Introduction

Europe's Search for a Public

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Today the European Union is visible most days to most Europeans, should they care to glance at their driving licenses, passports, or the coins in their pockets. There are plenty of reminders for ordinary people that they live in an age of political globalization, and that as inhabitants of the European region they are part of its largest experiment so far: the European Union (EU). At the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the EU is a regional order of twenty-seven countries. It is the world's most advanced institutional cooperation and a close interpenetration of societies, markets, and governments, both across borders and between supranational and national actors. Its multileveled political architecture is historically unprecedented and over time its power has grown beyond recognition. However, this substantial advancement of European integration over the past 50 years has been driven by political elites and, at least for the period of so-called "permissive consensus,"[1] has largely been out of the public eye. Over the past decade the political channels from the executive to the governed have been increasingly seen as inadequate, resulting in prominent debates about the EU's perceived democratic and legitimacy "deficits" in policy, academic, and public circles. The watershed moment came in the rejection of Europe's constitutional efforts by the French and Dutch peoples in the 2005 referenda. Taken against the expressed wishes of all main political parties, and all mainstream mass media, these popular rejections in usually supportive countries underlined the passing of the age of "permissive consensus."

Even if it did not occur in the supranational top-down way that the architects of the Constitution intended, the debates after the failure of the constitutional project have nonetheless brought the public back into all considerations of the European Union. In 2006, the Commission embarked on a

[1] Under conditions of "permissive consensus," a positive or neutral majority of public opinion allows for elite autonomy and imagination in managing foreign affairs (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970).

public communications charm offensive, adopting a new rhetoric and policy thinking on public engagement with its citizens, invigorated partly by a media-savvy Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, Margot Wallström, who "blogged" on the Internet. National governments were also less confident that their ratification of the Constitution's less pretentious successor, the depoliticized Lisbon Treaty (2007), would automatically receive public support or quiescence. Where possible they tried to manage ratification decisions away from the public domain. Nonetheless, even when stripped of constitutionalist aspirations and rhetoric, the Lisbon Treaty was rejected by an Irish referendum in 2008. Finally, after much uncertainty, the Lisbon Treaty was adopted by all member states and came into force on December 1, 2009. On November 19, 2009, the European Council agreed that its first president under the Lisbon Treaty would be Herman Van Rompuy. This decision was reached unanimously at an informal meeting in Brussels by the heads of state and governments of the member states, and it was the result of executive-level insider bargaining and private negotiations. Generally, Van Rompuy was considered by the media to be an underwhelming choice as the first full-time President of the European Council and one who would be unlikely to challenge the authority of national leaders in Europe or on the world stage. This apparently low key outcome, reinforcing nation-state power, contrasts starkly to the initial aspirations expressed in the process of the European Convention (2001–2003). Overall, the difficult passage of Europe's attempted Constitutionalization makes further immediate advances for European integration unlikely and has arguably brought the project into question. What is clear, is that now the European project can no longer avoid having a public face, the way that it is seen publicly, is somewhat different from the benevolent image that its elite advocates continue to promote.

Another event that brought globalization prominently to public attention, and arguably into public disrepute, was the onset of a global financial banking crisis toward the end of 2008. The fallout from the banking crisis has led to economic recession, rising unemployment, and national debt burdens that will have to be met by service cuts and higher public taxation for generations across all countries. As the pioneer for common market integration across the European region and the standard bearer for free market competition, the European Union is a potential target for the fallout from the shift in politics that is likely to result. In 2009 the government responses of EU member states were largely to defend their own financial sectors, national debts, and workforces first, often competitively, rather than seek a cooperative framework with their EU colleagues. It is too early to assess the depth and degree of this renationalization shift. What is clear, however, is that within this era of austerity it will be harder for governments to politically sell the argument to their electorates that everyone wins from free-market-driven globalization. Of course, globalization is not restricted to Europe, but the consequences of globalization are increasingly likely to shape politics and in the European region this inevitably places the future and substance of the European Union at center stage.

The examples show that we increasingly live in a world shaped by advancing globalization (e.g., Held et al. 1999) or "de-nationalization" (e.g., Zürn 1998) processes, the benefits and consequences of which are increasingly visible and real for people. It is not disputed that European society has transformed remarkably over the past fifty years. In a recent contribution, Neil Fligstein (2008) documented how the expansion of markets and economic growth has produced Europe-wide economic, social, and political fields, for example, ranging across the telecommunications and football industries. According to Fligstein, this has led to an increasing density of social interaction and a willingness of people to sometimes identify themselves as Europeans, so that "it is possible to say that there now exists a European society" (2008, p. 244). It is certainly clear that increasing trans-European social interaction has made Europe a common reference point and shared location of interests and power, at least for the minority of people who are its pioneers and beneficiaries. However, the degree and form of the Europeanization of national societies, the system of European multilevel governance that has emerged to sustain it, and the extent to which it is visible, salient, and meaningful to general publics are much disputed. On the last point, even Fligstein, who emphasizes the depth of transnational transformation, concedes that a gap remains between structural change and public perceptions (2008, p. 2): "What has struck me most about the creation of a European society is the degree to which people in Europe are unaware of it." Communication is vital for Europeanization. As Craig Calhoun (2003, p. 243) points out, "If Europe is not only a place but a space in which distinctively European relations are forged and European visions of the future enacted, then it depends on communication in public, as much as on a distinctively European culture, or political institution, or economy, or social networks." Applying a general stance on Europeanization through communication that is broadly compatible to that of Fligstein and Calhoun, we focus explicitly on the transformation of media and political systems that supply information about European actors, policies, and issues to general publics. In this way, the research presented in the following chapters aims to provide empirically informed answers to some of the important questions about Europe's ongoing search for its public.

A common starting point for debates about the performance of the European Union is the perceived existence of a "democratic deficit," or even multiple "deficits." Many scholars see a lack of communication to be part of Europe's perceived democratic deficit and emphasize the need for mass-mediated coverage and public visibility for European policy making as a requirement for a legitimate politics (e.g., Habermas 2005, 2006). The future of European politics, and the form that it takes, depends on the performance of polities and media systems, and what type of choices they supply to the voters, citizens, and peoples of Europe. It is still an open question whether these choices will remain largely nationally defined or alternatively whether cleavages will emerge over issues that cross-cut national boundaries, such as preferences for a more social or market-driven Europe. Now that we live in an era of European multilevel

governance, however, the development of a politically mature Europe requires a Europe-wide public discourse of some sort. A seasoned observer, Loukas Tsoukalis, flagged up precisely the need for this European conversation in the final paragraph of his *What Kind of Europe?* (2003, p. 222): "Europeans will surely not agree themselves on the choices they make. . . . This is, after all, the essence of democracy. But they need to become more aware of those issues and the choices they imply. They need a European public space in which to debate what they want to do together and how." Neil Fligstein further points out that this conversation is likely to become argumentative and holds substantive consequences for social relationships and politics across the region: "The main source of tension and conflict over what might happen next in Europe is the gap between those who participate and benefit from Europe directly and those who do not" (2008, p. 4). In this book, we take the emergence of a multilevel system of governance in the European Union (see, e.g., Kohler-Koch 2003) as a case for examining the performance of media and political communication in an era of advancing globalization. Although ours is a Europe-centric focus, we consider our findings on the transformation of media discourse and political contention in response to advancing European integration also to have general relevance for the debates about the capacity of media and political systems to respond to the challenges of globalization, by providing adequate links between polities and citizens, or not.

An impetus for the study is the common stance within communication and political science literatures on the increasing importance of "mediated politics" (Bennett and Entman 2001) and "audience democracy" (Manin 1997) in liberal democracies, where traditional forms of party politics are replaced by a more direct relationship between governments and citizens through mediated political discourses. The case of a possible European public sphere of communication and collective action allows for an empirical investigation of this mediated politics. Media performance is central to any debate about a European public sphere, since media actors are entrusted with making the European level visible and accessible to citizens. Without an effective media providing a supply line of political information, which allows people the opportunity to see, think, and make decisions about the European level, it would matter relatively little if institutional-fix solutions were applied to strengthen the link between the supranational level of governance and citizens.

News coverage is the best resource available for ordinary citizens to see political debates and the efforts by governments to address perceived problems. Conversely, elite and political actors use the news to monitor public understandings of issues and reactions to their policy decisions and actions (Almond 1960; Entman 2004). There are competing views on adequate media performance in liberal democracies (Ferree et al. 2002a; Patterson 1998). In one, the media largely limits itself to providing the public with reliable and accurate information, exposing the corrupt and incompetent. Its role is to publicize the differences between competing political elites by reporting "objectively." The media supplies the information for the electorate to decide between political parties that compete to represent their interests. The other view depicts a

more proactive media role. Here the media opens up policy debates to civil society by enabling collective actors and social movements to voice their demands and challenge executive power. Journalists also enter the political debate as actors by commentating and opinion-leading. Hence mediated political discourse becomes an interface for deliberative exchanges between policy makers and civil society, under the watchful gaze of an attentive public. In sum, mass media performance and the relationship between media and political systems importantly shape the degree to which there is a European public sphere at all, and what type of Europeanized public politics is possible.

We study the transformation of national public spheres. While arenas for public opinion formation, media systems, and channels for access to the polity still predominantly exist at the national level, any European public sphere development will have to be generated by actors from within national public spheres, whose communication leads to increasing mutual interpenetration and references to the EU level. As Habermas puts it (2006, p. 102), "The missing European public sphere should not be imagined as the domestic sphere writ large. It can arise only insofar as the circuits of communication within the national arenas open themselves up to one another while themselves remaining intact." The seven countries in our study are Germany, France, Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland. We chose "old" Western European democracies, rather than newer ones, since we expect their patterns of communication and interaction will have had more chance to develop in response to institutional and policy integration. The newer democracies of Eastern Europe are likely to have their own distinct trajectory in relation to the European Union. Our country selection nonetheless allows for variations across EU membership, length of membership, depth of integration among members, and big and small countries.

The study examines the supply side of the field of political communication that has emerged in response to advancing European integration and that carries political debates over Europe to general publics. A first important dimension is the *visibility* of the European level to publics. For there to be anything that meaningfully resembles a public sphere at all, European decision making needs to be made visible to citizens. Essential here is the performance of mass media in making Europe visible to people. Second, the degree to which the European level of politics is *inclusive* of publics is also important. This refers to the accessibility of European-level decision making to publics. First, as an electorate, the public have their interests represented by competing political parties; second, through collective action, public groups mobilize their demands and pressure governments. Here it is the democratic performance of the political system that matters and the degree to which the public is able to gain formal access to, and be included within public debates about the decision-making processes of European multilevel governance. A third dimension, which derives from the other two, is *contestation*. The more that the European level of decision making becomes visible and the more it includes nonstate voices, the more it is likely to be subject to dynamics of public contestation, leading to a politicization carried by party competition and challenges by civil society actors. Together, these three dimensions, visibility, inclusiveness, and contestation, structure our

inquiry into public sphere development and the type of Europeanized public politics that is on offer to the general public. The debates around these issues, and their specific related literatures, are taken up and discussed substantively in detail in the respective chapters.

The book divides into five parts. Part I addresses theoretical, conceptual, analytical, and methodological issues relating to a European public sphere. Part II presents analyses on the emergent general trends for visibility, inclusiveness, and contestation within Europeanized public debates. In Part III, chapters address different aspects of mass media performance in supplying a European public sphere. Chapters in Part IV assess aspects of democratic performance in more detail, by examining political actors' responses to opportunities for shaping mediated debates. Finally, Part V, the conclusion, draws together the findings from across the study to outline a stance on what type of Europeanized public politics we have, how we reached this point, and where we are likely to go from here.

First, Chapter 1 opens up the debate on the European public sphere. This is where we enter the theoretical and normative debates about the possible emergence of a European public sphere and the implications and consequences for democratic legitimacy of advancing European integration. The story is told of the political transformation of Europe through integration, from the early days to the present, and the dilemmas – practical and ethical – that have accompanied this institutional development and shaped its path, not least of which is the missing public. Chapter 1 unpacks the basic conflict lines and critically examines the disputes within political science and normative theory about the institutional development of the European Union and the available mechanisms for supplying public legitimacy. This chapter serves the book by providing a historical contextual background of the institutional integration that has resulted in the European Union's system of multilevel governance and of the driving processes of Europeanization.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical framework that underpins our own view on European public sphere development. It critically describes the evolution of empirical approaches for studying the emergence of a European public sphere, and it locates our own approach in this field. The chapter outlines the general theoretical framework, research design, and methods that inform the detailed empirical analyses of subsequent chapters. Importantly, this involves elaborating a perspective on the transformation of political communication by collective actors, whose communicative acts make links across borders and political levels, leading to a Europeanization of public spheres. This analytic framework allows one to distinguish between the forms of possible Europeanization – vertical, horizontal, supranational – that are subsequently used in the book. Chapter 2 also outlines how we combine perspectives on political mobilization and communication – "opportunity structures" and "mediated politics" – to develop a general model for analyzing public sphere development by linking the opportunities supplied by media and political systems to the acts of public claim making by collective actors. In addition, we specify the general

comparative dimensions that structure and run throughout the study: across countries, policy fields, and time. Finally, Chapter 2 provides the reader with information on the claim-making method for retrieving data from newspaper sources, which is our primary data source for five of the chapters, and technical details on newspaper selection and sampling.

Part II addresses the general trends of European public sphere development evident along the dimensions of visibility, inclusiveness, and contestation. Chapters 3 and 4 present general-level empirical analyses of claim making by collective actors across countries, policy fields, and time, on the basis of our data set of more than 20,000 cases. Chapter 3 provides answers to questions about the visibility of Europe in mediated public discourses: How much communication and interaction across borders and political levels is there? What are the prevalent forms of Europeanized communication? Does its emergence vary across policy fields according to the degree and form in which they have been Europeanized? Does it increase over time with advancing integration? Are there cross-national variations in Europeanization trends, and what might explain them? Finally, is there a relationship between public sphere emergence and the type of evaluations – supportive or oppositional – that collective actors mobilize over European integration and EU institutions? The study of actors' evaluations leads into an assessment of the degree, extent, and form of contestation over Europe. This issue is picked up directly in Chapter 4, which addresses claim making by collective actors. The prime focus of Chapter 4 is the inclusiveness of the European public sphere. It addresses the important question of who participates in Europeanized public debates and how actors evaluate European institutions and the integration process when they do so. The findings indicate who wins and who loses as a result of the advancing Europeanization of public debates. A key question is whether civil society actors are able to discursively empower themselves relative to government and executive actors within Europeanized compared with national-level communication. In addition, the relationship between inclusiveness and contestation is tested for specific actors. Together the findings from Chapters 3 and 4 provide an overall empirical picture of the European public sphere and explanations for its development in response to the shift of power within decision making that results from advancing integration. These findings provide the context and reference point for the subsequent detailed studies of specific actors and across different types of claim making and media.

The chapters in Part III address different aspects of mass media performance in supplying a European public sphere. Chapter 5 starts by examining how the press has responded to the challenge of covering the European level of decision making. Its findings are based on a systematic analysis of interviews with more than 100 journalists from the print media in the seven studied countries, plus the transnational press. There are different ways that journalists may view their role in making Europe visible and inclusive. What motivations and norms guide journalists? Is the European level adequately covered? What, in their view, constitutes adequate coverage and media performance? Do journalists report

the political world that they see, or do they try and open up a more pluralistic debate, adopting a political advocacy role? Do they adopt a more educational or partisan stance over Europe toward their readers? Are there differences across journalistic practices (reporting and commentating), professional roles (EU correspondents, reporters, and editors), newspaper types, or national press cultures?

Chapter 6 builds on this story by presenting a detailed study of claim making by journalists through editorials and commentaries. It is based on an analysis of the contents of more than 1,400 editorial and commentary articles. Journalists' own claim-making acts indicate how, to what degree, and where the media intervenes as an actor attempting to shape the political discourse over Europe. The study allows empirical purchase on whether media commentating has an Europeanizing impact by opening up national debates through references to Europe. In addition, it allows comparison across countries and newspaper types. Important are the types of issues and interpretations (conflict lines) that journalists apply to depict a country's relationship to the European project. In this way, Chapter 6 not only adds to the stance on media performance from Chapter 5 but also facilitates understanding on the extent to which the Europeanized world views mobilized by journalists replicate those that result from the claim making by collective actors that are reported in the news (Chapter 3). This builds an overall picture on the relationship between media and political systems in supplying political information to the public.

So far, chapters have addressed Europeanization by studying newspaper discourse. However, a salient thesis is that the alternative public space of the Internet and World Wide Web provides an important source of claim making that circumvents conventional media. Of course, the Internet's own ideology – often repeated in cultural studies – is that it stands as a force for a more deliberative, accessible, egalitarian, and transparent public debate when compared with political communication in newspapers. Indeed, a common urban myth is that the French "*non*" to the Constitution in the 2005 referendum was generated by oppositional stances accessible via the Internet and on the "blogosphere." Chapter 7 compares the Europeanization potential of political communication carried by the World Wide Web to newspaper media. It analyzes a data set of claim making from thousands of systematically retrieved search engine results and hyperlink networks among a multitude of national and transnational Web sites. This provides an overall empirical picture of the visibility and inclusiveness of the European public sphere that is produced by the millions of individual decisions by people who place material on the Internet and access it. The findings are compared with newspaper claim making to assess Internet performance alongside that of conventional media in supplying Europeanized public debates.

The next chapter, Chapter 8, turns attention to a feature within claim making, by examining the frames that are mobilized in news discourses by media actors in comparison to collective actors. Chapter 8 studies the different ways that actors depict and symbolically package claims about European integration,

such as whether they use identity, instrumental, or historical framing strategies. This allows analytic purchase on whether the European Union may be emerging as a set of countries that share and communicate common values and understandings of the integration project – the possible common building blocks for a shared political culture – or whether national or actor-specific visions and trajectories persist.

Part IV moves the discussion on from media to polity performance. Chapters 9 and 10 look at political actors' responses to the transformed opportunities within Europeanized decision making and public discourses for accessing and influencing the political debate. At stake is the effectiveness of channels and communicative linkages between the executive elites, on one side, and civil society actors and citizens, on the other. Chapter 9 looks at the inclusiveness of Europeanized policy domains toward political parties, social interest groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and social movements, while Chapter 10 examines party competition through media discourse.

Chapter 9 examines the impact of a political environment transformed by advancing Europeanization and mediatization on collective actors' action repertoires. The study covers state actors, interest groups, parties, and NGOs and social movement organizations and is based on structured responses to several hundred interviews. It assesses how important "going public" actually is for collective actors by examining the action repertoires that different actors use in their attempts to access different levels of the European polity, and whether they use insider or public-oriented strategies to gain policy influence. Chapter 9 builds up a general picture of collective actors' strategic responses to perceived opportunities for gaining access to European policy making. The study allows triangulation with key findings from the claim-making study on inclusiveness to see if the way actors see their own world matches the image produced by their successful claim-making acts. As in Chapter 4, a key concern is the extent to which actors from civil society, especially weaker NGOs and social movement organizations, are able to make their voices heard.

Chapter 10 turns attention to political party competition as a means for representing and mediating choices to voters over European integration and the European Union institutions. It contributes empirically to the debates about the relationship between political parties' alignments over Europe and traditional ones, especially the left–right cleavage. Is party contestation increasing, and to what degree and how do domestic political parties make Europe visible? Does a favorable consensus hold among mainstream left and right parties, or is criticism increasing over Europe at the core of political systems? What is the substance of this criticism? Is it ideological Euroscepticism, or is it a constructive critique of the European project? Do parties mobilize appeals to the "winners" and "losers" of Europeanization? Chapter 10 uses a sample of evaluative claim making by all actors belonging to a national political party. This allows for comparison of party contestation across countries, party families, and time. It also demonstrates that the claim-making approach has the potential to produce systematically linked quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

Finally, Chapter 11 in Part V synthesizes our perspective on visibility, inclusiveness, and contestation into an interpretive framework for different types of emergent Europeanized public politics. First it identifies the possible pathways for a Europeanized public politics. Then it draws together the evidence from across the chapters to outline a coherent stance on public sphere development in response to European integration. Key findings are presented on the dimensions of visibility, inclusiveness, and contestation, drawing on evidence across media, countries, actors, policies, and time. In this way, the concluding chapter answers to what degree – and how, where, when, by whom, and why – a Europeanized public politics has emerged and what it consists of. This returns us to the important questions raised by Chapter 1. Chapter 11 then continues with a discussion of the failed constitutional project, showing how that event may have transformed the situation leading to a possible increase in public attention for European integration. Finally, it proposes a realistic way forward for the European Union's search for public legitimacy, starting out from where we are now.