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TOWARDS A EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE?

Vertical and horizontal dimensions of Europeanized political communication

Ruud Koopmans and Jessica Erbe

In this paper we address the alleged communication or public sphere deficit of the EU. We develop a systematic approach to the Europeanization of public spheres, which distinguishes three forms of Europeanized political communication: supranational, vertical and horizontal. We propose that the spatial reach and boundaries of public communication can be determined by investigating communicative flows and assessing the relative density of public communication within and between different geopolitical spaces. We apply this model to data on political claim making in seven issue fields in German print media in the year 2000. We find that the degree and forms of Europeanization of political communication vary considerably among policy fields. These differences are strongly linked to the extent and type (supranational or intergovernmental) of competencies of the EU in these fields. Contrary to the hypothesis of a public sphere deficit, the German mass media seem to quite accurately reflect the Europeanization of policy making, at least in those policy fields where a clear-cut transfer of competencies to the supranational EU level has taken place.

While policy decisions in Europe are increasingly taken in the supranational and intergovernmental arenas, the nation-state has remained the primary focus for collective identities, and public debates and citizens' participation in the policy process still seem mainly situated at the nation-state level and directed at national authorities. This discrepancy between Europe's institutional development, its increasing competences and influence on Europeans' way of life, on the one hand, and the continuing predominance of the national political space as the arena for public debates and the source for collective identification and notions of citizenship, on the other, is at the core of Europe's 'democratic deficit'. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the former 'permissive consensus' on EU integration has eroded, increasingly after the Treaty on European Union of 1992, which was ratified only with great difficulty in those countries where it was subject to popular referenda. Trust in European institutions and support for the integration process have steadily declined, and so has voter participation in European elections in many countries (Schmitt & Thomassen, 1999). In addition, tendencies towards a 're-nationalization' of politics are observable, for example in the form of increasing support for xenophobic parties that usually also have a strong anti-European profile.

The increasingly controversial nature of the integration process, the need to fundamentally reshape the EU's institutional structure and decision-making process in the

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context of enlargement, as well as the heightened visibility of Europe in people's everyday life (e.g. the euro), make further advances in the integration process increasingly dependent on active engagement, acceptance, and legitimacy among the citizenry. Even more than at the national level, the communication flow between Europe and the public depends on the mass media. The mass media fulfil at least four crucial functions in the European policy process. First, in the absence of direct communicative links, European actors, issues, and policies have to be made visible by the mass media, and it is in this public forum that they may gain (or fail to obtain) public resonance and legitimacy (the *legitimization* function). Second, with the partial exception of opinion polling—which provides only punctual, pre-structured, and non-discursive access to public opinion—European policy makers must depend on the communicative channels of the mass media (the *responsiveness* function) for information about the desires and concerns of the citizenry. Third, and conversely, the public can build its opinion about the distant European institutions and the complexities of multi-level policies only to a very small extent on direct personal experience and therefore must also rely on how Europe becomes visible in the mass media (the *accountability* function). Finally, participation of citizens in the European policy process usually also requires access to the mass media. Although a small number of resourceful and well-organized actors may gain access to European policy makers directly (e.g. in the context of the Brussels lobbying circuit), most forms of citizen participation through NGOs, civic initiatives, and social movements can influence policy makers only by way of the visibility, resonance, and legitimacy they may mobilize in the mass media (the *participation* function).

Given the growing dependence of advances in the integration process on the emergence of a European public sphere that can fulfil these functions, it is no surprise that the conditions for the emergence of a European public sphere have come to the fore in the social-scientific debate about European integration (e.g. Gerhards, 1993; Erbring, 1995; Schlesinger, 1995; Kopper, 1997). However, so far this discussion suffers from insufficient empirical grounding, and has a tendency to remain highly speculative. In this paper, we want to offer a more empirically grounded view on the extent and forms of Europeanization of public spheres. We do so by presenting theoretical ideas and data from the ongoing project 'The transformation of political mobilisation and communication in European public spheres' (EUROPUB.COM).² Although this project is comparative both across time and across a total of seven countries (Germany, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, and Switzerland), we draw here only on the German case and the year 2000.

We focus on only one—albeit the most central—of the multiple data sources produced in the context of the project, namely the analysis of public political claims. We take acts of political communication—claims—as our units of analysis and use newspapers as a source for the publicly visible part of this claim making. A claim is defined as an instance of strategic action in the public sphere. It consists of the expression of a political opinion through some form of physical or verbal action, regardless of the form this expression takes (statement, violence, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc.) and regardless of the nature of the actor (governments, social movements, NGOs, individuals, etc.). Statements by journalists may also be included if the journalist's opinion is provided in an explicit way in the news coverage. Our approach therefore does not focus on public opinion at the individual level in relation to the perceptions and identities of European citizens, but on the degree of the Europeanization of public debates and collective

political mobilization as they become visible in the mass media (i.e. *publicized* opinion). We acknowledge that there are other fora, beside the mass media, where Europeanized political communication and mobilization may occur, for example in inter-organizational or interpersonal networks that cross national boundaries. However, ultimately the relevance of these networks will depend on the degree to which the incipient Europeanization tendencies that emerge within them are able to penetrate the mass media and are thereby able to reach a wider audience.

Because of the obvious possibility that levels of Europeanization of public communication depend on the actual competencies of the EU, our analysis stretches over various policy fields, ranging from those with strong (monetary politics, agriculture), intermediate (immigration, military troop deployment), and weak (education, pensions) EU influence. In addition, we study the public debate about the meta-issue of the European integration process.

Europeanization of Public Spheres: a Theoretical Model

There has been a tendency in the literature to view the notion of a European public sphere in a narrow way, implicitly or explicitly derived from an ideal-typical conception of the national public sphere. Several authors have focused on the probability of the emergence of transnational mass media or transnational collective action at the European level. This way of approaching the problem usually results in a negative answer to the possibility of a European public sphere, and emphasizes linguistic and cultural boundaries as an insurmountable barrier to the Europeanization of public debates, collective identities, and collective action. Although some authors reckon with the emergence of English as a true lingua franca in Europe that would allow direct transnational communication on a mass level (de Swaan, 1993), for the moment this prospect seems to be very distant, not least because of strong resistance against such cultural homogenization in many non-English-speaking member states. In our view, this perspective on the Europeanization of the public sphere is deficient because it views Europeanization as a replication, at a higher level of spatial aggregation, of the type of unified public sphere that we know—or think we know—from the nation-state context. This perspective often presupposes a degree of linguistic and cultural homogeneity and political centralization that cannot be found in many well-functioning democratic nation-states. For instance, the Dutch consociational democracy has proved to be a successful way to politically integrate a population characterized by deep socio-cultural cleavages (Lijphart, 1968). Similarly, Switzerland is one of the most stable and successful Western democracies despite important cultural differences, not least the existence of four different language regions (Ernst, 1998).

If one looks for a genuinely transnational European public sphere, there is not much to be found (see also Schlesinger, 1999). There have been a few attempts to establish European-wide mass media, but most of these have either quickly disappeared (such as the newspaper *The European*) or lead a marginal (and often heavily EU-subsidized) existence (e.g. the Euronews television station or the independent, but in terms of expert readership limited, *European Voice*). In so far as transnational media have been able to carve out a niche in the media landscape, the successful examples have a global, rather than European, profile and audience (e.g. CNN, BBC World, *International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Financial Times*). Regarding collective action and social movements,

Imig and Tarrow (2001) have similarly shown that mobilization at the European level by transnationally organized European actors is still a rare phenomenon.

Gerhards (1993, 2000) has rightly emphasized that the more realistic scenario is not that of a genuinely supranational European public sphere in the singular, but the Europeanization of the various national public spheres. This view assumes that—also because of the language factor—nationally-based mass media are there to stay, but that their content may become less focused on the nation-state context and will increasingly include a European perspective. Gerhards (2000, p. 293) mentions two criteria for such a Europeanization of national public spheres: on the one hand, an increased proportion of coverage of European themes and actors, and, on the other, the evaluation of these themes and actors from a perspective that extends beyond their one country and its interests. Using media content data drawn from Kepplinger (1998), he shows that in Germany between 1951 and 1995 there has hardly been an increase in European themes and only a very slight increase—at a very low level—in the coverage of European actors. These data, however, were gathered for other purposes and it is therefore questionable whether they accurately measure the European dimension of themes and actors, let alone the intricacies of multi-level politics that may result in varying mixtures of national and European dimensions in news coverage. These methodological reservations notwithstanding, we agree with Gerhards that an increased presence of European actors and themes in national media would be an important criterion for the Europeanization of public spheres. However, Gerhards' second criterion seems unnecessarily restrictive in that it demands an orientation on a European common good in order for an act of public communication to qualify as 'Europeanized' (for this criticism see also Trenz, 2000). If we apply this common-good criterion of orientation on more than self-interest, we should also exclude much of the routine national claim making (e.g. of many socio-economic interest groups) from the national public sphere.

Even though Europeanization in Gerhards' view does not require supranational mass media, it does presuppose a form of Europeanization of policies and politics along lines similar to those in the traditional nation-state. It is no surprise, therefore, that Gerhards (2000) arrives at the conclusion that the European public sphere deficit is a direct consequence of the democratic deficit, which he sees in the lack of the kind of government–opposition dynamics, and the direct accountability of office holders to the electorate that we know from the national level. This position has been criticized by Eder *et al.* (2000) as too restrictive. They assume that because of the complex nature of multi-level politics, we will not necessarily find a strong orientation of public communication to European institutions. In their view, the Europeanization of policies and regulations may instead lead to a parallelization of national public spheres in the sense that, increasingly, the same themes are discussed at the same time under similar criteria of relevance. An example would be the debates on asylum policies in different European countries during the 1990s, following European-level discussions and the Dublin Agreement. National political actors carried the ideas developed here into their national public spheres, and as a result discussions were launched more or less simultaneously in several member states about establishing lists of 'safe third countries', a notion that was developed in Dublin. However, the fact that such policies had a European-level origin was hardly mentioned in the coverage of these debates at the national level. Although what we see in such cases is certainly a consequence of the Europeanization of policy making, in our view it does not constitute a Europeanization of the public sphere. As long as the

European dimension remains hidden from public view, one cannot call such debates 'Europeanized'. For the citizen, unaware of what was discussed in Dublin or of the similar discussions in other member states, these appear to be purely national debates. If anything, such examples illustrate the nature of the public sphere deficit rather than a solution to it.

Nonetheless, Eder *et al.* are on the right track in insisting that direct references to the EU are not a necessary precondition for a Europeanization of public spheres. What Gerhards' perspective misses is that although, particularly in the first pillar, the EU has some supranational features, many of its policies have an intergovernmental basis. These intergovernmental features of the EU polity are more likely to be expressed in an alternative form of Europeanization of public spheres, which has thus far received almost no attention in the literature (a partial exception is Risse, 2002). This type of Europeanization would not consist of direct references to European actors and themes, but of increased attention to public debates and mobilization in other member states. In an intergovernmental polity, the other member states can no longer be treated as foreign countries whose internal politics are not really relevant for one's own country. On the contrary, in an intergovernmental polity, it may matter a great deal who wins the elections in another member state, or what kind of new policy another member state develops in a particular policy field. Such tendencies are reinforced by the interdependencies created by common market policies and the freedom of movement within the EU. Under such conditions, policies in one country may become relevant for one's own country in a way that goes far beyond traditional international relations. For instance, if Germany liberalizes its naturalization policies, this is immediately relevant for other member states because, once naturalized, immigrants from Germany can freely travel to and take up work in another EU country. Similarly, the northern EU countries watch closely what measures states such as Italy, Greece, and Spain undertake to prevent illegal immigration from Africa and the Middle East, which under the Schengen conditions is no longer simply 'their' problem.

We thus arrive at three theoretically possible forms of Europeanization of public communication and mobilization:

- (1) The emergence of a *supranational European public sphere* constituted by the interaction among European-level institutions and collective actors around European themes, ideally accompanied by (and creating the basis for) the development of European-wide mass media.
- (2) *Vertical Europeanization*, which consists of communicative linkages between the national and the European level. There are two basic variants of this patterns, a bottom-up one in which national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues, and a top-down one, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests.
- (3) *Horizontal Europeanization*, which consists of communicative linkages between different member states. We may distinguish a weak and a strong variant. In the weak variant, the media in one country cover debates and contestation in another member state, but there is no linkage between the countries in the structure of claim making itself. In the stronger variant, actors from one country explicitly address or refer to actors or policies in another member state.

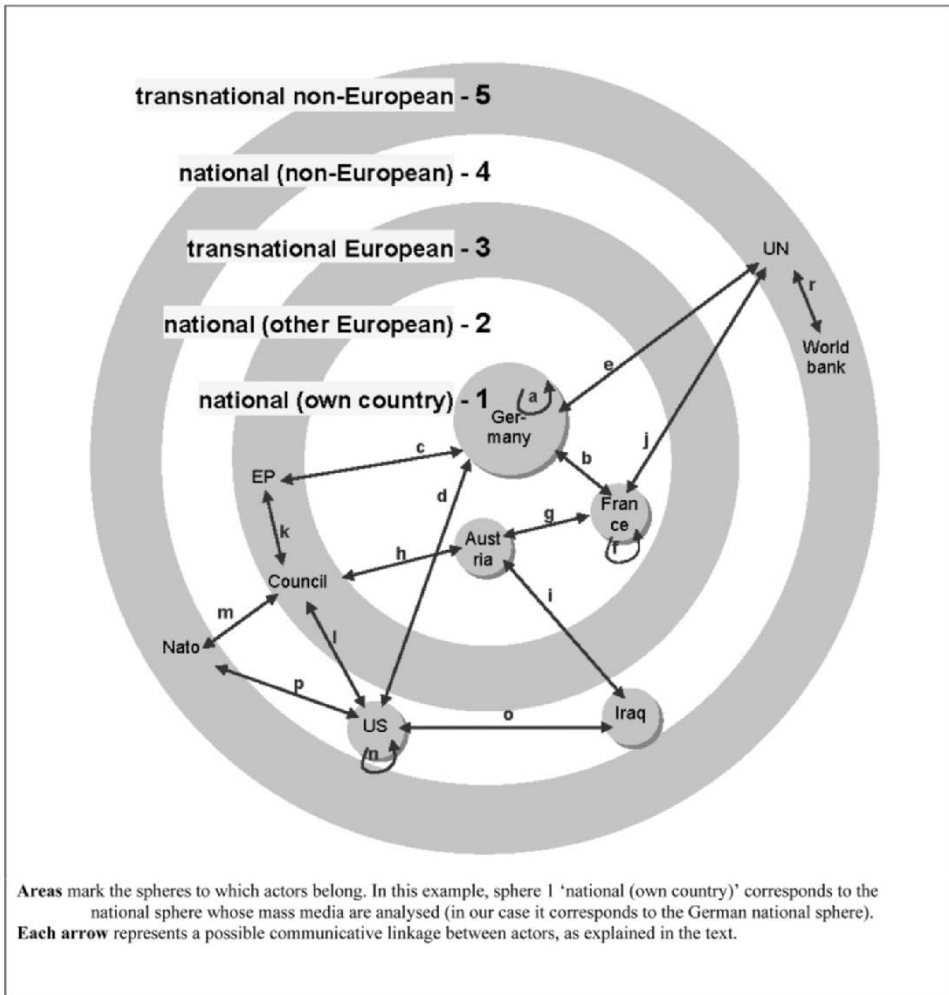


FIGURE 1
Model of intra- and inter-sphere communication from the perspective of national media from EU member states (here: Germany)

It is important to note that we can speak only of 'European', 'global', 'national', or 'local' public spheres in a relative sense. We propose that the spatial reach and boundaries of public communication can be determined by investigating patterns of *communicative flows* and assessing the *relative density of public communication* within and between different political spaces. In Figure 1, we have drawn a set of concentric spheres delimiting different political spaces that are of interest to us in this study. At the centre, we find the German political space (sphere 1). In the next sphere around it (2) are the respective national political spaces of the other EU countries.³ In the subsequent sphere (3), we find the transnational European political space, in which the European institutions and common policies are situated. Beyond that, the next circle (4) contains all other countries of the world and their national political spaces. Finally, the outer sphere (5) contains global supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF),

the G8, the International Court of Justice or the United Nations (UN), as well as international treaties and conventions.⁴ The nature of public spheres, now, is constituted by the density of communicative linkages (symbolized by arrows a–r in Figure 1) within and between these spaces. In terms of our model, the ideal-typical national public sphere is characterized by communicative linkages that remain completely confined to one national political space.

To clarify what we mean by such linkages, and illustrate them with concrete examples, we must say a little more about the constituent elements of public claim making. Claims normally consist of the following elements:

- a *claim maker* or *claimant*, who makes a demand, proposal, appeal, or criticism;
- an *addressee*, who is held responsible for implementing the claim, or is the target of criticism or support;
- an *object actor*, whose interests are or would be positively (beneficiary) or negatively affected by the claim;
- the *issue*, i.e. the substantive content of the claim, stating what is to be done (aim) and why (frame).

An ideal-typical national claim would be a German claimant making demands on a German addressee in the name of the interests of a German beneficiary, referring to a set of aims and frames that refer only to the German political space. An example is when German media report, a call by the German government on the German Trade Union Federation to co-operate in reform of the (German) retirement system in order to secure pensions for future (German) generations (corresponding to arrow a). The degree to which we can speak of a nationally confined public sphere is then measured by the relative amount of all communicative action that conforms to this ideal-typical national pattern of claim making. A fully nationalized public sphere would have a density of 100% of such nationally confined communicative linkages. In a fully denationalized public sphere the density of purely national communicative linkages would be 0%. This would not imply that national actors, addressees, interests, and issues no longer play a role, but that these always appear in combination with some sort of reference to political spaces beyond the country in question.

Along similar lines, we may speak of the emergence of a *supranational European public sphere* to the extent that we find claims that link European claimants to European addressees in the name of European interests, without referring to any other level of political space. An example is a motion passed by the European Parliament urging the Commission to undertake institutional reforms in the context of the enlargement of the Union (arrow k). Similar to the density scores for nationally confined political communication, we can conceptualize a supranational European public sphere as the percentage of all communicative action in which European actors refer to European addressees, interests, and issues.

This would be the replication of the classical pattern of the national public sphere at the level of the EU. However, if Europe is indeed a new type of multi-level polity, this should not be the most frequent type of Europeanized claim. Within the model of *vertical Europeanization*, we may distinguish a number of varieties in which vertical communicative linkages between the national and the European political space can be made. In the *bottom-up variant*, the simplest form is when national actors directly address European institutions (arrow c; e.g. when a national actor brings a case before the European Court

of Justice, or German Foreign Minister Fischer demands that the European Parliament be strengthened in the next treaty revision), but there are also more complex patterns in which national actors address national authorities asking them to promote the group's interests at European level (a case with national claimant, addressee, as well as object actor, but an issue with a European scope). The *top-down variant* of vertical Europeanization occurs when European actors address national actors, usually regarding common European issues and interests (e.g. when the Commission threatens sanctions against governments that do not meet the criteria of the stability pact).

The *weak variant of horizontal Europeanization* occurs when German media report on what happens within the national political spaces of other member states, for instance that the French national assembly has adopted stricter laws on soliciting in French streets (arrow f). In terms of the structure of claim making, this case is similar to the purely German claims, but the difference is that by their coverage the German media transport these non-German claims into the German public sphere. The degree to which such coverage represents a form of Europeanization of the German public sphere can be evaluated only in a relative sense. Horizontal Europeanization may be said to occur if coverage of other EU member states is over-represented in comparison with that of non-EU countries. If, on the other hand, references to France and Italy are no more frequent in the German public sphere than, say, to Japan or Mexico, we may perhaps still speak of a transnationalization of the German public sphere in a wider sense (if such references have increased over the course of time relative to purely national coverage) but not of a more specific Europeanization of public communication.

The *stronger variant of horizontal Europeanization* is brought about by direct communicative linkages between two member states' political spaces (arrow b). Examples are Prime Minister Tony Blair issuing a statement in support of Gerhard Schröder's bid for the Chancellorship, or the German government criticizing the French government's handling of the BSE epidemic. As in the case of vertical Europeanization, there may be cases where all actors involved remain national (German) ones, but the issue is framed in a comparative way with one or more other member states, for example when the German opposition criticizes the government's economic policies, pointing out that Germany has the worst performance of all EU countries. In such a case, the policies and performances of other EU countries are deemed relevant as benchmarks or possible examples for German policies, thereby introducing a European dimension to German public debate.

Of course, there can also be mixtures of horizontal and vertical Europeanization. A common example is when government representatives of several member states issue a common statement on some European issue, for example the proposals of the Spanish, British, and Italian governments for institutional reform of the EU. Another common combination of vertical and horizontal dimensions occurs when the media of one country report on interactions between the EU and another member state, for example when the German media reported on the FPÖ's warning that Austria could veto decisions in the Council of Ministers (arrow h).

All these forms of Europeanization of public communication must not only carve out a communicative niche in competition with purely national public communication but also relative to transnational communicative interaction that goes beyond Europe. It is possible, after all, that a denationalization of public communication and mobilization occurs, but that most of the resulting linkages beyond the national level refer to

supranational institutions and regulations with a wider scope than Europe alone (e.g. the UN), or to national political spaces outside the EU (e.g. to the USA, Russia, or Japan). In so far as claim making referring to political spaces wider than or outside Europe involves the EU and its institutions, this would still be a form of Europeanization—of the supranational variant, to be more precise. Such claims constitute the foreign political dimension of the EU polity, for example when the EU and the USA criticize each other's positions in the GATT negotiations (arrow l), or when the EU General Affairs Council agrees on embedding the WEU in NATO structures (arrow m).

Another form of communicative interaction involving supranational political spaces or countries beyond Europe, which might still constitute a form of Europeanization, is when German media report on interaction between actors from other member states, on the one hand, and supranational institutions or non-European countries, on the other (e.g. when they report on Haider visiting Saddam Hussein in Iraq (arrow i), or on French human rights NGOs calling on the UNHCR to improve the protection of female refugees (arrow j)). As in the case of coverage about other member states' internal affairs, the coverage of such claims in the German media might indicate a growing awareness of the relevance of other EU countries' foreign relations to one's own country's (or Europe's) position in the world. Of course a precondition would again be that such coverage of other member states' foreign politics would be over-represented compared with coverage of international and supranational politics in which other member states do not play a role (e.g. relations between the USA and Russia) or in which they appear only as part of broader international coalitions or members of supranational institutions (e.g. claims made by the UN Security Council on Iraq).

Finally, there are two types of communicative linkages that are—like the purely nationally confined claims we began with—clearly competitors to Europeanized political communication. The first is communications which link Germany to non-European countries or to supranational institutions, and which bypass the European level. Examples are the debate about US–German relations in the context of the Iraq conflict (arrow d), or Chancellor Schröder asking the UN Secretary General to mediate in a conflict (arrow e). Second, a substantial part of foreign political coverage consists of the internal affairs of non-European countries (arrow n), relations between such countries (such as President Bush's claims on regime change in Iraq or Iran; arrow o), between them and supranational institutions (e.g. the USA asking NATO for support after 11 September; arrow p), or among supranational institutions (the UN, for instance, calling on the World Bank to include poverty reduction in its funding criteria; arrow r). If such forms of political communication and contestation receive prominent coverage that increases relative to other types of coverage over time, we may consider them as an indicator of a denationalization or transnationalization of the German public sphere, but not of a more specific and delimited form of Europeanized public communication.

To summarize, we can speak of a Europeanized public sphere to the extent that a substantial—and over time increasing—part of public contestation neither stays confined to one national political space (the European public sphere's inner boundary) nor extends beyond Europe without referring to it (the outer boundary of the European public sphere). Coverage in the German media about other member states' internal and foreign affairs constitutes a borderline case and can be interpreted as a form of Europeanization only if such coverage is over-represented (and over time increasingly so) compared with the coverage of the internal and foreign affairs of non-EU countries.

Data and Method

In this paper, we draw on one part of the EUROPUB.COM project that maps the acts of communication through which collective actors make political demands. For the empirical data collection we use the methodology of *political claim analysis* (see Koopmans & Statham, 1999a), which goes beyond traditional media content analyses. The latter usually focus on newspaper articles as the unit of analysis, and use article-level variables to investigate the way in which journalists frame the news. Traditional approaches to content analysis are media centric, and neglect the role of other political actors in shaping the nature of public discourse and contestation. Media professionals certainly contribute to shaping the public sphere, but to do so they have to draw on the raw material of communicative actions and events that are produced and staged by non-media actors such as politicians, interest groups, and NGOs. Traditional content analysis at article level offers no possibility to map fields of political communication in terms of actors, issues, and the relations between them. At most, traditional methods can tell us with what frequency certain actors and issues are mentioned, and perhaps to what extent certain actors and issues co-occur in news stories. But they tell us nothing about the relations between actors, their role in public debates, or the positions they take with regard to which issues. It is precisely such information about who addresses who on which issues and in the name of whose interests that we need in order to answer questions about the Europeanization of public spheres and the different forms it may take.

We take individual acts of political communication—claims—as our units of analysis and use newspapers as a source for the publicly visible part of this claim making.⁵ For each instance of claim making, we coded a range of variables, including the actor, the addressees, the content and spatial framing of the demand, and the object actors whose interests are at stake. For each actor, addressee, and object actor, we coded the polity level at which they are organized (local, regional, national, European, and other supranational), as well as (in the case of local, regional, and national actors) their nationality (for more detailed information on the coding rules and variables, see the codebook: Koopmans, 2002).

Four daily newspapers of different types were selected to represent the German print media landscape: two quality newspapers with national reach (one centre left, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and one centre right, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), the tabloid *Bild-Zeitung*, and the East German regional newspaper *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. From these newspapers, we coded public claims that referred to one of the following seven policy fields:

- (1) monetary politics: currency politics and interest rate;
- (2) agriculture: subsidies, livestock and dairy quotas, animal disease control;
- (3) immigration: entry and exit;
- (4) troop deployment;
- (5) retirement and pension schemes;
- (6) primary and secondary education;
- (7) European integration.

Given our research question, the inclusion of the topic of European integration requires no further explanation. The other issues were chosen in order to generate systematic

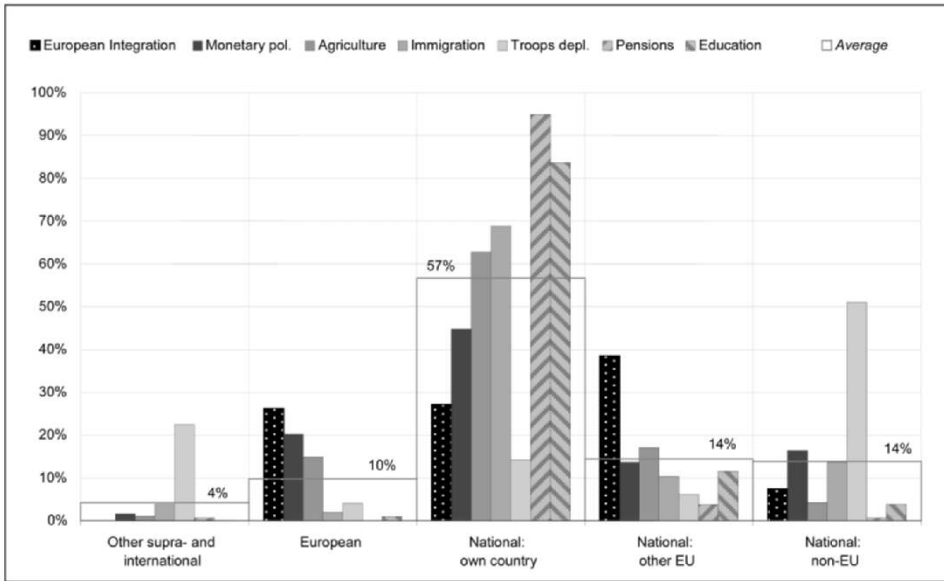


FIGURE 2

Spatial scope of claim makers, by policy field ($N = 1051$)

variation in the degree and forms of institutional Europeanization. Monetary politics and agriculture are fields in which the EU has strong competencies of the supranational type. The next two policy fields—immigration and troop deployment—are much less strongly institutionalized at the European level. To the extent that European decision making plays a role in these fields, it is of the intergovernmental type. In retirement and education politics, finally, the EU has virtually no formal competencies, and European institutions at most have a co-ordinating task.

For such a broad range of issues that need to be included regardless of whether or not a reference is made to Europe, it was impossible to code each newspaper for every day. We therefore used a sampling strategy.⁶ Since we are still in the process of collecting the data, in this paper we can draw only on the data for the German case for the year 2000.⁷

Who Speaks? The Spatial Scope of Actors Involved in Claim Making

The first question we address is whether the actors that appear in the German media as speakers on the seven selected issues are primarily national, German actors, or whether they also include a substantial number of speakers at EU level and from other member states. This will give us a first indication of the level of Europeanization of public communication in the German news media.

As Figure 2 indicates, on average across the seven policy fields, more than half (57%) of claim makers in our German media sources are German local, regional, and especially national actors. The other half has an international dimension and is distributed between national actors of other EU countries (14%) and of non-EU countries (14%), actors belonging to the EU and other European institutions (10%), as well as other supra-

or international actors (4%). These averages are, however, only of limited interest, because there is strong variation in the distribution of claim makers across the seven policy fields.

If we start with the two policy fields where the competencies of national institutions are strongest—education and pension politics—we see that these fields are strongly dominated by German actors who make up 84% of all claimants in the case of education politics, and 95% in the case of pensions and retirement. The only other categories that—at a great distance—receive some level of visibility in the German media are national actors from other countries. The fact that, among these other countries, EU member states predominate over non-EU countries is an indication of a certain degree of horizontal Europeanization, albeit at a very low level. Vertical Europeanization, in the form of claims by EU-level actors, plays no role whatsoever in these policy fields and neither do claims by other supranational actors.

More surprisingly, given the fact that there is considerable intergovernmental activity at the European level in these areas, European-level actors do not play a significant role as claim makers on immigration and troop deployment, either. The distribution of claim makers in the field of immigration very much resembles the results for education and retirement policies. Almost 70% of claim makers on immigration are German actors, and the remainder are primarily national actors from other countries. In this case, however, actors from non-EU countries (e.g. Australia) appear more frequently than those from EU countries, which does not suggest a high degree of horizontal Europeanization in this field. European-level actors as well as other supranational actors play virtually no role in public claim making on immigration. The results of Koopmans *et al.* (forthcoming; see also Koopmans & Statham, 1999b) regarding claim making on immigration in the 1990s in five European countries suggest that this finding is not limited to Germany, but reflects the still strongly national mooring of immigration politics in European countries in general.

The distribution of claim makers in the field of troop deployment shows a very different pattern. Here, German actors play a marginal role and are responsible for only about 15% of all claims. However, neither European-level actors nor national actors from other member states profit from the weakness of German actors in this field. In contrast, actors from non-EU countries (most importantly the USA) account for more than half of all claim makers, followed at a distance, with somewhat more than 20%, by supranational actors beyond the EU, particularly NATO and the UN. Troop deployment therefore appears—at least in Germany—as a strongly transnational policy field, but not one in which the EU or other European actors play any significant role. Our results for the year 2000 thus foreshadow the weakness of Europe in this policy field that became apparent in the conflict over military intervention against Iraq in 2002/03.

European actors are clearly more important in the two fields where the EU has substantial supranational prerogatives, namely agriculture and monetary politics. Still, German actors are the dominant speakers, responsible for almost two-thirds of claims on agriculture and 45% of those on monetary politics. Compared with the involvement of German actors, the role of EU actors (15% in agriculture and 20% in monetary politics), but also that of national actors from other members states (17% in agriculture and 14% in monetary politics) remains modest. In monetary politics, we also find a substantial share (16%) of claims that were made by actors from non-European countries, especially the USA. This attention for claims by US actors is related to the relevance of the exchange rate between the dollar and the euro for the German and other European economies.

Not surprisingly, European-level actors are most prominent in public claim making on the process of European integration, where they account for 26% of all claim makers. Nevertheless, national actors dominate this field as well but, notably, actors from other member states (39%) appear more often as speakers on issues of European integration than German actors (27%). This seems clear evidence in favour of a truly Europeanized public sphere as far as the issue of European integration is concerned, and runs counter to the expectations offered by Gerhards and others, who attribute a bias to the news media in favour of the national perspective in their coverage of European issues.

The most important conclusion from this section relates to the important differences we found among the seven policy fields. This result indicates that the question as it is usually posed in the literature, namely whether 'a' Europeanized public sphere exists, makes little sense at this general level, unconnected to specific issues. For similar reasons, empirical data about the presence of European-level actors in media content across all issues have little meaning, since they obscure large differences between policy fields. Differentiation by policy field is also crucial for the interpretation of findings. The fact that we hardly find any European-level actors in education and pension politics cannot reasonably be taken as evidence for a 'public sphere deficit'. These fields are strongly dominated by national actors and policies at the institutional level, and the EU has very little power and influence here. By focusing on the claims of those national actors that are the most relevant players in these fields, the media actually fulfil their legitimacy, accountability, responsiveness, and participation functions quite accurately. The same may be said for the field of troop deployment, where European-level actors do not play a significant role either, and coverage concentrates on claims made by foreign national actors, above all the USA, and supranational institutions such as NATO and the UN. Once again, this seems an accurate reflection of the relevant decision-making actors and arenas, rather than the result of a media bias against European actors and institutions.

For the other three substantive policy fields, the results in this section provide more reason for concern about whether the media accurately reflect the role of European institutions and policies. In the case of immigration politics, one may argue that the low profile of European-level actors is because most attempts to set up common European immigration and asylum policies have thus far failed, and the national level has therefore remained by far the most relevant arena of decision making. In agriculture and monetary politics, however, there can be little doubt that the European level is where the most relevant decisions are taken. Still, European-level actors appear almost four times less often as claim makers on agriculture than German actors. Even in the field of monetary politics, where the powers of national Central Banks have been almost completely transferred to the European level, we find more than twice as many German claimants as European ones. In both fields, moreover, horizontal forms of Europeanization are weakly developed. Even though in agriculture and monetary politics the member states have become highly interdependent, the German media tell us little about what other EU countries do and think in relation to these issues.

A Multi-level Look at the Structure of Public Claims

Although it is very important what kind of speakers appear in the media, an inspection of claim makers alone is an insufficient basis for drawing conclusions about the nature of public communication. Even if in most policy fields actors from the European

TABLE 1
Average multi-level linkages within claims

| Type of multi-level linkage [Letters refer to the corresponding arrows in Figure 1] | | All seven policy fields | Six policy fields (excl. Eur. integration) |
|---|--|----------------------------------|---|
| Non-Europeanized forms of claim making | | 57% | 67% |
| | Purely German national [a] | 37% | 43% |
| | Relations Germany with non-EU countries or supranational [d, e] | 6% | 7% |
| | International politics without ref. to EU, DE or other EU countries [o, p, r] | 15% | 17% |
| Europeanized forms of claim making | | 43% | 33% |
| Supranational | Purely supranational European [k] | 5% | 4% |
| | Relations EU with non-EU countries or supranational [l, m] | 7% | 5% |
| Vertical | Relations Germany with EU (without ref. to other EU countries) [c] | 11% | 10% |
| | Relations other EU countries with EU (without ref. to Germany) [h] | 10% | 6% |
| Mixed vertical/ horizontal | Relations Germany with other EU countries and with EU [combination] | 5% | 3% |
| Horizontal | Relations Germany with other EU countries (without ref. to EU) [b] | 2% | 2% |
| | Relations among and within other EU countries [f, g] | 1% | 2% |
| | Relations other EU countries with non-EU countries or supranat. [i, j] | 4% | 4% |
| Total | | 100% | 100% |
| Total number of claims (N) | | 1051 | 742 |

This table presents weighted averages across the seven policy fields, in such a way that each field contributes equally to the result. The three non-Europeanized patterns and the sum of Europeanized patterns add up to 100% of all coded claims in the year 2000. Within the category of Europeanized claims, however, some claims are attributed to more than one pattern and the total therefore exceeds 100%.

level and from other member states do not play important roles, Europeanization of public communication may occur when the content of claims refers to policies, institutions, or interests at the European level or in other member states. We will therefore now broaden the scope of our analysis and look at the multi-level structure of claims in their entirety, taking into account not only the actors involved but also the substantive aims and frames that are formulated.

To this end, we return to the types of communicative linkages between different geopolitical spaces that we outlined in the theoretical section above. For reasons of clarity we have reduced the 17 possible types of linkages, which were distinguished in Figure 1, to 11 main categories, which we have grouped in Table 1 according to the theoretical form of Europeanization they represent. To classify the type of communicative interaction to which a claim in its entirety belongs, we retain the information on who makes the claim, but add to this information about the addressees, adversaries, allies, and beneficiaries of claims, as well as on the spatial framing of the issue. We will focus here on co-occurrences of different geopolitical levels within claims, and leave for further

analysis the complex question as to how exactly these levels are combined. Concretely, this means that claims in which German actors address British actors, British actors address German ones, or German actors frame an issue by drawing a comparison with the situation in Britain, are all classified in the same way, namely as 'relations between Germany and other member states'. For the reader's reference, Table 1 shows which categories correspond to which arrows in Figure 1. Average percentages are given for all seven issues taken together, as well as excluding the field of European integration. In contrast to the other issues, claims in this field must by definition have a European dimension, and therefore may bias the overall average in favour of supranational and vertical forms of Europeanization.

Table 1 shows that even if we take all composite elements of claims into account, claims that remain entirely within the national German political space remain by far the most important category, accounting for 37% of claims across all seven fields, and 43% if we look only at the six substantive policy fields excluding the meta-issue of European integration. Table 1 shows that claims linking Germany to political spaces beyond Germany were made most often to European-level actors and policies (11% + 5%), followed to relatively equal shares by references to actors and policies in other member states (5% + 2%) and to non-EU countries or supranational institutions (6%).

More generally, Table 1 shows the predominance of vertical over horizontal forms of Europeanization. Altogether, 26% of claims (19% excluding the issue of European integration) link the European to the national level, whereas only 12% (11% excluding European integration) make horizontal linkages between two or more member states.⁸ Moreover, most of the horizontal linkages belong to the weak variant in which German media report about claims by actors in other member states that do not refer to Germany. As we have argued, such claims can be seen only as a form of Europeanization of public communication if they are over-represented compared with the foreign news coverage of the politics of non-EU countries. Table 1 does not suggest that this is the case, as claims belonging to international politics without any reference to the EU or its member states are more frequent (15%) than claims about relations between and within other member states or their foreign relations (5%). A further indication of the relevance of the EU and its institutions as a focus for claim making is that 12% of all claims (9% excluding European integration) can be classified as supranational European. This means that these claims refer either only to European-level actors and policies ('purely supranational European') or to relations between the EU and third countries or supranational institutions.

As in the case of our analysis of claim makers, we must be very careful in drawing conclusions from these results across all policy fields. As Figure 3 shows, there are again large differences between the policy fields that make it impossible to draw general conclusions about the Europeanization of public communication. Generally, the results in Figure 3 confirm the trends we already saw in our discussion of claimants. If we compare the percentage of claims with a purely German frame of reference with the percentages of German claim makers in Figure 2, we see that these are almost identical in the fields of immigration, troop deployment, education, and pensions. In other words, when German actors appear as claim makers in these fields, they do so almost exclusively to present demands and proposals that refer exclusively to the German political context. This is different in the other three fields where the competencies of the EU are greater. Whereas German actors are responsible for more than 60% of all claims in the field of

TABLE 2

Claims with a reference to a supranational European actor or issue, as a percentage of all claims within each policy field

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|---|----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------|--|
| | Monetary politics | Agriculture | Immigration | Troop deployment | Pensions | Education | European integration | Weighted average (policy fields 1–6) |
| % | 79 | 45 | 9 | 14 | 1 | 3 | 100 | 25 |
| N | 183 | 94 | 154 | 49 | 158 | 104 | 309 | 742 |

This table combines the supranational and vertical forms of Europeanization of Table 1.

agriculture, the content of claims remains exclusively German in 42% of the cases. In a substantial number of cases, therefore, claims by German actors on agriculture refer to other geopolitical spaces—as Figure 3 makes clear, usually in the form of references to the EU level or other EU countries. Even so, given the high concentration of regulative power in the field of agriculture at the European level, the frequency of claims with a purely German frame of reference (42%) remains high.

Purely national claims are much rarer in the case of monetary politics, where even before the introduction of the euro we find very few claims (5%) with an exclusively German frame of reference. Although Figure 2 shows that German actors remain the most frequent claim makers in this field, their claims almost always referred to contexts beyond Germany. Such references are made mainly to the European level, where the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of the European Central Bank (ECB) clearly provides a strong focus for claim making. Less surprisingly, the 27% claims by German actors on European integration that we encounter in Figure 2 all make reference to the European level.

Compared with the modest role of European-level claimants in Figure 2 (from 0% in pension politics to 37% in the field of European integration), Table 2 shows that claims that refer substantively to the European level are much more widespread. By definition, 100% of claims in the field of European integration refer to the European level (either in the form of supranationally or vertically Europeanized claims) but, more interestingly, this is also true for 79% of claims on monetary politics. Thus, with the introduction of a common currency, monetary politics has very quickly become a field that is debated and contested almost entirely from a European perspective. This provides support for the idea that the alleged ‘public sphere deficit’ of the EU is merely a derivative of a lack of strong and clearly demarcated competencies at the European level. With the ECB, and the relatively transparent delineation of its prerogatives and those of the Commission in this field, a clear focus for public communication has been created that has led to the quick establishment of a strongly Europeanized pattern of public contestation over monetary politics.

This is much less the case in the field of agriculture politics, where only 45% of claims refer to the EU. Here, we may perhaps speak of a deficit of public communication, since this relatively low percentage does not seem adequately to reflect the influence of the EU in this policy field. More detailed analyses of the structure of claims on agricultural issues will be necessary to clarify this finding. A possible explanation is that many of the

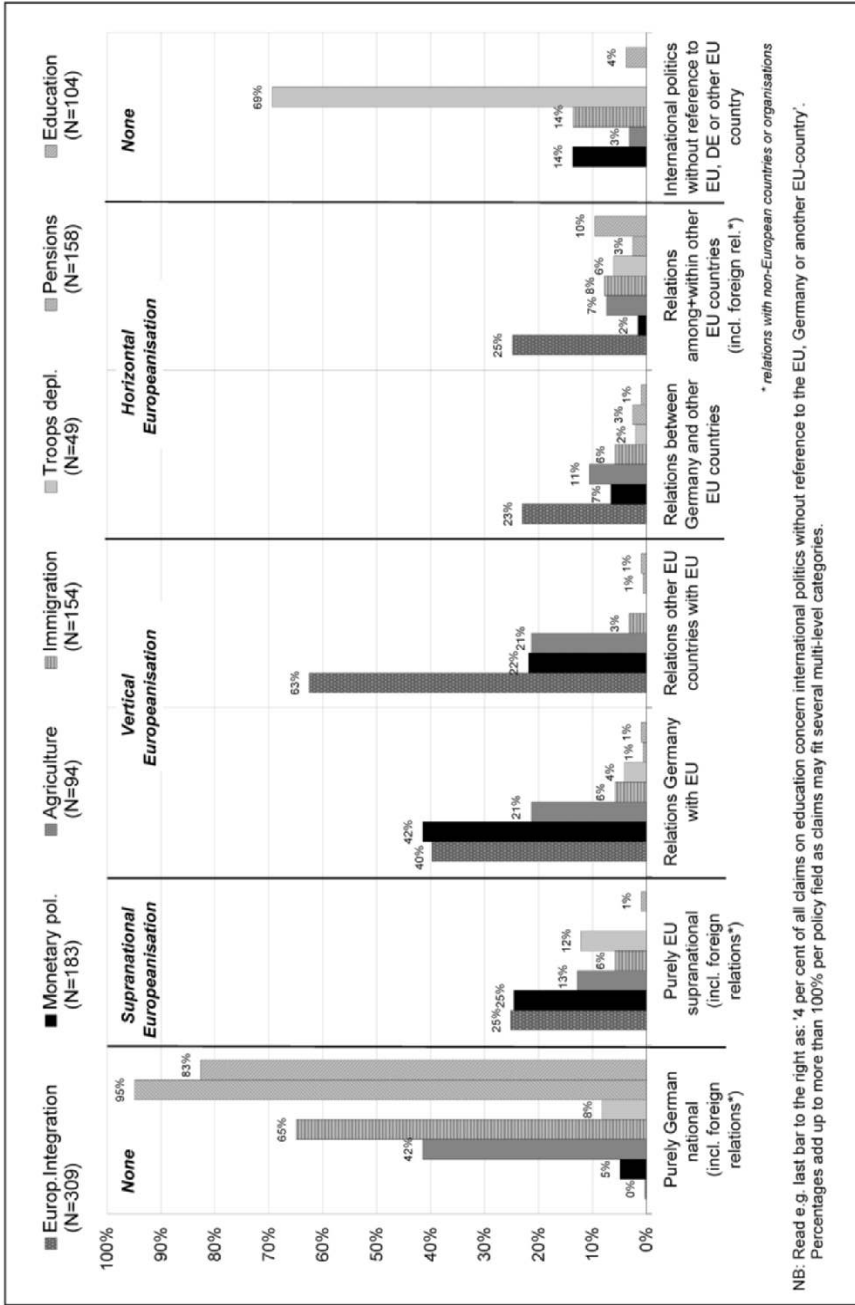


FIGURE 3
Multi-level relations within claims by policy fields

claims involving only the German national level concern the sub-issue of BSE, where the opportunity structures are perhaps less clearly Europeanized than is the case for agricultural subsidies. Another possible explanation is that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is far more intergovernmental than monetary policy. The budget for the CAP is almost exclusively determined by the member state governments. Moreover, the zero-sum, redistributive nature of many policies in the context of the CAP might encourage the use of parochial national frames.⁹

In the other policy fields, the European level plays a more modest role. In descending order, the EU level is referred to in 14% of claims on troop deployment, 9% of those on immigration politics, 3% of those on education, and a mere 1% of claims on pensions and retirement. The lack of strong supranational or vertical forms of Europeanization is in some policy fields partly compensated by significant levels of horizontally Europeanized claims, which refer to debates and policies on these issues in other member states. This is the case in the fields of agriculture (18% of all claims), immigration (14%) and education (11%), where claims referring to other member states are not negligible. However, they tend to take the form of classic foreign news coverage of the politics of other countries, and, except for agriculture, do not often refer to linkages between countries. Moreover, in two of the policy fields (troop deployment and immigration), references to EU member states are less frequent than references to countries or organizations outside the EU, which implies that we must be careful to interpret these findings in terms of Europeanization. Such an interpretation is more convincing in relation to agriculture, pensions, and education politics, where references to EU member states are clearly more frequent than to countries and institutions outside the EU.

Conclusions

In this paper we have developed a systematic approach to Europeanization of the public sphere, which distinguishes three forms of Europeanization of public political communication: (1) *supranationally Europeanized communication*, where European-level institutions and collective actors interact around European themes; (2) *vertical Europeanization* through communicative linkages between the national and the European level, either in the bottom-up variant where national actors address European actors and/or make claims on European issues, or in the top-down variant, in which European actors intervene in national policies and public debates in the name of European regulations and common interests; and (3) *horizontal Europeanization* through communicative linkages between different member states, either in a weak variant where media in one country simply cover debates and contestation in another member state, or in a strong variant where actors from one country explicitly address actors or policies in another member state. On the basis of data collected through political claim analysis in the EUROPUB.COM project, we have analyzed the degree to which these forms of Europeanization are present or absent in the German mass media in the year 2000.

Our results cannot be read as providing unequivocal evidence either for or against the existence of 'a' European or Europeanized public sphere. The answer depends entirely on the policy field one studies. Public contestation in the German media around the meta-issue of European integration quite closely approaches the ideal of a Europeanized public sphere. Actors at the EU level play a significant role in claim making, and actors from other member states appear even more frequently as speakers than German actors.

As a result, the information about the integration process that German newspaper readers receive is clearly not limited to a parochial German view on the issue, and provides ample room for expressions of opinion from European institutions and actors in other member states.

Given the fact that the data analyzed here refer to the situation only one year after the introduction of the euro (and still before its materialization as a tangible currency), it is remarkable how quickly a European frame of reference has come to dominate public communication on monetary politics. This shows that if significant power is transferred to the European level and institutional responsibilities are transparently demarcated, the public discourse in the mass media follows suit. The results on monetary politics suggest that the most important determinant of patterns of mass media coverage is simply where the decision-making power in a policy field is concentrated.

Seen from this perspective, it cannot be taken as evidence of a lack of a Europeanized public sphere that we find only very few claims with European references in policy fields such as education, pensions, and troop deployment. Rather than the result of a general lack of interest of the media in Europe, or of a parochial concentration on national interests, the modest place given to European actors and issues in these fields results from the media fulfilling, rather than failing in, their function to provide the citizenry with an accurate coverage of those actors and issues that matter most.

The two policy fields where there is more reason to have doubts about whether public debates adequately reflect the influence of European institutions and policies, or the interdependencies among member states, are the fields of agriculture and immigration politics. Even though the EU does not yet have many powers in immigration politics, one might have expected more attention to be paid to immigration issues in other member states and to cross-border issues between Germany and other member states. As a result of the opening of the internal EU borders in the context of the Schengen agreement, flows of migration to Germany are no longer independent from other member states' immigration policies. Moreover, enlargement will have important immigration consequences, especially for Germany, which shares long borders with two of the most important accession countries, namely Poland and the Czech Republic. We find these strong interdependencies to be only weakly reflected in the kinds of claims that appear in relation to immigration issues in the German media. Even though the majority of claims in the agriculture field do refer to the European level, and to a lesser extent also to other member states, two-fifths of all claims in this field remain within a purely national frame of reference. Even if some competencies in the field of agricultural have remained at the national level, our suspicion is that these cannot account for such a large percentage of claims. Further analyses will have to show whether this suspicion is correct.

Obviously, for the moment our findings refer only to the German case for the year 2000. Further results from the EUROPUB.COM project will allow us to determine to what degree our results are typical for Germany, or can be generalized to other member states. First results already indicate that in at least some member states, especially the UK, the structure of public communication provides less encouraging signs of the emergence of (field-specific) Europeanized patterns of claim making than is the case in Germany. In addition, the upcoming results from the project will allow us to place our findings in a temporal perspective by way of the inclusion of data for the years 1990, 1995, 2001, and 2002. Since Europeanization, as its name indicates, is a process, the temporal perspective

can help us to resolve some of the indeterminacy in the interpretation of the results presented here. Without a temporal standard of comparison it is not always easy to judge whether a certain level of Europeanized claim making is high or low. Moreover, a longitudinal analysis will allow us to trace the consequences of institutional changes on patterns of public claim making (e.g. pre-euro and post-euro).

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *European Governance and Democracy—What Prospects, Opportunities and Threats* conference, 14–15 November 2002, in Brussels. We thank the conference participants, our colleagues of the 'Political Mobilisation and Communication' Research Group at the WZB, as well as two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.
2. This project is sponsored by the European Commission in the context of its 5th Framework Programme (project number HPSE-CT2001-00046). For an outline, see Koopmans and Statham (2002), available on the project website at <http://europub.wz-berlin.de>
3. For all data presented in this paper, the terms *European* and *EU countries* include both the 15 current members and the 12 countries with whom accession negotiations have been concluded or opened, as they appear in the public debate as (potential) future member states.
4. Within each of the national political spaces, one could of course have drawn additional regional, local, and sectoral political spaces. For the sake of clarity, we have left those out of the picture and treat these subnational spaces as part of the national political space. Another simplification in the figure is that in reality political spaces are not always as well separated as the concentric spheres suggest, but may partially cross-cut and overlap. For instance, there is more than just one European public space, including, apart from the EU, subsets of it (e.g. the euro zone), or larger European political spaces (e.g. signatories to the European Human Rights Convention). Theoretically, of course, it is possible to disentangle these political spaces, and our data make this possible. For the purposes of this paper, however, we have chosen to ignore these relatively marginal deviations and focus on the broader picture.
5. Obviously, many attempts at making public claims never reach the columns of the news media because they fail to pass the media's selection filters. For our research question, however, it is the publicly visible claims that count, since by definition only those that become public can contribute to a Europeanization of public spheres.
6. For each of the two quality newspapers we sample one issue per week, and for the tabloid and regional papers one issue every two weeks. These days are chosen in such a way that for every second day of the year, one newspaper is coded. Because even this turned out to amount to an unmanageable workload, the sample was further reduced on half the days to claims with a European scope in at least one of the scope variables (claimants, addressees, object actors, or issue). For this paper, we only use the days with the full sample ($N = 1051$).
7. The data were produced by eight coders from two teams, at the University of Hohenheim (FAZ, Bild) and Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (SZ, LVZ). We thank Barbara Pfetsch, Silke Adam, and Barbara Berkel of the University of Hohenheim for sharing their data with us.

8. These percentages are obtained by summing all vertical forms and adding those from the mixed category (11% + 10% + 5%), the same goes for the horizontal categories (2% + 1% + 4% + 5%).
9. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting these possible explanations for the differences between the Europeanization of claim making on monetary and agriculture politics.

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