

A public sphere in the European Union

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Abstract

At the end of the era of the permissive consensus the European elites had to face the fact that without the support of wider masses in the EU member states the European integration might not advance. Such realization resulted in the European Commission's policy in public inclusiveness. The 2006 Communication Plan called for the creation of a European public sphere. The question if there are any traces of such a Europe wide public sphere, was investigated in this thesis.

In order to gain better understanding of the public sphere the paper this paper first looked at which democratic theories build on the concept of public sphere most extensively. As a result of that research, the deliberative model was explored through Jürgen Habermas' discourse theory of democracy, which forms the base of in a major number of contemporary research on the European public sphere. Since the public sphere was foremost created within the political framework of the nation state, a concept by Nancy Fraser was used to bridge the public sphere concept to the transnational space.

An overview on the contemporary thinking of a European public sphere showed a diverse debate. Concepts divided scholars between the existence, necessity and forms, such as pan-European or state-based forms of European public sphere.

A documentary analysis was conducted in this thesis that critically reviewed three contemporary media-discourse studies to reflect on empirical evidence of a European public sphere. These research studies were chosen on the basis of comparability and contrast. Comparability was served by similar methodological approaches, while contrast was provided by the different theoretically underlying concepts. The findings of this analysis illustrated traces of Europeanisation of public discourses in the dimensions of issues, time, and countries. Following that, a discussion on the contemporary media research revealed main concepts and argumentation in relation to materialization of a European public sphere. The three research studies represented three different concepts on the deliberative potentials of a European public sphere.

Finally, the thesis concluded that there is no evidence from the research studies for the two theoretical extremes, namely the non-existence of European public sphere, and existence of the

pan-European public sphere. More potential was found in the concept that argued for a nation-state based concept of Europeanisation of public spheres.

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1. Introduction

Until 1990's the elite-centered view on European integration was the most widely accepted. Many researchers claimed that the European integration was a „non-issue” for the general public. The assumptions behind that were the public's superficial attitudes towards the integration, the low salience of European integration, the sui generis feature of the integration that was incompatible with the structure of political competition. This view clearly changed following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, when party competitions showed an increase in European issues reflected in research studies. These were the first signs marking the end of the era of 'permissive consensus'.¹ In 2000 to address the perceived „growing alienation among local elites and masses within the member states”², European leaders initiated a public debate on the future of the European Union. As a result of that, representatives of the member states and EU institutions met in the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002 to discuss „European identity, supranational competence, and the power balance between large and small countries”³. However, the Convention was excluded from the very group that it intended to address, the wider public audience. The Convention's „substance (a new treaty) was rejected by angry French and Dutch referendum voters in the middle of 2005”⁴. The failure of the Constitution Treaty many scholars regard as the clearest sign of the end of the permissive consensus, and a new era of 'constraining dissensus'. When we look at the case of the Brexit, arguably the constraining effect of the public did not stop at the deepening of the integration but also affected membership. One of the findings in the study from Crescenzi et al was that among British nationals their localised identity was more defining in their voting patterns than clearly defined high financial interest.⁵

The European Commission did not ignore the alarming signs from Dutch and French veto, in 2006 it published a white paper on a communication policy. This document identified a communication problem which is commonly named as 'communication deficit' in academic discussion. „The gap between the European Union and its citizens is widely recognised. In Eurobarometer opinion polls

¹ Hooghe, Liesbeth; Marks, Gary, "A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus", *British Journal of Political Science*, XXXIX (2009): 6-7

² Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 13.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Crescenzi; Di Cataldo; Faggian, "Internationalized at work and localistic at home: The 'split' Europeanization behind Brexit", *Regional Science*, DOI: 10.1111/pirs.12350

carried out in recent years, many of the people interviewed say they know little about the EU and feel they have little say in its decision-making process."⁶The white paper emphasises the role of communication within a healthy democracy and sets the issue high on the EU agenda. An effective communication plan was envisioned in cooperation between the EU institutions and bodies; the national, regional and local authorities in the Member States; European political parties; civil society.

It was highlighted in the report that political issues are internalised in the national public sphere, whereas a major number of decisions are now made in EU institutions. „*There is a sense of alienation from 'Brussels', which partly mirrors the disenchantment with politics in general.*"⁷ Thus, the report calls for the need of a 'European public sphere' „*where the European debate can unfold*"⁸.

Problem statement

The aim of this thesis is to shed a light on the existence of such a European public sphere which lead to the following problem formulation:

Is there a European public sphere in the making?

2. Methodology

Research design

The discourse theory of democracy forms the keystone of this thesis. This theory was developed primarily for the framework of the nation state. However, the concept was later extended by scholars (e.g. Nancy Fraser), who used it for the application in the transnational space, as well as in supranational integrations, such as the European Union. The version of discourse

⁶ European Commission (2006), White Paper on a European Communication Policy, Accessed 29 May, 2018, http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com2006_35_en.pdf

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

theory, that will be explored in this thesis and was developed by Jürgen Habermas, relies on a combination of epistemological stances. In his early work Habermas identified three main knowledge constitutive-interests.⁹

The first one is the 'technical interest', that is an interest to predict and control the natural environment. The knowledge production of this interest comes from 'empirical-analytic sciences', natural sciences and certain types of social science that intend to provide testable explanations. Knowledge is generated through the observation of nature and society and methodical experiments. In discourse theory of democracy this can mean that e.g. if a speaker makes an argument that he/she expects from the others to be accepted as valid ('validity claim'), then the hearer has the chance to test this argument based on rational justifiability to accept it, or deny it in a discourse. The second type is the 'practical interest' which finds its roots in interpretiv, hermeneutic-cultural sciences that aim at cultural understanding. These sciences try to understand how social action is oriented through socio-cultural forms of life and grammar of ordinary language. In discourse theory this can be referred to how certain historical-cultural context resulted in different types of public spheres. The third, cognitive interest, the 'emancipatory interest' intends to free science from its 'positivist illusions' that tend to ignore human interests in potential objects of inquiry. It aims at overcoming dogmatism, compulsion, and domination. In discourse theory this could be illustrated by the emancipation of people from illegitimate social power and the ensurance of popular sovereignty. Habermas concludes in his work *The Theory of the Communicative Action*, that each of these knowledge-constitutive interests have their relative legitimacy. „Whereas the natural and the cultural or hermeneutic sciences are capable of living in mutually indifferent, albeit more hostile than peaceful coexistence, the social sciences must bear the tension of divergent approaches under one roof”¹⁰ Consequently, the combination of these epistemic stances will be utilised in this thesis as well.

After the discussion of the theory of this thesis, an overview on the different concepts and contributions will illuminate the different courses that the development of the European public sphere. To address the problem formulation a documentary analysis will be conducted based on the critical review of contemporary research. The empirical studies were selected on the basis of

⁹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed 12 May 12, 2018.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/#HabDisTheMorPolLaw>

¹⁰ Ibid

comparability. All the three studies generally share the same methodological approach, the research on media content and hypotheses on deliberative concepts. Due to the number of these hypotheses, they will be introduced in the Analysis chapter. The aim of the critical review is to formulate a picture on the existence of a European public sphere by critically reviewing the empirical results of the three research studies in light of the discourse theory of democracy. Therefore, the thesis relies on the deductive approach, where the theory guides the critical analysis. Contemporary research on media content is relevant in case of the European public sphere, because it gives the chance to reveal public discourses that were generated in the public sphere and picked up by the media.

Even though all the selected research use text-based media content analysis, they still differ in their specific concepts on this method. The difference can occur in the unit of analysis and in the type of coding. The traditional content analytic methods use article-level variables that can tell how often certain actors and issues are mentioned, and to what extent they turn up in news stories. An example to that is the research carried out by Bijmans & Altides, where they coded the most frequent topics in both Commission press releases and media news articles. This is, however limited in telling about the relations between actors and their positions on issues. A more complex method is used by Marianne Van de Steeg, that codes discourses according to their frames in the public debate, but even this method takes the newspaper article as the unit of the analysis.¹¹ Probably the most nuanced way to analyse media content is the claim-making analysis utilized by Koopman & Statham that takes political claims as the unit of analysis. „*Claim-making acts consist of public speech acts (including protest events) that articulate political demands, calls to action, proposals, or criticism, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants or other collective actors.*”¹² This gives to possibility to see connections across actors and countries and it can differentiate in the participation of claim-making between different actors, such as the EU institutions or the civil society. According to Koopmans & Statham, political decisions and policy implementations are seen as special claim-making acts. Therefore, the Commission press releases used in the research of Bijmans & Altides fulfill this criterion and serve with a complementary role in the Analysis.

¹¹ Van de Steeg, “Does a public sphere exist...?” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 616.

¹² Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 55.

Empirical studies as the units of analysis

These research studies share the same type of method, where they reveal public discourses by coding media news articles. This type of method was selected for the thesis specifically because in its principles it fits in with the discursive theory of democracy which is the foundation stone of the thesis' theoretical approach. Since the problem formulation of this thesis has a focus on process, thus one of the selected empirical studies by Koopmans examines the development of the European public sphere in a 12 years time period. The other two studies by Bijsmans & Altides and Van De Steeg show insight into specific cases, thus provide a more in depth snapshot of the state of the EPS. Now, it will be explained how the selected research studies their media content. It can be illustrated according to different dimensions such as type of media, type of newspapers, countries, issues, and time.

Type of media

The qualitative media analysis of the selected research is based on the national media of EU member states instead of pan European media. It is not sufficient to use cross-national functional alternatives in this type of research, because the political system largely shapes and constitutes the different liberal democracies, where it is important to reflect on political cleavages.¹³ Thus, different political systems with different press landscapes are needed to be represented in order to account for the contrast and rule out bias. Bijsmans & Altides add that there is no widely used pan European media in the EU, thus EU actors depend on national media outlets to address the publics of Europe.¹⁴

Selected newspapers

¹³ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 51.

¹⁴ Bijsmans, Patrick; Altides, Christina, "Bridging the Gap' between EU Politics and Citizens?", *European Integration*, XXIX. (2007): 326.

Newspapers are the primary source of data in the selected research. In the view of Koopmans & Statham print media is the best possible option in comparison with television and radio. They argue that television has less impact on the political agenda¹⁵, which is the deliberative function of the public sphere. Press news have a broader scope and they offer more elaboration on discourses. Thus, they serve as a better tool for having an effect from the public sphere on the will formation of the parliamentary complexes, that will be discussed with detail later in the Theory chapter. Additionally, television media is less comparable internationally than press news.^{16 17} When selecting specific newspapers one must also distinguish between left-, right-broadsheet, tabloid, or regional.¹⁸ Elitist newspapers can also be used as main source, because they are agenda setters for other media and the political actors.¹⁹

Countries

Among the main factors in the selection of specific countries are the size of the country, date of entry and comparability. Countries that have been members since the creation of the European Union have more potential for comparability.²⁰ It is possible to reach more articulate results with countries that show polarization in their national discourse.²¹ Koopmans & Statham and Van de Steeg add an extra country (respectively Switzerland and the USA) in their research for revealing how much Europeanisation is connected with EU membership.^{22 23} „(...)this ordering increases the chances of concluding from the analysis that, for example, the German newspapers have sufficient similarities that they may be grouped together and are significantly different from the other newspapers.“²⁴

¹⁵ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 50.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Bijmans; Altides, “‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX. (2007): 328.

¹⁸ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 51.

¹⁹ Bijmans; Altides, “‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX. (2007): 328.

²⁰ Ibid: 328.

²¹ Van de Steeg, Marianne, “Does a public sphere exist in the European Union? An analysis of the content of the debate on the Haider case” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 614.

²² Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 48.

²³ Van de Steeg, “Does a public sphere exist...?” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 621-622.

²⁴ Ibid: 618.

Issues

The selection of issues can be based on the EU's structure, that is, along the lines of the different policy fields, where the EU holds different levels of competence. Public spheres vary with different institutional settings. The different levels of competences were described in the Maastricht and the Amsterdam Treaties. This was the pillar system in effect leading up to the Lisbon Treaty. The first pillar included policy areas with supranational decision making power, whereas the second and third pillars had policy areas intergovernmental power. This is important because different policy areas can, thus, result in different political actors.²⁵ Another possibility is to have a more in-depth view on one specific issue, as it is in the case of Van de Steeg, who looked at the Haider case. This is one of those cases that had the potential to mobilize the public spheres, because it resulted in widespread international condemnation. The strong point of this research that it gives a solid ground of comparability with the same issue discussed at the same time with the same degree of relevance. „*This rule of thumb is based on the consideration that where two strangers become engaged in a conversation, they end up talking about the same topics and covering the same arguments. If this situation is extrapolated to a media debate, it can be inferred that when similar topics and arguments are being put forward in several forums (i.e., newspapers), there is likely to be a shared debate.*”²⁶

Time

The time varies according to issue type. Research that aims at showing development of the public sphere over time will include a longer time span, such as the research of Koopmans & Statham which looked at 1990 – 2002. On the other hand, a specific case will result in shorter life span less than a year, such as the Haider case

²⁵ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 48.

²⁶ Van de Steeg, “Does a public sphere exist...?” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 611.

Validity

The underlying contemporary research provided in this thesis draw on a wide range of data. In each cases newspaper articles are proportionate to the population of the countries where the newspapers were published. „*It was not logistically feasible to cover all newspapers for seven countries. However, it was necessary that we draw a significantly large sample of claims from a range of newspaper sources, to provide evidence on the transformation of national public spheres.*”²⁷ Considering the number of countries one of the researches (by Bijsmans & Altides) seem to propose underrepresented. Considering time period of the cases shows that only the study by Koopmans & Statham cover an extensive period of time. However, it can be generally said that these case studies complement each other in the above dimensions which ensures the external validity of the conclusion of this thesis.

Internal validity is connected to the discourse theory of democracy that states that public opinion can not be measured according to statistical data.²⁸ Therefore, it can be seen in each case studies that their quantitative methods are complemented with qualitative methods, where they code the newspaper articles in order to find discourses that, arguably, have been generated by preceding a public debate. The media affects the composition of public discourses, as Koopmans & Statham argue „*the limited carrying capacity of the media means that it has to select which events, claimants, and opinions are newsworthy*”. Another is constraint can be seen on the use of newspapers in the underlying case studies. Koopmans & Statham admit: „*By choosing newspapers as our source, we maximize our chances of detecting less prominent and more partial forms of Europeanization. We realize, however, that this implies that our findings will overestimate rather than underestimate the degree of Europeanization of the mass media taken as a whole.*”²⁹

²⁷ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 50.

²⁸ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 362.

²⁹ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 50.

3. Theory

The question regarding the public sphere turns us to systematic approaches that explain the role of the public sphere embedded in the democratic. When asking the question if a public sphere is exists, we can look at theories that deal with democratic legitimacy and the role of the public sphere. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview on the different contemporary democratic theories, as well as select one specific theory, the discourse theory that will be explored as the guiding theory of this thesis. The public sphere as essential part of this theory will be discussed in a different section. Finally, a section will be devoted to the transnationalisation of the public sphere, that will allow discourse theory of democracy to be expanded to the transnational public space, including supranational institutions like the European Union.

Models of democracy

According to Oxford Bibliographies the public sphere is „*is generally conceived as the social space in which different opinions are expressed, problems of general concern are discussed, and collective solutions are developed communicatively.*”³⁰ Different type of democracies see the importance and roles of the public sphere differently, that will be presented here. The different models of democracy will be based on John T. Ishiyama’s account of democratic models. The classical models of democracy will be discussed first as they constitute the base of contemporary democratic societies.

The concept of democracy comes from the ancient Greece, where the polis, or city-state was based on largely egalitarian values among the population that held political rights (adult male citizens). The best example of this is the case the polis of Athens that gradually became a world power. This resulted in increased wealth and a distinction of the old system. An important milestone was, when due to the city’s wealth, for the first time jury and political offices were paid. The army gave an opportunity for the lower-class citizens to improve their status and acquire political rights in the

³⁰ Oxford Bibliographies. *Public Sphere*. Accessed May 17, 2018.
www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0030.xml

communal decision making. The rule of government was done by the people directly in assemblies where the citizens voted on issues, that became binding norms in the society. Today, the equivalent of *participatory or direct democracy* can be traced in sub parts of the Swiss canton-system as well as in some New England towns. Based on Mezey's idea Ishiyama argues that, even though, participatory or direct democracy is the only system that gives citizens full and direct participation, it may still slow down the decision-making process.³¹

Similarly to direct democracy, *republicanism or representative democracy* also has its roots in ancient times, namely in the ancient Rome. The difference between the two models is that in the latter the decision making is not part of the citizens' daily life but they assign this right to their representatives. The representatives elected by a group of citizens, the constituents, are accountable to their voters, thus the citizens themselves have indirect effect on the decision-making.³²

Many contemporary scientists' interest stand in how we can measure democratisation, how can we tell that one state is more democratic than the other. Robert Dahl's contribution of *polyarchy* intended to address that question. Polyarchy denotes pluralism in the political system that allows the representation of groups in society. The societal groups' representatives will acquire decision making power together, and form a government 'ruled by many' (polyarchy). This allows minorities to have their voice represented as opposed to the majority rule. These principles must be reflected in the political system that allows for the representation and government of many.³³

On the other hand the *majoritarian democracy* is built on principles that can contrast Dahl's ideas. In majoritarian democracies there is a two party system, where the ruling cabinet is consisted of one party majority that leaves out minority parties from the government. This system tends to occur in states with homogenous societies, like the UK, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Arend Lijphart, a political scientist who developed the term of majoritarian democracy, holds that consensual democracy is more suitable for pluralist societies.³⁴

According to Lijphart, in culturally heterogenous societies the majoritarian model would not only be undemocratic but also dangerous because minorities could lose their allegiance to the state due

³¹ Ishiyama; Kelman; Pechenina, *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, 4-5

³² Ibid: 5-6

³³ Ibid: 6-7

³⁴ Ibid: 7-8

to the feeling of exclusion. Such division in a society could be drawn by the example of Northern Ireland. *Consensual democracy* thus offers a broad governing coalition with proportionality for the important parties.³⁵

Arguably, *delegative democracy* is the most detached model from the public. In this model, whoever wins the election can govern the way they see it fit. That is, policies of this democracy may not reflect the promises made by the candidate's campaign, because the candidate, once elected, is the one who decides what is appropriate for the country.³⁶

Finally, *deliberative democracy* is different from all the above models in the sense that it takes off the emphasis from the merely institutional decision making, but it offers an alternative 'unofficial' route for the circulation of power. According to Encyclopedia Britannica deliberative democracy is a „school of thought in political theory that claims that political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable discussion and debate among citizens.“³⁷ When members of a public deliberate the public opinion, they aim to achieve the public good and they intend to „arrive at political decisions through reason and the collection of competing arguments and viewpoints.“³⁸ The legitimation of law is the result of a deliberation process among the citizens. Just like any other theories of democracy, this model is not left without criticism. William Simon argues that the deliberative agenda is too broad and puts too much emphasis on civility. In addition to that, the sense of closeness and solidarity that is largely presupposed in this theory, arguably, lacks in some countries. Nevertheless, this model of democracy will be used in this thesis because it is the only model that offers the public sphere a systematic role in decision making of a state. It explains in a comprehensive manner how the citizens generate power through the public sphere in order to give legitimacy to the law.³⁹

Different scientists developed different concepts of the deliberative model. These concepts differ according to democratic dimensions, definition in the relation of various fundamental values, the way they see the deliberative procedure. The titles indicate the differences on the emphasis in these concepts: „communicative democracy (Iris Marion Young); *politics of presence*

³⁵ Ibid: 8

³⁶ Ibid: 9

³⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica. *Deliberative democracy*. Accessed May 21, 2018.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/deliberative-democracy>

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ishiyama; Kelman; Pechenina, *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, 10

(Anne Philips); dialogical democracy (Robert B. Talisse); discursive democracy (John Dryzek); epistemic conception of deliberative democracy (Jose Luis Marti); proceduralist-deliberative democracy (Jürgen Habermas and Seyla Benhabib); substantial deliberative democracy (Joshua Cohen) and so on.”⁴⁰ The model that this thesis will explore is the proceduralist-model (discourse theory of democracy) by Jürgen Habermas for consistency reasons, as this model forms the base of contemporary research on the European public sphere. Habermas also made great contribution to the theoretical concept of the public sphere.

The role of communicative power in the political system

In this section the democratic context of the public sphere will be discussed through Habermas’ discourse theory. A main concept of this theory is the separation of powers between the communicative, social, political, and administrative powers. The most crucial part of this concept that the free flow of communicative power is ensured generated by the masses, since it is the source of all the other powers.

Habermas explains through the discourse-theoretic concept of political autonomy why the communicative power should be mobilized for the state to produce legitimate law. According to him, the ‘communicative freedom’, that a country’s citizens practice, has power potentials when it takes “*yes or no position toward a simple speech act offer*”⁴¹. This is done by the intersubjective acceptance of a validity claim, which is a reasoning for universal facts or norms, that underlies the speech act. The common acceptance of the validity claim creates a discursively produced *shared belief* in the communicative freedom. The validity claim carries obligations that require action. “*By mobilizing citizens’ communicative freedom for the formation of political beliefs that in turn influence the production of legitimate law, illocutionary obligations of this sort build up into a potential that holders of administrative power should not ignore*”.⁴² Here illocutionary, a basic

⁴⁰ Tutui, Viorel, ”Theoretical Models of Deliberative Democracy: A Critical Analysis”, *Argumentum*, XIII (2015): 180

⁴¹ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 147.

⁴² *Ibid*

term in speech act theory, refers to the action performed in or by the utterance of a speech (e.g. request, promise, suggestion, etc.)⁴³.

Habermas relies on Hannah Arendt's view when discussing political power. According to this, political power is an authorizing force to make legitimate law and institutions. This goal is achieved by ensuring political liberty among the people. The political power is supposed to counter any force that restricts this political freedom, for example foreign forces in an occupied country, the civil disobedience of minorities, etc. Thus, political power protects the communicative action that is supposed to create the legitimate law.⁴⁴ Political autonomy is exercised to protect the united citizens' communicative formation of law making. Arendt argues also that power, as such, can be created only through communicative action. Thus, political authorities do not have the possibility of expanding their power as they wish. Communicative power is what organizations compete for, however none of them can create it.⁴⁵ This, however, does not explain how the administrative power of a state comes about.

Habermas argues that the law is "*the medium through which communicative power is translated into administrative power*"⁴⁶. This means that the law which was created through a common will formation (communicative power) constitutes a power code that gives the authorization to the administrative bodies to make collectively binding decisions (administrative power). This is the only way that the administrative authority will represent the public's will which was achieved in the communicative action, and the administration will not be biased by interference of illegitimate social power from the privileged interests of external actors, or politicians self interests.⁴⁷

The 'sluice model' of power circulation explains the transformation of the communicative power. The communication flow departs from the periphery which is rooted in the lifeworld. The lifeworld is a web of communicated life experiences "*that branch out through social space and historical time, and these live off sources of cultural traditions and legitimate orders no less than they depend on the identities of socialized individuals*"⁴⁸. The abstract lifeworld provides experiences of every-

⁴³ Encyclopedia Britannica. *Philosophy of Language*. Accessed May 5, 2018.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy-of-language/Ordinary-language-philosophy#ref257842>

⁴⁴ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 148.

⁴⁵ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 149.

⁴⁶ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 150.

⁴⁷ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 150.

⁴⁸ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 80.

day interactions, the first steps of the communicative actions. Following that, the communicative via the public sphere goes through the “*sluices of democratic and constitutional procedures*”⁴⁹ to reach the entrance of the parliamentary complex as illustrated on Figure 1. This is the only way that the power of the administrative system and the social power will not interfere with the communicative power which ensures the separation of powers. In the above system the public sphere plays the intermediary role between the periphery and center.⁵⁰

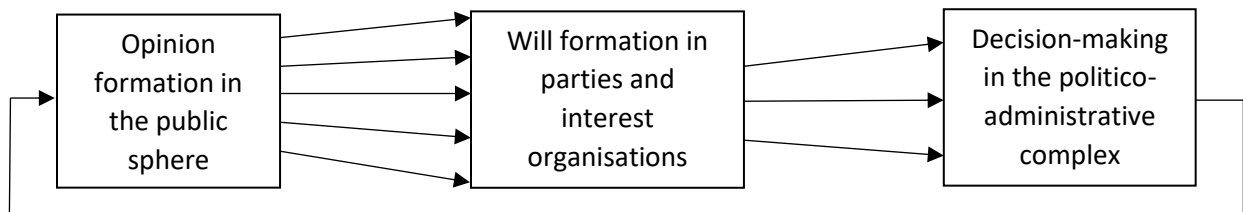


Figure 1. The circulation of political power.⁵¹

As a result of this circulation of the power public deliberation is guaranteed that is center of legitimacy in the discourse theory. To conclude on Habermas’ separation of powers, the communicative power is the key to the legitimacy of the political system. Communicative power must precede political and administrative powers in the creation and it must not be interfered with any other power such as social power. Communicative power goes through a transformation that prepares it to enter the political system. These crucial steps of legitimacy will be discussed in the next section.

The public sphere

According to Habermas, the public sphere is the warning system of the society for channelling problems from the lifeworld into the political system that can not be solved elsewhere. He defines the role of a public sphere, as internal part of the democratic theory, „*to amplify the pressure of problems*”⁵². This means that the public sphere is not only supposed to find problems but it must

⁴⁹ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 356

⁵⁰ Ibid: 356.

⁵¹ Fossum, Schlesinger, *The European Union and the Public Sphere*, 6.

⁵² Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 359.

also thematize them, give them possible solutions, and „dramatize” them to an extent that they will be taken up by the parliamentary complexes.⁵³ The public sphere can be seen within the social order as *„a network for communicating information and points of view(...) The streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions.”*⁵⁴

Linguistically constituted public space, that unfolds in an intersubjective encounter, is open to potential dialogue partners who could either be ‘bystanders’ or actively join those present. This public space has certain type of forms, when it is expanded and it has become permanent. Such forms are the forums, stages, arenas. The more the participants detach themselves from a physical space, and enter into a virtual space of readers, listeners, or viewers linked by the public media, the more abstract this public space is, leading to a public sphere.⁵⁵

In the communication structures the opinion formation is separated from the decision making, that is, reserved for the institutionalized political process. These opinions are sorted in the public sphere by their issues and contributions. The contributions are weighted by positive and negative responses they receive. These bundled opinions we can call public opinion, once there are enough approvals to it and it fulfilled the steps of its creation. The public opinion is not the sum of individuals’ private opinions, thus it must not be mistaken for the results of statistical surveys. *„Political opinion polls provide a certain reflection of „public opinion” only if they have been preceded by a focused public debate and a corresponding opinion-formation in a mobilized public sphere”.*⁵⁶

Several actors enter in the public sphere in order to gain political power. This is done through practice of political influence on the public opinion. The actors, persons or institutions, can make contributions to the public opinion by enjoying a reputation. *„The actors’ roles that increasingly professionalize and multiply with organizational complexity and range of media are, of course, furnished with unequal opportunities for exerting influence.”*⁵⁷ However, the public audience must be convinced in the discussed issues by *„comprehensible and broadly interesting contributions”*⁵⁸.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 360.

⁵⁵ Ibid: 361.

⁵⁶ Ibid: 362.

⁵⁷ Ibid: 363.

⁵⁸ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 364.

*„The public audience possesses final authority, because it is constitutive for the internal structure and reproduction of the public sphere, the only place where actors can appear. ”*⁵⁹

There are two types of actors in the public sphere. There is one that emerges from within, and another one that takes an already established public domain. Public opinion, which generated among them, can be manipulated but it can not be bought or publicly blackmailed. The public sphere can only fulfil its functions (perceiving and thematizing) if arises from the communication among those who are potentially affected.⁶⁰

The communicative power is born in the private spheres. The public sphere is linked to these private spheres (networks between friends, families, neighbours, etc) through communication channels. First, problems emerge from personal life experiences. They depart from the 'lifeworld' which is, as it was above discussed, is a web of private life histories.⁶¹ The public sphere, from a structural perspective, has an intermediary structure between the political system and the private sectors. *„It represents a highly complex network that branches out into a multitude of overlapping international, national, regional, local and subcultural arenas. ”*⁶²

The public sphere can be broken down into sub parts according to substance, density of communication, organisational complexity, and range. In the substantive differentiation we can find such public spheres as popular science and literary publics, religious and artistic publics, publics concerned with health-care issues, social welfare or environmental policy. Habermas also distinguishes between 3 levels based on communication density and organisational complexity, which can be episodic, occasional and abstract. Episodic publics can be in eg. taverns, coffee houses, or on the streets. Occasional or arranged publics are such events as theater performances, music concerts, party assemblies, or church congresses. The abstract public sphere widens in space because it consists of isolated readers, listeners and viewers in large areas, or even around the globe, connected only by the mass media.⁶³

Additionally, Nancy Fraser distinguishes between 'weak' and 'strong' public spheres. 'Strong' public sphere consists of parliamentary assemblies and discursive bodies in formal institutions that

⁵⁹ Ibid: 364.

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid: 365.

⁶² Ibid: 373.

⁶³ Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 374.

already possess the decision-making power. On the other hand, 'weak' public sphere deliberates outside of the political system and they do not have direct influence on decision making unless in revolutionary situations or constitutional moments, etc.

After discussing deliberation through the public sphere, it will be investigated how Habermas' theory of the public sphere can be brought beyond the borders of the nation state.

Transnationalisation of the public sphere

Whereas Habermas focuses on the public sphere as the 'demos' of a state, he does not explain how international issues that concern a broader public will be discussed. Frederica Gregoratto draws upon Habermas' discourse theory of deliberative democracy and addresses the question of transnationalisation of the public sphere in her scientific article, *Transnational Discourses between Facts and Norms. Toward a Two-Track Model of the Public Sphere*. Gregoratto challenges the model of public sphere which describes a Westphalian-national framing. This means that the public opinion which was generated in the public sphere addresses the national state. However, according to Gregatto „*the present reality of the public sphere contradicts such Westphalian-national image*”. Issues today do not limit themselves to the territory of states but they extend beyond borders. Public opinion is thus also becoming more transnational. Gregatto relies on the Habermasian idea that discourses of validity claims that are based on universal norms require the broadest audience possible. These moral claims can not be restricted to exclusive circle but it must be based on the participation of all affected persons.

In order to create a bridge between the public sphere theory that was designed for nation states and the transnational public opinion, Nancy Fraser attempts to reconceptualise certain key theoretical elements in Habermas' theory. She argues that (1) *normative legitimacy* and (2) *political efficacy* are essential to the concept, thus, without these the concept would lose its critical force and its political point.⁶⁴ She breaks down both of these conceptual factors into smaller units and point out

⁶⁴ Fraser, *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*, 8.

that some of them were fixed due to the historical character of the nation state. Point 1 will look normative legitimacy, and point 2 will address political efficacy:

1. In conventional public sphere theory for a public opinion to be legitimate, it must be generated in communicative arenas where interlocutors are fellow members of a political community with equal rights to participate in political life. This is one of the conditions that is clearly not met in a transnational space, because of the lack of global government. Fraser makes a distinction of the criteria for regarding interlocutors as legitimate between the 'inclusiveness' ('who') and 'participatory parity' ('how'). She points out that in the past the 'who' was attached to citizenship by common sense due to the Westphalian frame which we must reconsider in today's global context. She utilizes Habermas' concept of 'all affected' as a requirement for participation and she replaces the Westphalian constitutional system with „*common set of structures and/or institutions that affect their lives*”⁶⁵. This opens up the possibility of membership in transnational public opinion regardless of political citizenship.⁶⁶
2. Political efficacy means that public deliberation must be reflected in the political decision-making and must be held accountable to the public (communicative) power. Fraser makes a distinction, between 'translation', the condition of translating communicative power to administrative power through law, and 'capacity' referring to the implementation of the discursively formed will. She argues that the latter was taken for granted in the past, because the Westphalian state had the means to carry out all those laws. On the other hand, today „the modern state no longer possesses the administrative ability to steer 'its' economy, ensure the integrity of 'its' national environment, and provide security and well-being of 'its' citizens (...)”⁶⁷. Therefore, what was presupposed in the frames of the Westphalian state, „that economies were effectively national and could be steered by national states in the interest of national citizens” seem to be changing in the intertwined global economy. The existence of transnational public spheres should not be rejected so easily, because the condition of binding law is not met. Fraser critically notes that for

⁶⁵ Ibid: 30.

⁶⁶ Ibid: 29-31.

⁶⁷ Ibid: 32.

genuine transnational public spheres an accountable transnational power is still necessary.⁶⁸ This condition is, however, largely met in case of the European Union.

4. Overview on the European public sphere

This chapter aims at giving an overview on the possibility, necessity and different concepts on the European public sphere that created a broad debate among contemporary scientific thinkers.

Klaus Eder claims that the supranational level is difficult to democratise due to its basic characteristics. „*The theory of the regulatory state states that democratic procedures that maximise participation may become incompatible with the functional task of supranational institutions to regulate social and economic processes beyond the national level*”.⁶⁹ One solution to this problem could be to minimize the regulatory tasks of the supranational institutions as much as possible and keep them on national level. However, the recent global development shows that supranational institutions can not afford that 'luxury' of staying out of politics. The global market is keep advancing and as a result of this, there are more and more issues that require political solutions on this level. „*This implies that democratic procedures are unavoidable at the transnational level and any may even be required than ever before (assuming the normative premise that politics is to be based on some kind of democratic process of consensus-building)*”.⁷⁰

Claes H. de Vreese argues for the potential role that a European public sphere could serve in the EU's political system. Based on deliberative model of democratic theory, he argues that public sphere is essential in the political system as it relies on the consent of the governed. Thus, a public sphere in case of the European Union could result in further democratisation as well as it would serve as communication channel for the European affairs. Following this line of thought the European public sphere can be viewed as democratic precondition for the European decision making. Vresse, however, does not see the existence of a European public sphere as exclusive tool for the integration process of the EU. This contributes to the idea of 'weak publics' that is wild

⁶⁸ Fraser, *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*, 33.

⁶⁹ Fossum, Schlesinger, *The European Union and the Public Sphere*, 44.

⁷⁰ Ibid

and anarchic⁷¹ and that can potentially act as anti-European. Vreese argues that regardless of the debate on legitimacy of the EU, one should accept that a public sphere in the EU would be beneficial for its democratic condition. „*A viable public sphere not only contributes to the legitimacy of a system but also to the accountability by showing political actors in action and providing a forum for evaluating their performance.*”⁷²

Ulrike Liebert attempts to directly apply the deliberative model to the EU's parliamentary system. However, similarly to Gregoratto, he argues that the EU public sphere can not be regarded in the traditional way. „*In the view of unprecedented structure of the EU as a new form of multi-level and pluri-national polity, the European public sphere cannot be conceived along national lines and should rather be depicted as a radically different, possibly 'postmodern' form.*”⁷³ He notes that the European Parliament, even though it fulfills certain preconditions of public deliberation, with its practices still does not contribute to a truly democratic public opinion because of the following constraints: (1) EP plenary debates are not so commonly dealt with in the national media. (2) The electoral system privileges national and not European political parties which results in „*'segmented Europeanisation' of political communications within the boundaries of the member states*”.⁷⁴ (3) The insufficient use of mass media for which Liebert has given an example from 1999 where two researchers have dubbed the EP's press directorate the 'Great Non-communicator'. One could argue that, since, there is a growing coverage of European issues in the mass media, as it is reflected in the study carried out by Boomgaarden and de Vreese. However, the media coverage and the campaign leading up to the EP elections have still not become European in their nature.⁷⁵

One main deviation among scholars in relation to the existence of a European public sphere is what form of public sphere should be regarded as a genuine public sphere. Some scholars argue that a European public sphere is non-existent because we can not find a pan-European public sphere, while others argue that not only the Europeanisation of national public spheres can be detected but we can also see the existence of a genuine European wide public sphere. This debate can clearly

⁷¹ Gregoratto, Frederica. “Transnational Discourses between Facts and Norms”. *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* VIII (2013): 2

⁷² De Vreese, Claes H. “The EU as a public sphere”. *Living Reviews in European Governance* II (2007): 8

⁷³ Fossum, Schlesinger, *The European Union and the Public Sphere*, 260.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*: 266.

⁷⁵ De Vreese, van der Brug, *(Un)intended Consequences of European Parliamentary Elections*, 278.

be seen in the three empirical research studies that are critically reviewed in the Analysis of the thesis. Their concepts will be discussed in this chapter.

Bijsmans & Altides, in their research study *'Bridging the Gap' between EU Politics and Citizens? The European Commission, National Media and EU Affairs in the Public Sphere (2007)*, take an approach on the public sphere as the means to increase the EU's legitimacy. Therefore, they foremost look at how the EU can increase its legitimacy by engaging in more deliberative politics. In their view media is important here because they connect the political level with the citizens. They borrow their most important hypothesis from Kantner, who claims that there is not enough attention on European affairs in the media. Without delivering policy goals to the citizens, there can not be deliberative political processes, as the citizens will not even have the chance to participate in the debate related to these issues.⁷⁶

Following the Maastricht Treaty EU politics have become more salient, with more impact with the citizens. The authors take notice of the fact that the EU eventually realised that it needs to improve its citizens communication as a result of its growing power. This was realised in the initiation of the EU's Communication Strategy with an ambitious Action Plan. The Strategy intended to close the gap between by proposing more deliberative plan. Bijsmans & Altides imply that the media play an important role in the achievement of this Action Plan. There is a growing number of journalists in Brussels, however this growth does not correspond to substantial rise of EU affairs in national media coverage *due to their highly technical nature and seeming detachedness from the national political process.*⁷⁷ Even though the coverage did not increase substantially, the authors recognize that there is more public scrutiny in the media.⁷⁸

According to the authors while in nation states there is a straightforward system of political communication, in case of the European Union this tends to be somewhat blurred in regard to accountability and responsibility. This confusion with institutional roles allows national governments to put the blame on the EU or specifically on the European Commission when taking unpleasant (often by reaching a deal behind closed doors). For the Commission to effectively initiate policies and restore its image, it must escape from the so called 'blame game' and needs to

⁷⁶ Bijsmans; Altides, "'Bridging the Gap' ...", *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 324

⁷⁷ Ibid: 332

⁷⁸ Ibid: 324

acquire public support from the European public sphere. Bijsmans & Altides elaborate on their view of this public sphere which is in accordance with the widely accepted concept, that such a public sphere is constituted from the the sum of national public spheres.⁷⁹

They argue, since there is no pan-European public sphere, it makes sense to build on already existing structures. The authors rely on Meyer's concept of prerequisites for political communication generated public debate, that can be broken down into three dimensions. First, the issue dimension that gives possibility for feedback. Second, the procedural dimension that contributes to visibility and accountability. Finally, the accountability dimension that guarantees that political actors are personally accountable to the public sphere.⁸⁰

Marianne Van de Steeg disagrees with general thinking on the European public sphere in her study where she investigates the existence of a European-wide public sphere. She goes against the idea that the transnational public sphere is merely the aggregate of fragmented national public spheres. She takes on the challenge to prove that in certain cases there does exist a public „*space where citizens – in practice: an elite of citizens – discuss issues with each other in the presence of a public that itself has (at least theoretically) the chance to intervene and participate*”.⁸¹ For this purpose she borrows the traditional tenets on the public sphere from Habermas, who considers the public sphere as a multi-level system, where the public sphere is not a clearly defined group of citizens, but it is an overlap of different layers of spheres. Due to the nature of international space, she moves away from the micro layers of the public (such as coffee houses, the streets) and defines her focus on the more abstract „*public readers, listeners, and viewers scattered across large geographic areas, or even around the globe, and brought together only through the mass media*”.⁸² In her view, the public sphere does not always constitute the same people, rather specific issues will bring together different public spheres. As a result, the nature of the public sphere also varies according to issues, such as its geographical extent. Therefore, the main factor that characterizes the public sphere is the „*specific debate that is being held in that forum*”.⁸³ This issue-based concept claims that when the same content is discussed with the same degree in different fora, it can result in the creation of the transnational public sphere. „*This rule of thumb is based on the*

⁷⁹ Bijsmans; Altides, “‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 325

⁸⁰ Ibid: 326

⁸¹ Van de Steeg, “Does a public sphere exist...?” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 609-610

⁸² Habermas, *Facts and Norms*, 374.

⁸³ Van de Steeg, “Does a public sphere exist...?” *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 611

*consideration that where two strangers become engaged in a conversation, they end up talking about the same topics and covering the same arguments.”*⁸⁴ Then she applies this to the mass media when she argues: „...when similar topics and arguments are being put forward in several forums (i.e., newspapers), there is likely to be a shared debate”⁸⁵.

In order to prove this point she draws on a case, that she regards as the most likely case of the appearance of a European public sphere. Her example is the coming to power of the far right Austrian politician, Jörg Haider which was unanimously condemned by the then 14 member states of the EU.

Koopmans & Statham place political communication at the centre of their attention in their book *The Making of the Public Sphere (2010)*. Their concept of the public sphere is closely related to the characteristics of what political actors communicate to the public. Therefore, in their approach political claim-making is the key for understanding Europeanisation processes. Unlike Van de Steeg, Koopmans & Statham accept the contemporary wisdom that genuine European public sphere can not exist due to the cultural boundaries and the lack of common language. In their view, „the possible emergence of English as a true lingua franca”⁸⁶ is yet very distant by virtue of the resistance in many member states to cultural homogenisation.⁸⁷

They draw theoretical inspiration instead from Jürgen Gerhards, who rejects the possibility of a genuinely supranational European public sphere and proposes the concept of „Europeanisation of the various national public spheres.”⁸⁸ According to this, mass media will gradually focus less on nation state context and include the European perspective. Gerhards also proposes that Europeanisation of policies and politics in the EU should be on the model of the nation states. Thus, he demands government-opposition dynamics for the EU as well in order to handle its democratic deficit. Koopmans & Statham consider this view, but they argue that Gerhard does not take into account that the EU does not only have supranational powers, but much of its operation is on intergovernmental basis. „These intergovernmental features of the European polity are more likely to be expressed in an alternative form of Europeanization of public spheres...”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 35.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 35.

⁸⁹ Ibid: 37.

This means that Europeanisation is not only connected with EU institutions, but also in particular member states the politics of other member states will increasingly appear.⁹⁰ An illustrative example to this could be the case of Greece during the economic crisis where the political and economic processes had great potential to affect the entire eurozone, thus the country's affairs became salient in the European mass media.

Koopmans & Altides construct their own theoretical framework for the possible ways of Europeanisation of public communication and mobilization, which has 3 dimensions based on the directions of political claims

1. The emergence of supranational European public sphere in form of the appearance of claims in the mass media by European-level institutions and collective actors around European themes addressing each other.
2. Vertical public sphere, which consists of actors top-down or bottom-up communication.
3. Horizontal public sphere between political actors of member states, that can be weak or strong depending if it is merely media reference or there is actual communication links between the countries' actors.⁹¹

To summarize on the contemporary views on the existence of the public sphere, this chapter identified the following main concepts. Eder brought up the barriers of democratisation in the European Union, while de Vreese argued for the necessity of it based on EU's need for legitimacy. Ulrike found that the deliberative model of democracy can not be directly applied on the EU due to being a multi-level pluri-national polity. The debate on the existence of a European public sphere is represented by the authors whose empirical studies will be critically reviewed in the Analysis. Bijsmans & Altides hypothesize that the preconditions of deliberation is lacked by the EU in virtue of EU-media communication. Van de Steeg hypothesize that in specific cases there appears a genuine (pan-)European public sphere, potentially in the Haider case. Finally, Koopmans &

⁹⁰ Ibid: 35-37.

⁹¹ Ibid: 38.

Statham propose their hypothesis deducted by the EU's institutional structure, therefore Europeanisation can occur on supranational, vertical, or horizontal levels.

5. Analysis

The aim of the Analysis of this thesis is to reveal the existence of a potential European public sphere through the critical review of contemporary empirical research. The structure of the Analysis was inspired by Koopmans & Statham who distinguished 3 dimensions where the public sphere can be investigated: issues, time, and countries.⁹² This gives the possibility to investigate if the visibility of a European public sphere is limited to any extent by specific issues, if it appears periodically or constantly, possibly increasingly, and if it is spatially limited to a certain set of countries. The case studies will be included in those dimensions only where they have reflections on that particular dimension, e.g. the Haider case will not be included in the Time section as it does not cover a longer period of time. The three dimensions do not filter the content of the research studies, these will be fully presented, and the dimensions only serve the purpose of better overview in the dimensions where they make the most significant contributions.

The visibility of the EPS by issues

This section will be devoted to the issue extent of the EPS. Two reserach studies will be reviewed by Bijsmans & Altides and Koopmans & Statham, because these present more than one issue that can reflect on issue specific characters.

⁹² Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 63.

Issue contribution of the study by Bijsmans & Altides

Bijsmans & Altides present a comparison between the media's coverage of two policy areas, namely the enlargement policy and sustainability policy from 2003. The newspapers were drawn from Germany and the Netherlands. One might argue though, it would show more contrast if they selected countries that have more differences in their media traditions, which would provide a broader scope for generalisation on European wide media.

Enlargement was a salient issue at the time because of the ongoing Eastern enlargement. The independent factor for comparison in the chosen policy areas is that in both cases the Commission extensively dealt with the issues on the agenda, which resulted in a significant contribution of press releases in both cases⁹³. This is what the authors took as a starting point for comparison to evaluate how well the media covers these issues. Using these indicators they investigated similar patterns in the two countries' media. Although, it could have added further reflections if the authors changed these variables by analysing policy areas that have also lower and higher number of press releases. This could have tested the solidity and reliability of these factors.

Bijsmans & Altides depart from distinguishing between the different topics that were covered in the two policy areas. An overview of these is illustrated on Table 1. In the sustainability case this meant around the same coverage in topics for both Commission press releases and media press news articles, such as EU activities in the fields of saving energy, fostering hydrogen and fossil fuels and waste management. The authors found the main difference only in the emphasis of policy initiation and implementation. Policy initiation was covered more by the press releases, whereas the news articles tended to focus more on policy implementation. (The authors rightly argue that this is due to the different interests in media and politics.) In the case of accession of new member states the authors, again, found that the topics of both press releases and news articles were primarily the same with no major differences. This included „*the accession referenda in the candidate countries and their progress in the transposition and implementation of EU laws and requirements.*”⁹⁴

Comparing the results

⁹³ Bijsmans; Altides, "“Bridging the Gap’ ...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 330

⁹⁴ Bijsmans; Altides, "“Bridging the Gap’ ...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 331

	Sustainability	Accession process
Policy explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed <i>policy background</i> by both the European Commission (EC) and media; • <i>Active versus passive EC involvement</i> in press releases versus media; • EC more on <i>reasons/aims</i> and <i>measures</i>, significantly more on <i>citizens' relevance</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed <i>policy background</i> by both EC and media; • <i>Active EC involvement</i> in press releases and media; • EC more on <i>reasons/aims</i> and <i>measures</i>, significantly more on <i>citizens' relevance</i>
Procedural information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission and media focus on <i>present policy steps</i> but also considerable information on <i>future and past steps</i>; • Media <i>less on future and past</i> than EC; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather <i>equal treatment</i> by EC versus <i>present and future</i> preference for media; • Qualitative difference between EC and media <i>future</i> references;
Information on responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Personalization</i> versus EC as an “<i>obscure authority</i>”; • Qualitative difference between EC and media when mentioning <i>other actors involved</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High <i>personalization</i> on both sides (even if not 100%); • Qualitative difference between EC and media when mentioning <i>other actors involved</i>

Table 1.⁹⁵

The authors of the study point out as major difference in the two cases, the way the media handles the Commission's roles in the topics of sustainability compared to the accession process of the Eastern European countries. In the latter the Commission is shown as competent, actively engaging, whereas in the sustainability policy its role is portrayed as subsidiary and in many cases the Commission is mentioned indirectly as „*Brussels*, *EU legislation*’ or *projects funded ‘by the EU*’”.⁹⁶ They add that the responsibilities are also more precisely described by the media in the case of enlargement compared to sustainability. The authors combine these arguments to give a theoretical explanation on the media's behaviour. Their alternative reasoning is based on a concept from Peterson & Bomberg which conceives the enlargement as a history-making decision. Bijsmans & Altides claim that an event like that would interest the European public sphere more than a technocratic issue.⁹⁷ It seems so that the authors were using the terms of 'media' and 'European public sphere' interchangeably which would be then a fallacy, because arguably the media has profit oriented interests, while the public sphere has interests in the common good. The

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Bijsmans; Altides, “‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 332

⁹⁷ Ibid

authors, arguably, fell into fallacy when drawing that conclusion as they use the 'media' interchangeably with the 'European public sphere'.

Additional similarities found by the authors was in the way Commission and media deals with time, goals of initiatives, and tasks of the Commission. In the presented findings in all these cases the media fell short of detailed description. Compared to the media coverage, the Commission focused more on the past and future of policies, specified a wide range of goals and responsibilities.⁹⁸ However, when discussing these points the authors become rather ambiguous about which policy case exactly show these patterns.

What might be more relevant from the perspective of a public sphere is the citizens' interest in the communicated issues. The findings of the authors show that there were differences in the way and extent the Commission and the media perceived the citizens' interests. They give a specific example of the proposed energy labelling system. Whereas the Commission focused more on the citizens' long-term benefits, the media seemed more concerned with the citizens' financial interests. Generally, the enlargement case showed less implications about citizens' interest in both type of contents.⁹⁹

Bijsmans & Altides finishes on the empirical part of their research by concluding that there was only one field where the media managed to surpass the press releases in detail and transparency. This was the reference on other actors, where the the news articles provided a larger amount of participating actors with being more explicit on their involvement than the press releases.

To sum up on the findings of the empirical study by Bijsmans & Altides, whereas the media generally covered the same topics within each policy, it clearly filtered on the content of these topics compared to the press releases, which is most clearly seen in the case of sustainability that the authors regarded as a low salience issue. The media showed no interest in past and future aspects of policies, and did not thoroughly describe the responsibilities of the Commission as they were stated in the press releases. Both in issues and actors the media and Commission highlighted different interests. And, finally the Commission did not seem to expand on how its roles are connected with other European level institutions as much as the media did.

⁹⁸ Ibid: 333

⁹⁹ Ibid: 333-334

Issue contribution of the study by Koopmans & Statham

Another case study to reflect on Europeanisation of issues was carried out by Koopmans & Statham. In their analysis, however, the issues remained independent variables. Thus, they intentionally selected issues that they expected to show difference in media visibility based on the pillar system. They have chosen policy fields from the three pillars. The fields where they expected more claim making coverage in the media was the agriculture and monetary policy, where the EU acquired substantial supranational prerogatives. In immigration and troop deployment there was a shared policy making power between European and national levels, but mainly consisting of intergovernmental negotiations. And finally they chose education and retirement to represent those policy areas where the EU had only marginal power. Additionally, they identified European integration as a meta-issue „*as changes in European polity structures and enlargement of EU membership require the consent and cooperation of both the individual member states and European-level institution.*”¹⁰⁰ Thus, using the fixed institutional power distribution used as a reference point, they used two hypotheses to investigate the Europeanness of the claim-making in the media in the 7 EU member states.

Hypothesis 1 expects that „*claims by actors from the European polity level, such as the European Commission or the European Parliament, will be strongly represented in issue fields where decision making has important supranational components...*”¹⁰¹ and correspondingly Hypothesis 2 expects that „*claims by actors from other European countries will be strongly represented in issue fields where decision making has important intergovernmental components, such as European integration, immigration, and troop deployment, and will be relatively marginal in other issue fields*”¹⁰². The authors confirm both hypotheses in their findings.

¹⁰⁰ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 64.

¹⁰¹ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 64.

¹⁰² Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 65.

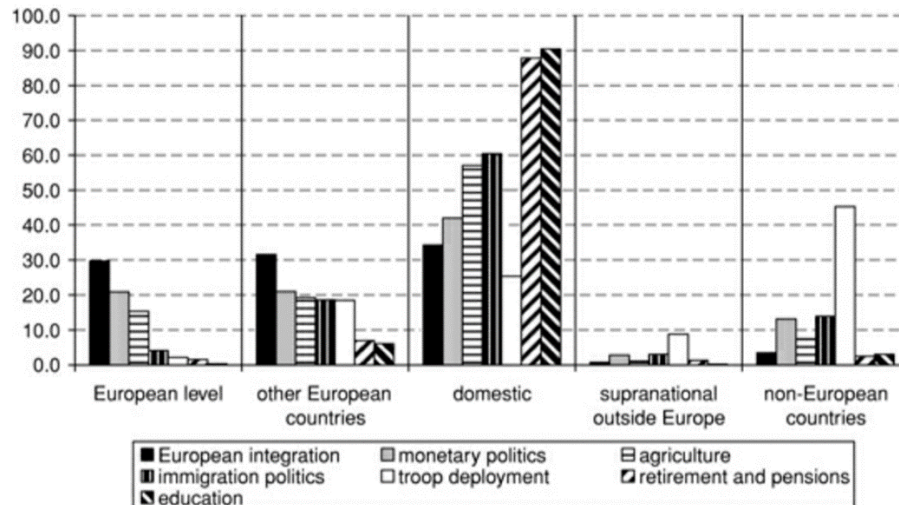


Figure 1.¹⁰³

The proportion of claims, depicted on Figure 1, shows that claims made from European level actors in the policy areas European integration(30%), monetary policy(21%), and agriculture(15%), where the EU had supranational power, were reasonably higher than in the policy areas of immigration(4%), education(0.3%), where the EU had only marginal authority. The authors conclude that this proves the vertical Europeanisation of policy fields. Koopmans & Statham notes that *Hypothesis 2* only partly proves right. Even though European integration(32%), immigration(19%), and troop deployment(19%), policies of high intergovernmental power, prove to be relevant, pensions(7%) and education(6%), that were almost exclusively under national authority, showed low proportion of claims by other European countries. Monetary policy(21%) and agriculture(20%) on the contrary appeared to be higher in percentage, regardless of their supranational nature. Thus, the authors conclude here that supranationalisation does not necessarily result in lower attention for actors from other European countries.

The main findings of this section was that high Europeanisation of European level claims can be clearly seen in those policy fields where the decision-making power was concentrated in the EU, and horizontal Europeanisation did not reflect so strong patterns. Additionally, where supranational claims increased, did not result in lower horizontal claims, that the authors accounted for the lack of influence by vertical Europeanisation on horizontal one.

¹⁰³ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 65.

The visibility of the EPS by time

Time contribution of the study by Koopmans & Statham

This part will examine how the selected research reflects on the time perspective. If the public sphere continuously exists or it appears only at certain times

Koopmans & Statham investigated how claim-making evolved in the time period between 1990 and 2002. They proposed two hypotheses based on the fact that the European integration deepened with the treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice. Thus, they expected rise in „*the shares of claims by European-level actors and by actors from foreign European countries will have increased.*”¹⁰⁴. Since, with the introduction of the euro, arguably the most apparent advancement could be seen in monetary policy, thus the authors expected that the „*shares of claim making by European-level actors and by actors from foreign European countries will be particularly pronounced in the field of monetary politics*”¹⁰⁵.

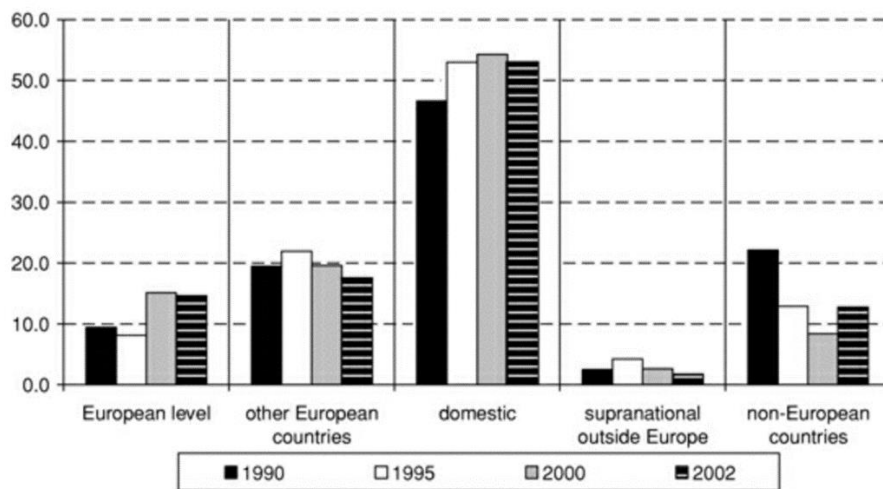


Figure 2. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 68.

The authors confirm these hypotheses from their findings, because claims by actors had increased, even though not gradually, between 1990 and 2002 by 6% from European level compared to other European countries', domestic, other supranational and non-European actors. The second hypothesis is not shown on the figure, since it is focused specifically on monetary politics. A part of their second hypothesis was confirmed as well, that is, the claims in the media from European level actors increased spectacularly by 20% in the field of monetary policy. The same confirmation could not be applied to the claims from foreign European countries. They account the increase of 10% between 1990 and 1995 to the convergence process of the euro which created more interest in the member states for each others' currencies. Nevertheless, they concluded that there was an overall decrease of claims from other European countries. To support their point they give another example in the meta-field of European integration where again a substantial increase in the share of claims could be observed vertically, whereas the horizontal claims increased by only 1%.¹⁰⁷

Koopmans and Statham summarize their results by stating that Europeanisation could be seen only vertically in the examined period. They assume that the lack of horizontal Europeanisation could be attributed to a trade-off between the European and national level, such as in monetary politics with the introduction of the euro there were no own currencies, thus public debate did not have to pay attention to other European countries' actors in this regard.¹⁰⁸

The visibility of the EPS by countries

Spatial contribution of the study by Van de Steeg

In this subchapter it will be discussed how many countries get involved in the potential European public sphere. First the Haider case will be drawn from Van de Steeg, which will be followed of the case study of Koopmans & Statham.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid: 69.

¹⁰⁸ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 69.

In the findings of the Haider case there is difference between the EU countries' newspapers and the newspapers of the United States as it is indicated by the research of Van de Steeg.

The indicators are the four themes of frames that she identified from the discovered frames: „*first, **Waving the European flag**, both the author of the article and the cited actors identify Europe as a community guided by moral values and legal standards, pro-sanctions. In the second, **Upholding the law**, Europe is seen as a legal community, against the sanctions against interfering with a democratically elected government, defending Austria's image; these descriptions are used by both the author and the cited actors. In the third, **Haider and Austria are Nazi**, the author of the article uses strong evaluative frames; and Haider and Austria are accused of being Nazi and xenophobe. Finally, with **Haider is said to be a Nazi**, a cited foreign actor uses the evaluative frames related to Haider.*”¹⁰⁹ Van de Steeg only implicitly states that among these themes 'Waving the European' and 'Haider and Austria are Nazi' included the most frequent discourses.

From these themes of frames 'Upholding the law' and 'Haider is said to be Nazi' were different in the case of the US, which led her to conclude that there was a particularly European way in the newspapers of EU countries (*first hypothesis*). She also states later that „*The Haider debate was clearly an EU debate, and not something more global*”¹¹⁰. This argument is not entirely convincing because it makes a conclusion that reaches too far based on the comparison with a single country. However, one could argue that the relative population of the United States could somewhat make up for the legitimacy of such a comparison.

Van de Steeg found in the reading of her results that the American newspapers did not intend to actively participate in the European debate, and they rather took a merely observatory attitude to follow the ongoing events. She deducted these conclusions from the discourse themes where in the theme 'Upholding the law' the US rated significantly lower, whereas in 'Haider is said to be Nazi' (as opposed to the explicit 'Haider is a Nazi') rated significantly higher. In the theme of 'Upholding the law' the frames were against the mainstream media frames, whereas 'Haider is said to be Nazi' included frames that only indirectly addressed the issue, citing or referring to European actors. The American papers addressed indirectly Jörg Haider as well such as 'a man

¹⁰⁹ Van de Steeg, "Does a public sphere exist...?" *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 617

¹¹⁰ Van de Steeg, "Does a public sphere exist...?" *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 622

*some label a neo-Nazi' or '[f]or many, Joerg Haider, . . . evokes memories of Europe's unsavory past'*¹¹¹

Van de Steeg makes an implication to the European public sphere when she states: „*The simplest way to demarcate the political community involved is to look at the actors: Who are the participants in a debate?*”

When answering her **second hypothesis** („*variables other than nationality contribute more to explaining the public discourse*”¹¹²) Van de Steeg finds that in the discourse theme 'Haider and Austria are Nazi', although, the values show apparent variation in 'nationality', it is still not more important variable than the 'identity' of the newspapers. She finds similar case of variance in the values of nationality in the 'Waving the European flag' theme, however in this instance it is the 'individuality of the newspaper' that shows the most variance. In the themes 'Upholding the law' and 'Haider and Austria are said to be a Nazi' her values showed much less variation.¹¹³

The author argues that national patterns could be seen the most significant way in the case of the American papers, and it also somewhat appeared in the German newspapers. Regardless of that, the nationality of the papers tend to strongly depend on if it is non-EU.

Van de Steeg makes a possible logical deduction from the context of the events, which she intends to rule out. According to this, since the discourses in 'Waving the European flag' were the leading discourses, there could be an implication that Austria was trying to defend its sovereign interests whereas the European-wide media was bashing Austria. She disapproves this hypothesis by giving a detailed presentation of the two Austrian quality newspapers. The newspaper Der Standard gives more instances in the theme 'Waving the European flag' than in 'Upholding the law', thus taking its own course. On the other hand, the other quality paper Die Presse scores considerably lower in 'Waving the European flag' and higher in 'Upholding the law'. The author makes the conclusion from that there is not a clear Austrian stance on this issue, thus it can not be argued that a single national opinion was collectively attacked.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid: 619-621

¹¹² Ibid: 622

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Van de Steeg, "Does a public sphere exist...?" *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 626

With the *third hypothesis* Van de Steeg wants to prove that not only national differences are not relevant in the Haider case but there are also layers of forums that exist across EU member states that share the same stances instead of merely having their own position. She found only 3 out of the 15 newspapers to show relevant difference. She gives the example of 'Upholding the law' theme where ideology accounted for half of the explained variance. For contrast 'Haider is said to be Nazi' theme mentioned where the highest values can be found for individuality among newspapers. However, even here more than half of the newspapers are connected in a forum on the ground of being published in the EU.¹¹⁵

Van de Steeg does not account for the relations between member states. She only relates to Austria, but she does not depict e.g. how politicians from member states other than Austria relate to each other in their discourses. Thus, we do not get an answer to how transnational communication takes place on a transnational forum, that does not turn only to Austria but the participants deliberate together. She did not discuss how newspapers reference to each other. Specifically the third hypothesis is problematic in this respect. It claims to set up layers of fora/public spheres, but there are no proofs that these public spheres of different type of newspapers/actors appearing in the newspapers transnationally deliberate with each other. This does not necessarily mean that the findings of the paper are incorrect, but the research seems incomplete in light of the drawn conclusions.

As a summery of the Haider case, Van de Steeg found in her study that membership of countries as opposed to the United States show clear difference in the frames found in the media. According to the findings nationality appeared less relevant factors than the ideology or identity of newspapers. And she also concludes on the controversial point that the coexistence of discourses in newspapers with same identity orientation proves the existence of deliberative transnational fora.

¹¹⁵ Ibid: 626-627

Spatial contribution of the study by Koopmans & Statham

Koopmans & Statham looked at how political claim-makers are distributed among 7 countries in order to make implications on the differentiated spatial Europeanisation of public spheres. They took two major factors into consideration. These were the extent of autonomy in a member state and the depth of institutional integration in the EU. First, for the extent of autonomy they determined population size and dependence of economy on other EU member states as indicators. Then for the depth in the European integration they specified EU membership and opt-outs as indicators.

Based on these considerations they propose four hypotheses. *Hypothesis 1* deals with the extent of autonomy as it states that the more a member state is politically and economically dependent on the other member states the more European level actors and actors from other member states will appear in their media by making claims. Such dependence is based on the idea, firstly, that smaller economies are more exposed to external shocks. Secondly, they depend on an umbrella of security alliances and they do not have so much room to manoeuvre in international affairs on their own. The considered countries in order from the highest to the lowest in population were Germany(80 million), Britain, France, Italy(each around 60 million), the Netherlands(16 million), and Switzerland(7 million). Here the authors note that politically Britain and France should be considered more autonomous than their population suggest due to them being nuclear powers and having seats in the UN Security Council. Thus, *Hypothesis 1* expects an inverse effect of claim-making from European level and other European countries based on the particular country's size and political autonomy. The authors took trade as another indicator, where they looked at 3 aspects as it is depicted on Table 2: trade-to-GDP ratio, share of intra-EU-trade, and intra-EU trade-to-GDP ratio.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 70-71.

Openness of the Economy

Country	Trade-to-GDP Ratio(%)	Share of Trade(%)	Intra-EU Intra-EU GDP(%)
Netherlands	66	65	43
Switzerland	45	68	30
Germany	38	65	25
Spain	28	65	18
France	27	67	18
United Kingdom	28	56	16
Italy	26	58	15

Table 2.¹¹⁷

Deducted from these results the authors expect in their **second hypothesis** that „shares of claims by actors from the European level and from other European countries will vary positively with the degree of dependence of a country's economy on trade with EU countries, and will therefore be highest in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany, intermediate in Spain and France, and lowest in the United Kingdom and Italy.“¹¹⁸

Related to the factors of the depth of membership, first, they expect in their **third hypothesis** that, since non-member countries are not directly bound by all the EU decisions, Switzerland will have lower claims by European level and foreign country claims. Secondly, they take into account that the United Kingdom has opted out from several agreements of the EU Community, such as the common currency, the Schengen Agreement, the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Therefore, in their **fourth hypothesis** they assume that claims from European level and from other EU countries will be lower due to these opt-outs.

¹¹⁷ Ibid: 71.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

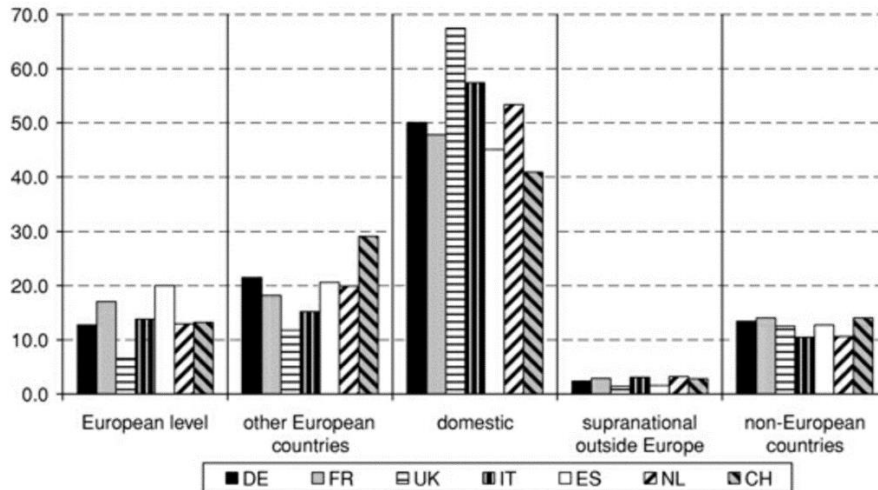


Figure 3.¹¹⁹

In light of the results, as Figure 3 shows, Koopmans & Statham discard two of their hypotheses, H1 that deals with economic and political autonomy, and H3 dealing with non-membership, but instead they propose alternative explanations. The authors, therefore, admit that regardless of Switzerland's membership in the EU, claims appear twice as frequently from European level and three times more frequently from other European countries in their newspapers compared to the UK. France and Germany, two powerful and large countries, appear to include quite some claims in their newspapers both vertically and horizontally from the EU, instead of focusing mainly on domestic actors. Their proposed interpretation is that Germany and France both have national ambitions from the beginning with the European integration. In the case of France, the European Union served as a way to „save some of the country's grandeur”¹²⁰. Whereas for Germany it was an opportunity „to project its influence internationally while avoiding too much emphasis on its national interest and identity...”¹²¹. The authors realise that the spatial area of maintaining great power influence was different in case of the UK that rather focused on keeping privileged relationship with the United States. The authors conclude on that point by admitting that as opposed to size and power, international influence is more a defining factor in relation to the European Union. The two other hypotheses, dealing with trade openness (H2) and with opt-outs

¹¹⁹ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 73.

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Ibid

(H4), is confirmed by the authors in the case of the UK. They explain Switzerland's high level of and Italy's low level of Europeanisation with their economic indicators.

The findings of the study by Koopmans & Statham show a picture where the difference in Europeanisation of claims is apparent. However, their proposed hypotheses based mainly economic and largeness indicators does not hold water entirely. Political and economic autonomy turn out to have little significance and they propose historical greatness as more suitable solutions. Membership also fails to be a relevant indicator in light of the results of Switzerland. Trade openness and opt-outs show partial significance in Europeanisation. However, in the latter one could argue that United Kingdom's opt outs are also rooted in their cultural features.

Summary of the analysis

The findings from the *issue* aspect of European public sphere by Bijsmans & Altides showed that different salience of issues appear in media discourses with both quantitative and qualitative differences. Koopmans & Statham found that the power distribution between member states and clearly affected the Europeanisation of policy areas. Therefore, issues seem to be limiting factors in the way Europeanisation of public debate takes place.

The *time* aspect of European public sphere which was illustrated only the in the study of Koopmans & Statham show apparent increase of Europeanisation in the period between 1990 – 2002, most reflected in the arguably most salient issue of monetary policy. This is, however not reflected in the transnational Europeanisation. The findings show gradual increase, which point at a rather constantly increasing aspect of the European public sphere, and challenges the concept of peridodic European public sphere.

In the country aspect of the European public sphere, Van de Steeg found that the European discourses were much more active, compared to the distinctive attitude of the American newspapers. She did not account for major differences between countries, although the discourses were salient in all cases. Additionally, she assumed that newspaper ideology/identity is more relevant factor than nationality. On the other hand, Koopmans & Statham found differences between Europeanisation of different countries, where trade openness and opt-outs seemed to be significant factors. Again contrasting results were shown by the two researchers compared to Van

de Steeg, because membership did not seem to play a key role in Europeanisation. However, it can be argued that since Switzerland is in many ways connected to the European Union, it has obviously much more influence by Europeanisation than United States.

Some of these findings are contradictory that can be based on the different concepts and data selection as well as different logics in drawing conclusions. Therefore, the next chapter offers a discussion between these different stances.

6. Discussion

Following the analysis of contemporary empirical research, two extremes can be identified about the existence of a European public sphere, complemented with a third intermediary approach. While Bijsmans & Altides argue much of the preconditions lacks for a public debate, and as result of that for a public sphere, on the other hand, Van de Steeg claims she has proofs for the existence of a genuine European public sphere deducted from the Haider-case. The third approach, represented by Koopmans & Statham do not jump into so far-reaching conclusions, thus proposing a more critical concept, where Europeanisation differs according to different dimensions. The aim of this chapter is to discuss, how the generally similar media studies resulted in different results and concepts.

Departing from the more pessimistic view, Bijsmans & Altides conclude from their findings that the media news articles not only quantitatively but also qualitatively differ from the Commission's press releases, where in most cases the press releases are much more detailed both from the perspective of describing time and responsibility aspects of policies, but Commission's press releases also lack transparency in terms of actors.

Bijsmans & Altides realise when looking at the two case studies in the policy areas of sustainability and enlargement that the media is much more precise in terms of detailed description in case of the enlargement policy. Additionally, while press releases focused on the initiation of policies, the media had a tendency to mainly focus on the implementation. This is where the authors rightly argued that without deliberation, there can not be public debate that corresponds to the

Habermasian idea that public debate must precede any formation of public opinion. Even though transparency of the political system is important, Bijsmans & Altides do not realise that deliberation is a bottom up process, where problems are generated in the lifeworld. Therefore, it is not necessary that European issues will appear in deliberative processes as a reflection on the decision-making of the political system, but they can appear regardless.

Furthermore, they explain the media's filtering attitude with the concept of media logic in striving for newsworthiness. From this perspective decisions (policy implementation) are more important than measures that will only later will be effective or might not have any effect (policy initiations). Similarly, the case of enlargement versus sustainability policy are regarded by the authors as the salience of a „history making decision” as opposed to a „technocratic issue”.¹²² „*Media logic appears to outweigh the democratic function to enable discussion and participation.*”¹²³ This is confirmed by Michael Gurevitch and Jay G. Blumler, two scientists that inspired Habermas, who see one of the media's fundamental role as the „*surveillance of the sociopolitical environment, reporting developments likely to impinge, positively or negatively, on the welfare of the citizens.*”¹²⁴

On the side of the Commission the authors take notice of the lack of transparency about how the Commission works together with other European level actors. The Commission mentions much less of how it cooperates with other bodies, such as the European Parliament compared to the media. Bijsmans & Altides argue, this is a direct result of the Commission trying to avoid politicization, remain neutral, and stay away from conflicting positions. They argue that in the media logic conflict is something journalists often look for.¹²⁵ This supports the thesis of Gerhards that calls for more government-opposition dynamics in the EU's political system.¹²⁶ Apparently, national media apply similar strategies towards their own political system as towards the European Union, regardless the differences of institutional structure, which results in the shortcomings of mediated communication.

¹²² Bijsmans; Altides, ”‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 322

¹²³ Ibid: 336

¹²⁴ Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, 378.

¹²⁵ Bijsmans; Altides, ”‘Bridging the Gap’...”, *European Integration*, XXIX (2007): 336

¹²⁶ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 36.

Whereas Bijsmans & Altides clearly have their interest in the top-down communication processes that guarantee transparency, on the other hand Van de Steeg and Koopmans & Statham seem more concerned with the opposite direction of communication flow, the Europeanisation of the public sphere(s). Van de Steeg declares all her hypotheses to be confirmed, however this is not necessarily true, if we think of her first hypothesis. She rightly chose the United States as comparable country by population. She uses the unfortunate argument that this can be generalized for 'other countries' or even as 'global'. Another weak point in the declaration of a genuine European public sphere is the fact that her study looks at only the frequency of discourses in each country and newspaper but do not look at the interlinks between the actors of each member state. According to Habermas, public opinion must go through a process of deliberation between the participants. Koopmans & Statham addressed this issue by using the instruments of vertical and horizontal claims of political actors, thus illuminating the interlinks that connect the member states. Thus, in the Haider case it can easily happen, that the national public spheres of the member states generated the same discourses along the lines of the same logic. The likelihood to confirm such assumption is reduced by Van de Steeg, when she finds that the representation of discourses, in newspapers with same identity, proportionally match, that she explains as the existence of different fora regardless of nation states.

Regardless of the defects in casuality, the research study was carried out by valid methods, which is still legitimate with less enthusiastic conclusions, such as that there was clear Europeanisation of discourses in the Haider case. Van de Steeg points an interesting feature of the Haider case, which is the fact that both sides of the debate, ideological-historical and democratic-autonom, could be perceived as the protection of European values. She notes there that this can be seen as Europe brought together in a debate to discuss its own identity, which suggests a demos-like feature.¹²⁷

Van de Steeg reaches such a contrasting conclusion compared to the case study of Bijsmans & Altides due to the different logic behind choosing issues. Although in both cases the same methods were used, it seems so, that both Bijsmans & Altides and Van de Steeg selected a most likely case for their theoretical concepts, which made their studies somewhat biased by issue.

¹²⁷ Van de Steeg, "Does a public sphere exist...?" *European Journal of Political Research*, XLV (2006): 627-629

The more representative data selection and methodology by Koopmans & Statham resulted in a middle course. Unlike the authors of the two other studies, Koopmans & Statham clarify the change in Europeanisation in all time, space, and issue dimensions. They distinguish between European level and national level claims that they later find to show different level of Europeanisation. They find that Europeanisation of issues depend on the EU – nation state power distribution. Where the EU holds more power, like the monetary policy, higher number of claims are made by political actors, than in areas where intergovernmental decision-making is dominant, such as education and retirement. They confirm that this is not due to lower media coverage in different European issues.¹²⁸

They find that between 1990 – 2002 Europeanisation of political claims increased on the European level, especially salient in the field of monetary policy, where the EU's role substantially advanced during the period. However, horizontal Europeanisation seems to have an inverse tendency, by either stagnating or decreasing, that they explain as the trade-off between vertical and horizontal Europeanisation. They find it important to note that this is only a shift between weak and strong Europeanisation, but it did not significantly affect the frequency of domestic claims. They argue that, thus this fits better the intergovernmentalist approach, represented by scientists like Andrew Moravcsik, that regards the European integration as a state-centered process as opposed to Europeanisation that would transform the domestic politics.

A recurring cultural-historical theme appears in the documentary analysis. Bijsmans & Altides found that more historically relevant enlargement policy generated more vivid public debate than the technocratic issue of sustainability. Van de Steeg's study also shows a historically rooted ideological-identity debate in the Haider case. Finally, Koopmans & Statham find that their hypotheses proposed for Europeanisation based on economic indicators, reveals different patterns that can be best explained through endeavor to maintain their great power past. Cultural-historically relevant issues, therefore, seem to mobilizing factors for the European public sphere.

¹²⁸ Koopmans; Statham, *The Making of the Public Sphere*, 93.

7. Conclusion

The documentary analysis on contemporary research revealed that in all dimensions of issues, time, and countries, the signs of a European public sphere were empirically provided by the researchers. In virtue of that, issues are limiting factors which was illustrated by both of the studies of Bijsmans & Altides and Koopmans & Statham. The dimension of time showed gradual increase of Europeanisation instead of periodic appearance. The external spatial dimension of countries set off Europeanisation from countries like the United States. Membership, however, did not turn out to be an excluding factor. Internally differences could be shown according to quality of membership (opt-outs) and trade openness. Cultural-historical aspect of the European public sphere as a mobilizing force was a recurring pattern in all the three studies.

The arising question, that the above along what lines can be regarded as the creation of a European public sphere, called for further discussion. The Discussion chapter revealed underlying concepts and argumentation connected to the researchers' empirical findings. Certain reasoning proved to have a weak argumentative power. Bijsmans & Altides showed a one-sided top-down approach that could not explain bottom-up deliberative processes. The causality in Van de Steeg's reasoning, namely that the co-existence of proved to be false because it did not provide with empirical evidence that could account for genuine communicative deliberation among the participating publics of the examined countries. Therefore, the concept of genuine European public sphere can not be confirmed. A more likely concept proposed by Koopmans & Statham as a result of unaffected domestic claim-making, show that Europeanisation does not have transforming effect, and prefers the state-based Europeanisation as opposed to transformation of the nation states.

As a final conclusion, regardless of many contemporary thinkers on the non-existence of a European public sphere, there is still support for the opposite by researchers, that is backed by empirical results in their studies that can be understood in a state-based concept.

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