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Identity, Europe and the World beyond Public Spheres

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Abstract:

This is the draft summary chapter for a collection of essays, *European Public Spheres: Bringing Politics Back In* (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press). It critically assesses what we do and do not know about the relation of public spheres to politics and the social more generally, and points out several gaps and challenges to address. First, arguments about public spheres are ultimately claims about how language and communication shape politics. Recognizing that institutions, power and practice are important as well, scholars in other fields have supplemented the linguistic approach with other types of analysis. In work on public spheres, however, a similar move seems absent – which results in incomplete arguments, for example, on the relation of public spheres to European identity. Second, how well do arguments on European public spheres hold up cross-nationally – or even in respect to the enlarged Europe that today's reality? Third, beyond establishing that Europeanized public spheres matter, future research needs to explore how much they matter. This will involve more ambitious research designs – establishing baselines and relative weightings, identifying scope conditions and thinking counterfactually.

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Identity, Europe and the World beyond Public Spheres

Europeanized public spheres affect politics. This claim is accepted by all contributors to the present volume, even if they disagree about much else – the extent of Europeanization in this area (a little or a lot), the way to measure public spheres (claims, frame or discourse analysis), where precisely to look for such spheres (amongst elites and the quality media or a more bottom-up, civil society view), and – finally – the politics being affected by them (party-political cleavages or identity politics). My purpose here is not to adjudicate amongst these disputes; the book's opening chapter does an excellent job of highlighting and justifying them while still persuasively demonstrating the common ground shared by all (Risse and van de Steeg, this volume). The collection is thus a state-of-the-art treatment of the subject matter – European public spheres – in the best sense of that phrase, telling the reader what we have learned, but also where our knowledge is incomplete or disputed.

My chapter picks up on this last point, making three arguments about these loose ends.¹ First, the workings of public spheres are ultimately claims about the ability of language and communication to shape politics. Elsewhere, however, such linguistic approaches have been supplemented, with analysts arguing that institutions, power and practice are important as well; a similar move seems absent in work on public spheres. The result is incomplete arguments – for example, on the relation of public spheres to changes in European identity. Second, how well do arguments on European public spheres stand up cross-nationally? Even within Europe this may be an issue, especially if we take enlargement seriously. Third, having established that Europeanized public spheres matter, future work needs to go a step further, exploring how much they matter. This will involve establishing baselines, relative weightings, thinking counterfactually, and crafting more ambitious research designs.

Put differently, the chapter is a modest attempt at mainstreaming findings on European public spheres, through the eyes of an outsider who has done considerable work on Europe but

¹ For comments on earlier drafts, I thank Onur Bakiner, the project participants and especially Thomas Risse and Marianne van de Steeg.

none *per se* on the subject at hand. How well do arguments about public spheres stand up when placed in a broader theoretical-empirical-methodological frame? Asking and offering answers to such questions can contribute to the all-important task of better specifying the scope conditions of the claims advanced in this volume.

Public Spheres and Politics

The volume views Europeanized public spheres as both dependent and independent variables. In Part 1 (chapters 2-5), they are the outcome or product, and we want to know what produces them – and how they might be measured. In Part 2 (chapters 6-8), contributors explore what public spheres cause or make possible. My concern is the theory in both parts is underspecified in important ways; as a result, the politics from which public spheres emerge and to whose development they contribute lack bite.

To begin, one effect of public spheres in general and Europeanized public spheres in particular is to facilitate democratic politics. This is a strong claim advanced throughout the book; it is also not very controversial.² As Risse has argued, a public sphere informs citizens about the political process, monitors and critically evaluates governance, and enables a public discourse in a democracy (Risse 2010, 108). No one asserts that public spheres cause or produce politics; rather, the more nuanced argument is that they act like an intervening variable.

The theoretical problem or gap is the implicit conceptualization of those democratic politics that Europeanized public spheres help foster. For some contributors (Kantner, this volume; Harrison and Bruter, this volume), it is an understanding of politics as communication, discourse and deliberation. Yet, if a central goal of this book is to bring politics back in, then we need to consider other facets of it. Politics – in Europe or anywhere – is also about institutions, power and daily lived practice. What is their role in shaping Europeanized public spheres? With institutions, several chapters do indeed view the media as an institution, one that both reflects and shapes public discourse (Risse and van de Steeg; Pfetsch and Heft; Harrison and Bruter, all this volume).

² Although as Follesdal (this volume) notes, it is a claim with a wrinkle, as contributors embrace two quite different conceptions of democracy – one emphasizing deliberative consensus and one more focused on political contestation.

More could be done with this institutional factor, however. If one views Europeanized public spheres as the dependent variable, it is quite likely that the varying structure of domestic institutions across Europe would crucially affect their shape, form and content. Here, I am not so much thinking of the media, but the broader domestic institutional context in which it is embedded. Indeed, an older literature on domestic structures (Katzenstein 1976) predicts cross-national variation in process and outcomes as a function of the structure of political institutions - statist, liberal, corporatist, for example. Such arguments would help make sense of the finding by Bennett, *et al*, that national-level issue networks in Germany – contrary to expectations – engage citizens more weakly than their EU-level counterparts. The answer to this puzzle lies in the “institutional incorporation of core civil society actors in the Federal Republic” (Bennett, *et al*, 3-4, this volume) – that is, within its corporatist domestic structure.

Institutions may also serve as amplifiers. Perhaps in particular countries, there are powerful organizations that promote a certain kind of claim-making (Koopmans, this volume) or discursive frames (Kantner, this volume) that are then picked up by the media, eventually appearing in the public sphere. Consider two examples. In Turkey, the military has played a central role in politics for many years, albeit one that has weakened more recently. Might a Europeanized public sphere in Turkey thus be influenced by frames embedded in and promoted by it? In Scandinavia, gender equality seems hard-wired into the social fabric of the countries. Would the content of Norway or Sweden’s Europeanized public sphere therefore not be shaped by gender’s deep institutionalization, in both discourse and public institutions?

The argument is simply that claims/frames/discourse + institutions will be a stronger force than when the former act alone. This is a central finding among students of historical institutionalism (Sikkink 1991; Steinmo, Thelen, Longstreth 1992), as well as by proponents of more interpretive institutional analysis (Hopf 2012). In fact, my point is similar to the excellent one made by Risse many years ago regarding the ideas literature, when he argued that ideas do not float freely (Risse-Kappen 1994); the same holds for public spheres.

It is also possible these national institutions cooperate across borders to foster islands of interaction that create their own frames and communities of understanding. These may support or undercut those generated by the media. We know the EU has facilitated extensive cross-border

institutional connections and communities of this type (Fligstein 2009). My hunch is these small, upper middle-class (for that is what they are) communities do have effects on the formation and content of public spheres. In fact, this is precisely the conclusion of the chapter by Bennett, *et al*, which looks beyond the quality media for its analysis of emerging Europeanized public spheres (Bennett, *et al*, this volume). Put differently, for future work to build constructively on this book's findings, we need to bring not just politics back in, but institutions as well.

Regarding power, students of the EU and Europeanization often underestimate its importance.³ The present manuscript seems to be of two minds on power's role. On the one hand, several contributions directly consider – in a theoretical sense – its role. The introductory chapter, for example, offers a careful and nuanced discussion of the power asymmetries and structural power shaping public spheres. As Risse and van de Steeg note, the so-called selectivity of public spheres – that is, who can speak and who is allowed to listen – is partly a function of asymmetries in (personal) power. At a structural level, the power of media empires – Murdoch's in the United Kingdom or Axel Springer in Germany, say - clearly also plays a role in shaping this selectivity (Risse and van de Steeg, 4-5, this volume).

It also matters whose media empire about which we speak. As Pfetsch and Heft argue in their theoretical overview of European public spheres, “communication patterns within Europe depend on the size and power of a country[,] thus determining the transnational hierarchy of influence on news geography and flows of opinion” (Pfetsch and Heft, 18-19, this volume). These analyses help us better understand public spheres as outcome and product – and power's role in the process.

Unfortunately, contributors to the volume too often fail to build upon such insights in their own empirical explorations. For example, Kantner's analysis of the emergence of transnationalized discourse arenas in Europe is oddly silent on power. Indeed, she goes so far as to deny its role, claiming that “no single speaker or medium has the power to hegemonically project ‘its framing’ on the society members” (Kantner, note 27, this volume). This is simply not the case, as demonstrated by a – now voluminous – literature on norm entrepreneurs. These

³ For those familiar with my earlier work, there is a healthy dose of self criticism here as well.

clever, strategic individuals exploit their personal skills and organizational power to make individual beliefs become collectively-held frames (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

In their methodologically sophisticated exploration of media and European identity, Harrison and Bruter argue and document (experimentally) that good news about Europe is good news for European identity. Building on this finding, they then argue there is a significant “scope for impact [on European identity – JTC] of any potential genuine information on Europe, for instance through civic education” (Harrison and Bruter, 19-20, this volume). Yet, the reality of politics – in Europe as anywhere – is that such information will be distorted by individuals in positions of power, institutions with agendas of their own, and media empires – to name just a few. Absent attention to such variables, the analysis seems more oriented to some (unreachable) normative ideal than to the day-to-day reality of a deeply politicized European project.

By power – let me be clear - I do not refer specifically to how a realist international-relations scholar might understand the term; rather, my more mundane point is that power is always present in politics. This power can be material; it can be social (the disciplining power of dominant discourses); it may operate through institutions (Barnett and Duvall 2005). The latter understanding of how power works should be especially relevant in a deeply institutionalized Europe.

Do EU institutions - in collaboration with or in opposition to national institutions – use their institutional power to privilege certain discourses and frames? Reaching back to a very old public policy literature (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 1963), one could ask if these institutions have a critical power of non-decision and non-agenda setting – a power that might decisively shape the content of public spheres? They clearly have the financial wherewithal and willingness to affect the NGO sector, which - in turn – is influencing the content of public spheres (Bennett, *et al*, this volume).

Perhaps power – in these multiple forms – does not matter. However, it is best to rule it out through theoretical specification and empirical testing, and not via neglect or assumption. Otherwise, there is a risk of developing Euro-centric arguments on public spheres that work only as applied to the EU in West Europe (see also Grande and Kriesi, 4-5, this volume), as happened in earlier work on socialization (Checkel 2007).

If we now shift the focus and view Europeanized public spheres as independent variables, it is here the book offers some of its most intriguing and – I argue – theoretically underspecified arguments. Consider the following statements.

It is public debate where collective identities are constructed and reconstructed and publicly displayed thus creating political communities (Pfetsch and Heft, 2, this volume).

The public sphere is a setting for communication and participation in collective action that can shape identities and interests, not only reflect them (Bennett, *et al*, 9, this volume).⁴

Public spheres constitute one of the sites where communities of communication are being constructed and re-constructed, and, as a result, collective identities emerge (Risse, 9, this volume).

... evaluating the emergence of a European public sphere matters to the extent that we believe that the way people are informed has an impact on their identity (Harrison and Bruter, 1, this volume).

These arguments go considerably beyond the idea that Europeanized public spheres facilitate a more democratic politics at the EU level. Now, they are exerting causal force on deep social stuff – the identities of European actors.

The volume is not alone in making such claims. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that identities and senses of identification in Europe are in flux – evidence that is all the more compelling because it comes from multiple disciplinary perspectives utilizing different methodological tools (Bruter 2005; Favell 2008; Fligstein 2009; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Risse 2010). That Europeanized public spheres would also be playing a role makes intuitive sense; such spheres are arenas of communication, and we know from a now well-developed constructivist literature that communication, language and discourse can shape identities (Adler 2012).

Yet, theoretically, this is a rather narrow understanding of the processes that may influence identity. Indeed, I would argue that the volume needs to engage other types of arguments, both to specify better the scope conditions for its public sphere → identity claims and

⁴ Citing Calhoun 2003, 4.

to build a more integrated understanding of the mechanisms shaping identity in contemporary Europe.

The starting point – to repeat the obvious – is Europeanized public spheres. They are one site where collective identities emerge; this is a consensus view in the book, as the quotes above suggest. Thus, to explain a change or evolution in European identity, a role must be accorded to public discourses, public spheres, communicative practices, communicative spaces, and communities of communication (see also Risse 2010, 5, 11, 63, 107, 168). I intentionally use the phrases ‘one site’ and ‘a role’ for no one claims that Europeanized public spheres carry all the causal weight in shaping identities; rather, the challenge is better to specify and delimit their role.

In this regard, there are three issues to consider. First, absent further specification, the argument resembles an old one from social psychology – the contact hypothesis – where communication and the rubbing of elbows produce a greater sense of group identification. However, most now recognize that the hypothesis fails when we move from the laboratory-experimental setting of social psychology to the real world of politics, in the EU or elsewhere. In particular, while the *quantity* of contact does play a role, much more decisive is its *quality* (Beyers 2005). That is, deliberative settings – dominated by arguing and persuasion - are more likely to promote greater identification with the group. Contributors to this book who embrace a Habermasian perspective may thus be on to something (Kantner, this volume), as it emphasizes the importance of deliberative dynamics. Yet, even in this case, one would need to document not just the amount of deliberative communication; rather, the (empirical-methodological) challenge would be to look inside these Europeanized public spheres, searching for observable implications of possible identity change.

Second, it is equally plausible that identity change is produced not via communication amongst elites, but by the daily lived experience and social practice of those same elites. From such a practice perspective, “it is not only who we are that drives what we do; it is also what we do that determines who we are” (Pouliot 2010, 5-6; see also Neumann 2002; Adler and Pouliot 2011). Perhaps those same individuals who have a European identity lite (Risse 2010) go to the beaches of Southern Spain and – through daily practice - recreate their own national communities by establishing Norwegian (or German, or British – choose your nationality!)

schools, by producing local editions of national newspapers, or by constructing gated communities of co-nationals.

Such lived experience may undercut feelings of identification with Europe, even in the most likely case of young, upwardly mobile, well educated Europeans. This is precisely the dynamic that Favell masterfully documents in his sociological-anthropological study of identity (non-) change among young European professionals in Brussels, Amsterdam and London (Favell 2008; see also Favell 2009). Favell's findings are supported by studies of the Erasmus student exchange program, with students reporting they never feel so Dutch (or German, or Polish ...) as when they temporarily move abroad (Wilson 2011).

My point is not to claim that social practice will always trump social communication as a mechanism of European identity formation. Rather, by engaging the broader literature on identity change, the volume can sharpen its own arguments, better specifying the scope conditions for when social communication and Europeanized public spheres really will matter. And most likely, this will be a case where it is not either/or, but both/and (Checkel 2012). That is, we will need to theorize both social communication and social practice, and their interaction if we want fully to understand changing identities and their relation to Europeanized public spheres (see also Checkel and Katzenstein 2009).

Third, an emphasis on identity change as occurring – at least partly - through social communication in public spheres can all too easily lead one to view such processes in non-violent terms. Yet, in many other contexts – professional militaries, urban gangs, rebel groups in civil war – and regions – the Middle East, Serbia under Milosevic – identity change results from intimidation, hazing, violence, rape, and death (Cohen 2013; Wood 2008, 2010; see also Checkel 2011, 14-15). It may be the case that none of these dynamics are at work in contemporary Europe or, if present, they have little impact on the communities of communication forming in public spheres. However – and to repeat my earlier concern - this needs to be established empirically and not simply assumed away.

To summarize, this volume makes powerful and innovative claims both on how transnationalized/Europeanized public spheres are being constructed and their impact on

European politics and society. At the same time, new arguments, at least in their initial specification and testing, often over-reach theoretically and underperform in terms of research design. Future work can easily rectify the former, by considering additional factors shaping and interacting with public spheres; I suggested several above.

On design, follow-on studies should be crafted explicitly to examine cases where Europeanized public spheres fail to form; such non-events can help scholars move a step further analytically, specifying the scope conditions of their arguments. In a partial move in this direction, several contributors compare European public spheres to national ones (Koopmans, this volume; Bennett, *et al*, this volume). This is an excellent strategy; in future work, it should be the norm and not the exception.

Public Spheres and the Borders of Europe

Are Europeanized public spheres co-terminous with the borders of the old EU-15? Put differently, how and in what ways do the 2004 and 2007 enlargements affect the arguments in this book about public spheres? One answer is that it is still too early to tell. Researchers are just now beginning to extend their media data bases to the new member states (Diez Medrano 2009).

Still, it seems odd that all contributors to the volume focus empirically on an entity – the EU-15 – that is no more.⁵ Where will Europeanized public spheres stop? Will they eventually include the new East European member states? What about European states – Turkey, Ukraine and Russia come to mind – with little chance of EU membership? Will their public spheres nonetheless be Europeanized through the half-way house measures the Union is offering them?

While some work on Europeanization has begun to theorize and collect data on the new member states (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005), in many other cases, we are essentially left with stories and data about West Europe (Favell 2008; Fligstein 2009; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Risse 2010). So, absent hard data, what are the theoretical expectations for how inclusion of these missing Europeans might affect arguments about Europeanization or

⁵ The only exception is Kantner, whose data on Poland was only partly available for analysis. Kantner, 8, this volume. Two other chapters contain brief mentions of the new member states, but only to summarize others' data (Pfetsch and Heft, 15-16, this volume; Risse, 8, this volume).

Europeanized public spheres? I see two possibilities – call them modernization and the return of history and domestic context.

The modernization story predicts more of the same. That is, the tentative, partial Europeanization of public spheres seen in Western Europe and documented in this book will continue in the new member states. There may be some delay, but as the various mechanisms of Europeanization kick in – be they judicial (ECJ rulings), legal (the *Acquis*), material (structural adjustment funds) or normative (diffusion of models and standards) – we will see similar patterns emerge in East Europe. The past is the future. The volume's main theoretical chapter explicitly adopts this perspective, arguing that “in the course of time differences in the Europeanization of old and new member states seem to vanish” (Pfetsch and Heft, 15, this volume).

I call this the modernization story because it basically sees the EU as a great development machine, wearing down and making more similar all member states. Everyone does not become the same – the Europeanization literature has never made such a claim – but partial Europeanization continues apace. This is a theory of Europeanization where greater weight is placed on the European level.

The history and domestic context story predicts a sharper break with current trends. Historically, the new member states have had a different relation to Europe; they have unique historical memories that will not be Europeanized away (Case 2009). Religion (Catholicism, Orthodoxy) plays a different and more powerful role than in Western Europe, adding a confessional element to politics and processes of identification (Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006, *passim*; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009, chs. 1, 9). Put differently, enlargement has meant the return of history and religion to the EU (see also Risse 2010, 209-13); the future is not the past. This is a theory of Europeanization where, in the interaction between the European and national levels, the primary causal weight is with the latter. No contributor shares this view of Europeanization.⁶

⁶ Although two chapters – each in its own way – highlight the importance of domestic politics in West Europe (Koopmans, this volume; Grande and Kriesi, this volume).

Of course, either theory could be correct; the test will come as each is operationalized and assessed against new data. And for this test to be fair, the data must come from at least two sources. One will be an extension of the sophisticated media (Koopmans, this volume), discursive-framing (Kantner, this volume) and panel studies (Harrison and Bruter, this volume) on display in this book. They capture the communicative and linguistic dimensions. However, equally important will be data collected from sociological-anthropological fieldwork, as this will highlight the role of daily practice in also shaping European politics, public spheres and identities (Favell 2008; Holmes 2009; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009, ch.1).

After this new data is collected and the dust settles, my own sense is that the second story will get it more right. Domestic politics matter as never before in relation to the EU. This is true in Western Europe, where Risse (2010; this volume) and others (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Grande and Kriesi, this volume) have noted the growing trend towards politicization of all things EU. It is true in Eastern Europe as well, with the added twist of radically different domestic contexts (see above). The Euro and sovereign-debt crises of recent years have only exacerbated these trends.

Over time, the EU will clearly interact with and possibly change historical memories and consciousness in the new member states. It is not either/or here. However, this will be a slow process, one even less linear than seen in Western Europe in the post-World War II period.⁷

If I am right, this has implications for Europeanized public spheres, as both dependent and independent variables. On the former, their construction will become more complicated, as the media structures, politics and domestic institutions of the new member states are different. It is true the latter will likely see an increase in reporting on EU matters – indeed, it is already happening (Pfetsch and Heft, 15, this volume); however, this will be refracted through a new – that is, not West European – domestic context.

A central finding of this volume is that the Europeanized public spheres we see today are partial, operate mainly if not entirely at the elite level, and are still dominated by their national counterparts (Risse and van de Steeg, 9-11, this volume; Koopmans, 21, this volume; Bennett, *et*

⁷ Thanks to Thomas Risse for discussions on this point.

al, this volume); they are a “fragile and fluid phenomenon” (Pfetsch and Heft, 21, this volume). If it took 55+ years to attain this outcome among the old EU-15 in West Europe, then the addition of 12 new member states – nearly all from a very different part of the continent – since 2004 will, at a minimum, not lead to any acceleration of Europeanization in this area.

What about the causal effect of Europeanized public spheres – post enlargement - on other aspects of European politics? On the one hand, politicization will likely continue apace. Contributors to this volume - looking at Western Europe – are unanimous in this conclusion; the addition of member states from East and Central Europe should not change the general trend. However, these same contributors are split when it comes to interpreting the results of this politicization.

Risse (12-18, this volume) is cautiously optimistic, while Grande and Kriesi (this volume) warn that opponents of integration are best positioned to exploit the new discursive possibilities offered by politicization and Europeanized public spheres. A key fact behind this difference is empirical domain, with Risse considering the EU and Europeanization, while Grande/Kriesi include broader globalization dynamics. The latter – structural – force has produced new “cleavage coalitions,” which have been exploited most successfully by eurosceptic parties of the populist right (Grande and Kriesi, 2-3, this volume). With the countries of East and Central Europe fully exposed to these forces of globalization and, in Zuern’s (2012) apt phrase, de-nationalization since at least the end of the Cold War, one might expect similar (and new) cleavage coalitions in these countries as well. Thus, enlargement not only continues the process of politicization, but in a way that likely further strengthens opponents of the EU.⁸

Moving beyond politicization, how might enlargement affect the ability of Europeanized public spheres to craft a sense of collective identification with Europe? On the one hand, as I argued above, enlargement will increase politicization, or at least not slow it in any way. And as Risse explains elsewhere in this volume, politicization and the growth of Europeanized public spheres means “debating European issues as *European* questions”; in turn, this is “likely to

⁸ To be clear: This is my extrapolation of the Grande/Kriesi argument; their empirical data only covers West Europe.

increase political identification levels with the EU” (Risse, 11-12, emphasis in the original, this volume).

On the other, as suggested in the previous section, this is a very top-down view of identity formation. It may still help create a European identity lite – even in an enlarged EU – among a small cross-section of the elite. However, this top-down dynamic will now interact with a different kind of bottom-up process, where historical memory and religion in the new member states are crafting different senses of identification. The overall effect will be a diminished role for Europeanized public spheres in the shaping of collective identification with Europe.

In sum, where we draw the borders of Europe has quite significant implications for both the operation of and causal effects of Europeanized public spheres. For a Europe defined as the old EU-15, this volume demonstrates beyond doubt that something is going on. That is, public spheres – at least among elites – are indeed being Europeanized, creating new transnational communities of communication. For an EU of 27 – the Union we have today after the 2004 and 2007 enlargements – any conclusions are heavily constrained by data limitations. However, empirical extrapolation and theoretical logic suggest that - in this new EU - the construction of and effects wrought by Europeanized public spheres will be slower and weaker.

How Much Do Public Spheres Really Matter?

If the current book has shown that public spheres matter, then the challenge for future work is to develop metrics, designs and methodological strategies to tease out better how much they matter. If earlier sections were criticisms of what the volume has done (or omitted), then my comments here are more forward looking. If we think in terms of research programs, then the scholarship on European public spheres represents a maturing one. And for the latter, the where next is invariably a mix of greater theoretical specification, sharper research designs and more attention to methods - all in the service of getting answers to those how-much questions.

In this regard, follow-on studies could usefully address four issues. First, we need explicit attention to and justification of baselines (see also Risse and van de Steeg, 9-10, this volume; Follesdal, 1, this volume). To what are Europeanized public spheres being compared? National

public spheres? Some ideal from political theory? The volume makes a start at thinking through this question, but more still needs to be done.

In particular, Koopmans' approach – to compare national and European structures of political communication – should be replicated. As he notes, an important reason why debates about the Europeanization of public spheres have remained inconclusive is that “a standard of comparison has lacked” (Koopmans, 2, this volume). Koopmans provides such a standard by theorizing and measuring – in similar ways - both the Europeanization of political communication and, within countries, its nationalization. This then allows him “to directly compare the structure of communication within national and European arenas and thus puts our assessments of the (in) sufficiency of current degrees and forms of Europeanization on a more solid footing” (Koopmans, 4, this volume). From a research design perspective, this kind of comparison would seem essential; unfortunately, only one other contribution – by Bennett and collaborators on civil society networks (Bennett, *et al*, this volume) – adopts a similar design.⁹

That missing standard is why readers of this volume will have a hard time understanding the quite different conclusions reached by its contributors. What to make, for example, of the openly expressed disagreement between Kantner, in her study of transnational, European discourse arenas in the policy area of humanitarian interventions, and Koopmans (both this volume)? Part of the disagreement is clearly driven by Kantner's lack of a national baseline in Europe. There is a baseline of sorts in her study, but it is measured by newspaper articles in the USA. The result, as Pfetsch and Heft show, is Kantner's inability “to establish the extent and intensity of Europeanization within a national or transnational forum of communication as compared to non-European, purely domestic communication” (Pfetsch and Heft, 5, this volume).

To be fair to Kantner, even if she had a Koopmans-like baseline, the disagreement between the two would still persist – and for epistemological reasons in this instance. Koopmans' chapter, and the larger studies upon which it draws, are works of empirical social science, concerned with measurement and the validity of any results. Kantner's chapter is all this, but it also has a strong normative element, where it is more the very possibility of

⁹ Perhaps tellingly, it is also the Koopmans and Bennett, *et al*, chapters that offer the most pessimistic findings on the degree of Europeanization of public spheres.

Europeanized public spheres and their implication for a more democratic European politics that matters (Kantner, 7-8, 20-21, this volume). From this perspective, that national public spheres may still trump their European counterparts (Koopmans' finding) is of less import.

Second, to explore and fully understand the impact of Europeanized public spheres, one needs some sense of relative weightings. For example, in their cleverly crafted panel study, Harrison and Bruter (this volume) show that news and images drawn from Europeanized media influence individual identity. This is an important finding, but at the same time it begs the question of how much of an individual's identity is shaped by media exposure. We know from a rich and multi-disciplinary literature that identities are shaped by a variety of forces, including media and communication (this volume), structural economic flows (Favell 2009), schools and churches (Dawson and Prewitt 1969), national militaries (Winslow 1999), and – in many cases – through violence and intimidation (Vigil 2003; Stretesky and Pogrebin 2007).

Given this multitude of forces shaping any individual's identity, the challenge for Harrison and Bruter (and for sure many others) is to explore how much identity change results from media exposure. My strong suspicion is that media-driven change is being swamped by these other mechanisms, many of which are anchored in powerful and deeply institutionalized national organizations (see also Checkel 2007, ch.8).

Another, related way to think about the analytic challenges sketched above is to develop scope conditions for arguments about the causal effects of Europeanized public spheres. That is, what are the conditions under which an argument is likely to hold? Returning to the study by Harrison and Bruter, a crucial – albeit essentially implicit - scope condition for media-driven change in identity would appear to be the intensity of exposure. Almost in passing (and on the chapter's third-to-last page), the authors note that participants in their two-year panel study were “exposed to more news on Europe than the average European over a whole (or indeed, perhaps several!) lifetime(s)” (Harrison and Bruter, 20, this volume). Absent such intense and high volume exposure, the argument relating media to identity change does not hold.

In his chapter, Risse thinks quite explicitly in terms of scope conditions, a smart move that allows him to nuance and delimit his claims. In particular, he advances two “scope conditions under which the Europeanization of public spheres is likely to increase the sense of

identity among Europeans” (Risse, 11, this volume). For one, he argues that framing matters: “good news about the EU is good news for identity” (Risse, 11, this volume; see also Harrison and Bruter, this volume). However and following on the discussion immediately above, this might be more aptly phrased *lots* of good news about the EU is good news for identity, given the need for significant exposure.

Risse’s other scope condition is a bit unclear, as it seems to over-ride the first. In particular, he argues that whether or not the EU is portrayed in good or bad terms, the very act of “debating European issues as *European* questions ... is also likely to increase political identification levels with the EU” (Risse, 12, this volume, emphasis in original). This is intriguing, but the theoretical logic is unclear and no supporting empirical studies are cited - in contrast to his discussion of the first scope condition. Moreover, Risse concludes the analysis by noting that such debates may be part of a virtuous or vicious circle, with the latter leading to a “de-Europeanization of public spheres and their re-nationalization” (Risse, 12, this volume; see also Grande and Kriesi, this volume). It would seem this second scope condition is indeterminate.

While I thus have concerns regarding the specific operationalization of Risse’s two scope conditions, he should nonetheless be praised for undertaking the exercise in the first place.¹⁰ By delimiting his argument in this way, he puts his neck on the line, as it were – for it allows critics to challenge and build upon his findings. And for research on European public spheres to consolidate and advance as a theoretically driven empirical research program, such critical exchanges are essential.

Third, work on public spheres needs to ask the counterfactual: Absent the emergence of Europeanized public spheres, would the outcomes of interest – politics, collective identification with Europe – be any different? I ask this not in any mean-spirited way; rather, there is a

¹⁰ While Risse is the only contributor to advance scope conditions, the concluding section of Pfetsch and Heft’s theoretical overview chapter provides excellent raw material for developing additional ones in future work. Pfetsch and Heft, 21-22, this volume.

tendency in any focused research project to be too close to one's arguments, failing to ask hard so-what questions.

Counterfactuals are thought experiments. Asking and answering them, does not prove anything. In this sense, they are a forward-looking exercise: How could we design future research to deal with the issues they raise? Consider Europeanized public spheres and identity in Europe, and ask the counterfactual. Absent any such public spheres, would the outcome – the tentative emergence of a European identity light – be any different?

Contributors to this volume would likely answer 'yes, the outcome would be different; Europeanized public spheres have had a discernible causal impact on people's identification with Europe.' Checkel would answer 'no, the outcome would be the same, as there are other factors at work – strategic efforts by the EU to craft such an identity, social practice and lived experience, the creation of small horizontal communities of common identification a la Fligstein (2009) – producing the same outcome: a European identity lite.'

Where does this leave us? Having thought counterfactually, the contributors and I would likely agree that the outcome was over-determined, with multiple mechanisms at work, all contributing to the same result – the creation of a weak sense of identification with Europe. The challenge, in follow-on research, would be to think at an early point of research designs that could deal better with such causal complexity, or to employ methodological tools such as process tracing (Bennett and George 2005, ch.10; Bennett and Checkel 2014, ch.1), qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin and Rihoux 2009), or agent-based modeling (Nome and Weidmann 2013) that could better disentangle the competing mechanisms.

My arguments here, it should be noted, resonate with those of the Pfetsch/Heft chapter. While they are looking more at the input side – what contributes to the growth of Europeanized public spheres – their advice is the same: a greater focus on research design in future work (Pfetsch and Heft, 21-22, this volume).

Fourth – and another point about design – we need ones that are less EU-centric, and especially less EU-15 centric. This simply reiterates a call for studies that include all EU member states, including the 12 new ones added since 2004. And, yes, these more ambitious designs must

await the collection of data in the new members – data, as argued earlier, that should come from surveys and panel studies as well as techniques more informed by sociology and anthropology. This inter-disciplinary mix of techniques offers more powerful answers to central questions, be it about politics more generally (Schatz 2009, Introduction and *passim*) or the creation and effects of Europeanized public spheres.

More ambitiously, designs would extend beyond the European Union and Europeanization, which would sharpen our arguments on Europeanized public spheres as both independent and dependent variables. On the latter and as Grande and Kriesi argue and document in their chapter, the politicization that many in this volume see as an enabling condition of Europeanized public spheres, is also empowering new domestic political actors and cleavages who are no friends of the integration process. Spurred by the workings of longer-term globalization dynamics, their (negative) role would be missed if we focused only on the effects of Europeanization.

Regarding Europeanized public spheres as the independent variable, scholars need to learn the same lesson as those studying European identity: the EU is not the only game in town (Favell 2008; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). Europeanized public spheres do play some role in shaping senses of identification in Europe; this is an important finding of the present volume. Yet, ‘some role’ will remain vague and under-specified until research is specifically designed to capture the multiple causal factors shaping identity on the continent.

Conclusions

This volume demonstrates that Europeanized public spheres affect politics, which is no small feat, especially in an era when the Euro/sovereign-debt crises have highlighted the continuing centrality of power, political leadership and material interests in the European project. As the opening chapters argue, vibrant public spheres are an essential prerequisite of democratic politics, including those in the EU (Risse and van de Steeg, Pfetsch and Heft, both this volume). Most of the remaining chapters - using diverse analytic starting points, different methodologies, and examining a range of issue areas and actors – then go on to show that transnational communication in Europe is occurring. And, to repeat, this is no small feat given the reality of

(still) independent nation-states speaking a bewildering variety of languages (Risse and van de Steeg, this volume). From the standpoint of normative-democratic theory, the volume has done its job, demonstrating that a crucial ingredient of a more democratic EU exists and is (slowly) growing.

If we move from the realm of normative to problem-solving theory, then here, too, the book delivers, with a core argument that is both powerful and succinct. Simply put, it is language - transnationalized communication in this case – that helps shape the world around us. This is a refreshing formulation for students of integration, one that frees our thinking about Europe and its future from those old war horses – neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. For sure, Risse and collaborators offer no general theory of their own to explain the broad workings of public spheres and their relation to the integration process. However, the days of grand theorizing, be it about Europe or more generally, seem to be over (Sil and Katzenstein 2010a, b; Checkel 2012).

Yet, at the same time, the volume is less successful in theorizing at a level below grand, general theories – that is, in articulating a partial, middle-range (George 1993) framework for explaining Europeanized public spheres. To understand fully how, whether and under what conditions public spheres shape politics – questions at the heart of middle-range and problem-solving theory – the core argument will need further specification.

At a minimum, this will require greater attention to institutions, power and daily practice. Institutions matter in at least two ways – (i) the media itself as an often powerful institution (media conglomerates, say); and (ii) how different structures of political institutions across countries can lead to differential input into public spheres. Power also plays two roles – (iii) the traditional one of differentials in material power; and (iv) institutional power, where institutions work to privilege certain discourses and frames that are subsequently re-articulated in public spheres. Finally, daily practice is (v) an additional arena in which activities and behaviors may counter dynamics playing out in Europeanized public spheres. Of these five factors, the volume does address (i) and (iii), but chiefly in the introductory and theory chapters (Risse and van de Steeg; Pfetsch and Heft, both this volume); only (i) is addressed in the empirical essays and then in only one instance (Harrison and Bruter, this volume).

Beyond theory, further work on design and method will sharpen analytic claims about Europeanized public spheres by delimiting their scope. If this all sounds like a call for a normal science of research on public spheres, then readers will have correctly interpreted my fundamental bottom line and take away. In saying this, I well realize that work on public spheres has a strong normative and – for some – critical theory element to it; this is necessary and welcome. Yet, greater attention to problem-solving theory and method, and empirical testing can only strengthen that critical project. Such a synergy stands at the cutting edge in the broader international-relations literature (Price and Reus-Smit 1998; Price 2008a, b) and, it is to be hoped, in future work on European public spheres as well.

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