governments as informants of European articles. The French Presidency of the second half of the year 2000 leads to intensified EU-news coverage in the French media (high percentage of intergovernmental agenda-setting by the EU-Council).

. Agenda-setting reflects the multi-level dynamics of European politics. About half of the media agenda-setters are European players, one third are national players and only 5% regional and local players. The action that lead to agenda-setting are rather conventional. Media reflect institutional action that accompany the decision-making process and rely on verbal statements and official declarations of professional European actors and experts. Campaigning events or outside protest events that lead to media-agenda setting are nearly absent.

The conditions for agenda-setting of European articles help to specify the degree of absolute resonance that has been introduced as a necessary condition for the emergence of a European public sphere (Chapter xx). A European resonance structure with regard to agenda setting emerges if the same actors resonate within different media arenas. This is clearly the case with regard to Communitarian and supranational actors who produce regularly European-wide resonance and amount to about 55% of all agenda-setters of European news articles. Besides, also single governmental actors jump into foreign media arenas. 12% of all European news articles are triggered off by "foreign" (European) governments and 22% by "national" governments. What we still do not know, however, is whether this absolute resonance produced by the same actors is also converted into reciprocal resonance, i.e. into a convergence of simultaneous issues and debates.

3.3. About what is communicated in Europe?

The thematic ordering of the European news geography has been the principal concern of this quantitative survey of European news coverage. Our coding allows both a qualification of

newspaper communication according to the general policy fields in which debates are situated and according to the particular issues which are debated in each single article.

Policy fields

Our classification of policy fields uses the organigram of the EU-Commission and its division of competencies in different directorate generals to allocate issues and debates to different policy sectors. In addition, "constitutional affairs" and "institutional affairs" will be distinguished, the former including all issues and debates which discuss the constitution of Europe as a whole, its past and future, its identity, values or interests; the latter including all issues related to problems of European governance, distribution of power and competencies and projects of institutional reform.

Table 2: Distribution of news on policy-fields - percentage

	FAZ	SZ	Gu	Ti	Sta	Pr[13]	EP	LM	Li	Stp	Re
Constitutional affairs	7,4	4,6	16,7	9,2	8,4	6,9	10,4	7,8	9,3	8,3	8,9
Institutional affairs	12,7	14,6	16,7	23,1	28,6	42,6	16,3	13,3	14,7	18,3	14,3
Monetary policy	14,8	8,6	3	9,2	6,7	1	6,7	9,4	5,3	11,7	1,9
Market/competition	32,3	35,1	30,6	27,7	6,7	8,9	19,3	19,5	22,7	18,3	32,1
Employment/soc. policy	2,2	0,7	0	1,5	0,8	1	3,7	5,5	4	0	1,8
Familiy, women, etc.	0	0	0	0	0,8	0	0,7	0	1,3	0	0
Health and consumer	1,7	4,6	4,2	1,5	4,2	4	3	6,25	6,7	6,7	8,9
Agrarian policy	2,2	2	2,8	1,5	1,7	2	3	0	1,3	3,3	3,6
Science and technology	0,9	2,6	0	0	0	1	3	5,5	4	3,3	0
Education/culture/sport/	0,4	0	2,8	0	0,8	1	1,5	1,6	2,7	0	1,8
Traffic/infrastructure/	2,2	4	2,8	0	10,1	5,9	5,2	9,4	6,7	6,7	8,9
environment	2,2	2	2,8	3,1	3,4	0	2,2	1,6	2,7	3,3	0
Regional policy	0,4	1,3	0	0	0,8	0	0	0	1,3	0	5,4
Justice and home affairs	2,6	1,4	5,6	7,6	5	2	9,6	5,4	5,3	1,7	3,6
Foreign/security policy	16,2	18,5	13,9	15,4	21,8	23,8	14,1	14,1	9,3	11,7	8,9

In a comparative perspective, the distribution of issues to the policy-fields in the single newspapers points towards convergence. Economic news coverage is highest but not dominant. In addition we find highly concentrated new coverage about questions of institutional reform, about general aspects of European governance and about common foreign policy. However, the high degree of attention to Europe in general is hampered by the low degree of specialisation to the particularity of the single policy sectors. Notably, none of the newspapers guarantees full coverage of administrative activities within the principal communitarian policy fields (CAP, regional funds, social policy, environmental policy, JHA). Newspapers prefer news coverage about the big events and debates that mark the future of European integration, not

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[13] Economic and financial news-not yet included.

about fastidious details from the single DGs and long-lasting and boring decision-making processes.

Mean variation of issues

The quality press has developed a common practice of making use of multiple points of references and information about the political landscape of Europe. The advantage of this practice is that newspaper explore a plurality of European issues and debates. The total of European news articles coded in all newspapers refers to 157 different issues. The mean variation of each single newspaper amounts to 47 different issues over the whole period examined (July-December 2000). This means that a new issue is introduced in every second article. The major disadvantage of this selection practice is that the probability of issue convergence even between single newspapers in one country decreases dramatically. The traffic on the European road network is not only dense but also highly unregulated frequently changing directions and leading through different locations.

Converging issues

While all newspapers have a high pulse rate in taking up new issues and thematic areas, the journey does also allow some longer breaks on particular spots on which newspapers from different locations have the chance to meet and to coordinate their journey. Table 3 indicates a limited number of common topics on which media attention concentrates at one particular moment of time. The selection of these predominant themes is highly congruent with the major events of the EU-policy agenda. This issue spectrum structures the visibility of the political Europe towards reciprocal resonance of European political communication. It constitutes the common grounds for the public perception of European integration and its relevance for the public. For the second half of the year 2000 the major topics of reciprocal resonance discussed by all media were (in decreasing numbers of weight): problems linked to the common currency, the debate on institutional reform and on the future of Europe, Eastern enlargement and the Haider debate.[14]

Converging issues help us to specify the conditions of reciprocal resonance of political communication in Europe. There is extensive coverage about a plethora of European issues in the national media. However, media attention on single issues is very unequally distributed. Reciprocal resonance expands on the basis of converging attention cycles in the media. In all newspapers examined, media coverage cyclically peaks around focusing events such as the

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[14] Missing values in table xx do not mean necessarily that issues are not discussed at all in the relevant newspaper. The high mean variation of issues corresponds with a very low accumulation rate which is even more restricted by our selection procedures which de facto selects only every ninth European article.

Nizza summit, the formation of the new Austrian government or the Euro-referendum in Denmark. Throughout routine periods and with regard to routine issues media attention is considerably flattened. Media coverage further focuses on the "big issues" of Europe, its common future and destiny. In depth-coverage of specific issues which reflect the daily deliberations, negotiations and administrative procedures of the EU-decision-making bodies remains ephemeral.

Table 3 The most frequent issues (July-Dec.)

	SZ n=296	FAZ n=411	Ti n=167	Gu n=157	LM n=296	Li n=169	EP n=276	Pr[15] n=169	Sta n=371	Re n=171	Stp n=187
Euro	15	41	25	26	22	9	19	7	9	16	10
Insitutional reform	15	17	8	11	15	9	19	21	21	5	11
Eastern enlargement	23	31	6	6	8	0	6	22	36	4	7
Haider	9	10	0	3	3	6	4	35	49	4	5
BSE	12	8	3	0	8	10	5	7	10	7	4
Former Yugoslavia	10	11	0	6	8	3	8	10	11	0	3
ECB Interest policy	12	19	3	5	0	3	3	0	9	0	7
Common defence policy	6	5	10	12	8	0	6	6	8	0	0
Privatisation of post, telecom	5	8	4	4	3	5	5	0	0	0	0
Partisan conflicts	7	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	17	8	3
Anti-trust regulations	11	8	0	10	4	5	3	0	0	0	0
Middle Eastern conflict	4	0	0	6	3	3	6	0	4	0	0
Future of Europe	5	6	0	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	9
Charta of Fundamental Rights	0	6	0	4	3	0	0	0	6	3	0

Diverging issues

Within this all-European spectrum of issues there are also significant differences of highlighting particular issues and debates between the single newspapers. For obvious reasons, national newspapers pick up those issues that seem most relevant for them from the national perspective. Most often, these national specific issues depend of particular decisions that affect only one country (e.g. regional subsidies, competition policy). Sometimes, they also reflect a singular pattern of national politics that must be explained out of the particular socio-political background of the relevant country. Such patterns of diverging relevance include terrorism and fishery (in the case of Spain), relations to the NATO (in the case of Britain) or atomic energy regulation in Eastern Europe (in the case of Austria). However, the national agenda does not intervene straightforwardly and unilaterally on the selection of European news. After all, the particularity of European debates in one country is as exceptional as the convergence of European debates between different countries. Besides, it is not clear whether

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[15] Economic and financial news not yet included.

these differences of emphasis are national-specific or express ideological or editorial prefer-
ences of the particular newspaper.

Multi-level issues

The multi-level structuring of issues is analysed by combining the level of initiative action
(subjecthood) to the level of reaction and affectedness (objecthood) of an issue. 44% of all
European articles are based on multi-level issues in the sense that they combine European
subjecthood and national objecthood (or vice versa).[16] 42% of all articles are one-dimensional
European issues which combine subjecthood and objecthood on the supranational level (e.g.
the Commission addresses the EP). The remaining 14% link the European to the international
level of politics.

Multi-level issues can be taken as an indicator for the degree of domestisation of European
politics in the media. The domestic impact of Europe is integral part of the way the issue is
constructed and presented in the media. Typical domestisised European issues are competition
policy, common currency policy, subsidies and privatisation. There is convergence with re-
gard to the media performance of coupling different arenas and levels of politics, for obvious
reasons, there can be no convergence with regard to the debates that are following from it.

Non-issues

In spite of the high speed, frequently changing directions and different destinations through
which national media explore the political landscape of Europe, newspapers cannot be omni-
present. There are still many spots that remain untouched and, consequently, many issues
which are not discussed at all by European newspapers. What have such "non-issues" to do
with a European public sphere? Assuming that spotlighting one debate inevitably lays shad-
ows on others, "non issues" can be regarded as a structuring side effect of European political
communication.[17] "Shared non-issues", i.e. the fact that some issues are systematically left out
by *all* newspapers, refer to a particular kind of reciprocal resonance, which demarcates the
non-visibility of Europe. They cannot tell us what kind of communication actually takes place
within the European public sphere but they tell us what kind of selection procedures are ap-
plied by the single newspapers and what kind of news values underlie European news cover-
age. The invisibility of Europe is also highly relevant for institutional and non-institutional

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[16] In Europeanised articles, by contrast we find an even higher rate of 55% of multi-level issues. All newspapers
examined make frequent use of this common practise of subordinating European to domestic issues and debates.
[17] To speak of "non issues" only makes sense in relation to the political agenda of the EU, i.e. by assuming that
these issues exist somewhere and for someone and that roads towards them could be principally constructed.

actors who will adjust their communicative strategies depending on what is debated in the media or not.

From a normative point of view the existence of "non issues" remains certainly deplorable, since they include not only milk quotas and tractor driver regulations but also the debates on a European constitution or on the European democratic deficit. We must recognize, therefore, that even the quality press is still far from accomplishing the normative requirements that are needed to hold European politics transparent and accountable. We also think, however, that the simple fact that the European policy agenda and the media agenda differ should not be taken too seriously. Deviating media agendas, which from the point of view of political institutions or from a normative point of view distort the reality of Europe, are also an indicator for the autonomy and self-organisation of European media. In this sense, mediatising European politics always means selecting and defining the own contents and thus constructing a different reality of the political Europe. And anyhow, if someone decides to deplore the existence of "non-issues" in the media debate on Europe, she or he can always feel free to do so and thus has already done the first step of turning them visible.

To conclude our rather sketchy overview, the quantitative distribution of European issues suggests that there is a considerable degree of resonance of European affairs both in absolute and reciprocal terms to be found in national quality papers. We are well aware that this convergence of national news agendas does not lead automatically to the convergence of debates about Europe. "Similarities in the choice of topics of the news stories does not mean that the event is reported similarly." (Semetko et al 2000: 135). At this point we can only assume that converging issue agendas correlate with ongoing debates between EU-actors, national actors, the media and their publics. In the following, we will examine more closely how such issues are turned into debates.

How is communicated about Europe?

So far, this paper has applied a rather parsimony model with only two indicators (absolute resonance and reciprocal resonance) for the emergence of a European public sphere. For most authors, the mere quantity and the structuredness of public communication would not be sufficient. In addition, the European public sphere must pass a quality test facilitating not simply the visibility of actors and their contributions but, above all, their engagement in common discourse and understanding. We agree that the simultaneity of communication about the same issues does not by itself define the criteria of a European public sphere (it is still possible that communication takes place in different arenas which ignore each other). We do not agree, however, that the necessary qualitative refinement must be narrowed to the rather ex-

ceptional and highly selective case of discursive interchange and/or understanding among the Europeans.[18]

Earlier, we have reformulated the qualitative requirements of a European public sphere recognising that Europeans must not only talk at the same time about the same issues but must also underlie the same criteria of relevance (Habermas 1996: 190; Eder/Kantner 2000; Eder/Kantner/Trenz 2000). It has soon turned out, however, that – depending on how restrictive or inclusive these rather opaque standards are operationalised – a public sphere can be found either nowhere or virtually everywhere.[19] In addition, it had to be recognised that the Habermasian formula for a European public sphere builds on redundancy: if it is true, that the problem of relevance refers to the delimitation of issues in a world of diffuse communication (Habermas 1981(2): 194), it follows automatically that, whenever communicators underlie the same criteria of relevance, they talk about the same issue – or the other way around – whenever they underlie different criteria of relevance, they also talk about different issue. The possibility that the same issue is communicated by underlying different criteria of relevance becomes meaningless.[20] In other words, the counter-example, that a European public sphere does not exist, is excluded by definition.

For the specific purpose of this paper, it is tried to avoid normative statements about how much of synchronicity and simultaneity of debates and how deep understanding we need in order to be able to speak of a European public sphere. It is proposed, instead, to redefine "criteria of relevance" as a specific case of reciprocal resonance. Reciprocal resonance is not limited to issues and debates but also extends to the "thematic field", i.e. to the specific meaning, expectations and world views which are carried by these debates.[21] In this sense, a European public sphere does not only observe *what* is communicated, but also *how* and *why* it is communicated. This "reflexive view" on what is communicated can be taken by applying the dual code self/other which determines whether and why an issue is relevant for us (or for the

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[18] Both criteria may possibly define the performance of a democratic public sphere. But this should not narrow our empirical view because other forms of public communication may still have important structuring effects on pushing EU integration and governance. For a systematic elaboration of this argument see Eder/Kantner 2002.
[19] For an example, look at our rather general classification of European issues which can be either accumulated or further differentiated. Similarly, the periods for measuring the simultaneity of debates can vary from one day to one year.
[20] Schütz and Luckmann (1979 [1]: 224-70) distinguish between thematic relevance and interpretive relevance. The latter can be interpreted as a kind of second order observation on issues and as such comes close to the kind of solution which will be applied below (for a further elaboration on this point see Trenz forthcoming).
[21] This is what neo-institutionalists mean when they talk of the "impact of world models in framing national and subnational politics" (Meyer et al. 1997). We can safely assume that European integration strongly supports cultural isomorphism (for empirical examples see Kohler-Koch 2000; Mazey/Richardson 1997).

other). [22] From the perspective of participatory observation, European issues are included into the own context of relevance and treated as "home news". From the perspective of non-participatory observation, European issues are left out from the own context of relevance and transformed into "foreign news. By applying this distinction to the problem of reciprocal resonance we arrive at the following matrix:

Media 2 / Media 1		No resonance of Europe	Resonance of Europe	
			N. particip. observation	Particip. observation
No Resonance of Europe		No news	Foreign news about Europe	Unilateral reflexivity in European news
Resonance of Europe	N. particip. observation	Foreign news about Europe	Reciprocity of European news with regard to issues	Reciprocity of European news with regard to issues but unilateral reflexivity
	Participatory observation	Unilateral reflexivity in European news	Reciprocity of European news with regard to issues but unilateral reflexivity	Reciprocity with regard to issues and reciprocal reflexivity

"Reciprocal reflexivity" describes the specific case of resonance of European political communication which comprises both the convergence of media coverage about the same issues and the submission of the issue under a common frame of reference. Reciprocal resonance with regard to the same issues points to the visibility of European political communication: the probability that European political communication is observed by the media. Reciprocal resonance with regard to common frames of references points to the connectivity of European political communication: the probability that European political communication is included as relevant and coupled to ongoing media debates in the different member states.

Accordingly, we can specify the qualitative requirements of the public sphere as follows: the case of unilateral non-participatory observation of European issues and the case of reciprocal non participatory observation of European issues do not constitute a transmedia public sphere. Media are either isolated or unaware of their reciprocity with regard to the same issue. The case of unilateral reflexivity with regard to converging issues can be described as a *European-ised public sphere*: the visibility of European political communication is principally guaranteed in different media but only one media fulfils the condition of connectivity (e.g. the Euro-referendum in Denmark reported as foreign news in foreign media and as home news in Danish media). The case of reciprocal reflexivity with regard to converging issues describes a

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[22] News articles in different European media will tell us at the same time what kind of relevance the Euro referendum in Denmark has for Danish politics (relevance for the other). News articles in different European media can also stress at the same time the impact of the Danish referendum on European and domestic affairs (relevance for us).

European public sphere. The visibility and connectivity of European political communication is safeguarded in different arenas and a European debate is possibly carried out between different media which takes at the same time a reflexive view on the self of communication and on its unity in diversity (e.g. the "future of Europe debate").

Our quantitative survey of European political communication does not tell us much about the frames of references and evaluation which are underlying European news articles. As the framing of European political communication has to be investigated in single issue-specific qualitative case studies, we can only draw some general conclusions from our quantitative data:

Interpretative bias. European issues to be found in European news articles are coded along three patterns of evaluation: interests, values and identity. The first refers to the instrumental dimension, the second to the normative dimension and the third to the ethical-identitarian dimension of the social word.[23] The distinction indicates further three dimensions of reflexivity, which tell us why an issue is relevant for us: because it touches our particular sphere of interests, because it touches a universal sphere of values or because it touches our collective identity. These patterns are not exclusive, to the contrary, 42% of all articles make use of multiple framings combining instrumental reasoning with the sphere of values and identities.

As expected, the great bulk of European issues is coded in instrumental terms (85% as compared to 38% in normative terms and 27% in identitarian terms with only minor differences between the newspapers and countries examined). Typical issues which are linked to interest negotiations among the Europeans are institutional reform, competition policy and the Euro debate. There are only a few articles which refer to pure normative or identitarian framings (e.g. the "Charta of Fundamental Rights" or the "struggle over a European identity"). 45% of the articles make use, instead, of multiple framings rising issues in the context of interests and/or values and identities. The "Haider case", "institutional reform" and "Eastern enlargement" are examples for issues which are predominantly framed in instrumental terms but regularly linked to normative questions or questions of collective identity. Normative framings are typically used in news about EU-foreign relations with regard to European interventions in former Yugoslavia and European monitoring activities.[24] Typical identitarian issues

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[23] For the distinction between instrumental, normative (universalistic) and ethical (particularistic-identitarian) argumentation, see Habermas (1992: 139).

[24] This could become a clear distinctive mark of the EU, which, in contrast to nation-state power politics, provides a new framework of international relations.

either refer to the constitution of the self (Charta of Fundamental Rights, Treaty reform, Eastern enlargement) or to the delimitation towards the outside (relationship EU-Turkey, common security policy). Also economic issues such as "monetary union" are regularly linked to debates on collective identity in all Member States.

The qualitative evaluation has not yet proceeded so far to evaluate the newspapers' pro- or anti-European attitudes. Most articles are critical towards European governments and institutions, yet they have a positive-leaning slant towards European integration in general. This pro-integrative attitude of the European quality press can be regarded as a key-effect of reciprocal resonance of the European media. It is not clear at this point whether framings and, in particular, multiple framings with regard to issues indicate a further dimension of conflict (e.g. interests against values) or a dimension of amplified consensus (e.g. "the Euro corresponds to our interests and expresses our identity"). Reciprocal reflexivity does only measure the extent to which issues are included by the media under the same frame of reference. The latter tells us that there are debates and that such debates are framed. It does not tell us, however, how they are framed and whether they lead to discursive interactions and understanding.

European rhetorics. The following category refers to the form of Europeanisation of political communication which penetrates national media aside from European or Europeanised news articles. Quite often, speakers and journalists in the media use references to Europe as a stylistic device for pushing their arguments. For the most part, these rhetoric devices go unnoticed, or, at the best, help to increase the visibility of Europe.[25] In some specific cases, however, these rhetorical devices can take the form of reciprocal resonance which allows for the reflexivity and connectivity of political communication without going into the details of European issues and debates.

Such "reflexive rhetorics" take either the form of generalising statements or of comparative statements about Europe. A generalising use is made by pointing to the "unity" and commonness of a problem beyond the particularity and diversity of its elements: "Unemployment as a European problem", "A tragedy with European dimensions". In some specific cases, "Europe" becomes also a telos for collective action: "entrare in Europa" has become a slogan to call for collective efforts in Italy. The opposite fear to "stay out of Europe" has become a

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[25] In particular, we distinguish three cases: the naming (and sometimes stigmatisation) of political actors as European, the naming of European events which mark the political space in which national and subnational actors move (meetings, campaigns, elections to the European Parliament, introduction of the Euro, etc.), the naming of European law (Treaty, Conventions, regulations, etc.) which might have possible impact on national (or international) politics (without specifying that impact).

synonym for backwardness and a warning against possible deviants (e.g. Bossi). Comparative statements refer to the effects of standardisation which are linked to Europe: "Our national achievements in education are far behind European standards." What these different cases represent is the impact of "European models of appropriateness" which tell national and sub-national actors how to measure and contextualise particular policy outcomes and to redefine political goals and interests.

According to Laura Cram (2001) these spreading rhetorics about Europe in different social and political contexts can be identified as a form "banal Europeanism". Europe becomes a taken for granted reality. To make rhetoric references to Europe is no longer exceptional but enters the routine way of making sense of the world in every-day political talk.

Unfortunately, we lack comparative time series of data to decide whether this kind of "rheto-ric reflexivity" is increasing as an effect of European integration or not. We can nevertheless find that this kind of European rhetorics constitute already an important part of the total of political communication in all Member States. There is virtually no political issue that cannot be linked to European rhetorics. This gives evidence of the latency of Europe, which, again, becomes the precondition for turning it manifest in the form of issues and debates whenever considered as necessary.

4   Conclusion: The European media sphere revisted

On the basis of the data which has been presented in this paper, it is difficult to uphold the thesis of a persisting communication deficit of the EU. What we describe, instead, is a highly Europeanized media system which is penetrated by the effects of European resonance. Reso-nance has been measured, first, in quantitative terms as the total share of European political communication in the national media: one out of three political articles in a European quality paper makes political reference to Europe, one out of five reports directly about at least one European issue. Second, the structuring of resonance has been measured with regard to the convergence of issues and the reciprocity of communication: there is a common universe of issues and debates which determines the visibility of the political Europe. The connectivity of issues does not translate into issue cycles which guarantee permanent debate but rather into "communicative accumulations" (Tobler 2002) which focus around particular events at one particular moment in time. Third, the structuring of resonance has been measured in terms of interpretive frames of interpretation and the spread of rhetorical patterns. There is a common universe of meaning that is applied not only to issues but also made rhetorical use of. The

multiple framing of issues gives further evidence for potential conflicts and debates to be carried out between the national media.

The good news at the end: there is a media public sphere in Europe with regard to the quality press. Both the absolute resonance and the reciprocal structuring of resonance in the national media describe the effects of a European public sphere. Europe is hidden and overt, it is real and present, it is banal and significant, it expresses overall consensus, or, again, raises debates and conflict. A qualitative case study on the "future of Europe debate" which is currently completed by the author, will provide further evidence about how far this is translated into exchange and debates between the Europeans.

Are quality newspapers the exception? The question to be posed is rather: why should they not be exceptional? One of the lessons learned is that we should dismiss the idea of a unitary national media sphere. There is a high and growing degree of differentiation and specialisation of the national media landscape. The assumption that national quality papers, regional newspapers and the tabloid press represent one unified national media system cannot be uphold that easily today than let's say thirty years ago at the height of public service media systems. For sure, we can still find many national specifica just as we can find convergence between different media segments. The tabloid press in Germany, for instance, might be more inclined towards observing British yellow papers (and copying their news) than German quality papers. In the same way, we claim to describe the emergence of a unified European media system with regard to the specific organisational sector of the quality press. It is a self-regulating and largely autonomous system that is specialised in observing and selecting European political communication and that applies similar standards and selection procedures for building political news from it. Taking into account the sectoral differentiation and self-organisation of mass media communication (Luhmann 1996) helps to avoid the risk to fall into a triple fallacy when conceptualising the relationship between the media and the public sphere in Europe:

1) The media are not a rational actor and at the same time the media are not the sphere for rational discourse. They do not select news according to a hierarchy of preferences which leads to stable results in the form of political news standardisation. Our finding that there exists reciprocal resonance with regard to the quality standards of news selection and framing cannot be turned into a prediction about the specific selection of news of one single newspaper at one specific moment of time. Reciprocal resonance is defined here as a vision of what is significant and what is insignificant with regard to the universe of political communication about Europe. At the best, this can guarantee a certain degree of uniformity of the political

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news agenda. European newspaper underlie maps with a similar scale for travelling through the political landscape of Europe. But this does not turn them automatically into travelling companions who share the suitcase on their trip towards common destination.

2) The media are not the mirror of the political system. Newspapers design their own maps of the political landscape and use different scales than political actors. By comparing the policy agenda of the EU and the media agenda, we can only expect partial convergence. EU-agricultural policy has practically no chance of trespassing the threshold of media attention. The constitutional debate of the EU is rather a political and intellectual debate with only limited access to the media.

3) The media are not the mirror of the nation. The political landscape that is mapped by the newspapers can be opened towards different horizons. They may have a predominantly national readership, but this readership does not exist as a collectivity to be called a national public or even a demos. Normally, quality newspapers do not bother about national publics. Instead, they address their own readers and are well aware of the fine distinctions that separate FAZ readers from SZ readers. Likewise, publics often exist only with regard to specific issues and might change with regard to others.

What this paper has ultimately demonstrated is the existence of transnational resonance of political communication in Europe that is organised around particular actors and institutions, a specialised media sector and an unknown number of attentive publics. The effects of this kind of European resonance on the restructuring of political spaces and the allocation of actors and different publics within it are not yet understood sufficiently. It has certainly still to be discussed whether the degree of visibility and connectivity of political communication in Europe is sufficient proof for proclaiming finally the existence of a European public sphere. Whatever thorny this debate will be, it should not repeat the triple fallacy of the national public sphere which has just been deconstructed.

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