

David Tréfás/Jens Lucht (Eds.)

Europe on Trial

European History and Public Spheres

edited by Thomas Lindenberger

Volume 5

European History and Public Spheres, edited by Thomas Lindenberger and published with Studienverlag/Innsbruck and Transaction publisher/New Brunswick, N. J., is a book series from the Vienna based Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres. The international non-university research institute is a part of the Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft, one of Austria's most important foundations for the advancement of Medical Science, Social Science, and Humanities. The institute aims to contribute to the development of a multifaceted and transnational historiography of contemporary Europe through cooperative research projects on themes as diverse as the remembrance of migration, the Cold War experience and its public representations, and conflicted memory cultures in contemporary Europe.

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Europe on Trial

Shortcomings of the EU with regard
to democracy, public sphere, and identity

StudienVerlag

Innsbruck
Wien
Bozen

Published with the support of Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft GmbH, Austria

© 2010 by Studienverlag Ges.m.b.H., Erlenstraße 10, A-6020 Innsbruck
e-mail: order@studienverlag.at
Internet: www.studienverlag.at

Corporate design by Kurt Höretzeder
Layout: Studienverlag/Christian Sonnewend, www.madeinheaven.at
Cover: Studienverlag/Judith Eberharter

Distributed in North America and South America and the rest of the world excluding Austria, Germany and Switzerland by: Transaction Publishers, Rutgers – the State University, 35 Berrue Circle, Piscataway, New Jersey, 08854-8042, USA, www.transactionpub.com

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek. Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-7065-4861-8

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Katharina Kleinen-von Königslöw

Europe for the People?

The Europeanization of Public Spheres in the Tabloid Press¹

The European Union has often been accused of being an elitist project, disconnected from the interests of the majority of its citizens, pushed forward by political and economic elites who could for a long time depend on the “permissive consensus” i.e. the disinterest of the larger public on the question of European Integration. A similar accusation could also be laid at the door of the academic researchers working in the European public sphere: the theoretical discussion of this concept was advanced by and has remained closely linked to Jürgen Habermas², whose idealistic vision of a public sphere has traditionally been criticized for its elite bias.³ At the same time, with a few notable exceptions, empirical research into the European public sphere has concentrated its efforts on the quality press. Here different research projects have been able to detect the nascence of a European public sphere, whether in the sense of a growing interest in the institutions and decisions of the European Union, or by discovering a synchronization of the political debate in different European countries. But, what about the majority of the citizens? What about the European masses who, for the most part, do not participate in the public debate of the quality press, neither as active speakers nor as passive readers? Even if the Irish people have now revised their original rejection of the Lisbon treaty in 2008, politicians and researchers alike cannot afford to ignore the opinions, life worlds and information sources of the ‘common people’ on the question of the European Union. It therefore has become crucial to know whether, beyond the limited audience of the quality press, the Europeans participate in something resembling a European public sphere. And if some traces of a European public sphere can be discovered in the tabloid press, how do these differ in their treatment of the EU and the European community of nations? How might these differences in turn affect the European project?

1 This article presents results from the research project “The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe” directed by Andreas Hepp at the German Research Foundation’s Collaborative Research Centre 597 “Transformations of the State” at the University of Bremen and Jacobs University (former project heads were Hartmut Wessler (2005-2007) and Bernhard Peters (2003-2005)). The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the other members of the project team, Michael Brüggemann, Swantje Lingenberg and Johanna Möller. In addition we are greatly indebted to Monika Elsler, Daniela Marinas, Michal Palacz, Samuel Rothenpieler, Simon Rötter and Monika Sowinska for their support while coding the articles of the new sample.

2 Grimm 1995, Habermas 1998.

3 Fraser 1992, 2007.

For the past six years our research project at the Collaborative Research Centre Transformations of the State (University of Bremen/Jacobs University) has been investigating “The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe”.⁴ Focusing at first on developments in the quality press of six European countries between 1982 and 2003, we discovered a pattern of “segmented Europeanization”⁵ – while the public spheres of the different nations have become increasingly interested in the EU and its politics, they show no sign of growing together as a community of nations, of observing their European neighbours more closely. Thus the public spheres are transnationalized or – more specifically – *Europeanized*, but remain nationally segmented. Looking for possible explanations of this phenomenon, the project is currently investigating the political discourse cultures of the different nations through a mixture of qualitative methods involving newsroom observations, newsroom interviews and media diaries. In addition, the stability of our findings is tested by expanding the original content analysis of the quality press in two ways: a) by adding 2008 as another point of analysis and b) by broadening the sample to include tabloid newspapers.

Based on this new data, the article will be able to address the questions discussed above and develop a comprehensive picture of the Europeanization of national public spheres as experienced both by the broadsheet and the tabloid audience. To this purpose, the article will first discuss the possible contribution of the tabloid press to a public sphere in general and the European public sphere in particular. It proceeds by presenting the three-dimensional conceptualization of the European public sphere originally developed for the analysis of the quality press and will then relate whether these dimensions remain useful for an analysis of tabloid media. After a brief description of the research design the article will discuss results from the standardized content-analysis of tabloid newspapers in six European countries, comparing them to the previous study on the quality press, and finally draw conclusions from both the similarities and differences between the processes of Europeanization identified in the two media types.

The European public sphere and the tabloid press

The scientific “quest for the European public sphere”⁶ has in recent years proven to be quite successful: a number of research projects have by now contradicted Jürgen Gerhards’s much-quoted original assessment that the European public sphere does not exist.⁷ Whether based on an analysis of political “claims”⁸, of the EU as a topic of

4 Results of our research project have previously been published in Brüggemann/Kleinen-von Königs-löw 2009, Wessler et al. 2008, Siff et al. 2007, Peters et al. 2005; for the Polish case see Kleinen-von Königs-löw/Möller 2009; for an explanatory framework to these results see Hepp/Wessler 2009.

5 Wessler et al. 2008: p. 52.

6 Wessler et al. 2007: p. 94.

7 Gerhards 2000.

8 Koopmans 2004, 2007.

discourse⁹, of “banal Europeanism”¹⁰, or of the similarity in debating a specific issue in different European countries¹¹, some form of European public sphere appears to exist, at least in the shape of a Europeanization of national public spheres as they are represented in the quality press.

The role of the tabloid press in the Europeanization of national public spheres has not been explored much for a number of reasons. First of all, researchers have been sceptical as to whether there would be much to *research*: it was presumed that a Europeanization of public spheres is more likely to occur in the quality press.¹² This presumption was based on common-sense considerations – the quality press addresses (and is read by) the political and economical elites who view European integration more favourably than the general populace and have a greater interest in this topic – and has since been confirmed by empirical studies describing lower levels of EU coverage in television news, the regional press and in the tabloid press of particular countries.¹³ Secondly, single-country studies have also revealed that in some European countries the popular press is openly campaigning against the European Union (for example *The Sun* in Great Britain, *Kronen Zeitung* in Austria).¹⁴ It therefore seemed unlikely that the tabloid press contributes to a European public sphere which, after all, is supposed to *legitimize* the European Union. And thirdly, public sphere research in general has had reservations concerning the role of popular newspapers in a public sphere. Most normative models of a public sphere¹⁵ include criteria on the content and form of public debate which tabloid media may have difficulties meeting: in the view of many scholars (and journalists) the focus on “soft” news and the “melodramatic” emphasis on sensation and emotion prevent the popular press from contributing (positively) to the public sphere.¹⁶ Other authors, however, urge us to understand the tabloid press as an alternative public sphere, which “can help affect social change in addressing issues not previously open to debate, including new publics and using new forms—thus introducing new areas of discourse into the mainstream-mediated public sphere”.¹⁷ From this perspective, it seems unnecessarily elitist and restrictive to prematurely exclude the tabloid press from an analysis of the European public sphere. The tabloids may still offer the part of the European population which does not regularly read the quality press a chance to participate in a European public sphere, even though it may turn out to be a discourse on different issues and in different forms than that in the quality press.

This article will therefore take more of an empirical perspective on the public sphere: It defines the public sphere as a thickening of political “forum” networks, accessible to

9 Wessler et al. 2008.

10 Trenz 2004.

11 Berkel 2006, van de Steeg 2006.

12 Wessler et al. 2008: p. 28.

13 TV: Groothues 2004, regional press: Veters 2007, tabloid press, for example for Austria: Saurwein/Brantner/Dietrich 2006.

14 For Great Britain see Conboy 2006, for Austria see Arendt 2008.

15 For an interesting overview see Ferree et al. 2002.

16 See for example Gripsrud 1992, also the overview in Sparks 2000.

17 Örnebring/Jönsson 2004: p. 292.

the general public and legitimating political decision-making and actions.¹⁸ Whether on a national or a European level, a public sphere serves two main functions: to create transparency for its members about all political matters of relevance to them and to form a cohesive political community with a sense of collective identity. This identity may then facilitate the acceptance of majority decisions.¹⁹ For the analysis of the transnationalization of public spheres (but also for the study of national public spheres), these two functions can be translated into three empirical dimensions: monitoring governance, discursive integration and collective identification.²⁰

Monitoring governance: As European integration progresses and more and more political power is transferred to the EU level, the transparency function can only be fulfilled adequately through an increase in the reporting on, and debate of EU politics. This concerns not only the decision makers of the political and socio-economical elites, but also all normal citizens whose everyday lives are increasingly affected by political decisions realized by EU institutions. Whether it is the introduction of the Euro or the national smoking bans initiated by and adapted to EU legislation, it becomes important for everyone to be informed about and form an opinion on EU politics, if only to be able to make an informed decision in elections for the European parliament or in referenda on European treaties.

Discursive integration: As the European member states grow more and more interdependent in the process of European integration, transparency on all relevant political issues can only be assured through a horizontal extension of the horizon of political reporting and debate. Only when we know about the political developments in our neighbouring countries will we be able to make informed decisions that represent our best interests.²¹ Being informed about the concerns of our neighbours and even discussing relevant issues with them also has the added benefit of helping to create a community of communication which may facilitate the acceptance of majority decisions in the political community.²² This community of communications needs to include not only the audience of the quality press, but also that of the tabloids.

Collective identification: This “community of communication” can also be directly expressed and reinforced in public discourse as a sense of collective European identity, an expression of a shared sense of belonging to the European community, for example through European we-references. Such a common European identity or *demos* is often seen as a prerequisite for the legitimacy of the European Union,²³ and it should not be restricted to the public sphere of the quality press. Furthermore, it

18 Ferree et al. 2002.

19 A number of other possible functions of the public sphere have been discussed, for example a validation and an orientation function as proposed by Neidhardt 1994, p. 8. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Kleinen-von Königslöw 2010), the transparency and the integration function seem to be the ones which can realistically be fulfilled given the limitations of mass-mediated public spheres and are at the same time the most important for the political community.

20 Wessler et al. 2008: p. 10.

21 Koopmans/Erbe 2003.

22 Habermas 1998 [1992], Peters 2005.

23 Cederman 2001, Zürn 2000.

is the tabloid papers which are often attributed a particularly powerful role in the creation of a sense of community and collective identification.²⁴

Measuring Europeanization

The data on which this article is based was collected in three waves: the first wave analyzed the leading quality newspapers of five European countries – Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and Great Britain – in seven-year steps between 1982 and 2003. In the second wave, Poland as a new member of the EU was added to the sample, while the third wave constituted both an extension of the period of analysis (to 2008) and a broadening of the sample through the addition of a tabloid newspaper for each of the six countries.²⁵ The original analysis of the quality papers focused on the Europeanization of *discourse* and thus regarded only discursive articles in the political section of each paper, i.e. articles concentrating on the exchange of arguments and opinions rather than “mere” information or “facts” such as editorials, commentaries, interviews, contributions by external authors, press reviews and analysis/background articles. The adaption of the research design to tabloid papers, however, necessitated a broader perspective: tabloid articles seldom corresponded to the criteria developed to identify “discursiveness” in the quality press, and while most of the articles contain opinions, these opinions are not necessarily backed up by arguments. In addition, only few tabloid papers have a distinguishable political section. Thus the sample was extended to include *all* tabloid articles in the general news section, even if they contained no argumentation. This broader perspective obviously needs to be kept in mind when comparing the results for the two different media types; however, it does correspond to our theoretical argument that the debate in the tabloid press may take place not only over different issues, but also in different forms than in the quality press.²⁶

24 Conboy 2006.

25 The newspaper sample now includes *Die Presse* and *Kronen Zeitung* (Austria), *Politiken* and *Ekstra Bladet* (Denmark), *Le Monde* and *Le Parisien/Aujourd'hui* (France), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Bild-Zeitung* (Germany), *The Times* and *The Sun* (Great Britain), *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Super Express* (Poland, only since 1989 (GW) and 1996 (SE)). We sampled the issues of two constructed weeks per year of analysis (1982, 1989, 1996, 2003 and 2008), obtaining an overall sample of 19175 articles.

26 The first wave of coding was performed in 2003 by four student coders, the second wave in 2007 by three student coders, the third wave in 2009 by five student coders. In order to assure the comparability of the data obtained in the three different waves, the training of the coding team was always conducted by the same researcher (the author of this article). In addition, an intercoder reliability test was performed for each wave using the same test sample (n=100). For all three waves, the tests showed satisfactory results (for each indicator, all three reliability values are shown, for the first wave as Cohen's *kappa*, for the subsequent waves as Krippendorff's *alpha*): Institutions mentioned (0.79/0.82/0.83), policy focus (0.75/0.75/0.70), geographical focus (0.80/0.90/0.79), origin of discursive references (0.70/0.71/0.75), collectives mentioned (0.71/0.71/0.69), we-references (0.67/0.68/0.75).

The operationalization of the three dimensions of Europeanization remained the same for both the quality and the tabloid sample: each dimension was assessed through two indicators: monitoring governance could be measured either by references to EU institutions or the EU itself, or by EU politics as the main topic of the articles. Discursive integration could either occur through mutual observation, i.e. other (western) European countries as the main geographical reference of an article, or through an exchange of opinions, i.e. the citation of speakers from other (western) European countries.²⁷ Collective identification could either take the shape of references to the collective “The Europeans” (by literally using the term “The Europeans” or referring to the “people of Europe”) or of European Werefences, i.e. the phrases “We Europeans” or “Us Europeans” in public discourse.

A laggard vertical Europeanization in the tabloid press

The first dimension, monitoring governance, captures the interest in and attention paid to the European Union in the different arenas of the national public spheres: how often do articles make a reference to EU institutions and thus include the EU-level in the public discussion of different issues? And how often do EU politics themselves become the centre of attention? And finally, how do tabloid and quality media differ in their treatment of the EU? We distinguished between the mere mention of EU institutions or the EU itself as an indicator of a weak form of monitoring governance on the one hand, and on the other hand, the focus on EU politics as the main topic of the article as a stronger form of this vertical Europeanization. As Figure 1 shows, the clear-cut trend of a growing interest in EU institutions in the quality press between 1982 and 2003 is mirrored, though at a much lower level, by the tabloid press. While in 1982 there was almost no attention paid to EU institutions (only 1.3 percent of all articles in the tabloids mentioned EU institutions, ranging between 0.2 percent in Austria (*Kronen Zeitung*) and 2.5 percent in Denmark (*Ekstra Bladet*)). By 2003, the interest had tripled to four percent, but it still remained negligible compared to the 28 percent share of articles mentioning the EU in the quality press. The strong trend towards vertical Europeanization in the quality press, however, had stopped by 2008: While in some countries (Germany, Poland) the interest in EU institutions has stagnated, in France, Denmark, Great Britain and Austria it has actually decreased. In the tabloid press, the EU institutions continue to gain ground, reaching a share of on average 5.2 percent of all articles in 2008.

27 Although we are primarily interested in mutual observation/discursive exchange between 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 for the quality press.

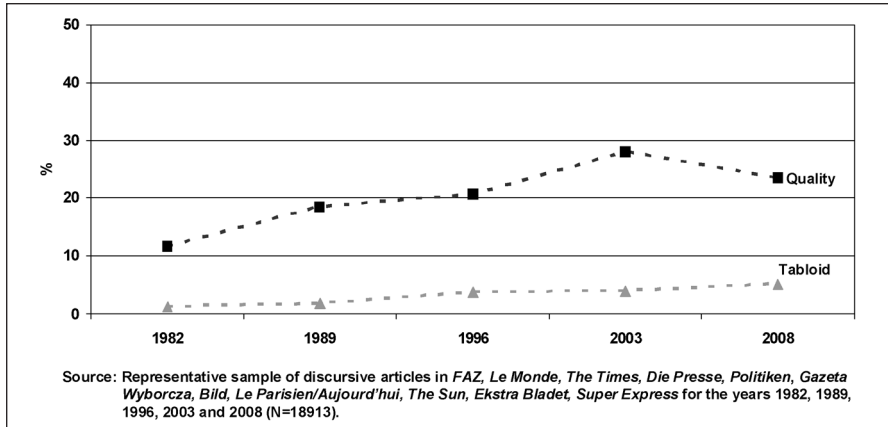


Figure 1: Share of articles referring to EU institutions by newspaper type

Taking a look at the stronger indicator for monitoring governance, the focus on EU politics, two things become apparent: first of all, the reversal in the trend of vertical Europeanization in the quality press by 2008 is confirmed: EU politics, which in 2003 had seemed to have conquered a fair share of the public debate, reaching seven percent of all articles in the quality press, dropped again below the five percent line. In the tabloid press, however, EU politics as a topic of discussion appears to be a lost cause: the attention paid to EU politics peaked in 1996 at two percent. It is important to note, though, that in the quality press EU politics never came close to reaching the same relevance as foreign politics (on average nine percent of articles compared to an average of five percent on EU politics), let alone national politics (31 percent). By contrast, in the tabloids EU and foreign politics are treated on a similar level, while national politics are also a lot less important than in the quality papers (only about 15 percent of all articles discuss national politics). In other words: taking into account the general disinterest of tabloid papers concerning politics, the share of EU politics should not be completely dismissed.

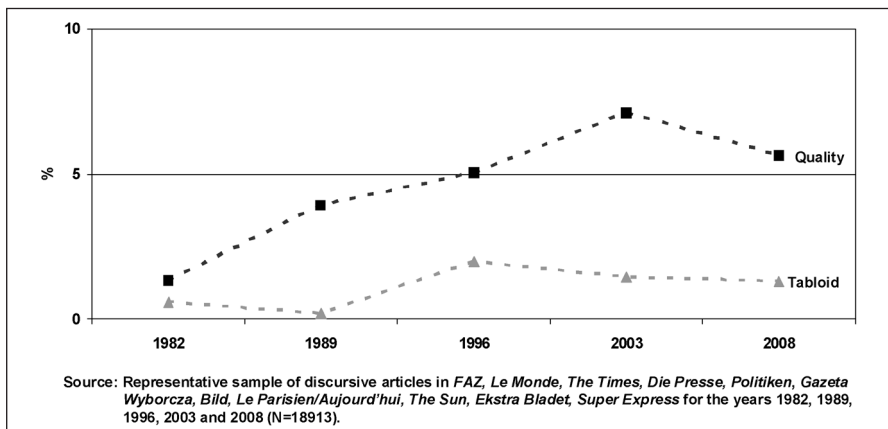


Figure 2: Share of articles focusing on EU politics by newspaper type

Horizontal Europeanization: Tabloid interest in other European nations remains limited to soft news

The second dimension of Europeanization focuses on the “horizontal” aspect of the European public sphere: this explores not the relation between each nation and Brussels, but the relations between the different member states of the EU. A weak form of horizontal Europeanization is the mutual observation of the member countries: are the politics of European countries increasingly discussed in the public spheres of the other member states? Do the French national elections serve as a point of debate in *The Times* or *The Sun*? The second indicator for this dimension concerns the speakers quoted in the newspapers: Are the issues discussed only with the participation of national speakers or do speakers from other European countries increasingly play a role in national discussions?

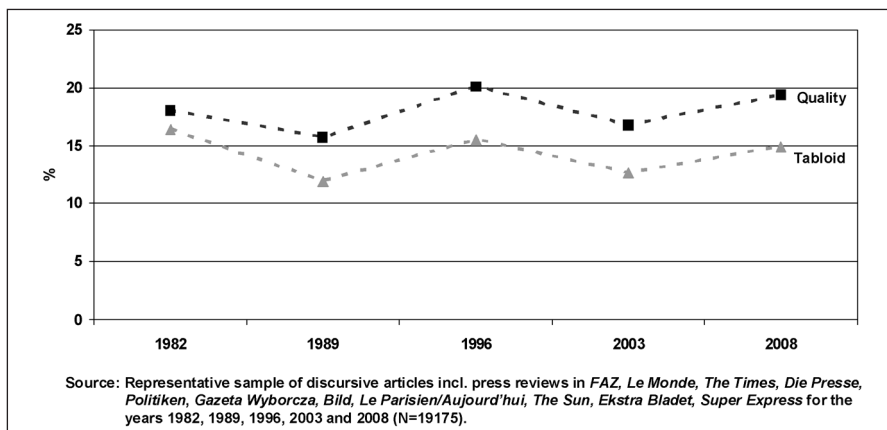


Figure 3: Share of articles focusing on other (western) European countries by newspaper type

In neither the quality nor the tabloid press is there an identifiable trend towards more mutual observation between 1982 and 2008. In both types of media outlets, the share of articles discussing the affairs of other (western) European countries fluctuates, but overall remains on a stable level: In the quality press around 18 percent of all articles discuss other countries, while in the tabloid press the interest in our European neighbours is not much lower (at about 15 percent). This openness towards foreign countries in the tabloids may at first glance seem counter-intuitive; however, a closer look at the topics of these articles reveals that here the tabloid papers are even less interested in politics than usual: foreign VIPs, catastrophes or weird stories set in foreign countries are the focus of these articles. So the *intensity* of the European community of communication that is constructed for the readers of the tabloids is similar to that in which the broadsheet readers participate. However, it is based on non-political topics; the European neighbours are simply used as a resource for soft news.

And whom are the papers interested in? Most newspapers apparently attribute similar news values to the different countries, whether for the discussion of political news or trivia: they most often discuss Germany - in six of our ten newspapers

this is the foreign country the most often discussed -, followed by Great Britain (the most important in five newspapers) and France (in one newspaper). In addition, Italy and Spain receive some attention, while the Danish newspapers also tend to observe Sweden more closely. The Polish newspapers in our sample display a clear Western European orientation: mostly ignoring the other former communist countries, like all other papers they focus on Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy.

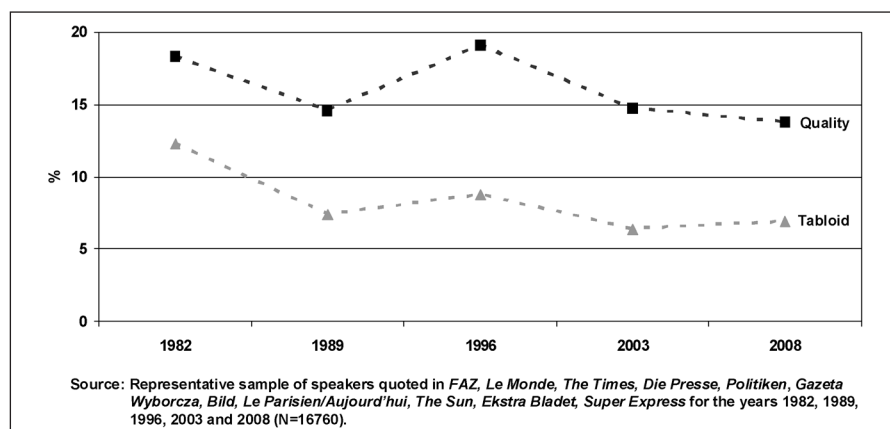


Figure 4: Share of speakers from other (western) European countries by newspaper type

Concerning our second indicator of horizontal Europeanization, discursive exchange, we find a comparable picture: Again, there is no clear-cut trend, the share of foreign speakers from other Western European countries fluctuates between 1982 and 2008; there might even be a small decrease in the amount of European speakers included in the national debates. The gap between the different newspaper types, however, has grown wider: while on average 16 percent of all speakers cited in the quality press belong to the European neighbours, their share is half as strong in the tabloids. Curiously, speakers from the countries most often in the focus of public debate are not necessarily the most cited: the opinions of German speakers are referred to less frequently than British or French voices – apparently Germany is often discussed, but not that often as part of the discussion in the different national public spheres. According to our observations of the newsrooms and interviews with foreign editors of (most) of the newspapers analyzed here, this is mainly due to language difficulties: only few foreign editors speak another foreign language in addition to English, and they are reluctant to cite speakers from countries whose languages they do not understand.²⁸ In addition, the prominence of Germany may be due to our period of analysis: it includes the year 1989 when the Fall of the Berlin Wall had such a great impact on all European countries that it became something of a figure of speech. It was often used as an introduction to a wide range of topics but our tool of analysis cannot distinguish between a metaphorical or factual reference to “Berlin” (and thus “Germany”) at the beginning of an article.

28 See Lingenberg et al. (2010) for the results of our study on national discourse cultures and their effect on the Europeanization of public spheres.

Different forms of constructing collective identity in the tabloids

The last dimension of Europeanization focuses on the collective identity constructed in the public debate: Are “the Europeans” as a collective identity increasingly discussed? Do the newspapers refer to a European “We” more and more often when they discuss politics and matters of common concern? Or do the media forums continue to cling to national identities?

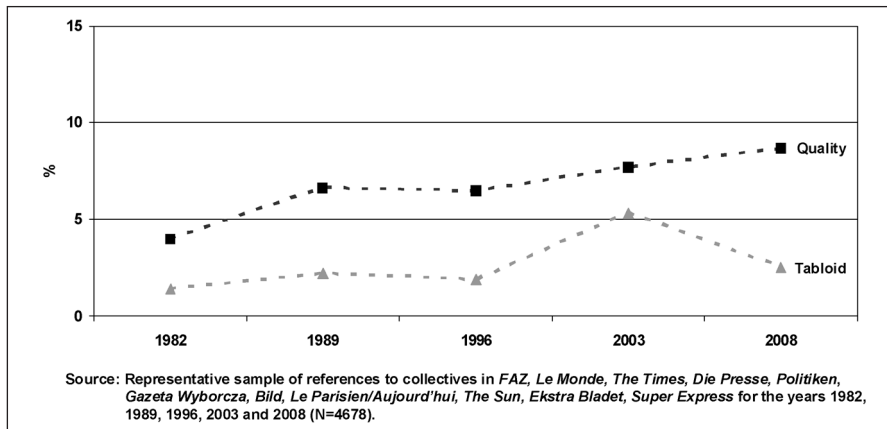


Figure 5: Share of “The Europeans” in all references to collectives by newspaper type

In the quality press, the collective reference “The Europeans” has steadily been gaining ground; it has more than doubled its share among the references to collectives used in public debate from four percent in 1982 to almost nine percent in 2008. It has thus outpaced “The West” which used to be much stronger (14 percent in 1982), but has lost in importance ever since the Fall of the Berlin Wall. The interest in “The Europeans” in the tabloids appears to have peaked at six percent in 2003 – however, these results need to be treated cautiously. The use of references to collectives such as “The Germans” or “The Europeans” in newspaper reporting and discussion is mainly limited to broadsheets, in the tabloids the total numbers for the references to collectives are too low to allow a meaningful interpretation - less than three were coded per issue.

In our previous analysis of Europeanization, we were cautiously optimistic that something like a common European identity might emerge in the quality press. However, our new wave of data has crushed this optimism. The share of European “We” actually declined in 2008 – this may already be an effect of the global financial crisis leading to a resurgence of national identities and thus demonstrating that the European collective identity is not (yet?) strong enough to weather political crises. In the case of the tabloids, the European “We” never gained enough ground to be noticed by the tabloid readers; overall less than half a percent of all “We”s in the tabloids refer to the European identity.

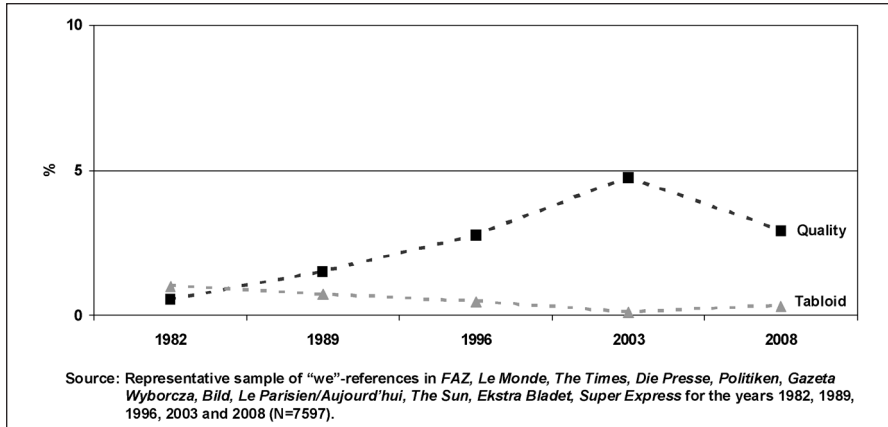


Figure 6: Share of references to "We Europeans" among all we-references by newspaper type

Despite research proclaiming tabloid papers to be a decisive force in the forming of the national identity,²⁹ the national "We" is actually stronger in the quality press: there, 37 percent of all "We"s refer to the national community of the respective newspaper, while in the tabloids the national "We" reaches only 21 percent. This can be explained by a difference in reporting styles: the broadsheets discuss more political topics, more foreign news and cite more politicians, all of which offer more opportunities to construct a collective identity that potentially includes all readers such as "the nation" or "Europe". In the soft news and human interest topics favoured by the tabloids, on the other hand, most quotes belong to everyday people, company managers or celebrities whose "We" will probably not include the tabloid readers or contribute to their identification with a political community. These "exclusive" We-phrases are especially popular in the Danish and the French tabloid press (82 and 83 percent of all We-references) and less often used in German-speaking tabloids (59 percent in the *Kronen Zeitung*, 63 percent in the *Bild*). However, in all tabloid papers they clearly dominate the discussion, while in the quality papers exclusive We-references only reach a share of 45 percent. If the tabloid newspapers contribute strongly to the construction of national identity then it appears to be through other means than the use of phrases like "We Germans".

Country-specific patterns of Europeanization – the multi-segmentation of the European public sphere

As a final step we shall try to determine similarities in the patterns of Europeanization in the different media types of each country. How does the view of the European public sphere differ for the citizens of a particular European country depending on

29 Conboy 2006.

whether they participate in it through the national broadsheet or tabloid? As the indicators for the dimension collective identity were not very fruitful for an analysis of the tabloid press, we shall focus here on the indicators of the first two dimensions, monitoring governance and discursive integration, which could also be considered as the vertical and the horizontal dimension of Europeanization.

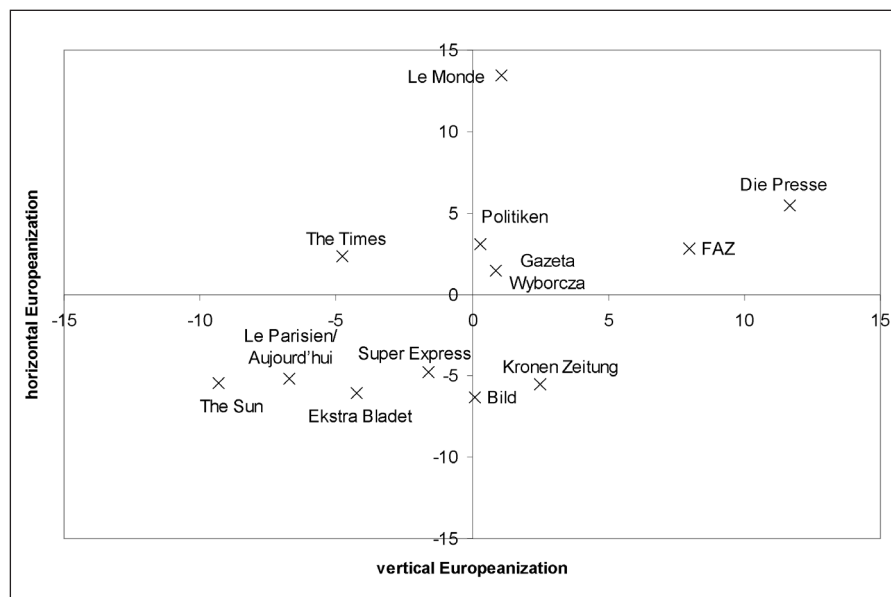


Figure 7: Level of vertical and horizontal Europeanization for quality and tabloid newspapers
Basis: Average deviation from mean for both indicators of monitoring governance (i.e. vertical Europeanization: visibility of EU institutions/focus on EU politics) or discursive integration (i.e. horizontal Europeanization: focus on other EU countries/extended quotations of speakers from other EU countries).

Figure 7 shows the relative position of each newspaper analyzed on the two dimensions of Europeanization: it was determined by calculating, first, how much each newspaper deviates from the mean across all analyzed newspapers for the whole time-period (1982-2008) for a specific indicator. Then the mean of the two indicators for each dimension of Europeanization was taken for each newspaper. For example, the share of articles monitoring EU institutions in *Die Presse* is ten percent higher than the mean across all newspapers (13 percent), the share of articles focusing on EU politics 0.3 percent higher than the mean (three percent). Taking the average of both indicators for the dimension vertical Europeanization, *Die Presse* is thus five percent above the mean for all newspapers.

As we can see, quality and tabloid papers are clearly separated by their respective level of vertical Europeanization: The quality newspapers all display an above average interest in EU institutions and politics. The French *Le Monde* achieves by far the highest score; it is followed at a distance by the Austrian *Die Presse*, and then finally the remaining four quality papers from Germany, Great Britain, Denmark and Poland.

By contrast the tabloids all show a very similar level of interest (or disinterest) in EU affairs; the highest score among the tabloids is achieved by the Polish *Super Express* (4.8 percent below the mean), while readers of the German *Bild* receive the least information on the EU (6.4 percent below the mean).

On the dimension of horizontal Europeanization, however, similarities between the quality and tabloid newspapers of each country become apparent: Austrian papers, for example, are the most interested in their European neighbours. While the Austrian quality paper *Die Presse* contains the most articles on other (western) European countries and citations by (western) European speakers compared to the other quality papers, the same can be said for the Austrian *Kronen Zeitung* among its tabloid peers. The *Kronen Zeitung* even achieves a higher level of horizontal Europeanization than the quality papers from Denmark, France, Poland and Great Britain. Runner-up for both media types are the German papers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Bild*, whose interest in the politics and opinions of other European nations outpaces both that of the other tabloids and of the British *The Times*. At the other end of the scale, not only is the British *The Times* the most parochial of all quality papers³⁰, in a similar manner the British tabloid *The Sun* also shows the least interest in the concerns of its European neighbours. The only country in which the quality paper and the tabloid differ in their stance on horizontal Europeanization is France: while *Le Monde* is comparatively open to stories and quotes from other European countries; *Le Parisien/Aujourd'hui* offers its readers a public sphere almost as closed off from the rest of Europe as that of *The Sun*.

The results of our latest content analyses, as we have discussed them in this article, confirm the general stability of our previous findings; at the same time they induce us to modify our original appraisal of the “segmented European public sphere” somewhat. For the quality press, our first analysis had already identified a pattern of “segmented Europeanization”: While the process of European integration has led to a growing interest in the EU in each of the analyzed public spheres, they have remained separate, displaying no signs of increasing interest in each other, or in the development of a common European discourse.³¹ Our look at the tabloid press has revealed a very similar pattern: We can detect some traces of vertical Europeanization, at least in the form of increasing attention paid to EU institutions; however, the amount of exchange between the different countries remains stable over time. One of the key differences between the public spheres experienced by readers of the quality press and those of the tabloids is the presence of a fledgling European identity in the broadsheets, even though its growth appears to have been halted somewhat by the year 2008. In the tabloids, no substantial traces of a growing European identity can be found – at least not of a collective identity transported through the use of phrases like “The Europeans” or “We Europeans”. Hence, based on our results the Europeanization of public spheres should be understood as *multi-segmented*: it is not only segmented in relation to nations, but also in relation to the *type of media outlet*.³²

30 see also Brüggemann/von Königslöw 2009: p. 31.

31 Wessler et al. 2008, p. 52.

32 Hepp et al. 2009, p. 47.

On the one hand our research has confirmed the sceptics doubting whether the tabloid press can contribute to the Europeanization of public spheres. In all three dimensions, on all six indicators, and in all six countries under analysis, the level of Europeanization is in fact lower in the tabloid papers than in their more elite counterparts. On the other hand, we were able to detect some traces of Europeanization. The tabloids have not ignored the shift in political power and have accordingly increased their observation of EU institutions – and they continue to do so even though the monitoring of EU governance appears to have reached a plateau in the quality press. More importantly, however, the study has highlighted the comparatively high level of attention paid to other European countries in the tabloid papers. While articles on the trivia of European neighbours may not necessarily provide the substantive information which might serve as a basis for the political decisions of tabloid readers, they may help create a sense of community, of collective identification with the European community of nations. At the same time we have to bear in mind that, while such a community of nations may strengthen solidarity among neighbours, it apparently has not yet had an impact on support for the European integration project itself.

Thus the key to understanding the recent difficulties of the European integration process may lie in the lack of forthright identification with Europe within the tabloid press. Even though tabloid readers receive more and more information about Brussels, the discussion of this information is not embedded in (at least occasional) appeals to a common European identity such as can be found in the quality papers. And without this sense of belonging to the European Union, a sense that this is “their” project as well and not something which has been forced on them, the increase in information appears to lead to growing discontent and alienation among the citizens. But questions like these require research on the level of media reception and appropriation and cannot be answered here.³³

For the moment we can only speculate on the potential impact of the different forms of Europeanization of public spheres which we identified in this article for quality and tabloid papers from six European countries. While moving beyond the quality press has already greatly increased our understanding of the European public sphere as it is experienced by the greater part of the European population (and not only by the national elites), it is only in talking to the readers themselves that we will be able to substantiate how this public sphere affects their relationship to their respective nation-states, the European Union itself, and the European community of nations.

33 In fact our research project is planning to complete its investigation of “The Transnationalization of Public Spheres in Europe” by analyzing in its next project phase the reactions of the citizens, i.e. the possible changes in their understanding of political legitimacy as well as in their identification with and participation in the political community. For an interesting analysis of audience reactions and appropriation processes in the debate on the EU constitution see Lingenberg 2010.

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