

Segmented Europeanization: Exploring the Legitimacy of the European Union from a Public Discourse Perspective*

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a longitudinal newspaper analysis on the Europeanization of public discourses in five EU countries. It shows that European governance is increasingly subject to public scrutiny, but neither has a common discourse in Europe developed nor has the communication lag of the EU disappeared. Therefore the EU remains largely dependent on domestic processes of legitimation.

Introduction

The notion of the public sphere has come to play an important role in the debate on the European Union's democratic legitimacy. Particularly since the erosion of the 'permissive consensus' and a growing opposition to the EU in

* This paper presents results from the research project 'The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe' directed by Hartmut Wessler at the German Research Foundation's Collaborative Research Centre 597 'Transformations of the State' at the University of Bremen and the International University Bremen. The project was headed by Bernhard Peters until his sudden death in 2005. We are greatly indebted to his ideas and our discussions with him. We thank Ralf Bendrath, Alexander Gattig, Beate Kohler-Koch, Friedhelm Neidhardt, Heinz Rothgang, Steffen Schneider and the anonymous reviewer for helpful comments on earlier drafts. Furthermore, we are greatly indebted to Dennis Niemann, Hans-Gerhard Schmidt, Thorben Köhn and Anne Veghte-Quatravaux for their support while coding the articles.

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the wake of the Maastricht Treaty (see Niedermayer, 1995) and, more recently, the Constitutional Treaty process, the emergence of a communicative infrastructure between the EU and its citizens has become a touchstone for the legitimacy of European governance. Not only has public support for the integration process steadily declined since the beginning of the 1990s, but with the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty by the French and Dutch its absence also created high obstacles for further integration. Eurobarometer surveys show that Europeans are not sufficiently informed about the EU and often feel alienated from decision-making in Brussels. They 'often feel that they themselves have little opportunity to make their voices heard on European issues' (Commission, 2006, p. 5) and tend to see the EU as remote and at the same time too intrusive (Commission, 2001, p. 3).

Against this background, democratic theory suggests that the 'widening gulf between the EU and the people' (Commission, 2001, p. 5) does not result primarily from a lack of formally democratic institutions at the EU level, but from an imbalance between the increasing transfer of political power from European nation-states to the EU on the one hand and the still-national orientation of political debate and opinion formation on the other hand (Gerhards, 2001; Grimm, 1995; Scharpf, 1999). If the transfer of decision-making powers to the EU is not accompanied by a prominent role for EU institutions and policies in public discourses within EU member countries, European integration runs the risk of depriving citizens of a constitutive feature of democracy: the possibility to inform themselves, reason about, scrutinize, criticize and eventually influence policy-making. A related line of argument refers to Europe as a common 'community of communication' (Habermas, 1998) and puts emphasis on the 'horizontal' integration of national public spheres. It states that EU legitimation requires not just the public monitoring of EU governance, but also a common European discourse and some sense of belonging to a common community (Eriksen, 2004; Kielmansegg, 1996; Peters *et al.*, 2005; Peters and Wessler, 2006; Risse, 2003).

The objective of this article is to integrate these normative perspectives into a multi-dimensional model of the Europeanization of public spheres (EPS) and expose them to empirical examination. Based on a public discourse approach it focuses on the public sphere as an arena of communication that is accessible to mass publics rather than as a realm of deliberation or contestation between civil society and state actors. Mass media are able to circulate relevant issues and themes from issue-specific arenas to the general public (Peters *et al.*, 2005). They are by far the most important method by which citizens inform themselves about the EU (Commission, 2004). We therefore consider public discourse as a crucial mechanism for potentially narrowing 'the widening gap between the EU and the people'.

Yet, it is still an open question whether, to what extent and with which quality a transformation of media discourses has taken place in Europe. So far, the debate on the Europeanization of public discourses has focused primarily on the conditions and obstacles for the emergence of a European public sphere.¹ To a large degree, however, it lacks empirical grounding or provides only snapshots of a long-term process. We therefore do not know much about the overall pattern of Europeanization of national public spheres and hardly anything about their long-term development.²

This contribution addresses the empirical desideratum by presenting the results of a quantitative analysis of newspapers in five EU Member States (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Austria and Denmark) over two decades from 1982 to 2003. It is based on a longitudinal, multi-dimensional framework that puts emphasis on the process character of Europeanization and helps to avoid the pitfalls of exaggerating or underplaying the contemporary form and degree of Europeanization. In contrast to other studies that narrow down their focus on EU issues and policies, the cross-sectional analysis gives a broader picture of the development of public spheres and covers all topics of political discourse. This allows us to compare the Europeanization of public spheres with broader forms of transnationalization such as Westernization.

The article proceeds in four parts. Section I elaborates our conceptual framework by distinguishing two dimensions of Europeanization: (1) Monitoring governance, i.e. the focus of domestic debates on EU policy-making; and (2) their discursive integration into a common European discourse. Section II describes how we measure Europeanization. In Section III, the results of our media analysis on the two dimensions of Europeanization are presented by systematically comparing each with other possible patterns of transnationalization, specifically Westernization. Finally, in the conclusion we assess the 'communication deficit' of the EU in the light of our findings.

I. Two Dimensions of Europeanization

Given the absence of a common language and common media system (Schlesinger, 1999), Jürgen Gerhards (1993, 2001) has suggested thinking of the European public sphere not in terms of a unified public sphere, but of the Europeanization of various national public spheres. He thus proposes taking

¹ Eriksen (2004); Eriksen and Fossum (2000); Greven (2000); Grimm (1995); Habermas (1998); Kielmansegg (1996); Peters (1999); Schmalz-Bruns (1999); Trenz and Eder (2004).

² Virtually all empirical studies have narrowed down their analysis of public debates on specific EU issues at a certain point in time (e.g. de Vreese *et al.*, 2001; Kevin, 2003; Law *et al.*, 2000; Meyer 1999, 2005; Risse and van de Steeg 2003; Trenz, 2000, 2004). An exception is the Europub project (Koopmans, 2004).

national public spheres as a starting point for the emergence of a European public discourse. While this approach is now widely accepted among scholars working on this issue, there is still disagreement on how to conceptualize Europeanization. Is the orientation of public discourses towards the EU the crucial indicator, as Gerhards (2001) suggests? Are Klaus Eder and his collaborators right when they claim that a common European 'frame of reference' in domestic EU debates is the benchmark for Europeanization (Eder and Kantner, 2000)? Or should we instead conceive Europeanization in terms of intensified 'discursive interaction' between different countries (van de Steeg, 2000, 2002) or the emergence of a European 'identity light' (Risse, 2003)? Our approach does not attempt to resolve this dispute, but acknowledges that Europeanization and transnationalization in general can take different patterns and qualities. We conceptualize Europeanization as a multi-dimensional and gradual process that in one way or another extends public discourse beyond national spaces.

A central inspiration for our study is the classic work of Karl W. Deutsch (1953) on 'Nationalism and Social Communication'. Deutsch argues that a nation is a political community sustained by intensified communicative interaction. For him, the defining feature of a nation is neither a common language nor shared memories or past history, but the ability of its members 'to communicate more effectively and over a wider range of subjects with members of one large group than with outsiders' (Deutsch, 1953, p. 97). Consequently, Europeanization and transnationalization in general can be understood as a process that enlarges communicative interaction in one way or another beyond national borders. At its core is 'the extension of social spaces, which are constituted by dense transactions beyond national borders without being necessarily global in scope' (Zürn, 2000, p. 187; see also Zürn, 1998).

What does this imply for the Europeanization of public spheres? First, transnationalization can be regarded as a process that enlarges the *scope* of public discourse beyond the territorial state by directing public attention towards the EU. However, transnationalization might also be understood as a more profound transformation characterized by intensified discursive interaction among EU Member States and the emergence of a *common European discourse*. Based on these considerations, we distinguish two dimensions of Europeanization: monitoring governance and discursive integration.

The first dimension, *monitoring governance*, is determined by a growing attention of public discourse to European institutions and policies. It shows whether political decisions taken at the EU level are exposed to the same potential pressure for public justification as domestic policy-making. From a normative point of view, this dimension addresses the question of the extent

to which the EPS endows European citizens with the possibility to inform themselves, reason about and scrutinize EU policy-making, hence it is concerned with 'communicative power' (Habermas) in the European multi-level system. It draws on the widespread assumption that European policy-making dries up societal sources of influence while privileging national executives. Their privileged access to European information, it is argued, opens the way to manipulating domestic policy debates strategically (Moravcsik, 1994; Zürn, 2000). Empirically, we assume that public spheres are more Europeanized the more the EU is visible in public and the more EU policy-making is subject to public debates.

Public monitoring generates parallel universes of EU-focused public debates, but it does not necessarily involve the emergence of a common communicative space across territorial states. It is therefore a segmented form of Europeanization and contributes to the de-borderization of public discourses in terms of 'EUization' rather than broader Europeanization. In contrast, the second dimension, *discursive integration*, is an integrated form of Europeanization. It covers the extent to which the scope of public discourse enlarges not just 'vertically', but also 'horizontally' into a wider (European) public space.³ At its core is the emergence of a common discourse across national borders.

We distinguish two aspects of discursive integration, discursive exchange and collective identification.⁴ The first aspect measures the degree of communicative exchange across national borders. From a normative perspective, it is a crucial prerequisite for the development of a common European opinion formation. It includes into domestic discourse other European opinions and arguments, where they can serve as a point of reference for the formulation of one's own position. In that sense, discursive exchange has been regarded as a mechanism for overcoming national solipsism and self-centredness (Scharpf, 1999, p. 688). From an empirical perspective, however, discursive exchange is less demanding. It grasps to what degree public spheres are open and permeable for opinions, ideas and contributions from other spheres.

The second aspect of discursive integration, collective identification, measures whether 'objective' communicative exchange across national borders is acknowledged by its participants 'subjectively' as a common discourse. It hence defines Europeanization in terms of the emergence of a common transnational 'community of communication' (Habermas). In the literature on

³ A weaker form of integrated Europeanization is the mutual observation of European countries, i.e. articles about political developments in other EU Member States (Brüggemann *et al.*, 2006; Koopmans and Erbe, 2004). For lack of space, we concentrate on discursive exchange as the stronger indicator for integrated Europeanization. Our empirical findings on both indicators show similar results anyway.

⁴ For a broader discussion of discursive exchange and collective identification see Brüggemann *et al.* (2006).

EU legitimacy, the emergence of a common European identity or *demos* is frequently referred to as a necessary precondition for the legitimacy of the EU (Cederman, 2001; Kielmansegg, 1996; Scharpf, 1999; Weiler, 1999; Zürn, 2000). As Thomas Risse (2003, p. 8) rightly has pointed out, however, the transnationalization of public identities does not necessarily presuppose such a ‘thick’ conception of collective identity. At stake is rather ‘identity light’, i.e. ‘some minimum sense of belonging to the same community’ (Risse, 2003). It grasps whether speakers in public discourse argue from a participant’s perspective and acknowledge that the issue discussed concerns ‘us’ as members of a common community (Eder and Kantner, 2000). Collective identification hence tells us whether discursive exchange beyond national borders is acknowledged by its participants as a *common* discourse.

II. Measuring Europeanization

Table 1 gives an overview of how we operationalize our two dimensions of Europeanization. The table shows that the first dimension, monitoring governance, is subdivided into an institutional as well as a policy-related aspect. While the first aspect describes the relevance of EU institutions and actors in domestic debates, the latter shows the degree to which EU policy-making is subject to public scrutiny. The second dimension, discursive integration, includes direct and indirect quotations of foreign actors as an indicator for discursive exchange. For measuring collective identification with Europe, we

Table 1: Two Dimensions of Europeanization

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Research question</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
1. Monitoring Governance		
Visibility of EU institutions	Is the EU regarded as a relevant actor in public debates?	Mentioning of EU institutions
Public attention to EU policy-making	To what degree is EU governance subject to public scrutiny?	EU policy-making as main subject of an article
2. Discursive Integration		
Discursive exchange	To what extent are public spheres permeable for discursive exchange with fellow Europeans?	Direct and indirect quotations from foreign actors
Collective identification	Is a sense of belonging to a common European discourse developing?	‘We’-references

Source: Authors’ own data.

use explicit references of speakers to a common European public as a rough indicator. Hence, we assume that public identities are more Europeanized the more actors explicitly address a European public as 'we Europeans'.⁵

We further differentiate amongst three qualities of Europeanization: the trend and the level of transnationalization as well as its geographical scope.

The *trend* towards transnationalization refers to the process character of Europeanization, to its supposedly growing amplitude. It answers the question: how strong is the development towards the EPS? Following a suggestion by Michael Zürn we measure the trend of Europeanization in relative terms, 'as the extent of cross-border transactions relative to transactions taking place within national borders' (Zürn, 2000, p. 187; see also Zürn, 1998, p. 76). This allows us to assess whether we are actually witnessing a process of Europeanization or rather some other kind of transformation. For example, the increasing attention of the media to EU policy-making might not just be an outcome of Europeanization; it could also be the result of politicization if the media generally report more on (domestic, European or international) policies.

The second quality of transnationalization refers to the *level* of Europeanization already achieved. It answers the question of how relevant the Europeanization of public spheres actually is. We might find a trend towards transnationalization; if it remains on a low level, however, it would hardly amount to a noticeable transformation of public spheres albeit it might do so in the future. Similar to the trend, we assess the level in relative terms by comparing it to the level of domestic references.

The third quality of transnationalization refers to the geographical *scope* of cross-border interconnectedness. It answers the question: are we really observing the Europeanization of public spheres or do transnational communicative exchange and collective identification actually extend beyond Europe into a Western or eventually global public sphere? Assessing the scope helps us to avoid overestimating the effects of the EU on the transformation of public spheres by taking into account that European integration might not be the only possible trigger for the transformation of public spheres. International communication studies show that new technologies of communication, international news agencies and the growing importance of international, often US-based media corporations might as well generate transnational communicative flows, albeit with a global, or rather Western, scope (Held *et al.*, 1999; Beisheim *et al.*, 1999; Boyd-Barrett and Rantanen, 1998).

⁵ There might be also more hidden forms of identifying with a European public, such as references to a common European past or future and the mentioning of common European values (see e.g. Wodak *et al.*, 1998). Analysing them, however, requires elaborate qualitative tools that are beyond a cross-issue quantitative content analysis.

Geopolitical developments such as the end of the Cold War and the threat of international terrorism might further contribute to a growing attention of public discourse to realms beyond the narrower EU-Europe.

We systematically distinguish between two alternative *patterns* of transnationalization: Europeanization and Westernization. If communication within Europe increases, we are witnessing the Europeanization of public spheres. If we find a parallel increase in transatlantic communicative exchange, we have a case of Westernization. We take the USA as a rough indicator for the latter, i.e. quotation of US speakers and we-references to 'the West'.

To examine whether transformations of public spheres display a pattern of Europeanization or rather Westernization, our *data set* is not restricted just to EU articles, but includes articles in the political sections of newspapers covering all topics of political discourse. In contrast to most EPS studies, the analysis is furthermore based on a long-term perspective. It starts in 1982 at the high tide of 'Eurosclerosis' and continues in seven-year steps until 2003.⁶ We therefore can analyse whether relatively high degrees of Europeanism, as they have been found for the year 2000, for instance by Hans-Jörg Trencz (2004), are actually the result of a transformation of public spheres, or rather a permanent feature of public discourse. This helps us to assess whether more European integration – as it has developed with the Common Market, the Maastricht Treaty as well as the common currency – goes hand in hand with the Europeanization of public spheres.

Besides the three 'big' EU Member States of Germany (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*), the United Kingdom (*The Times*) and France (*Le Monde*), our sample includes, Denmark (*Politiken*), also one of the Eurosceptical Nordic states, and Austria (*Die Presse*), a country that joined the EU as a latecomer only in 1995. The focus on quality newspapers is based on the assumption that a transnationalization of discourse is more likely to evolve here than in the regional press, tabloids or television (Pfetsch, 2005). Thus, we assume that if we find no significant trend of Europeanization in quality papers, it will be found even less frequently in the other media.⁷

⁶ For sampling our articles, we used the method of constructed weeks, in which sample dates are stratified by day of the week, i.e. for each year, we sampled all political newspaper articles of two randomly selected Mondays, two Tuesdays and so on (see Riffe *et al.*, 1998). Through this method, we obtained a representative sample of 3,059 discursive articles: *FAZ* 769, *Le Monde* 534, *The Times* 598, *Die Presse* 604 and *Politiken* 554 articles. A reliability test was performed for 100 randomly chosen articles across all eight coders. The test showed satisfactory values for all variables relevant to the analysis: institutions (kappa 0.79), subject of article (kappa 0.75), discursive references (kappa 0.70) and we-references (kappa 0.67).

⁷ In a pre-test, the selected newspapers were compared with quality papers representing the opposite political camp, e.g. *The Guardian* with *The Times*. The test showed that differences for the variables relevant to our analysis are mostly small and insignificant.

Moreover, since we are specifically interested in the Europeanization of *discourse*, the sample encompasses only discursive articles, i.e. articles concentrating on the exchange of arguments and opinions rather than on 'mere' information or 'facts'. This includes editorials and editorial page opinion articles as well as political columns, interviews and contributions from external authors such as intellectuals, politicians or experts, but also a range of other non op-ed articles and pieces which analyse, interpret, argue or justify rather than just 'objectively' report political news. We focus on this discursive part of public communication because we consider it as a primary medium for opinion exchange and formation.

Having elaborated the framework for the analysis, we shall now present the empirical results of the content analysis along the two dimensions established, monitoring governance and discursive integration.

III. Monitoring Governance

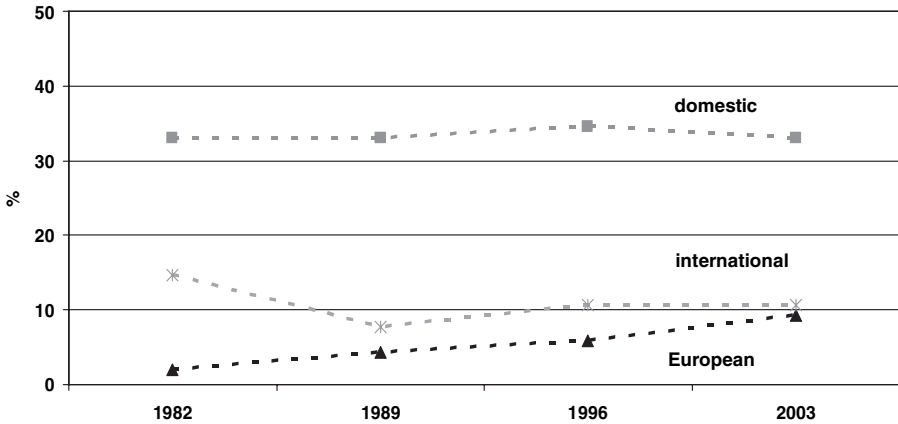
Although the monitoring of EU governance by domestic media is considered a core prerequisite for narrowing the gap between the EU and its citizens, empirical findings are far from providing a coherent picture on the state of this dimension. While Jürgen Gerhards' (2001) findings indicate that public discourses have so far not Europeanized at all, Hans-Jörg Trenz (2004) comes to the conclusion that a European public sphere has already come into existence. Our own empirical results on the long-term development of the EU's salience in five Member States suggest a more careful optimism. We find a robust and statistically significant trend towards Europeanization. In most cases, however, EU policies are embedded in domestic structures of political contestation, while articles monitoring policy-making at the European level still remain on a relatively low level.

We develop our argument by showing, first, that the trend towards Europeanization is (a) robust and (b) of European rather than broader Western or global scope. Secondly, we argue that the extent to which EU governance is effectively monitored remains nevertheless limited and still lags behind the increasing transfer of competences to the EU. Thirdly, we show that the communication lag is persistent in all countries of our sample except France, the forerunner of 'EU-ization'. Finally, we suggest that the communication lag narrows as EU issues become more obtrusive.

The Trend Towards Europeanization

Figure 1 depicts the trend towards Europeanization by comparing articles on EU governance to articles placing domestic or international governance

Figure 1: Governance as Main Subject of Articles



Source: Author's own data, compiled from a representative sample of discursive articles in *FAZ*, *Le Monde*, *Times*, *Presse* and *Politiken* (N = 2,964).

centre stage.⁸ It shows that the share of articles in which EU policy-making is the major subject has steadily increased since the 1980s. Whereas European governance was referred to in the headline or first paragraph of only 2 per cent of all articles in 1982, this share now amounts to 9 per cent. By contrast, the monitoring of international governance has remained rather stable on average. Even major issues in world politics, such as the war in Iraq of 2003, did not permanently draw attention away from the EU in any country except Britain (see below). On the contrary, throughout the years EU articles have on average slightly outstripped those on other foreign policy issues. The trend towards Europeanization is thus remarkably robust even against major international developments such as new threats to international peace and security.

Our second indicator, the visibility of EU institutions in the media, corroborates the finding that public discourses Europeanize rather than Westernize or globalize. Whereas the share of articles mentioning EU institutions has more than doubled since 1982 to now 29 per cent (in 14 per cent EU institutions were the main subject), public attention to other international institutions has fluctuated and effectively fallen below the amount of attention

⁸ Articles on European governance include contributions that refer to policy-making at the EU level in the headline or first paragraph, but not articles that deal predominately with domestic debates on EU policies (see in more detail below). Under the label 'international governance', we subsume articles focusing on international relations and foreign policies, such as debates in the UN Security Council and the like, but not all kinds of political coverage on other countries such as, for instance, controversies among US actors on the 'war on terror'.

paid to the EU. NATO as the transatlantic institution *per se* serves as a good indicator for the absence of a trend towards the Westernization of public spheres. Compared to the EU, it has gradually fallen into public oblivion and is mentioned in only 5 per cent of all articles on average. Other international institutions such as the OECD and the WTO are far less visible. Even the UN (8 per cent on average), which experienced rising relevance in the course of the US-led intervention in Iraq in 2003, still attracted far less attention than the EU.

The Lag of Monitoring EU Governance

Given the relatively high visibility of the EU in public discourse, Trezn argues that it is 'difficult to uphold the thesis of a persistent communication deficit of the EU' (Trezn, 2004, p. 311). In contrast, our findings on the level of monitoring EU governance suggest that the communication deficit still exists – although the media pay increasing attention to the EU. Like EU institutions, EU policies are frequently mentioned, in more than every fifth article in 2003. Yet, it is not just quantity that counts, but also quality, i.e. the way in which the EU is discussed in the media. We find that EU policies are mostly referred to as intervening factors for domestic matters, or represented as just marginal topics rather than issues of EU politics and policy-making.⁹ For instance, an article about the euro might focus on the impact of the common currency on domestic spending or touch upon its effects on the national economy without referring to political developments at the EU level. Such Europeanized articles are certainly an indicator for the increasing relevance of Europe in domestic discourses. Since they remain predominantly domestically oriented, however, they do not contribute much to reducing the lack of public information about political decision-making at the European level and hence the 'publicity deficit' of the EU.

In contrast, articles focusing explicitly on European policy-making and 'politymaking' (i.e. institutional reforms and the constitutional process) currently make up not even a tenth of media discourses on average and in most countries just about 5 per cent. The level of monitoring EU governance displayed in Figure 1 therefore remains much lower than the degree of public scrutiny at the domestic level. Compared to the legislative output of the EU, which is on average higher than the number of acts passed by the British parliament and about half as high as the number of German acts, public attention to EU policy-making still lags behind the transfer of decision-making

⁹ Technically, the coders were instructed to code the major subject of an article strictly according to the way in which the issue was framed. Thus, the code 'EU politics' was only used for articles in which EU policy-making and 'politymaking' were the main issues. If the article instead focused on the impact of the EU on domestic policies, it was marked with the respective thematic code. Regardless of the major subject, the coders furthermore coded all instances in which a specific EU policy field was mentioned.

power to the European level.¹⁰ As a rough indicator for the degree of public scrutiny, we compared the (annualized) number of EU articles to the annual number of European directives and British and German acts. The results show that European legislation is increasingly observed by the media, but still much less exposed to public scrutiny than domestic legislation. In the 1980s, one directive corresponded to not even two articles per newspaper on average and public attention just kept pace with the growing number of directives. In the post-Maastricht era, by contrast, EU legal activities have slowed down and fluctuated, while the Europeanization of public discourses further increased. Consequently, the number of EU articles per directive has increased to more than six today. However, public scrutiny on EU policy-making is still significantly lower than on domestic governance. In Britain an average of 31 articles per act focus on domestic governance and even in Germany the number of articles per act (11) is nearly twice as high as now in the EU, despite the much higher legislative output of the *Bundestag*. Likewise, the much greater and further-reaching competences of the EU compared to other international institutions have so far not resulted in a more pronounced focus on the EU as compared to these other institutions of international governance. Instead, the media still pay somewhat less attention to EU governance than to international governance (Figure 1).

Also when taking into account different policy areas, we find that the public monitoring of EU governance reflects the degree of centralization achieved in the European integration process only partly. As early as the beginning of the 1990s, there was hardly any policy area in which the EU did not have at least some competences (Schmitter, 1996; Schmidt, 1999). The Data Handbook on the German *Bundestag* shows that meanwhile between 19 per cent (home affairs) and 69 per cent (agriculture and consumer protection) of all acts are designed exclusively or partly to implement EU legislation (Feldkamp with Ströbel, 2005, p. 601).¹¹ Yet, even if we take into account Europeanized articles, i.e. articles just mentioning the EU, public debates reflect the decision-making powers and influence of the EU only to some extent. Of the overall low number of articles on agriculture and consumer protection, just about a fifth refer in one way or another to the EU; in the area

¹⁰ Between 1988 and 2002 the Council adopted 64 directives per year on average. During the same period, the British House of Commons passed 50 acts per year on average and the German parliament 130. We are very grateful to Andreas Maurer for making available his data on the EU legal output to us and updating them for our purposes; see also Maurer and Wessels (2003). For the number of British acts see: <<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts.htm>>. The number of German acts is calculated from Feldkamp with Ströbel (2005, pp. 860–61).

¹¹ The figures refer to the election period 1998 to 2002. It should be noted, however, that not all subject areas are listed in the handbook; for instance, education and defence are lacking. To our knowledge, reliable data for other countries are not available.

of economic and financial policies, 29 per cent of all articles mention the EU – although, for example, 43 per cent of all German acts in this policy field implement European legislation.

Thus, although the public lag in the EU has narrowed since the 1990s, it certainly has not disappeared. Instead, the transfer of competencies to the European level still tends to remove policy-making from the public sight, though to a considerably lesser degree than 20 years ago. Overall, the discrepancy between the high share of articles mentioning the EU and the much lower share of articles focusing explicitly on European governance suggests that EU policies mostly receive public attention when EU decisions have already been taken and their domestic consequences are at stake. The communication deficit of the EU is therefore not characterized by a general lack of attention to the EU, but by the predominantly domestic orientation of public discourses. In most cases, EU policies become an issue when they ‘hit home’. They are embedded in domestic structures of political contestation, while their formulation, negotiation and adoption at the European level is far less subject to public scrutiny.

The French Forerunner in ‘EU-ization’

Our finding of a trend towards Europeanization with limited effects on the lag of monitoring EU governance is corroborated by the country comparison. Notwithstanding country-specific attention cycles, the visibility of the EU, as well as its observation have significantly increased since the 1980s in all countries included in the sample (see Table 2). Again, however, we find that growing attention to the EU does not necessarily narrow the gap between the EU and its citizens. In Austria, the EU accession of the country in 1995 fuelled debates in *Die Presse* about EU policies, but did not result in a higher share of articles focusing on European governance. In Germany, too, the challenge of legitimating (or de-legitimating) EU policies remains predominantly a domestic matter. Despite a clear Europeanization trend, the monitoring of EU governance in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* is still comparatively weak. The same holds true for Britain, where attention to EU politics peaked with the BSE crisis in 1996 – without a lasting effect on the level of Europeanization. Although essential issues such as the European Constitutional Treaty and enlargement were on the political agenda of the EU in 2003, not even four *Times* articles per constructed week focused on political developments at the European level. Although initially weak as well, the monitoring of EU governance in the Danish *Politiken* has meanwhile increased more than in most other countries. The level achieved is still somewhat lower than the average, however.

Table 2: Articles Focusing on EU Governance or Mentioning EU Policies (in %)

		1982	1989	1996	2003	mean
<i>FAZ</i> (D)	EU governance	2.5	3.5	3.9	6.3	4.0
	EU mentioned	6.9	7.5	12.9	15.9	10.7
<i>Le Monde</i> (F)	EU governance	3.2	9.7	6.4	22.0	11.4
	EU mentioned	16.7	24.3	27.3	36.9	27.2
<i>The Times</i> (GB)	EU governance	1.4	4.3	10.9	4.5	5.2
	EU mentioned	5.6	15.4	21.7	14.3	14.2
<i>Die Presse</i> (A)	EU governance	0.8	4.5	3.2	4.5	3.4
	EU mentioned	2.5	8.3	20.8	22.4	14.2
<i>Politiken</i> (DK)	EU governance	1.7	1.4	5.2	8.4	4.3
	EU mentioned	10.9	20.8	12.7	19.4	16.3
Total	EU governance	2.0	4.3	5.8	9.2	5.5
	EU mentioned	8.3	14.3	18.7	21.8	16

Source: Authors' own data.

Notes: All articles in the sample ($n = 2,964$, with *FAZ* 721, *Le Monde* 507, *Times* 598, *Presse* 586 and *Politiken* 552). The table shows that for instance in the German *FAZ* 6.3 per cent of all articles in 2003 focused on EU governance as main subject; 15.9 per cent of all articles mentioned EU policies (either as main subject or a side topic).

As a notable exception, only France has managed to catch up with the development of European decision-making. A remarkable boost in the monitoring of EU governance in 2003 has pushed France far ahead of all other countries and turned it into a forerunner of 'EU-ization'. Today every fifth contribution in *Le Monde* focuses on EU politics. Partly, this boost was related to topical events, particularly the European Convention, which was directed by the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and followed by the French press more attentively than by the other European media. However, *Le Monde* is also the only newspaper in our sample with a regular EU page in 2003, published several times a week. Although it remains to be seen whether the Europeanization of French discourse will continue on the same level after the termination of the constitutional process, findings by others indicate as well that French media are among the most Europeanized, though usually with less distance to other countries (Pfetsch, 2005; Koopmans, 2004; Trenz, 2004).

Obtrusiveness as a Driving Force for Europeanization

What accounts for the Europeanization trend? Andrew Moravcsik has argued that any effort to expand public engagement in EU governance is doomed to failure because EU policies generally 'lack salience in the minds of European voters' (Moravcsik, 2002, p. 615). Our findings show that this indeed holds

true for EU issues such as the removal of non-tariff barriers, technical regulations in the area of agriculture or environmental protection and even redistributive structural funds. However, the French case also illustrates that European governance still provides sufficient triggers for public attention to catch up with EU policy-making. We find that public debates focus particularly on issues related to core functions of the nation-state.

Hence, the degree of Europeanization seems to be determined by the kind of EU issues rather than by their occasional 'scandalization' (Trenz, 2000). Whereas the BSE crisis had no lasting effect on the monitoring of EU governance, we find that the media in all countries focus particularly on issues that touch upon core competences of Member States and their monopoly on public spending and defence (Zürn and Leibfried, 2005). They include the euro with the related Maastricht limitations on public spending. Notably, the common foreign and defence policy is frequently at issue, too, despite the relatively weak EU competences in this area. Particularly in 2003, debates on the EU furthermore focused on issues of EU polity-building such as the constitutional process as well as enlargement. As a core area of European integration, the common market also plays an important role, though with decreasing relevance.¹²

Overall, then, the attention pattern of public discourses only partly coincides with the decision-making power of the EU. Rather than following the growth of EU competences, the media focus on the EU as an intruder into statehood. Viewed from this angle, the fact that the monitoring of EU governance lags behind the transfer of responsibilities to Brussels is not a matter of generally lacking salience, but of infringement intensity or obtrusiveness. The more the EU has touched upon core functions of the state such as defence, public spending and polity issues, the more it has been in the focus of public debates.¹³ Notwithstanding the fact that other factors such as prominence, as in the case of the French debate on the Convention process, play a role as well, our findings suggest that we might witness a disproportionate increase in public attention to EU politics the more the EU intrudes into core state functions.

So far, however, our analysis on the dimension of monitoring governance leads to the conclusion that the communication lag hypothesis is still valid –

¹² The share of EU articles referring to the policy areas mentioned ranges between 28 per cent and 39 per cent on average (multiple coding was possible). Among all articles their share is between 3.2 per cent and 4.1 per cent, while all other EU policy areas remain below 1.7 per cent.

¹³ Particularly in the areas of polity-making and the common foreign and defence policy, the prominent role of Member State governments might further have contributed to the relatively high salience of these issues in the press. However, we do not find that intergovernmental governance is in general monitored more closely than supranational governance. For instance, immigration and asylum policies are referred to in only 3.7 per cent of all EU articles until 2003.

despite a clear and robust Europeanization trend. With the notable exception of the French forerunner, the level of public monitoring of EU governance is relatively low in all examined countries and has not (yet) caught up with the transfer of decision-making power to the EU. Policy-making at the European level is therefore still less exposed to public scrutiny than domestic policy-making.

IV. Discursive Integration

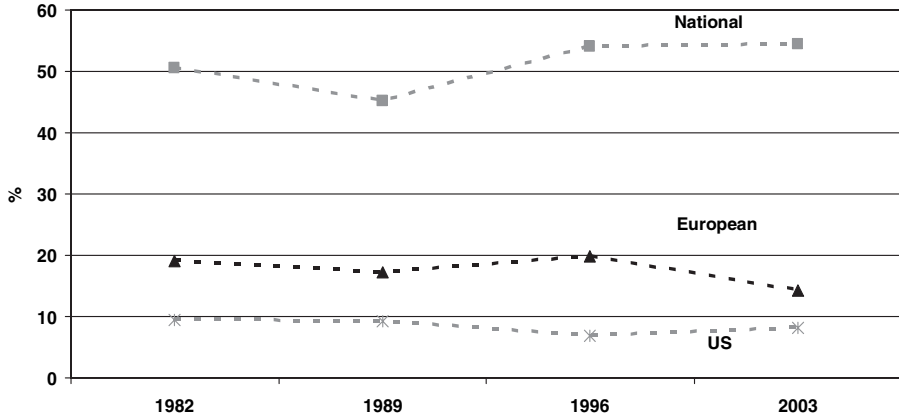
In contrast to the 'vertical' orientation towards Brussels entailed in the monitoring of EU governance, the dimension of discursive integration highlights the 'horizontal' development of the EPS. It focuses on the cross-border flow of opinions and arguments and tells us to what extent public debates in the Member States are integrated into a common discourse. As an indicator for the 'objective' aspect of discursive integration, we use *discursive references*, i.e. direct and indirect quotations. Since we are specifically interested in public opinion exchange rather than mere information provision, we take into account only quotations of at least two consecutive sentences, which offer speakers the chance to give at least some kind of basic justification for their position. The 'subjective' aspect of discursive integration, collective identification, is measured by references to a common European 'we'.

The Lacking Influence of European Integration

In contrast to the monitoring of EU governance, the distribution of discursive references shows no *trend* whatsoever (see Figure 2). There is neither a development towards Europeanization nor towards Westernization. Instead, the share of European speakers is relatively stable at 17 per cent on average, with a recent decrease in 2003.¹⁴ US speakers range around 8 per cent, whereas the percentage of discursive references to domestic speakers dropped significantly in 1989 and rose again in the 1990s. In order to explain these ups and downs, we might look at the agenda of world politics rather than at the continuous development of EU integration. In 1989 and 2003, major international events such as the fall of Communism and the US-led attack against Iraq dominated the scene. The latter in particular drew attention away from European speakers to actors in the Middle East, mainly Iraq and Israel, but did not result in a Westernization of public discourses. Instead, the US as leader

¹⁴ Although we are primarily interested in discursive exchange among EU Member States, we defined Europe as Western Europe for pragmatic reasons. In contrast to the changing shape of EC/EU Europe, this allows us to work with a stable concept of Europe throughout the whole period of analysis. Our choice has no effect on the (lacking) trend of Europeanization and only a minor effect on its level – amounting to a deviation of 5 per cent in 1982 and narrowing to 3 per cent in 1996 and 2003.

Figure 2: Distribution of Discursive References



Source: Author’s own compilation of discursive references in a representative sample of discursive articles in *FAZ, Le Monde, Times, Presse* and *Politiken* (N = 2640).

of the ‘coalition of the willing’ was mostly an object of debates in Europe rather than subject in a deepening transatlantic discourse.

In contrast, the integration of Europe has never influenced the scope of public discourses in the same way. The accession of Spain, Portugal, Finland, Austria or Sweden has not triggered significantly more discursive exchange with those countries. Their observation, as measured by the share of articles focusing on those countries as main subject, did not increase either (see in more detail Brüggemann *et al.*, 2006). The same holds true for the latest newcomers. Only Poland received somewhat more attention in 2003 than in the 1990s.

Considering the overall *level* of discursive references, we find no strong indications for a distinct European discourse either. With only about half of all discursive references related to speakers of one’s own country, public discourses are characterized by a remarkable openness to the outside world (see Figure 2). But they tend to enlarge into the wider world rather than limiting themselves to Europe. With 17 per cent, European neighbours make up just about half the share of all foreign speakers. Only in the small segment of public debates on EU governance, European actors frequently contribute to the public opinion exchange in their neighbouring countries. Their opinions and arguments are referred to in more than every third EU article. In EU debates, also actors of European institutions, mainly the Commission, have a chance to express their point of view. Though largely neglected as speakers otherwise, they are quoted in 12 per cent of all EU articles, but only in 1.4

per cent of all other articles. Not surprisingly, a distinct European opinion exchange is thus found only in those 5.5 per cent of articles that embed EU issues in European rather than domestic structures of political contestation.

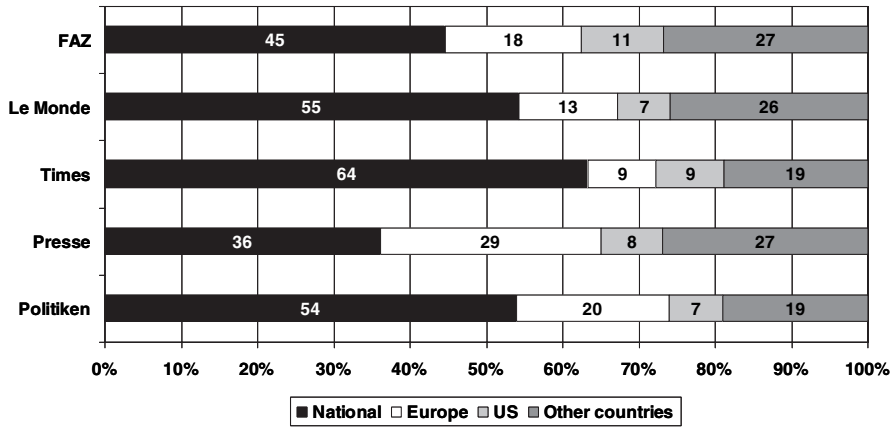
Neither Inclusive Nor Common: Missing a European Discourse

Our results furthermore show that transnational discursive exchange is of lower quality than domestic opinion exchange. It is neither as inclusive as domestic debates nor does it amount to a common European discourse. Instead, European and other foreign speakers included in domestic opinion exchange are predominantly state actors (see also della Porta and Caiani, 2006; Koopmans, 2004). While national executives and politicians make up just half of all speakers in domestic discourses, alongside experts and intellectuals, interest groups and ordinary citizens, they have nearly a monopoly on 'voice' in EU articles (80 per cent). Moreover, despite the normative claim that public debates in an integrated Europe should represent the opinions of all fellow Europeans equally, the media rather follow a realist approach: they concentrate on the most powerful countries (see also Wu, 2000). With on average 8 per cent of all articles quoting US actors, the global superpower is by far the most frequent subject of opinion exchange in all newspapers of our sample. Among European countries, too, discursive exchange is narrowed down to the most powerful players, namely the UK, Germany and France. While each of them accounts for about 3 per cent of all discursive references, actors from smaller European powers hardly ever make it into the public discourse of their neighbours.

Our second indicator of discursive integration, collective identification, shows that the discursive exchange beyond national borders can hardly be called a *common discourse*. Measured by the rough indicator of how the term 'we' is used in public discourse, we find that one's own nation plays by far the most important role (40 per cent of all 'we's' on average). By contrast, identification with a common European public is much lower; it has grown from virtual non-existence at the beginning of the 1980s to a small share of now 5 per cent of all we-references.¹⁵ So far, however, this hardly indicates a transformation of public identities. Rather, our findings suggest that indications for a European community of communication found in specific identity-related topics – like the debate about the right-wing extremist Jörg Haider joining the Austrian government – are largely isolated phenomena (Risse and van de Steeg, 2003). Despite the steady flow of arguments and opinions

¹⁵ Identification with 'the West' remains even below, with a share of 1 per cent. In order to avoid narrowing down the relations between national and transnational collective identifications to a zero-sum relation, we coded all instances of 'we' in an article, including references to specific entities such as 'we, the government' or 'we, the employers' (see in more detail Brüggemann *et al.*, 2006).

Figure 3: Distribution of Discursive References per Country



N: all discursive references in the sample (2640)

Source: Authors' own data.

across national borders, EU issues continue to be debated mostly from a national rather than a European perspective in the sense that they concern ‘us’ as members of a common community.

Overall, the transformation of public spheres in Europe thus follows a pattern of *segmented Europeanization* rather than integrated Europeanization. While European integration in all countries has fuelled the monitoring of EU governance at least to some extent, during the last two decades it has made no difference for the degree of discursive exchange with their European partners and has so far not amounted to a common European discourse. Instead, we find that the level of discursive integration is determined by country-specific factors. Small states and countries with a highly Europeanized state identity are significantly more attentive to the opinions of their fellow Europeans than more powerful European players with an unchallenged nation-state legacy.

The More Powerful the Less Integrated: Country-Specific Patterns of Discursive Exchange

The distribution of discursive references in Figure 3 shows that besides Germany the two small countries in our sample are the most inclusive to European speakers.¹⁶ As by far the most Europeanized newspaper, *Die Presse* takes the opinions of fellow Europeans into account in more than every fourth

¹⁶ The number of European we-references is too low to allow for a more detailed country-specific analysis. It ranges between 6 and 11 we-references per newspaper for the whole period analysed.

article, including articles not focused on EU governance. Although Danish political discourse is generally less outward-oriented, the greater exposure of small states to European economic and political developments (Branner, 2000) is also in *Politiken* reflected by an above-average share of European speakers. By contrast, countries capable of shaping the rules of the European game such as Britain and France are significantly less oriented towards their European partners.

The British press proves to be the 'most parochial voice' in Europe with a remarkable ignorance for speakers from the European continent (Pfetsch 2005, p. 11). Particularly in debates focusing on topics other than EU governance, they make up only 6 per cent of all cited speakers. When taking into account Europeanized articles, the British discourse, too, is 'to a large extent an internal debate among British actors *about* Europe, rather than a genuinely Europeanized debates *among* European actors' (Koopmans, 2004, p. 20). Only in the small number of articles focusing on EU governance, British solipsism gives way to the emergence of a European discourse including 60 per cent European speakers. With only 3 per cent of EU articles also giving actors of EU institutions a change to justify their positions, the distance to Brussels nevertheless remains vital.

Notwithstanding its somewhat stronger European orientation, French discourse also reveals one of the most segmented patterns of Europeanization. European speakers do not play an important role, whether in articles on domestic or foreign matters, or in debates on EU governance. Despite its role as a forerunner of 'EU-ization', *Le Monde* has actually the lowest share of EU articles with discursive references to fellow Europeans (22 per cent). EU governance is thus largely debated from the point of view of *La Grande Nation* rather than from a broader European perspective. In sharp contrast, the 'tamed power' in Europe, Germany, is both generally more outward-oriented and highly attentive to the opinions of its fellow Europeans (Katzenstein, 1997). Nearly 80 per cent of all European discursive references are concentrated in articles on EU governance. The Europeanness of Germany and its post-Second World War culture of exercising political power only in multi-lateral, institutionally mediated systems such as the EU, which soften sovereign power, has often been described (Katzenstein, 1997; Banchoff, 1999). In the public sphere, it finds expression in the tendency of Germans to listen carefully to the arguments of their European partners and to take them into account when formulating their own positions.

Thus, instead of a common European discourse, country differences have ushered in a differential pattern of discursive exchange in Europe. Whereas Britain and France are characterized by highly segmented patterns of Europeanization, European speakers are included more often into domestic

discourse in the small countries and the ‘tamed power’ Germany.¹⁷ Their greater vulnerability and attentiveness to external factors has not resulted in a more careful monitoring of EU governance, though. Not surprisingly, in all countries discursive exchange within Europe is most developed in the small share of articles debating EU policy-making and politymaking. Not in a single case, however, European integration has strengthened the exchange of opinions among the Member States during the last two decades.

Conclusion

Our longitudinal analysis of media discourses in five EU Member States yields important insights into the question of whether, to what extent and with which quality a transformation of public spheres has taken place in Europe. It shows, first, that public discourses have responded to the democratic challenges of European integration with a pattern of segmented Europeanization. Secondly, it reveals that the impact of European integration on the transformation of public spheres is limited and should not be overstated. Finally, our findings suggest that the communication lag of European governance still exists and, except in France, has narrowed only to some extent. Therefore, the EU remains largely dependent on domestic processes of legitimation.

Table 3 summarizes our results on the two dimensions of Europeanization by contrasting, for each of its indicators, the trend and level of Europeanization with Westernization. The strength and direction (positive/negative) of the

Table 3: Trends and Levels of Transnationalization

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Europeanization</i>		<i>Westernization</i>	
		<i>Trend</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Trend</i>	<i>Level</i>
Monitoring Governance	Visibility of the EU/IOs	8.2	33%	0.4	13%
	Focus on policy-making	7.0*	16%	-2.8	33%
Discursive Integration	Discursive Exchange	-3.7	34%	-2.0	16%
	Collective Identification	3.8*	7%	-0.1	3%

Source: Author’s own data.

Notes: Europeanization: values refer to EU institutions, EU policy-making, discursive and ‘we’ references relative to national ones. Westernization: values refer to international organization and policy-making, ‘we’ references to the West as well as transatlantic discursive references excluding the EU, all relative to the respective national values. Trend: slope parameter of regression line (OLS regression) in comparison to national development with * $p < 0.05$. Level: share relative to national politics/references.

¹⁷ Although our country sample is too small to test general hypotheses, in analytical terms, it suggests that a country’s international power position is the independent variable, while cultural factors are intervening factors.

trends is calculated in relation to the domestic development. In a similar fashion, the level of transnationalization is to be understood as the share of the transnational value of a variable relative to the respective national value.¹⁸ The table shows that a statistically significant trend towards the transnationalization of national public spheres occurs only in the first dimension, monitoring governance. Here we find a robust process of Europeanization that is not part of a general trend of Westernization. By contrast, the dimension of discursive integration displays no clear-cut development. The indicator of discursive exchange is marked by a slightly negative trend related to the war on Iraq. As for the indicator of collective identification, we find a weak development towards the emergence of a European community of communication, albeit at a very low level. As mentioned, it would therefore be premature to conclude that a common European discourse has already developed.

In a nutshell, we find a Europeanization of public spheres in the sense that the EU increasingly plays a role in media debates; but despite their remarkable openness to the outside world, public spheres are so far not integrated into a distinct European discourse that is acknowledged as a common discourse by its participants. Therefore, the overall pattern of transnationalization emerging from our data is one of *segmented Europeanization*. Only in the narrow segment of articles that focus on EU politics, European issues are discussed more often as matters of common concern. In most cases, however, EU issues remain embedded in domestic structures of political contestation and identification.

What accounts for the pattern of segmented Europeanization? Our findings suggest that it has developed out of the differential impact of European integration on the two dimensions. The increasing monitoring of EU policy-making is fuelled by the generally growing importance of the EU and more particularly the increasing obtrusiveness of EU issues (see also Gerhards, 2001). As elaborated above, the media tend to focus on the EU as an intruder into statehood. The more it has touched upon core competences of European nation-states such as defence and (indirectly) public spending, the more EU governance has been at the centre of public debates. Our findings on discursive exchange suggest, however, that the role of European integration for the transformation of public spheres should not be overstated. Instead of European integration, discursive transnationalization is influenced rather by geopolitical developments such as the war on Iraq. Furthermore, its continuously high level corresponds to broader developments in the OECD world such as new technologies of communication and information and the growing

¹⁸ For instance, EU policy-making is at issue in about 5 per cent of all articles on average and domestic governance in 33 per cent; therefore the ratio has a value of 16 per cent.

importance of international media corporations (for figures see Beisheim *et al.*, 1999). European public spheres are influenced by these developments at least as much as by European integration.

Moreover, our results have important consequences for the question that is at the heart of much of the discussion on the Europeanization of public spheres: is there a communication deficit in the EU? The analysis shows that the lag between the growing decision-making power at the European level and its public monitoring has narrowed, but certainly not disappeared. Due to a corps of now more than 1,000 journalists accredited in Brussels (Bastin, 2004, p. 18) – more than at the White House and the UN (Meyer, 2003, p. 240) – the EU is increasingly visible in public debates. Yet, with the notable exception of the French forerunner of ‘EU-ization’, public discourses reflect the far-reaching competences of the EU only partly and have not fully caught up with the increasing legislative output of European governance. The media predominately pay attention to EU policies when they hit home and their domestic consequences are at issue, while their formulation and negotiation at the European level is often neglected. Research by Barbara Pfetsch (2005) furthermore suggests that the communication lag is even greater in tabloids and the regional press than in the quality newspapers analysed in this study. From the angle of democratic theory, therefore, the current pattern of Europeanization entails severe limits for the legitimation potential of the EPS.

If European policy-making is only rarely embedded in processes of public scrutiny and justification, the EU does not just appear as ‘undemocratic’ but also lacks its own resources for justifying its decisions. Instead of having its own voice in public discourses, it still largely depends on the legitimation by domestic actors – and is vulnerable to de-legitimation. Domestic actors might justify EU policies, but they might as well increase public discontent by directing protest against European institutions (Scharpf, 2004, p. 19). Due to the pronounced consensus orientation of EU governance, this might not cause much of a problem in the routine mode of everyday EU policy-making (Moravcsik, 2002). Yet, consensus orientation does not necessarily translate effectively into a low need for legitimation. The findings of the Europub project reveal that European integration, though still evaluated positively on balance, has become significantly more contested in public discourses during recent years (Koopmans, 2004). The rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty by its constituents despite the consensus-oriented Convention process is a case in point. Efficiency problems resulting from compliance crises are more frequent. They occur when Member States persistently refuse to implement EU law into domestic legislation.

Taking the BSE crisis as an example, Michael Zürn and Jürgen Neyer (2005, pp. 201–2) argue that compliance crises are fuelled by the segmentation

of public spheres. They can occur if domestic actors mobilize in the media against EU policies as a matter of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Under conditions of segmentation, where EU issues are debated predominantly from (opposing) national perspectives rather than as a common European problem, the struggle over EU issues is likely to result in ‘public disturbance’ and lasting non-compliance with EU law (Zürn and Neyer, 2005). The lack of a common European discourse thus seems to aggravate the legitimation problem of the EU; it sets limits not just on the input legitimacy of the EU in the sense of democratic processes of opinion exchange and formation, but also on its output legitimacy in the sense of efficient problem-solving.

Overall, our findings suggest that the segmented Europeanization of public spheres provides the EU only with limited legitimation resources. The EU still largely depends on domestic legitimation mechanisms, which have their limits where EU policies become contested among domestic actors and where domestic governments are not willing to act on behalf of the EU and legitimize such policies. Thus, the domestic orientation of public debates on the EU has not hollowed out the legitimation of European nation-states (see also Hurrelmann *et al.*, 2005), but it has not increased the legitimation potential of the EU either.

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