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Abstract

The emergence of a pan-European public sphere as a correlate of democratic governance in the EU is held to be difficult, if not impossible. This has shifted the research agenda to the Europeanisation of public and media communication. The “European public sphere light” is observed by measuring different degrees of Europeanisation of existing national media spheres. In applied research however, the notion of “Europeanisation” remains often very fuzzy and contested. The new agenda of “Europeanisation” has so far been mainly applied as a pragmatic research strategy. As such, it still lacks theoretical grounding and methodological coherence. For this purpose, the article raises the question of standards. Following a proposal of Johan Olsen, a distinction is made between the what, how and why of Europeanisation. This regards first of all the necessity to set diagnostic standards for designating the different phenomena of what is changing. Second, methodological standards must be set, which indicate how to measure the Europeanisation of public and media communication. Finally, public sphere research must critically address the question of evaluative standards to determine why Europeanisation takes place and when it can be considered to be a sufficient indicator for assessing a public sphere of a new quality.

Keywords

European Public Space - Europeanisation - Governance - Identity - Legitimacy - Media

A researcher who sets out to discover the public sphere is likely to find it wherever he or she looks like and then perhaps to reify it – that is, to construe it as a force at work in history, an active agent which produces palpable effects.

(Darnton, quoted in Splichal 2006: 706)

Beyond methodological nationalism in public sphere research

The notion of the public sphere is generally developed by reference to language, territory and authority that restrict communication to distinctive spaces of meaning and intensified discursive interchange. Public sphere research is consequently biased in the way that it focuses primarily on the performance of the *national* public sphere. For normative and empirical accounts alike, the nation state appears to be the kind of natural container of the public sphere. Nation-building and public sphere building are seen as co-evolutionary through the differentiation of a well functioning system of mass communication (Deutsch 1953; Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991).

European integration has put to the test these taken for granted assumptions about a symbiosis of the public sphere and the nation state. From the beginning, the very idea of European integration has been followed by a new enthusiasm in the possibilities of trans-border communication and understanding. On this basis, the notion of the European public sphere has been discussed as enabling legitimation of the EU-institutional world as well as a potential arena for socialising European citizens. At the same time, a functional relationship between political integration and social integration has been postulated acknowledging the existing communicative deficit of the EU, which needs to be overcome by innovative policy instruments and technical solutions (Trenz and Eder 2004).

The constitutive and distinctive features of the European public sphere have thus been elaborated “ex-negativo”. The European public sphere has not been introduced as a new conceptual tool to give an account of the transformation of existing communicative spaces. Its prominence is rather a fruit of the concern with the normative deficits of European integration. Within EU studies and from the perspective of institutional reformers alike, the European public sphere has mainly been addressed as something imperfect but desirable, in other words as something that does not yet exist but that should be constructed for normative reasons (Eriksen 2005; Peters 2005; Habermas 2000).

This grounding of public sphere research in moral philosophy and normative political theory has to a large extent excluded social scientific analysis (Delanty and Rumford 2005: 184). The European public sphere has become the object of institutional-constitutional design at the expense of recognising its effects on integration. Enhancing a European public sphere means acknowledging that the so-called gap between the EU and its citizens is grounded in a communication deficit and that the EU should therefore strive towards a higher legitimacy in terms of public accountability, openness and participation, in other words of democracy (European Commission 2006). European public sphere research has thus been carried by an enlightening movement that has promoted a normative debate about the reallocation

of democracy.¹ This also explains the personal commitment of the research community, which has been more interested in producing policy recommendations for public sphere building than developing analytical tools for understanding the possible transformation of existing public and media spheres.

Outside the field of European studies, academic research has so far not been much affected by this enthusiasm for the possibilities of trans-border communication and its new legitimacy potential. Within media studies and political sociology, the resilience of the national public sphere as the main locus of political communication and political orientation of citizens is emphasised. According to Weischenberg (2000: 275) the construct of “world-society” as a new reference point of media and communication studies has proven to be of little analytical value. The drawing of national geographic and economic borders between societies remains fundamental for categorising existing media communication. Comparative media surveys therefore always start and end up with a typology of national media systems.

In some cases, the resilience of a national research focus might simply reflect established research routines. Most of social sciences’ analytical categories were developed within the nation state framework. As such they account for the mainstream “methodological nationalism” of the discipline, which considers nation states and nationally bounded societies as their basic units of analysis (Beck 2003; Zürn 2001). Inconsiderate theoretical premises also structure empirical observations. This can be seen, for instance, in the choice of the units of measurement of public sphere and media research, which either look at the communicative performance of national governments or at the intermediary capacities of national media organizations or at the opinions and attitudes of national publics.

In most cases, however, the national research focus of media and communication studies is not simply the result of a theoretically blind research routine but actually the conclusion of an enhanced self-reflection of the discipline. Against the rather fashioned bashing of social sciences’ methodological nationalism, media analysis has provided rich evidence, which reconfirms the national fragmentation of the public sphere and explains its resistance to transnationalisation. From a historical perspective, media acts as a conservator of national culture; they are the school of the nation that forms the unitary national public. Schlesinger (2003) and Slaatta (2006) have pointed to the particular institutional connection between news media and politics as manifested in the conventions that generate the daily representation of national symbolic complexes. Following the main lines of historical sociology it is argued that “both linguistic and cultural boundaries, formatted through historic structuring of social communication, over time has formed functional communicative spaces along the lines of national borders that work towards social cohesion and strengthening of collective identities” (Slaatta 2006: 16).

Furthermore, media’s inherent nationalism has been made responsible for the re-interpretation of issues of global or transnational concern within contextualised systems of meaning and particular cultures. Through the intervention of the media more encompassing debates are re-fragmented into national debates when political journalism develops within a particular political culture and reproduces its dominant values and interpretations. This nationalistic and ethnocentric bias comes to bear

¹ Friedhelm Neidhardt (2006: 46) observes this analogy in promoting the European public sphere with the early 19th century proliferation of the concept “Öffentlichkeit”.

above all in foreign news coverage, where journalists tend to defend national interests over normative ideals of a just world order (Hafez 2005). The nationalistic bias is manifested, first of all in agenda-setting (heavy attention to those foreign events that are most closely tied to domestic politics and interests) and second in framing (e.g. in categorising foreign actors as friends and enemies of the nation) (Page and Shapiro 1992: 376).

In postulating the European public sphere as a necessary correlate of legitimate governance in the EU, normative political theory has to take into account these intrinsic constraints that obstruct the emergence of a transnational sphere of media communication. While it is true that mainstream public sphere research has mainly been conducted within the nation state framework, it must be also recognised that methodological nationalism of the discipline is at least partially grounded in mainstream media nationalism. There are reasons to assume that mainstream media has resisted and will continue to resist the transnationalisation of the public sphere. The way to go beyond methodological nationalism can therefore not simply consist in changing the normative preferences of public sphere research. Instead we have to search for a theoretically sound and empirically grounded way of thinking how the public sphere beyond the national level becomes possible.

Europeanisation of public communication: a new research agenda

The majority of authors have discarded the possibility for an encompassing European public sphere that is built along the template of the national public sphere (Gerhards 1993, 2000; Schlesinger 1994, 2003). Most importantly, the emergence of a pan-European media system is held to be difficult, if not impossible. Due to the diversity of languages, media cultures and traditions European audiences remain nationally segmented. Furthermore, political communication in Europe is still channelled mainly through national organisations, parties or elected representatives. This results in a differentiated practice of news production with regard to the EU. European actors and European issues appear, if at all, in domestic debates (Preston and Horgan 2006: 37).²

This has shifted the research agenda to the *Europeanisation* of public and media communication. The “European public sphere light” is observed by measuring different degrees of Europeanisation of existing national media spheres. In applied research however, the notion of “Europeanisation” often remains fuzzy and contested. Recent research projects have developed different indicators, which, quite often are also used to measure different social artefacts.

The new agenda of “Europeanisation” has so far primarily been applied as a pragmatic research strategy. As such, it still lacks theoretical grounding and methodological coherence. As a result, this article raises the question of standards. Following Olsen’s (2002) proposal, a distinction is made between the what, how and why of Europeanisation. This regards first of all the necessity to set diagnostic standards to designate the different phenomena of *what* is changing. Second, methodological standards must be set, which indicate *how* to measure the Europeanisation of public and media communication. Finally, public sphere research must also critically address the question of evaluative standards to determine *why*

² The report is based on the accumulative findings of case studies on news-making cultures in nine European countries

Europeanisation takes place and when Europeanisation can be considered a sufficient indicator of a public sphere of a new quality.

The scope of Europeanisation

The scope of Europeanisation can be approached by distinguishing its procedural (operational) and relational component (Eising 2003). With regard to the first component, Europeanisation implies a specific mode of social change. It stands for a transformative process that expands within a particular economic, political and societal space. In addition, Europeanisation also implies a horizontal or vertical linkage between different institutional environments: a new centre-periphery relationship between the European Union and its subunits, the horizontal interrelation of different member states, or the relationship between EU-governance and its societal environment.

Europeanisation of public and media communication mainly concerns the transformation of national public spheres and their long-term development. Forms of coupling either take place through intensified communicative interchange between different national public spheres (horizontal Europeanisation) or through the infiltration of European actors and issues in national public spheres (vertical Europeanisation) (Koopmans and Erbe 2004).

To speak of the national public sphere as the object of Europeanisation has not been very clarifying, however. Instead of providing an empirically substantiated model, the national public sphere itself is based on highly idealised assumptions that are not easily translated into research indicators (van de Steeg 2002). The public sphere is neither an organisational entity nor a particular institutional setting that can be analysed as a whole. It is rather made up of forms of loose couplings of communication that refer to variable carriers and reference groups.³ This also marks the major distinction between the notion of the public sphere and the notion of civil society. Whereas the latter has been conceived as a membership community that is built around solidarity, trust and unity, the former allows for contestation and open debates, which transcend contextualised identities.

The national public sphere is therefore a dummy alternative when it comes to determining the scope of transnational communication (Neidhardt 2006: 52). As there can be no unitary European public sphere, there also cannot be a national public sphere understood as an entity that can be Europeanised in a more or less linear and unitarian way. Facing these conceptual problems, research has generally proceeded pragmatically in disaggregating the concept of the national public sphere.

The pragmatic solution followed in most analyses has been to focus at the Europeanisation of *national media systems* as representing the national public sphere. The tricky question here is to determine the representativity of particular media products, i.e. to identify those media, which speak to the nation. In the past, national

³ It is of course impossible to conceive the "nation" as a carrier of communication. One alternative way would be to identify the "nation" as a reference group of identitarian discourse (Giesen 1999). Within the ongoing contentions that make up political life we observe a multiplication of possible reference groups of identitarian discourse. Moments, in which political discourse addresses the whole of the nation (the "national interest", the "national soul", etc) are still crucial but also become increasingly contingent on parallel discourses, which address the regional community, the professional group, the sectorial constituency, Europe or the world.

public spheres that were represented by relatively integrated media systems were mainly upheld by nationalised public broadcasting and television. They were symbolised by the fact that the whole nation gathered around the eight o'clock news. Since the late seventies the internal segmentation of what has been labelled national media system has been proceeding very fast. The privatisation, regionalisation and commercialisation of news formats have fostered the multiplication of segmented spheres of communication that speak to differentiated publics. Under such conditions, political communication is increasingly dispersed and faces difficulties in reaching larger mass audiences. There is thus the need to disaggregate the object of Europeanisation even further and to identify the relevant media segments that specialise on the distribution of European news.

The proposal made in this article is that Europeanisation research should focus on those particular news formats in which national political communication is also taking place. In all Member States the institutional arrangements and the organisational capacities for national news production are clustered around political journalism, which serves mainly public television, the radio and nationally wide diffused newspapers (Cook 2005). This is the (increasingly?) restricted place in which information about national and international politics is selected and represented to larger mass audiences according to converging standards of news making. It is also here that EU-politics can reasonably be expected to find resonance. Europeanisation of political communication is thus heavily dependent on the allocation of knowledge and organisational capacities for national news-making.

European public sphere research has mainly followed this advice in determining the scope of Europeanisation of news-making through quality journalism. The selective bias of this research mainly follows the internal selective logics of the media system and its parallel differentiation of a highly professionalised sector of European news-making in the member states. This shall not exclude the parallel Europeanisation of regional news landscapes or the Europeanisation of the tabloids, but this will take place in different forms and with a less clear focus on the regular and equilibrated provision of information about the EU or other member states.⁴ Political news-making in general, and European political news-making in particular are floating islands in the sea of dispersed communications that make up the modern public sphere.

The scope of Europeanisation of the quality media is analysed along different dimensions. A first group of researchers was devoted to the analysis of the dynamics of European news-making, agenda-setting and diffusion. Following the classical model of the public sphere as a mediating arena between political contenders and their publics (Gerhards and Neidhardt 1991) the scope of Europeanisation was determined by analysing the inputs, throughputs and outputs of political communication on the EU:

- a) The scope of political communication: the role of European actors and institutions as the *initiators* of debates on Europe and their agenda-setting strategies is taken into account. This includes the analysis of media and communication policies of the EU (Mak 2001; Brüggemann 2005), the role of public intellectuals and media entrepreneurs (Lacroix 2005), the impact of

⁴ This has become evident in media surveys which compared the scope of Europeanisation of quality newspapers, regional newspapers and tabloids (Koopmans and Erbe 2004; Roose 2006; Vettters 2006). Regional newspapers have only restricted capacities to become engaged in European news coverage and tabloids tend to avoid EU issues altogether.

protest movements (Imig and Tarrow 2000) or the contestation within political parties (Eijk and Franklin 2004).

- b) The scope of mediation: This comprises the information management through journalists as the *mediators* of Europeanisation in the Member States. Research has so far focused mainly on the organisational capacities of journalism and the media. Field studies were carried out to analyse the performance of EU-correspondents and the agenda-setting and control function of the Brussels *corps de presse* (Meyer 2002; Siapera 2004; AIM research consortium 2007).
- c) The scope of public reception and resonance. This includes research on the changing attitudes and preferences of the publics as the *receivers* of political communication on the EU (Bruter 2004; Hooghe 2003). Attentive structures and the knowledge of European citizens are regularly surveyed through the Eurobarometer, which becomes the common reference point for institutional actors as well as for the European research community to observe European publics.

A second group of researchers has mainly promoted content analysis of European news coverage. The public sphere is not seen as an arena of contention but as an arena of framing discourses and identities. Accordingly, research has focused on the contents of unfolding debates, on general issue structures and modes of interpretation:

- a) *Europeanisation of attentive structures*. The scope of Europeanisation is measured here as the general level of media attention to political news from the EU or other member states. Accordingly, vertical Europeanisation refers to the general visibility of the EU measured in the extent to which European events, actors and issues are covered by national news media. Horizontal Europeanisation refers to the enhanced visibility of issues, actors and debates from other member states and the communicative linkages following from it (Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Europe is thus conceived as an observatory space in which attentive structures for ongoing events are symmetrical and political debates are synchronised (Tobler 2006).
- b) *Europeanisation of meaning structures*. The scope of Europeanisation is measured here in the degree to which issues are discussed under a common frame of interpretation, which includes the identification of problems of shared relevance (Kantner 2003; Risse 2002). Europe is thus conceived as an interpretative space in which meaning structures converge, common standpoints are crystallised and a collective self develops (Diéz Medrano 2003; Risse 2004; van de Steeg 2004).
- c) *Europeanisation of interactive structures*. The scope of Europeanisation is measured here in the degree to which communication binds participants of different provenience together. Europe is thus perceived as an interactive space in which people of different national provenience become engaged in common discourse (Wimmel 2006; Brüggemann et al. 2006).

Through disaggregating the concept of the national public sphere, the conditions for the Europeanisation of public and media communication could be narrowed down to the rather restricted and specialised sector of quality journalism. However, identifying the scope of Europeanisation is not enough. The public sphere also has to be perceived in terms of mechanisms that mediate between the institutional arena of government and the everyday-life of citizens. Europeanisation adds an additional dimension to these mediating mechanisms that goes beyond the interrelation of

“state” and civil society” within a given territory. Research must also make a decision about the interrelational modes that crosscut existing territorially confined spheres of communication and that interlink different layers of government and civil society. At this point, it is essential to specify *how* Europeanisation takes place.

Mechanisms of Europeanisation

The mechanisms of Europeanisation refer to the driving forces and dynamics of the interrelational processes, which transform the European social and political order. Historical-institutional accounts of European integration usually analyse mechanisms of Europeanisation in terms of path dependencies and learning (Cram 1998; Olsen 2002). This does not yet provide the answer to the question through what devices such path dependencies and learning processes are activated.

Early integration theory has conceived learning as a particular form of institutional adaptation and spill over. The interesting detail is that also in these early variants, learning was activated through intensified communication (Haas 1958; Deutsch 1953). This argument has recently been refreshed in institutional and constructive analysis of multi-level governance. Through public communication a new integrative dynamic is activated that goes beyond interest negotiation and unfolds through shared ideas, justificatory claims and discourses. Hence, communication is identified as the glue that holds the complex and multi-level institutional setting of EU-governance together (Kohler-Koch 2000).

Public sphere theory adds an additional element to this. What is usually forgotten is that public discourse is not only an integrative mechanism within the institutional realm but also builds an additional form of coupling to by standing and attentive publics. Hence, learning does not only take place as institutional adaptation but is also linked to more encompassing and long-term processes of “societal learning” (Trenz and Eder 2004). Through the public sphere the structure of the EU-polity is also linked to its social carriers outside the institutional confines of the EU, i.e. to the people in Europe (Fossum and Trenz 2006).

As with regard to the objects of Europeanisation also the indicators that are used for measurement change. In the following, two mechanisms of coupling through communication and discourse will be discussed. In the first case, Europeanisation is measured through discursive interaction that results in networks of communicative interchange. In the second case, Europeanisation is measured through the effects of transnational resonance that result in parallel attention cycles and the diffusion of meaning across media spheres.

Discursive interaction: Europeanisation of public and media communication can be analysed as a process that enlarges the scope of public discourse beyond the territorial nation state. The development of a multi-level public sphere is seen in correspondence to the establishment of a multi-level system of governance. Europeanisation proceeds through enhanced interchange between different levels of jurisdiction represented by cooperating actors and institutions, which become engaged in collective problem-solving (Börzel 2001). In EU-governance research, this relational understanding of Europeanisation has recently been re-formulated as EU-network governance (Eising and Kohler-Koch 1999).

In similar terms, Europeanisation can be also analysed as intensified discursive interchange and the emergence of an encompassing European discourse (Wimmel 2006; Peters et al. 2005; Brüggemann et al. 2006). For Brüggemann et al. (2006: 5) the question of the Europeanisation of political communication is not only a question of the scope of communication and of mutual observation between national public spheres. The democratic quality of such a public sphere is rather searched in what they call “discursive transnationalisation”, i.e. the way debates in different member states are interconnected. Media should thus become engaged not simply in *parallel* debates but also in *common* debates and in collective identifications about topics of shared relevance (similarly Risse 2004). This approach is clearly referring to a discursive understanding of the public sphere as the realm of shared understanding (Habermas 1996). It postulates the emergence of a “Europeanised discursive public sphere” the primary function of which is to engage the Europeans in public reasoning and collective will formation (Wimmel 2006: 50ff; Eriksen 2005).

A less demanding variant of measuring discursive interaction as a mechanism of Europeanisation is represented by the so-called claims-making approach. Claims are defined rather restrictively as a form of strategic interaction and interest communication (Koopmans and Statham 1999).⁵ What is important is that this approach does not refer to the Habermasian notion of understanding as a necessary element of successful Europeanisation. It rather builds on a more liberal model of the public sphere as an open arena of contention (Ferree et al. 2002). Even so, claims-making analysis focuses primarily on the performance of actors as the promoters of Europeanisation within the media sphere. Koopmans and Statham (2002) have analysed the conditions for a European public sphere not in the density of coverage on EU-issues but in the density of claims-making through collective and institutional actors that is either directed at the EU or that unfolds horizontally across the European space.

Transnational resonance: This interactionist logic has biased policy research as well as civil society and public sphere research to the extent that only the direct interchange (conflict and cooperation) between and among non-state and public actors has received attention. Beyond networks and interactions European public sphere research has helped to identify an additional mechanism of linkage: the effects of transnational resonance of communication and discourse. If networks can be made responsible for the strong coupling of institutional and non-institutional actors through direct discursive interaction, there is another form of loose coupling of collective actors and their general audiences which has been called *transnational resonance* (Trenz and Eder 2004; Esmark 2005). This additional form of loose coupling comes to bear whenever actors do not only interact among each other but also address a general audience. The theoretical concept of the public sphere refers exactly to this basic insight: it includes not only those who take active part in political debates but always presupposes that communication can be followed by others.

Resonance refers to the diffusion of ideas, attitudes, semantics, schemes of interpretations or even behavioural patterns through ongoing communication that is followed by a general public. Europeanisation through transnational resonance is not necessarily relying on dialogue and discursive interchange. It simply requires that media constitute a shared space for the observation of political life. The public sphere

⁵ This is an unnecessary restriction as the method can be equally applied to the analysis of normative discourse (Vetters et al. 2006).

is thus perceived primarily as the societal observatory that mirrors political events, issues and meaning structures (Luhmann 1996; Marcinkoski 2002; Trenz 2005).

Diffusion through public monitoring should be considered as a central mechanism of linkage in a multi-level polity.⁶ A relationship of mutual trust or mistrust between different national settings, for instance, points to the monitoring effects of public communication, without collective action as a necessary result. Diffusion is also made responsible for the construction of social problems whenever claims about the existence of such problems in one country influence awareness of them in others (Best 2001). In this sense, the public sphere indicates the latency of structured relationships between actors. The expectation is that Europeanisation of public communication, to a large extent, is pushed by such latent structures of resonance which do not necessarily need to become manifest in enhanced discursive interchange, cooperation and understanding.

Transnational resonance has been measured, first, in quantitative terms as the total share of European political communication in the national media: the absolute amount and the density of European political communication within the geographic area of Europe. Second, the structuring of resonance has been measured with regard to the convergence of issues and the reciprocity of communication: the generation of European wide attention for particular events and issues of common relevance such as the common currency, the process of Eastern enlargement, the common foreign and security policy, the institutional reform of the EU or European constitution-making. Third, the structuring of resonance of European political communication in national media spheres has been measured in terms of interpretative frames and the spread of rhetorical patterns that make sense of the common European political universe of meaning (Trenz 2005).

The resonance mechanism also gives a clue to the re-interpretation of interdiscursivity, which can be operationalised in terms of *reciprocal resonance* of public communication between national media spheres (Trenz 2005: 176ff.). Instead of focusing on interactive dialogic situations (which are rather unlikely to appear in media communication) research should describe the effects of the diffusion of common topics, patterns of interpretations and frames of references. Media communication is then structured in a way that contributions at one place become not only observable but are also likely to be taken up and connected with ongoing communication at other places.

With regard to further specifying the mechanisms of Europeanisation of public and media communication, the proposal in this article is that the inter-discursive mechanism and the resonance mechanism should be considered as complementary. Networks and the public sphere refer to different interactive and communicative modes of interlinkage. In contrast to networks, a public sphere is not necessarily built on an interactive relationship between a given set of actors. Through the monitoring effects of public communication, an additional mechanism of linkage come to bear, which is based on the diffusion of meaning and the exchange of material and ideational interests across languages and lifeworlds.

⁶ This refers to the so-called Stanford school of neo-institutionalism (Meyer et al. 1997), which speaks of a world polity that is based on the diffusion of ideas and meaning. For the modes and impact of cross-national diffusion in the study of contention see also Snow and Benford 1999.

As should have become clear, the contribution of public sphere theorising for understanding Europeanisation is not to say that people need to become engaged in direct discursive interchange within a transnational environment. It is rather to say that public communication establishes a more basic and enduring linkage, which is based on a situation of mutual observation between competing institutional and non-institutional actors and their multiple publics. Public communication thus results in a situation of intensified monitoring of the EU governance system through relevant publics (and vice versa also of intensified monitoring of relevant publics through EU-institutional actors). The European communicative space is first and foremost a European observatory space in which particular information is distributed, issues and policies are made transparent, positions and claims are staked and old and new cleavages are demarcated. The effects of this new observatory relationship should therefore not be searched for in open conflicts and debates (which are still mostly kept latent) but in the structuring of common interests, beliefs and expectations, which lay down the scope of legitimacy of present and future integration.

Effects of Europeanisation

The major effects of the Europeanisation of public and media communication can be described in terms of shifting the focus of legitimacy and reallocating collective identities. The question of the *why* of Europeanisation of public and media communication points to the normativity of the project of European integration and its requisite in terms of legitimacy. By most authors who have become engaged in this debate, the dismissal of the template of the national public sphere was not meant as a dismissal of the normative essentials that are commonly linked to the performance of national public sphere (Kantner 2003; Risse 2004; Eriksen 2005). Europeanisation was expected to change the institutional architecture of the public sphere but not its normative underpinning.

This insistence on the validity of democratic legitimacy in the postnational constellation should be analysed as part of the Europeanising dynamics of the public sphere. The intrinsic normativity of the public sphere unfolds a creative force, which shapes further steps of integration. This was also the expectation of Jürgen Habermas more than a decade ago, when he postulated that a process of EU-constitution-making could have a catalytic function on the emergence of a European public sphere (Habermas 1995). With the negative referenda in France and in the Netherlands such a critical and a controlling function of the public sphere has been displayed with clear consequences on the restriction of institutional choices.

These repercussions of the normativity of the public sphere on the facticity of ongoing integration need to be further analysed. In the following, I propose that the normative impact of Europeanisation should be measured first, in terms of increasing public attentiveness for processes of European integration and governance; second, in terms of enhanced or restricted legitimacy of the EU; and third, in terms of a realignment of collective belonging and identities.

In terms of increasing public attentiveness for processes of European integration and governance, one clear indicator for the normative impact of Europeanisation would be a linear growth of the absolute amount of media communication about Europe. The expectation is that the growing significance of European governance and the rising concerns of European citizens would also translate into intensified communication about European governance. EU competences and public attention

would thus increase simultaneously (Latzer and Sauerwein 2006: 17). Since public attention becomes a central requirement of legitimacy, European integration could slowly proceed through the mutual observation of EU-governance institutions and their diffuse publics. Once European governance structures and their affected parties are under observation this would also make increasing discursive interchange likely. Public opinion and will formation would follow.

The problem is that such a linear relationship between growing competencies of the EU and growing public attentiveness to European integration has so far not been corroborated by empirical analysis. Only few studies have been able to observe the synchronic effects of Europeanisation over time and those who did ended up mostly with negative findings (Gerhards 2000; Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Only Brüggemann et al. conceded a slight increase of EU-coverage in quality newspapers, which however did not translate in an increase of discursive interchange between national media spheres. In the new Member States, effects of Europeanisation of public and media communication seem to be more accentuated. Sauerwein (2006) observes a clear increase of Europeanisation in the case of Austria after the country entered the EU in 1995. Similar effects were observed in post-communist countries in the transition period (Salovaara-Moring 2006).

Any investigation into the transnationalising dynamics of public communication must therefore recognise that the scope of Europeanisation of existing public spheres is rather limited. The major constraint to Europeanisation is that nationally confined media markets are already saturated, with only small niches left than can be occupied by European political communication. Processes of Europeanisation of public communication lose ground and become increasingly diversified. Ultimately we are faced with what Hannerz (2004: 23) has pointed out as one of the main challenges of cosmopolitanism: the fact that in an era of intense globalization and increased global connectedness, foreign news coverage in many media channels has recently been shrinking and existing communicative spaces become increasingly diversified. In light of the lowering news quality and the demolition of the unified national public sphere, the emergence of a European or Europeanised media sphere should thus be perceived as being even more exceptional.

Concerning the point of enhanced or restricted legitimacy of the EU, research has been concerned with determining the "adequate" level of Europeanisation, which could be considered as "sufficient" to meet the criteria of democratic legitimacy. From the deliberative perspective of the public sphere, the yardstick for "successful" Europeanisation is high. The Europeanised discursive public sphere should support the constitution of a democratic sovereign by generally increasing the level of information, reducing the problem of bounded rationality of segmented institutional arenas and forcing all participants to justify their claims and demonstrate the quality of their choices and preferences (Eriksen 2005: 356). Such a perspective clearly overburdens the public sphere as a system of mass media communication, which is found to be only loosely integrated, and rather based on weak commonalities and only partly interactive (Neidhardt 2006: 52). Rather than a "communication system", public spheres are described as "munication systems" (ibid.), in which communication is neither consonant nor necessarily directed towards common understanding. From the liberal perspective of the public sphere, the yardsticks for "successful" Europeanisation are lower. The media should open an arena for contention in which open-ended conflicts can be carried out, cleavages marked and diversity made visible. Europeanisation could thus contribute to turn antagonism into

polarised conflicts, which recognise pluralism by inter-relating (and not overcoming) basic difference.⁷

Last but not least, in terms of a realignment of collective belonging and identities, the effects of Europeanisation of public and media communication can be measured in terms of opening a metadiscourse on European integration providing collective representations of the community of European citizens. Two basic approaches in analysing the transformation of collective identities as an effect of the Europeanisation of the public sphere can be distinguished. A first approach consists in linking identity transformation to attitudinal changes. This kind of analysis is mainly based on the Eurobarometer, which since 1975 includes questions on the feeling of belonging of the Europeans (Kohli 2002; Bruter 2004). Survey data can be used to develop a more complex understanding of the mapping of collective belonging in Europe according to the socio-geographic location of different carriers of subnational, national, European, globalised and hybrid identities.

The second approach looks at the *reflexivity* of public discourse as an indicator of identity transformation. The effects of Europeanisation on identity formation are traced back in ongoing debates that reflect upon the collective self and belonging. In these terms, Kaelble (2002) and Giesen (2002) come to very similar findings in their historical reconstruction of a European self-understanding enshrined in a specific form of discourse about the commonness of the Europeans. Both point out the role of intellectuals as key persons to carry on such semantics about Europe's unity and unification. Also Kantner (2006) analyses the emergence of a shared ethical self-understanding of the Europeans that develops through conflict and debates about issues of common relevance.

In all the three variants Europeanisation is ultimately measured in unfolding an integrative potential. It is thus perceived as a principal positive, in some cases even as a civilising force in the sense of unifying European societies and enhancing their regulative and communicative capacities. It is here that the research programme of Europeanisation displays its own normativity.⁸ Ideas about what social and political order is desirable in Europe remain heavily contested, but Europeanisation expresses the minimal consensus about the possibility of turning Europe into a stronger entity.

Conclusion

This article has dealt with the different meanings of the term "Europeanisation" and their applicability in public sphere research. Europeanisation refers to different but related processes of change which should be seen as complementary and not exclusive, as interrelated but not as causally determined (Olsen 2002). Research on the Europeanisation of public and media communication has provided compelling theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that the national public sphere should not be taken as the template for the emergence of a European sphere of communication. By setting the new research agenda of Europeanisation, most studies

⁷ See the programme of "radical democracy" as proposed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which is based on the deconstruction of the deliberative and the liberal paradigm of democracy.

⁸ This is a clear difference in the semantic use of "Europeanisation" as compared to the negative and disintegrative meaning that is frequently associated with the term "globalisation".

have nevertheless still uncritically referred to the national public sphere as the main object of analysis.

This assumption of the national public sphere as a unit of analysis that could be Europeanised in a more or less linear and consistent way is misleading. Research on Europeanisation should therefore pay attention to the question of standards. This implies basically three things: first, the scope of Europeanisation must be confined (what is Europeanised?), second, the respective mechanisms of change must be identified (how is Europeanisation taking place?) and third, the evaluative criteria must be established (why should Europeanisation be expected to take place?). In this sense, the article has examined the rather restricted scope of Europeanisation of existing media spheres, it has distinguished networks and transnational resonance as two operating mechanisms of transformation and it has determined the effects of Europeanisation in terms of increasing public attentiveness, enhancing legitimacy of the EU and realigning collective identities.

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