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How Do We Know a European Public Sphere When We See One?
Theoretical Clarifications and Empirical Indicators

by

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Introduction[1]

A lively political and academic debate has emerged about the normative viability and the empirical possibility of a European public sphere. This debate is directly linked to the controversy about the democratic or legitimacy deficit of the European Union (EU). There is general agreement that modern democracies rely upon multiple channels of intermediation between private actors in civil society and public authorities in order to insure the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance. In this context, an open, pluralist, and critical public discourse rooted in independent public media is considered crucial for providing an interface between state and society in a democratic polity. If we conceive of the EU as an emerging democratic polity beyond the nation-state, the issue of a European public sphere is raised quite naturally.

Yet, there is little agreement in the literature on what constitutes a democratic public sphere (*demokratische Öffentlichkeit*), let alone a European public sphere – and how do we know one when we see one. As a result, different conceptualizations lead to diverging assessments about whether there is a transnational public sphere in Europe in an empirical sense and, if the answer is no, whether something resembling such a sphere could actually emerge in principle. Different concepts of a public sphere inevitably result in different indicators how to measure it which leads to almost incompatible empirical data. Take three prominent examples: Gerhards uses time series data from 1951-1995 on the treatment of European issues in German quality newspapers to demonstrate that Europe matters very little in the German public sphere (Gerhards 2000, 294-295). In the same volume, Eder and Kantner see an emerging European public sphere with regard to issues such as citizenship and "fortress Europe" (Eder and Kantner 2000, 317-319). And Trenz claims with regard to the EU Commission's corruption scandal that there are no emerging transnational "resonance structures", but that symbolic mobilization of European themes has rather accentuated polarization along national lines (Trenz 2000, 353). So, who is right?

This paper serves two purposes with regard to these disagreements. First, I want to clarify some of the conceptual issues at stake in the debate in order to spark conversations across the various positions. In particular, I argue that we should stop using dichotomous notions of a public sphere (either there is one or not). It is also not very useful to take idealized notions of homogenous national pub-

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lic spheres as a starting point for thinking about transnational public spaces. Rather, we should distinguish between various types of public spheres according to the dominant modes of discourse: In some public spaces, symbolic mobilization might prevail leading to rather polarized debates along ideological or other lines. There might also be public spheres characterized by principled arguing in which actors justify their various positions on the grounds of commonly accepted principles before the court of public opinion. Finally and in some circumstances, forms of deliberation might prevail in the sense that actors no longer take their identities and interests as given, but reason about the common good and the preferable courses of political action. Furthermore, if we include various degrees of "transnationalness" of a public sphere, we get a more comprehensive picture of what "European public sphere" might actually mean. Such a conceptualization also allows us to develop indicators which can be measured empirically.

Second, I introduce the research design, the research questions, and the indicators used in our joint project on the basis of these clarifications (see also Giesen and Risse 1999). Our project examines the reaction to Europeanization processes in various national public spheres. In particular, we are interested in examining the degree to which a common European public sphere is emerging out of the interconnection of and mutual interaction between various national public spheres. We also want to know more about the discursive quality of these public debates and the degree to which they may result in transnational democratic deliberations as compared to symbolic mobilizations of given identity/interest constructions. The empirical domain of the project is a media analysis of the public debates surrounding the entry into power of an Austrian right-wing party and the European reaction to it (the "Haider debate"). The analysis concentrates on print media in five European countries, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and Austria itself. Thus, this paper should be read as an introduction to the presentation of preliminary empirical results provided by Valentin Rauer, Sylvain Rivet, and Marianne Van de Steeg for this workshop.

The paper starts with a discussion of three conceptual issues:

1. Should we imagine a public sphere beyond the nation-state as more or less some sort of supranationalization of national public spaces? What about the transnational quality of a European public sphere?
2. How much heterogeneity and/or fragmentation of public spaces can we allow to speak of a public sphere in a meaningful sense relevant for a democratic polity?

3. To the extent that the notion of a public sphere is linked normatively to the legitimacy and to participatory rights of a democratic polity, what about the modes of discourse including the deliberative quality of a public sphere?

I then proceed with summarizing the research design of our joint project.

What Constitutes a European Public Sphere as Compared to National Public Spaces?

As to the first question mentioned, Grimm and Kielmansegg in particular have denied even the possibility of an emerging European public sphere on the grounds that there is no "community of communication" on the European level based on a common language and genuinely European media (Kielmansegg 1996; Grimm 1995). Eder, Van de Steeg, and others have convincingly argued against this view that it is based on an idealized picture of an almost homogenous national public sphere which is then transferred to the European level (Van de Steeg 2002; Eder 2000). There is no reason why we should all speak the same language and all use the same media in order to be able to communicate across national borders.

However, Gerhards has argued that one crucial ingredient for the emergence of national public spheres is missing on the European level, namely transnational interest groups, parties, and social protest movements who mobilize the public in the process of democratization: "The territorial boundaries of the public sphere are, therefore, mostly identical with the territorial boundaries of democracies, because the elected representatives of the respective peoples orient their communicative, public behavior to the 'demos' who elected them and on whom they depend" (Gerhards 2000, 292/my translation). He sees the democratic deficit of the EU as one of the reasons why there is no European public sphere (the *"Öffentlichkeitsdefizit"* of the EU).

This is not a theoretical argument against the possibility of an emerging European public sphere, but an empirical one. It follows that the more contentious European policies and politics become and the more social mobilization occurs on European issues, the more we should observe truly European public debates. This argument resembles both Imig's and Tarrow's points on protest politics at the European level (Imig and Tarrow 2001) and – interestingly enough – Eder's claim that we can observe emerging European issue specific communities of communication (Eder 2000). The latter refers to debates across borders concerning particular questions of European policies, e.g., the BSE

scandals. The disagreement between Eder and Gerhards would then become a question of how to evaluate particular empirical phenomena. I would add, however, that issue specific communities of communication must emerge in the public realm rather than behind the closed doors of elite networks in order to qualify. If political issues are not contested, if European politics remains the business of elites, we should by definition not be able to observe public debates, irrespective of whether they occur on a European level or in national public spheres. Contestation is a pre-condition of public debates almost by definition. In our project, for example, we look at the media representations of the public controversies surrounding the European reaction to the entry into government of Haider's right-wing party in Austria.

Social mobilization and contestation of European policies and politics is a necessary pre-condition for an emerging European public sphere, but it remains unclear whether it is a sufficient one. It is here where I see the real controversy concerning the conceptualization of a European public sphere as compared to national public spheres. Let me take the examples of Trenz's work on the EU Commission's corruption scandal (Trenz 2000) as compared to Gerhards's essay on the missing European public sphere (Gerhards 2000). Trenz finds that news reporting about the Commission's corruption scandal in the national public spheres (Spain as compared to Germany) has strengthened rather than weakened existing nationalist reactions and polarizations and might have even reinforced the closeness and self-referenciality of national public spheres. This finding is particularly striking in light of the fact that the corruption scandal itself is probably *the* example of truly transnational news-making in the sense that the scandal was revealed by very close collaboration among Brussels-based journalists across national and ideological orientations (Siapera 2002; also Christoph Meyer quoted in Gerhards 2000, 301). Yet, Trenz then goes on to argue that polarized public spheres are not the same as fragmented public spheres which do not communicate with each other. Polarized public spheres constitute each other through mutual observation (Trenz 2000, 354). In other words, even public spheres that are polarized along national rather than ideological or other lines would still constitute a common European public sphere as long as media communicate "the same issues at the same time using the same criteria of relevance" (Eder and Kantner 2000, 315).

In contrast, Gerhards uses a normatively more demanding concept of a European public sphere. National public spheres must not only communicate about European issues, but must also take a European rather than a national perspective on these issues (Gerhards 1993, 102; Gerhards 2000, 293). He then measures the latter by using statements of EU officials as reported in the national me-

dia as an indicator. Not surprisingly, the percentage of such statements as compared to other speakers is extremely low.

The controversy, thus, centers around the question of how much transnationalization of national public spheres is sufficient to constitute a European public sphere in which people communicate across borders via media representations. In my view, the opposing conceptualizations of a European public sphere constitute two ends of a continuum, but are both problematic for almost opposite reasons. The conceptualization by Eder/Kantner/Trenz is rather broad so that it is almost impossible *not* to find a European public sphere. More important, their definition overlooks a minimum substantive standard for communicative action if the notion of a public sphere is supposed to have normative meaning in a democratic society. Communication in a public sphere means that speaker talk to each other and to their audiences rather than simply voicing utterances. As a result and at a minimum, speakers in a public sphere must recognize each other as legitimate participants in a discourse. We might disagree fundamentally, but we take each other's statements seriously in a democratic polity. Nationalist reactions deny this legitimacy. Polarizations along national lines by definition create boundaries using nationalist "self-other" distinctions, as in the case of the corruption scandal: *The* Germans are after *our* (Spanish) Commissioner. *The* Spanish don't know what the rule of law means. In these and other statements, the two public spheres still observe each other and they also use common reference points, at least to some extent. But they surely do not treat each other as legitimate speakers in one's own public sphere. On the contrary, nationalist reactions to criticism from the outside are meant to construct territorial boundaries around one's own public sphere. The others are meant to become "foreigners" who do not have the right to interfere in one's affairs.[2]

On the other extreme, there is Gerhards's conceptualization which makes it virtually impossible to find *any* European public sphere, unless the EU develops into a traditional nation-state writ large. Here, I agree with Eder and Van de Steeg that a theoretically informed notion of a European public sphere able to generate meaningful empirical research should take into account the multi-level governance nature of the EU system. A European transnational debate does not require to solely focus on supranational institutions, but can also concentrate on national institutions (as in the Haider debate; see the graph in Eder 2000, 76; also Van de Steeg 2002).

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[2] To make this point even more pronounced and to add a slightly polemical note to it: Ethnic hatred and ethno-nationalist warfare certainly constitutes a mode of communication by which the various sides deal with the same topic at the same time at the same level of relevance. But does this constitute a public sphere?

Our project goes beyond the two theoretical positions discussed above. We start with the Eder/Kantner/Trenz definition of a European public sphere as

> *the degree to which the same topics are discussed at the same time and at the same level of relevance in various public spaces (e.g. national, but also functionally differentiated).*

This is a quantitative content-analytical concept of a joint public sphere focussing on the degree of commonality with which an issue is discussed across borders in various national spheres. But we would add to this a discourse-analytical or qualitative dimension according to which the various national public spaces need to be

> *interconnected through either direct or "virtual" discursive interaction with fellow Europeans treated as legitimate speakers in order to qualify for a transnational European public sphere* (see also Van de Steeg 2002, ms. 13-15).

Note that we do not require here that speakers must take some sort of general European perspective on issues. In fact, as to the substantive content, it is completely unnecessary for the definition of a European public sphere that speakers or their media representations discuss "European" issues. All we require is that fellow Europeans in a transnationalized public sphere are treated as legitimate speakers, as part of the "we" in whose a community of communication emerges. It follows that the degree of "transnationalness" of a European public sphere cannot be measured using quantitative indicators alone, but requires some sort of qualitative in-depth analysis.

We use three sets of indicators in order to establish the degree to which a European public sphere exists and the extent to which national public spaces are open to transnational influences.

Degree of commonality of an issue

This concerns the extent to which the same topic is discussed at the same time and at the same level of relevance in the various national public spheres. Here, we use essentially the definitions provided by Eder/Kantner (2000) and apply them to our topic. We use frame analysis (Gamson 1992; see paper by Rauer/Rivet/Van de Steeg for details) to establish whether indeed controversial issues are discussed at the same time using the same criteria of relevance in the various national public spheres. Such commonalities would represent a first step toward an emerging European public sphere. At least five patterns could emerge from such an analysis:

1. Use of similar frames with peaks and lows in similar time-periods across media and across countries;

2. Similarities for some media along other than national dimensions (e.g., ideological, i.e., left-right cleavage) or similarities among media in some countries versus others (Northern vs. Southern Europe; etc.);
3. Similarities along types of media (e.g. quality/elite newspapers vs. tabloids);
4. Similarities among media within particular countries;
5. No pattern.

Since consensus is not required for a public sphere to exist (rather the opposite, see below), possibilities 1.-3. would all serve as a first indicator for an emerging European public sphere pertaining to the particular issue debated here. If the frames vary strictly along national lines (4.), such a finding would confirm the lack of Europeanness of individual national public spaces. If the variation is confined to individual media with no discernible pattern at all, one could even call into question the existence of national public spheres in such cases.

Transnational European Character of Communication Structure

The second set of indicators pertains to the degree to which national public spheres are open to transnational influences and accept other European speakers as legitimate contributors to national debates. Such transnational exchanges might occur directly or virtually through the representation of different views in a given public space or media. We use four indicators in this regard:

1. The extent to which fellow European authors/speakers participate in the various national public debates as represented in the media;
2. The degree to which "foreign" European media are represented in the national public space and treated as legitimate voices in one's home debate;
3. The degree to which external actors are referred to as legitimate voices in the national debates and in national media
4. The extent to which national public spheres observe each others, e.g., media reports about debates elsewhere.

The greater the direct (1./2.) or indirect (3./4.) representation of fellow European speakers as legitimate voices in a national public sphere, the more we can speak of an emerging transnational European public sphere that permeates nationally constructed boundaries. In reality, however, we expect far more indirect references to and representations of fellow Europeans in the national public spaces.

Construction of Collective Identity in Public Spheres

Treating "foreigners" or fellow Europeans as legitimate voices in a public sphere inevitably raises the question of collective identity. This does not imply that we need to assume some primordially constructed and mythological European identity to which speakers in a public sphere relate. Once again, one should avoid simply transferring some particularly "thick" and historically actually rather contingent notions of nation-state identities on the European level (for further discussions of this topic see Giesen 1999a, b; Risse 2001; Herrmann, Brewer, and Risse forthcoming). Nevertheless, accepting other fellow Europeans as legitimate speakers in a public sphere does imply that the "we" in whose name actors speak and to whom they relate, extends beyond national boundaries, and, thus, some degree of collective identification with fellow Europeans.

Moreover, our particular empirical domain, the media representations of the public debates about the European reaction to the events in Austria, can also be used to investigate the particular substantive content of identity constructions pertaining to Europe and the nation-state in the various countries. What constitutes "Europe" to which speakers refer to? Is it simply a geopolitical or economic space for the free exchange of capital, people, goods, services? Or does "Europe" constitute a moral community of values leading to a specific boundary creation of the "other"?

We raise three questions pertaining to specific indicators to try to understand these identity constructions:

1. Where do news referring to European issues appear in the national media? Domestic news? Foreign news?
2. Who is the "we" in whose names the speakers communicate or to whom they refer in their utterances and, accordingly, who is the "them"? To what degree is a European "we" being constructed, how does this relate to the national "we"?
3. To whom do the "lessons from history" in the speakers' constructions refer to? To Europe, the nation-state, or both? Are there indications of a "community of fate", and, if so, to which community does it refer?

Part of this analysis will be done through the frame analysis mentioned above, but it also requires a more in-depth qualitative analysis of specific newspaper articles.

Heterogeneity, Polarization, and Fragmentation in a European Public Sphere

A second controversy concerning a European public sphere centers around the question of how much heterogeneity can we allow to speak of a public sphere in a meaningful sense. This question is not specific to a European public sphere per se. But the EU accentuates it anew, because of its specific nature as a multi-level governance system and because of its history of an elite-driven project focussing on output performance and legitimacy.

As to the first question, to assume homogeneity and consensus among speakers makes little sense as defining characteristics of a public sphere, be it a European or a national one. Politics is about conflict, disagreement, contestation – and public debates are part of it in a democratic polity. Thus, heterogeneity and disagreements are almost constitutive for a meaningful notion of a public sphere (Eder 2000; Eder and Kantner 2000). This means for the conceptualization of a European public sphere that agreement about European policies across boundaries, ideological or other cleavages cannot be made into a criterion for its existence. The same holds true for support levels for European integration. One could even argue that the lively debates in France (during the early 1990s), Britain or Denmark about whether or not to join Euroland constitute better examples for the emergence of a European public sphere than the silencing of public controversy which we witnessed in Germany, Italy, and among other staunch supporters of the Euro (on Italy see Sbragia 2001). This observation implies that it is irrelevant in the context of our project whether media reports on the "Haider debate" agree or disagree with the reaction of the European Council of Ministers.

Yet, heterogeneity, polarization, and fragmentation are three different concepts that need to be kept analytically separate. Public spheres are *fragmented* if the Eder/Kantner condition of "same topic, same time, same level of relevance" is not fulfilled. In our project, we measure this with regard to the first set of indicators mentioned above. If fragmentation occurs along national boundaries, this disconfirms the notion of a transnational European public sphere. However, there might well be degrees of fragmentation. What if, for example, media in some countries join in a transnational public sphere, while media in other countries do not? If we were to find a pattern here, this could even mean that some European countries join in a European public sphere, while others do not. This would be an interesting topic for further research.

As to *polarization*, public spheres can be said to be polarized, if the Eder/Kantner condition is given, but there are strong and stable disagreements along, say, party lines, ideological or other

convictions. Unless we restrict the definition of a public sphere to one in which high standards of discursive deliberation and argumentative rationality are met and in which interests, preferences, and identities are no longer fixed but subject to challenges and counter-challenges, polarization as such should not be regarded as preventing the emergence of a European public sphere. Some of our national public spheres are deeply polarized along the right-left division, take Italy for example. While strong polarization might prevent discursive deliberation, it should not be taken as an indicator for an absent public sphere – as long as the speakers in the public controversy still treat each other from the perspective of participants in a common debate rather than as mere outside observers (see Eder and Kantner 2000, 307, on this point). The latter point implies, though, that strong polarizations along national lines preclude the emergence of a transnational public sphere in Europe – for the reasons discussed above. If I disagree with you, because you are a foreigner, an outsider etc., this connotes a strong "self/other" distinction and implies that the "other" is not treated as a legitimate speaker in one's public sphere. In sum, our project only treats degrees of polarization as indicators for the absence of a transnational public sphere, if such polarization occurs along national lines. In the case of the "Haider debate," it will be very interesting to see how Austria (as opposed to Haider and the Freedom Party) is treated in the media discourses of its neighbors – and how the Austrian media react to this. Is there a nationalist counter-response, or is the criticism of Haider and other right-wing politicians treated as legitimate concerns of fellow Europeans with which one might or might not agree? In the latter case, we would have a strong case for an emerging European public sphere, since it concerns a "hard case."

On the Modes of Discursive Interaction in a European Public Sphere

The final controversy to be mentioned here concerns the modes of discourse in a public sphere. If the public sphere is nothing but the mutual observation of citizens, interest groups, and policy-makers, as Gerhards argues (Gerhards 1993, 98), the form and quality of the debate might not matter much. Yet, he also claims that publicity constitutes the identity of a society, because it enables citizens to observe society, participate in it and acknowledge it as their own (ibid.). In other words, a public sphere constitutes a shared community of communication (*Kommunikationsgemeinschaft*) in a democratic polity (also Eder and Kantner 2000, 311). At this point, though, we do need to care about the form and quality of the debate. Do the participants in a debate at least talk to each other rather than past each other? As to a European transnational public space, is it characterized by symbolic mobilization of pre-existing collective identities? Does it also allow for the public deliberation

of political issues across national borders, and to what degree? In sum, Europe as a deliberative space is at stake here (Habermas 1990, 1996; Eriksen and Fossum 2000).

In our project, we hesitate to overload the concept of a European public sphere with normative content – apart from the mutual recognition of participants as legitimate speakers across borders (see above). Yet, we are interested in measuring the modes of discourse in a transnational European public space, to the degree that it exists. In this context, we distinguish among four ideal-types of communicative strategies the public sphere. Each type has obvious affinities to different institutional settings.

First, *symbolic mobilization* essentially invokes collective identities, historical memories, and myths to increase mass loyalty and public support for a given policy (Edelman 1976; Dubiel 1986; Eder, Hellmann, and Trenz 1998). In other words, such communicative behavior assumes a high degree of ”taken-for-grantedness” of these symbols in order to be effective. It rests on strong collective identities and consensual norms which do not require further justification. The purpose of symbolic mobilization is not to persuade outsiders of the community of particular claims, but to invoke and to stabilize the community's identity itself. Nationalist reactions against external criticism is often accompanied by strong efforts at symbolic mobilization against “those bloody foreigners.” However, if we find transnational mobilization of identities, common values, and myths in Europe, this would connote a rather strong degree of European collective identities which speakers can use as a symbolic ressource. Moreover, contestation and social mobilization in a transnational public sphere are likely to go together with strong efforts at symbolic mobilization.

In our analysis, we measure symbolic mobilization as a discursive tendency in individual media reports as

- the dominance of a moral discourse pertaining to community values and principles;
- references to just one set of principles.

Symbolic mobilization then means that speakers act as if they are in possession of the moral truth and try to rally others around that “flag.”

Second, *public bargaining* follows the institutional logic of the *market-place*. It is based on presumably fixed interests and preferences that define the identity of actors. These identities are taken for granted and are accepted as legitimate, but they are no longer shared. To be more precise, it is irrelevant whether actors share a collective identity or not, since these identities recede into the

background in a public bargaining mode. Public bargaining implies that speakers accept their respective interests and preferences and then try to find out whether compromises are possible. We measure public bargaining by using these indicators:

Indicators for public bargaining in our analysis are

- the dominance of a procedural discourse whereby references are made to procedural norms and legitimate process, on the one hand;
- references to various moral principles, values, and norms without any judgements about superior or inferior norms.

Third, *principled arguing* is modelled according to the institutional logic of a *legal court*. Again, the identity of the actors is taken as given, while reason and deduction from fixed premises define the scope of legitimate arguments – whatever the consequences of these principles for the actual interests may be. Principled arguing closely resembles what Schimmelfennig has called "rhetorical action" (Schimmelfennig 1997, 2001). Depending on the particular cultural and legal premises, this mode of discourse can either be a resource of or a threat to particular identity claims and thereby it can at least in the long run also channel the transformation of identities. Unlike public bargaining, principled arguing has to rely on reasoning and on justifications. Speakers argue from the basis of fixed interests, preferences, and identities in order to convince *others* of the validity of their claims – such as the judges or the jury in a court room.

For our purposes, we measure principled arguing as

- the predominance of a procedural discourse (as in public bargaining);
- reasoning on the basis of one agreed-upon moral value, principle, or norm which is taken for granted and from which conclusions are deduced.

Finally, there is the logic of the *public forum* (see Elster 1992, 1998). The forum can perhaps be seen as the paradigmatic case of public discourse since the Enlightenment, dealing with the *deliberation of public issues* (Habermas 1990, 1992). It is the realm of moral reasoning and the moral construction of collective identity and their challenge and approval by others. Within the public forum, interests and collective identities are no longer presumed to be fixed and stable resources, but are a matter of claims and contestation in the discourse itself. In the attempt to reach a consensus, the participants construct their identities and interests. The more general policy goals are sub-

ject to challenges and counter-challenges in the public arena, the more actors need to refer to arguments and justifications in order to make their point and to sway a sceptical audience. The more common assumptions and commitments are contested in the public arena, the more deliberation becomes necessary to solve an acute crisis of collective identity.

We use the following indicators to measure the degree of deliberation in a public sphere in terms of the discursive tendency of single media reports:

- predominance of a moral discourse focussing on contested values, principles, and norms;
- reference to several values, principles, and norms which are given almost equal treatment.

Symbolic mobilization, public bargaining, principled arguing, and moral deliberation are ideal modes of communication that are claimed and referred to by the participants in the public sphere (see graph 1 for a summary). However, they are realized only in an approximated way by the realities of public discourse. Thus, we expect to find some mixture of the four modes of communication in the empirical realm of our research.

[Graph 1 about here]

In the project, we try to measure the modes of communication on various levels starting with the discursive tendency of individual articles in the media. The indicators outlined above pertain to that level. However, we cannot determine the mode of discursive interaction in a transnational public sphere by simply adding up the tendencies of individual news reports and articles in the print media (our empirical domain). It might well be the case that symbolic mobilization is the dominant tendency of individual media reports given the way in which news media operate and generate their products in a competitive market. But we cannot infer from such findings that symbolic mobilization prevails in a national or transnational public sphere. Rallying the public around particular and contested values might well lead to principled arguing or even deliberation, provided that the "battle lines" are not static and completely polarized. Thus, we need further measurements pertaining to the modes of discourse within national public spaces and across borders. We need to determine the discursive tendency in national public spheres up to the transnational level. This procedure should allow us to establish with some degree of confidence the discursive form of a European public sphere pertaining to our particular empirical case.[3]

[3] This is an area in which I would like to get some input from workshop participants on how to measure modes of discourse beyond individual articles.

Brief Overview of Research Project: Empirical Domain

As already indicated above, our project investigates the public debates and controversies generated by the entry into government of Jörg Haider's right wing *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Austrian Freedom Party), on the one hand, and the reaction by the European Council of Ministers to it, on the other (the so-called "European sanctions" pertaining to the level and extent of diplomatic contacts with the Austrian government). Particularly the EU reaction to the events in Austria tried to construct "Europe" and the EU as a moral polity going beyond simple market integration. This sparked a transnational debate about the appropriateness of sanctioning an EU member state even if the country had not (yet) violated any specific EU rule or obligation. Our project then focusses on whether this deliberate attempt at creating a common European moral community has been reflected in the creation of a transnational public space as defined above, or whether the reactions to the EU decisions followed largely national frames or reference.

One might argue, of course, that our case selection suffers from a bias toward an "easy case" to make a point about transnational public spheres. On the one hand, it is true that the data are primarily geared to serving as a plausibility probe for the concept of a European public sphere and the measurement instruments outlined above. We are very careful not to generalize out of this case, whatever the final data will look like. On the other hand, it is not a foregone conclusion that deliberate attempts to create a transnational polity necessarily result in the construction and emergence of a transnational public space, as Trenz's findings with regard to the Commission's corruption scandal demonstrate (Trenz 2000).

We analyze the media discourse on the basis of mainly a frame analysis of print media in five countries, namely Austria (data not yet available), Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy. Each of the countries selected faces its own problem with right-wing parties which might lead to similar media reactions. At the same time, the media markets in each country vary enormously – and so do the domestic institutional structures as well as political cultures including collective understandings of national sovereignty, of "Europe," and of European integration. Thus, there is quite some variation among the countries which might lead to different and specific national reactions to the "Haider debate." For each country, we selected at least two elite newspapers along the left-right dimension (assuming that general political orientations might influence media reporting on the issue involved)

and, if possible, mass level newspapers in addition to that (Austria: *Neue Kronenzeitung* and *Die Presse*; Germany: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; France: *Le Monde, Le Figaro,* and *Le Parisien*; Belgium: *De Standaard* and *Le Soir*; Italy: *Il Corriere della Serra, La Nazione*, and *La Repubblica*). The time frame for the analysis ranges from October 3, 1999 (i.e., the Austrian election date) to September 12, 2000 (i.e., the date when the "EU sanctions" were lifted).

An analysis of the preliminary findings of the frame analysis will be presented in the paper by Valentin Rauer, Sylvain Rivet, and Marianne Van De Steeg.

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Graph 1: Modes of public discourse

modes of public discourse	**public bargaining**	**principled arguing**	**symbolic mobilisation**	**deliberation**
discursive pattern	no arguing about interests, interests accepted and regarded as a priori actors do not challenge each other's arguments and accept claims in a 'give and take' mode actors try to find a compromise or common ground expectation of compromise as a solution	actors give reasons and justifications for their viewpoints based on moral values in order to convince others of the validity and legitimacy of their claims actors are not open to listen to the better argument themselves nor to persuasion decision on principle whatever the cost involved expectation of impartial judgement rhetorical action	actors yell at each other invoke and mobilise support among constituencies do not consider the other actors' claims fighting "for a cause" mobilising interests call for a rush to action typical: distinction between "us" and "them"	actors engage each other's arguments and challenge each others claims about facts in the word, moral and other values actors are prepared to change their own views and claims in the light of the better arguments questioning, debate is taken seriously, arguing for open debate outcome is open, variety of possible options truth-seeking
institutional paradigm	markets	court of law	mass-communication	public forum
core values	fairness, compromise	strict deduction, principled reasoning	devotion to a common cause	openness, spirit of dialogue
representation of particular interests	legitimate, pre-given interests	illegitimate, disregard for particular interests	merging of particular interests into collective action	recognition of alter's identity
prototypical actors	corporate actors	legalists bureaucrats	politicians journalists	intellectuals
European integration as	common market	standardised by legal norms	moral crusade	reflexive identity discourse