The Making of a European Public Sphere

Media Discourse and Political Contention

This book investigates an important source of the European Union’s recent legitimacy problems. It shows how European integration is debated in mass media, and how this affects democratic inclusiveness. Advancing integration implies a shift in power between governments, parliaments, and civil society. Behind debates over Europe’s “democratic deficit” is a deeper concern: whether democratic politics can perform effectively under conditions of Europeanization and globalization.

This study is based on a wealth of unique data from seven European countries, combining newspaper content analyses, an innovative study of Internet communication structures, and hundreds of interviews with leading political and media representatives across Europe. It is by far the most far-reaching and empirically grounded study on the Europeanization of media discourse and political contention to date, and it is a must-read for anyone interested in how European integration changes democratic politics and why European integration has become increasingly contested.

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Politics and relations among individuals in societies across the world are being transformed by new technologies for targeting individuals and sophisticated methods for shaping personalized messages. The new technologies challenge boundaries of many kinds – between news, information, entertainment, and advertising; between media, with the arrival of the World Wide Web; and even between nations. The Communication, Society and Politics series probes the political and social impacts of these new communication systems in national, comparative, and global perspectives.

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Continued after the Index
The Making of a European Public Sphere

*Media Discourse and Political Contention*

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Although it is nominally an edited volume, from the outset our aim in writing this book was to produce a collective statement that integrates the insights and findings derived from the discrete parts of the project. This has not always been an easy task. In some ways, our endeavor has mirrored the trials and tribulations but also some of the achievements of European integration. Along the way, we witnessed interdisciplinary learning processes and disagreements; national team differences and cross-country collaborations; supranational, intergovernmental and federal leadership models; a Europe of different speeds; and even on the odd occasion an “empty chair” policy. At the same time, we were able to collectively benefit as researchers by having access to a large body of original empirical evidence that none of us would have been able to produce alone. In the final analysis, like Europe, it will be for the public to judge whether it was worth the effort.

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