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The Missing European Public: A Note on the Ethics and Politics of Contemporary European Integration since Nice

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Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan (eds.), <i>Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective</i> Carlo Hagemann	427
Ard Schilder, <i>Government Failures and Institutions in Public Policy Evaluation</i> Michiel S. de Vries	429
Henri Goverde, Philip G. Cerny, Mark Haugaard, and Howard Lentner (eds.), <i>Power in Contemporary Politics. Theories, Practices, Globalizations</i> Leo Huberts	432
Charles C. Ragin, <i>Fuzzy-Set Social Science</i> Paul Pennings	434
Amy Verdun, <i>European Responses to Globalization and Financial Market Integration. Perceptions of Economic and Monetary Union in Britain, France and Germany</i> Femke A.W.J. van Esch	436
Contributors	440
Errata Acta Politica 36 (Autumn)	442
Acknowledgements	443
Contents Volume 36 (2001)	445

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The Missing European Public: A Note on the Ethics and Politics of Contemporary European Integration since Nice

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Abstract

It is common knowledge that there is no European public. According to federalist theory such a public can be created through a process of democratization in which either constitutional commitment or European identity is framed. This article discusses the desirability and feasibility of a quasi-national idea of Europe. Against Kamminga (2001) it is argued that Europeanization of national publics in member states can pass the test of moral integrity and global justice. A research programme to collect data and test hypotheses about such Europeanization is spelled out. Finally, recent trends in European identity politics are addressed briefly.

1 Introduction

It is hard to see how European integration can work and succeed when the Europeans (for example, the Dutch) have good reasons for refusing to love the European Union while the non-Europeans (for example, the Americans) have good reasons for hating it. One of us wrote elsewhere that political cultivation of a love of Europe has become a precondition to stability of the emergent European Political Union. Such a union may very well be crucial to the survival of civic nations in this world region (the patriot's cause) as well as the diffusion of federalist schemes in other regions (the cosmopolitan cause) (De Beus 2001a).

In an important critique of this claim, Kamminga has argued that the application of constitutional republicanism and liberal supranationalism to the case of European integration is flawed in general. Invention of European politics and ongoing democratization of such politics based on these ideals – a European charter of goals, rights and the machinery of government, and a European nation of nations, respectively – will have a negative impact on the moral integrity of European citizens as persons and on global justice, that is, the fair share of non-Europeans, in particular the poor members of poor countries excluded from European membership (Kamminga 2001).

Our response is threefold. First, we formulate the problem: a European public, yes or no? Second, we spell out a view of European democratization that passes the dual test of moral integrity of individuals and justice for mankind. Third, we introduce a research programme concerning the Europeanization of nations, as opposed to the nationalization of Europe, such as Germanization. This research examines the following sequence:

Current European policies → Changing political opportunity structures in member states →
 Changing national modes of political communication and mobilization in policy areas → Rise
 of a European Public in national spheres → European Policies in a transnational public sphere

It may shed light on the empirical plausibility of the right kind of democratic unification of Europe.

2 The no public thesis

According to the conventional wisdom there is no European public. There is no transnational middle class committed to a European mode of citizenship. There is no wide debate and discourse beyond borders on policy issues such as monetary union, enlargement and institutional reform. There is no European civil society in the sense of a public sphere in politics and society, created and set in motion by transnational journals, television channels, web sites, parties, interest groups and social movements. There is no European public culture, marked off from national cultural traditions as well as the Brussels policy culture of commissioners, diplomats, civil servants, judges, members of the European Parliament and lobbyists (Middlemas 1995; Shore 2000). Finally and most importantly, there is no European identity as a source of mass loyalty to the European community, regime, framework of institutions, policy and leadership.

The absence of a European public seems to constitute a dual problem for political elites. On the one hand, the dominant post-war view of European legitimacy turns into a failure. The mixture of lofty idealism about European Enlightenment and civilization, consensual regulation of common problems (such as agriculture and global trade), the rule of experts and courts, the spill-over effect of market integration, and symbolic cultural policies does not engender the presumed shift of the permissive consensus at the national level towards a stable practice of ideas, passions, principles and interests at the European level (Haas 1958). Instead, it seems to generate inefficient interventionism, large-scale corruption, electoral alienation and nationalist

backlash. This side of the problem is often referred to as the dying-hour of functionalism (Schmitter 2000).

On the other hand, the dominant view of the future European Union becomes unattainable because of the missing link of European publicity. Many argue that the effectiveness of current policies (competition policy, monetary policy), the effectiveness of new policies under the sign of positive integration (employment policy, social policy, foreign and defence policy, migration policy), the cohesion and capacity of an enlarged Union (27 members, many candidate members) and the democratic nature of multi-level governance in Europe all depend on the timely formation of a European public. European publicity is necessary for coping with the national and international problems and conflicts that require European solutions as well as the national and international problems and conflicts of the second order that are triggered by the implementation of European unity. Let us refer to this side of the problem as 'the labour pains of federalism' (Hoffmann 1995; Garton Ash 2001).

The problem of the missing European public puts the mainstream in both political philosophy and political science to the test. Most political theories about public interest in a wide sense (peace, justice, democracy) presuppose the context of national states, a cosmopolitan context or an abstract and ideal world without context. Universalists argue that the domain and scope of political morality ought to be global. Particularists argue that the limits of political morality ought to be local. The exchange between universalist world citizens and particularist patriots may dominate academia, particularly American universities. Yet it is irrelevant to the justification and assessment of the emergence of moral goals, duties and virtues at the intermediate European level since it neglects contemporary history from 1950 (Treaty of Paris, the coal, iron and steel community) to 2000 (the Treaty of Nice, the community of Western and Eastern Europe). Likewise, most comparative studies about European public opinion and legitimacy focus on patterns of divergence and convergence between nations (or distinct sets of nations like Nordic, Continental and Southern nations) or between standard categories of a general nature (classes, left-right ideologies, religions, regions, sexes, generations) or between Western and non-Western cultures. They neglect the rise of a European public as the unintended consequence of multilevel structures, strategies and processes of public building.

So where should the research agenda be taken from here? One alternative is a continuation of the no public thesis. Perhaps the functionalist avoidance of classical state making (monopolization of violence and coercion) and of classical nation building (assimilation) ought to be revitalized. Perhaps it will do so in the present decade via the open method of coordination (benchmarking), the strengthening of domestic accountability with respect to European policies (such as the introduction of a European Senate), the rise of

consensual democracy within member states, the endorsement of a public philosophy of deliberative democracy in the triangle of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament (rival views of moral constituencies correcting the exclusiveness and self-centredness of factual constituencies) and the innovation of methods of accommodation of European diversity. The Treaty of Nice seems to make a lot of sense in this perspective since it approves further qualification of the Council's majority rule (255/245 or 73.91% of the vote, 14 out of 27 members, 62% of the European population), extension of the Commission (to 27 members), extension of the European Parliament (732 members) and strict procedures for enhanced cooperation among subsets of member states. There is a growing literature on new functionalism (De Búrca & Scott 1999; Hérítier 1999; Hix 1999; Lijphart 1999; Scharpf 1999; Ferrera et al. 2000; Laffan et al. 2000; De Beus 2001b; WRR 2001).

Another alternative concerns the research of ideas, models, trends and scenarios about the entry of a European public in a political union of ever-closer states and peoples. This literature seems much less developed because of the fuzziness of post-national thought and the lack of historical role models, broad empirical evidence and clear cases (Goddard et al. 1994; Delanty 1995; Smith 1997; Archibugi et al. 1998; Smith & Wright 1999; Schulze 1999; Eriksen & Fossum 2000; Eder & Giesen 2001; Imig & Tarrow 2001; Guibernau 1996, 2001; Kaelble 2001).

We will only explore the second alternative here. Let us define the European public as an encompassing set of citizens of all European member states that has free access to a common public sphere, that cultivates the institutions and practices of such a sphere (European culture), that develops a belief in Europe and the dignity, trust and solidarity among fellow Europeans (European identity), and that is engaged in democratic self-determination of European interests, values and rights (European politics). Is a European public desirable? Is a European public likely? Section 3 discusses the normative issue. We will defend the ethical credentials of a specific concept of European communitarianism in a comparison with European realism (the anarchy of fully sovereign nation states and great powers), functionalism and republicanism. Section 4 discusses the empirical issue. It outlines our research programme on the Europeanization of national publics. It entails a brief survey of similar research efforts today. Section 5 briefly addresses recent political developments in this area.

3 In defence of a European ethical community

There seems to be no escape from synthesis of ethical universalism and ethical particularism (Kagan 1998; Kamminga 1998). Universalist argument corrects particularist argument by its demand of humanity, accountability (with regard to excluded individuals and groups) and consistency. With universalist considerations patriots may construct open societies; without it they will reap closure and new tribalism. Particularist argument corrects universalism by its demand of cultural diversity, meaningful special relations in bounded communities, and shared understanding (informed by history and experience). With particularist considerations world citizens may bring about a mode of global coordination within the limits of knowledge, responsibility and scarce resources; without it they will reap global inefficiency and new imperialism.

This synthesis is directly at stake in European integration. A universalist view of supranational authority in Europe points at internal benefits to (nearly) all citizens in the member states: peace, liberty of movement, prosperity, efficient provision of European public goods (such as clean air) and social assistance to backward provinces. It also points at external benefits to the rest of the world population, that is, the contribution of European unity and common policies to a humane order and development at the global level. A particularist view of the European Union emphasizes certain special features of what is often called the 'European model of society': social citizenship (welfare state), organized capitalism (mixed economy) and national pluralism (diversity of civic national cultures). In this view, any European participation in cosmopolitan missions and structures of governance, like development aid, humanitarian intervention, and the regulation of global markets and media of communication, should take into account the special ethos of the new European community since 1945. The European role in international affairs ought to be different from the role of other great powers, such as the United States of America, Russia and the People's Republic of China. For example, it should be geared distinctively towards dialogue and soft measures.

Kamminga rightly argues that the value of democratization of the European Union is in many ways derived from the basic value of European integration. Yet he is too pessimistic about the case for valuable integration, partly because of insufficient recognition of the crucial distinction between the noble idea of European civilization and the messy practice of European bargaining in the Brussels District (Judt 1996). The pessimist argument suggests that politicization of the European question beyond secret diplomacy will lead to a European 'fortress': mercantilist protection of core producers and workers writ large (Weiler 1999; Gilpin 2000). Yet this argument is one-sided. Perhaps such politicization can lead to control of trade wars, revision of the neo-liberal

consensus of the World Trade Organization in the 1990's and, eventually, a combination of liberalization of trade and strengthening of social protection in open economies (global embedded liberalism). Furthermore, a general backsliding in the old regime of aggressive state rivalry and balance of power politics would be quite costly, both for European and non-European peoples, associations and individuals.

The real issue lies elsewhere. Will the formation of a democratic political union of Europe protect and promote the *acquis communautaire*? Will it abolish or compensate well-known moral failures of the *acquis* to date, like massive unemployment in the framework of EMU, agricultural protectionism, lack of positive integration of market economies, and lack of cutting power and ethics of responsibility in foreign policy and migration policy? There are obvious tensions between the good of European unity and the good of European democracy. It is clearly possible that the rise of supranational democracy via European parties, bicameral European Parliament, general elections of the European Commission presidency and referenda results in worse cases, such as the postponement of enlargement to the east and a rise to power of the extreme right. It is up to empirical political science to examine the plausibility of such anti-liberal scenarios. It is up to political theory to explore the contradictions, costs and dangers of an effective abolition of the democratic deficit of Europe. Here we concur with Kamminga's worries about an unruly collapse of national states at the backdrop of a feeble United Nations regime.

In order to sort out claims and phenomena in this vast and unknown territory, one must bring in certain models of Europe. Old models are realism (Europe in the Westphalian regime) and functionalism (the spill over effect of economic integration). New models are constitutional republicanism and liberal supranationalism. The main difference between these old and new models concerns the issue of supranational sovereignty. While the old models counterpoise expansionist and dogmatic attitudes of national politicians, the new models may counterpoise expressions of vulnerability and the sense of a lack of orientation in the current opinion climate:

Today's 'Europe' is neither a commercial empire nor a tyranny nor anything that the kings of the Holy Roman Empire, or Napoleon, or Hitler would recognize. It is certainly not a democratic state either. It is the half-finished outline of a political ideal, fuelled by fear of war and by a dream that a unified Europe would replace the failed nation states. The fear is passing with the generation that lived under Hitler. The idealism, too, is fading (Buruma 1999: 304).

The main difference between the new models concerns the issue of supranational identity. Most supporters of the new models argue as one vis-à-vis the supporters of realism and functionalism that the time is ripe for a mode

of sovereignty pooling based on citizenship, which corrects endemic injustice and inefficiency in a system of cooperative national states. They agree as to the nature of scale enlargement of post-national polities. Such enlargement should and can be based on the legacy of national democratic revolutions: primacy of politics, the autonomy of human agents, the ability to construct social order, universal rights and group plurality. Note that there is nothing *pre-political* in a civic interpretation of modern nationalism and modern post-nationalism in Europe (against the account of Kamminga 2001: 237, 240).

Yet the new public philosophies of Europe clash as to the very nature of European citizenship (Habermas 1998). The republican sees the written constitution as the dominant force of cohesion, both within and across member states. A democratic political union of Europe is instrumental to the build-up of world governance. Love of Europe is the outcome of the right kind of constitutional politics. It is also conditional, that is, dependent on the liberal-democratic content of European law. The boundaries of the European polity should be open (pragmatic immigration policy). The supranationalist sees the public culture as the dominant force of cohesion. As all such cultures, European culture must be the outcome of evolution of cultural accommodation (overlap, interaction, negotiation), mutual economic advantage, interwoven history *and* cultural policies (like the binding choice of a European standard language). A democratic political union of Europe is instrumental to continued pacification of Europe and to its flourishing in a wide sense. Love of Europe is the precondition of the right kind of politics, whether high (constitutional politics) or low (ordinary politics such as distributive policies). It also constitutes the stake of European identity politics, as the present contestation about the future of European immigration and multi-ethnic tolerance shows. Liberal supranationalism welcomes a restrictive and selective immigration policy based on legal, political and economic principles.

Kamminga argues that both views of European citizenship boil down to false patriotism and false egalitarianism. We will concentrate now on his critique of the communitarian approach. This approach claims that citizens of member states should not abandon their identification with the nation altogether, but rather that they should improve it by forming a Europe consciousness, by joining a European public and by feeling loyalty towards fellow Europeans. Quasi-national European identity is conducive to a wider circle of belonging, sociability, dignity and self-determination for all persons involved. It also entails a wider set of political commitments, legal rules and moral obligations. Kamminga claims that a plea for quasi-national European identity marks a disintegration of moral personalities since (1) democratic integration of Europe is not a fundamental value; (2) the required convergence towards a stable pattern of typically European ideals, ways of life (religion,

language, history) and boundaries is missing today; (3) the only really existing bond today, namely European reciprocity of state elites and business elites, will be hollowed-out and jeopardized by the appeal to a partially extra-rational European identity; and (4) the required conflict between national and European demands remains unsolved or will be solved by destruction of legitimate traditions of national identification (Kamminga 2001: 240-244).

It is clear that there is no nested nationality at the level of individuals in the sense of a mental and moral balance between the experience of belonging to a smaller community (such as the Netherlands) and the experience of belonging to the larger European community. Most farmers to date have acted as bargain-hunters rather than good Europeans (Miller 2000). But why would political formation of such nested nationality in a European compact end in disaster, as Kamminga suggests it will? Our supranationalism avoids both horror stories and fairy tales.

First, European integration does involve basic values, basic structures and basic cultures in national societies. In the Netherlands, for example, the turn from the regime of neutrality (1815-1939) to the regime of commitment to Western alliances (since 1945) engendered a broader appreciation of security, a more inclusive structure of power and political opportunity, and a more libertarian culture. The major ethical point of Europe is, of course, the widening of the circle of rationality, reason and responsibility. Yet the minor ethical point is no less important and in some ways the innovative one. It is a mode of change of basic morality in the world of nation states that avoids both a clash of incompatible national values (conquest, revolution) and mutual non-interference (truce, isolationism). It creates and exploits opportunities for mutual dialogue, reflection, friendly interference and compromise (Duchêne 1994: 20). There are sound reasons to be sceptic about the progress made here. Yet there is no doubt in the literature that the introduction and strengthening of publicity will make such progress more likely, except for the case of state secrets and the case of privacy in public places (Luban 1996).

Second, quasi-national European identity in terms of equal dignity, trust and solidarity among fellow Europeans warrants a specific form of cultural convergence. On the one hand, it requires the growth of a civic political culture in member states. National civil societies need to share a common core, which entails a common language, secular religious tolerance, freedom of enterprise and commerce, plurality of political associations and voices, liberal arts and sciences, and limited government under the rule of law. Recent comparative research by leading scholars such as Colin Crouch, Juan Linz, Anthony Smith and Göran Therborn points at the genesis of such a core at the backdrop of expansion of the number of core member states since the early days of the European Economic Community. On the other hand, European identity requires politics of framing at national and European levels. Participants in the

debate on Europe ought to present practical proposals about public representation and protection of European nationhood, for example in the policies of enlargement (say the 'Turkey yes, Russia no' proposal). Or they should articulate the dimension of identity in other important proposals concerning European policy (say the 'Euro in your pocket' proposal). Furthermore, they should articulate their negative attitude towards the European past of quasi-natural division as well as their positive attitude towards the European future of partly constructed harmony. Public political contestation about episodes of darkness (national socialism) and light (post-war Keynesianism) will foster shared understandings about a European past and fate. The dominant apolitical approach to high culture (the greatness of Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and so on) no longer makes sense.

Third, quasi-national identification with a unified Europe need not, and should not, replace the force of coinciding interests of states, corporations and other powers that be in this region. The argument is simply that geopolitical and economic interdependency is a necessary condition to political union, not a sufficient one.

Finally, the issue of the primacy of either national or European obligations should not be avoided anymore. The partially democratic mode of European integration to this very day tries to prevent national identity crises by budget limits (less than 1.27 per cent of the Union's total GNP until 2006), the requirement of unanimity and national implementation of European regulations. A fully democratic mode thrives on creative identity conflicts that diminish local and national outlooks and strengthen European views. Ethical theorists tend to focus on the incoherence of dual or multiple obligations, while economists tend to make a big deal out of the strict conditions for stability and optimality of a homogeneous currency area. They neglect the simple point that Europe-building, or nation-building for that matter, boils down to creating new and more inclusive spaces in which conflicting obligations and interests arise, make sense and must be overcome in order to attain strong unity. This is called domino dynamics (first France and Germany, then the United Kingdom, and so on) and disequilibrium dynamics (first trade policy, then monetary policy, and then social policy, and so on) (Emerson 1998). Kamminga draws a distinction between 'choose your nation first', 'choose Europe first', and a flexible combination of these two. He argues that liberal supranationalism needs to justify its general preference of the second alternative. We argue, however, that the very choice of these options in routine politics and the daily life of citizens would indicate the possibility of a new moral integrity in a European nation of nations. Of course, Kamminga is right to stress that a communitarian account of European federalism should elaborate the core role of the European state, the core legal duties of European citizens, as well as the core tensions in various member-state settings.

Kamminga's second claim concerns the expected negative relation between liberal supranationalism in Europe and global distributive justice. He argues (1) that the growing willingness and ability of rich Europeans to transfer means (resources, goods, money) to poor Europeans irrespective of nationality will go in tandem with a decreasing willingness and ability of all Europeans to transfer means to poor non-Europeans irrespective of nationality; (2) that the distributive ethos of the coming Political Union of Europe may well be an American one, in the sense of a quasi-American tradition of meritocracy and poor policies for the poor (the argument of Americanization of distributive culture); (3) that the required diffusion of concern and respect – from the national worse off to the European worse off – will be conducive to a loss of concern and respect for the global worse off; (4) that the influence of member states with high shares in development aid (Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden) on Europe's global distributive policy will decrease in a quasi-national European democracy; and (5) that effective European politicians who abandon horizontal redistribution in favour of European farmers and other producers, and introduce a more even-handed approach of horizontal and vertical equity, are absent.

It goes without saying that global distributive justice is not a primary goal of European integration. The primary goal is global peace and security of Europeans in a broad sense. Furthermore, full egalitarian justice would require the abolition of national difference. Such abolition is explicitly rejected in liberal supranationalism.

Nevertheless, the tension between European democracy and global justice may be less strong than Kamminga suggests. The empirical evidence for the argument of limited solidarity (1) is weak. We know that nationals who support domestic solidarity also support global solidarity, and that egoism is often consistent in a similar sense. Support for global solidarity may indeed fade away when European public outlays for the European poor start to rocket because of general pauperization in Western Europe and the membership of many Eastern European countries with massive poverty and weak social policy schemes. But this is a special case. The case is also mixed from the viewpoint of global justice, since transfers from rich European countries in the West to poor ones in the East may be part of an efficient division of tasks of a broad coalition of donor countries.

Americanization of European distributive culture (Kamminga's argument 2) is unlikely. Liberal supranationalism dissociates itself explicitly from American *laissez-faire*. It may accept Americanization of the consumer culture and elements of workfare in European social policy (the Third Way social democrat approach of social duties and active labour market policy comes to mind here), but it rejects restoration of the nineteenth century night-watchman state by means of European policies. Kamminga's argument (4)

about the entrenched minority of egalitarian states and peoples in a quasi-national European Union seems to point at such restoration. But where are the historical examples to justify a belief in this bleak scenario? Look at the United Kingdom, the potential leader of an anti-egalitarian coalition in Europe. The Thatcherite experiment (1979-1990) was a combination of conservatism and hate of Europe. It was rejected by Christian democrats, social democrats and liberals on the continent. It also produced major inconsistencies in the economic policy and general ideology of the two large British parties, leading toward a chronically unstable role for the United Kingdom in Europe (Young 1999).

The arguments of moral Eurocentredness (3) and the impossibility of the European egalitarian (5) are much more serious. Hayek claimed in a classic paper that lack of international agreement on moral principles would block the making of left-wing economic and social policies in a European monetary union. He also argued that classical liberalism is the only viable option that avoids both European egoism and inefficient planning by a European federal government (Hayek 1939). Quasi-national European identity may create the proper conditions for European redistribution, such as a European basic income scheme as advocated by Van Parijs and Ferry (Ferry 2000), but can it avoid a focus on European humanitarian catastrophes, such as the current Balkan war, at the cost of neglect of such catastrophes elsewhere, in particular the ongoing war in the heart of Africa? That is indeed an unsettled question in liberal supranationalism, which is precisely identified by Kamminga.

4 The thesis of Europeanization

Whereas in the past decade, research has focused on the influence of European integration on the institutional change of domestic political structures, the question has recently shifted to whether it has led to a change in the more profound characteristics of the national political arena. Europeanization in that understanding can be defined as: "an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making" (Ladrech 1994: 70). In the most recent literature, two major foci can be distinguished: an empirical concern to assess the degree of Europeanization across time and sectors, and a normative concern about the substantial change in policies (Jachtenfuchs 2001). Our examination deals with both questions. Can the change in national political culture be understood as absorption, accommodation or genuine transformation (Boerzel & Risse 2000)? What will be the result of conflict between established national practices and occurring European influences?

Research on European identity has increasingly shifted to the transformation of national identities. The outstanding issue is no longer the possibility of multiple identities but the settlements reached to accommodate them. It assumes that Europe is incorporated in, and coexists with, given nation-state identities. Integration then depends on the alteration, not necessarily the aggregation, of preferences and identities and allows for differentiation amongst member states (Eriksen & Fossum 2000; Closa 2001; Risse 2001). Equally, it is believed that the prerequisite of a unitary homogenous European public sphere should be replaced with one of a sphere of European publics. A certain nationalization of political communication about the European Union has been observed while at the same time European themes and discourses have become more salient in national public debates. As a result, the question has become whether and to what extent these national public spheres have become more inclusive and Europeanized (Schlesinger & Kevin 2000).

Our research has the ambition to examine these relationships and dynamics empirically. The aim of the project, 'The Transformation of Political Mobilisation and Communication in European Public Spheres' (Europub.com), is threefold. First, to analyse whether and to what degree Europeanization transforms national identities, attitudes and behaviour; second, to track down how this process takes place, and finally, how this in turn influences participation of various political actors in the public sphere, both nation- and European-wide.¹ The main idea is that we may not yet have observed a 'European' public and a 'European' public sphere because we have looked for them in the wrong place: at the European rather than the national level. It may well be that in the various national contexts, similar processes of formation have taken place.

The project is a common endeavour of seven universities in six European countries. The project is not only comparative across countries but equally over time and across policy areas. On the basis of content analysis of newspaper articles, interviews with political actors, policy-makers and media makers, as well as a quantitative analysis of the political use of the Internet, the spectrum will be mapped of the changes in political mobilization and communication in the national public spheres over the last twenty years. The research combines institutional approaches, and both quantitative and discourse analytical methods. This will allow us to speculate on the type and degree of change of the political arena: has only institutional adaptation occurred or can we observe a profound transformation? Moreover, it enables us to explain the political dynamics of this change. Is a consensus for change created and if so, by what means? A central focus is thereby how European issues are being framed in the national context (Schmidt 2001).

It has been argued that Europeanization does not necessarily imply convergence (Radaelli 2000) and that the influence of Europeanization may

vary across policy fields (Cowles et al. 2001). Our aim is to formulate a set of explanatory variables for these differences and thereby contribute to the question of viability of a European public sphere, either differentiated or not by member state. In order to do so, five possible outcomes of Europeanization have been specified: supranationalization of the public sphere; increased national focusing on Europe in the national public sphere; vertical convergence under influence of European policies; horizontal convergence by increasing interdependence between states; and finally, 'Europe' as a new conflict dimension in public spheres.

The little empirical research on Europeanization of national public spheres and discourses has so far primarily shown the differences between countries (Risse et al. 1999), whereas the challenge ahead is to break down the state-centric picture and identify the variety of discourses on Europe at the domestic level (Diez 2001). Only in that way, can we establish to what extent 'Europe' is internalized in the national culture, whether it is a topic for domestic agreement or dispute and whether and how consensus is reached on a number of core values and practices. Finally, this approach will allow us to move beyond an examination of the mere consequences of Europeanization and to differentiate between the effects of regionalization, Europeanization and globalization.

5 European identity politics after Nice

Awaiting the empirical findings of our research, we may for a moment speculate on the likelihood of the appearance of a European public. The last couple of years, an increasing interest for the concept of multi-level governance in the European Union, and the importance of networks, dialogue and debate therein can be noted. Authors have drawn attention to the fact that European politics is characterized by an enhanced interdependence between public and private actors (Matlary 1996; Pierson 1996; Richardson 1996; Olsen 1997) and between the national and the European level of governance (Peterson 1995; Marks et al. 1996; Rometsch & Wessels 1996; Wessels 1996, 1997). However, widespread participation does not seem to trigger down easily from the level of interest groups and associations to the general public. While it is acknowledged that a public sphere cannot be imposed by governments or bureaucrats, it seems vital that top-down structures recognize the significance of civil society and an active citizenry and that they seek ways in which public participation can take place (Curtin 1997, 1998). Therefore, we would like to explore briefly the willingness and ability of the European institutions and the national governments of the member states, in this case the Dutch one, to stimulate the occurrence of a European public sphere, either differentiated nationally or not.

During the mid-1980s, the attempt to create a European identity reflected an explicitly cultural approach and the effort to stimulate a European space of communication can be characterized by the 'Television without Frontiers' project. However, as a direct result of the problematic ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, a new era started. Since then, improved access to information has been regarded as a means of bringing the public closer to the European institutions and a way of stimulating a more informed and involved debate (Cini 1996). Consequently, a new, legitimizing EU administrative discourse developed. More participatory strategies in the making and implementation of policies were introduced and openness and transparency were to become the norm (Cini 2000).

So far, the willingness to use consultation procedures and stimulate debate seems to be based on the desire to improve the quality of policy output or to safeguard public support, rather than on the aim to build a more democratic union. Nevertheless, the question may be posed whether the authorities are increasingly convinced by the importance of public debate or whether they keep on putting their trust in the Monnet method. The silencing of the political debate on the Economic and Monetary Union in many participating member states, the primarily technical government information on the euro, and the fact that dialogue on the issue took place after the major decision had been taken, all seem to suggest a continuous functionalist approach (Mak forthcoming). However, practices may have changed. What do post-Nice developments tell us?

The latest version of the 'Dialogue' series of the European Commissions is *Futurum* and it was triggered off by a declaration, included in the final act of the Nice Treaty, that called for 'a deeper and wider debate about the future development of the European Union'. By encouraging public debate between Europe's politicians, institutions, organizations and citizens, it should "help bring the European Union closer to its citizens" and "reduce the *perception* of a democratic deficit..." (CEC 2001c, emphasis added). Furthermore, the Commission's White Paper on European Governance explicitly emphasized the importance of a European public sphere. It regards information and communication as pre-conditions for generating a sense of belonging to Europe: "The aim should be to create a transnational 'space' where citizens from different countries can discuss what they perceive as being the important challenges for the Union" (CEC 2001b: 12).

At the same time, it took the Prodi Commission, which had declared that communication was a top priority in order to get closer to the citizens, more than two years to come up with a paper on the issue. The document does not actually lay out a policy proposal, rather it intends to create a framework for a new coordinated strategy concerning the information and communication policy of the EU: "The content of that strategy should be a matter of urgent

debate between European and Member States institutions in the coming months" (CEC 2001a). It can be concluded, therefore, that so far the Commission has produced no more than a framework for a 'dialogue' on 'dialogue' and that the issue has by no means been addressed forcefully.

Notwithstanding the former, there seems to be a certain awareness of the importance of debating European issues with the population at an earlier stage, and that this should be largely the responsibility of the member states, rather than of the European institutions. An earlier Commission document, which proposed increased cooperation with national governments regarding proactive communication on EU policies, stated that:

Europe is no longer a distant reality, a 'foreign' issue reserved for diplomats. 'European affairs' have become 'home affairs' relevant to virtually every dimension of citizens' lives. Therefore, providing information about the European Union could no longer be a sole responsibility of the European institutions (CEC 2000).

In line with this argument, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had noted before that: "Europe has become part and parcel of domestic affairs. The question of legitimacy of Europe is outdated. What is important now is the legitimacy of the European policy of the Dutch government."² With regard to the EMU, it could be argued that a widespread debate beforehand would have been too risky. After all, the chance of public rejection could not be taken, as further European political integration depended on the success of the single currency. However, it seems that with respect to enlargement of the EU and the debate on the future of the EU, this risk may be worth taking and can even be regarded as a prerequisite to avoid having to open a 'Pandora's box' of popular opposition at a later stage. The Dutch prime minister, Wim Kok, argued last year in parliament that:

The enlargement process deserves widespread general attention [...] This is important in order not to be confronted with an unexpected negative final decision. The Netherlands will therefore more actively bring the issue of 'enlargement of the EU' to public attention.³

A spokesman from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued around the same time that Dutch activities to give information about the euro had presented the EMU both as a *fait accompli* and something purely positive. In her opinion, to obtain public support, one has to avoid giving people the impression that they are being confronted with a certain decision. The discussion needs to take place earlier, even if that results in a negative reaction. She argued that a lesson had obviously been learned from EMU, which could be put to use for communication initiatives on enlargement and the follow-up of the Nice Treaty.⁴ However, these initiatives will only lead to more participatory and deliberative practices when policy-makers actually take note of the outcomes

of debate, and do not just use them to give the public the idea that they are participating and thereby winning their support.

This brief summary of recent initiatives has been laid out to illustrate the idea that whether a European public sphere, in the sense of a patchwork of Europeanized national spheres, will develop, depends to a large extent on the behaviour of political actors and media-makers. Yet, the role of the authorities, in particular the national ones, and whether they have the political will to stimulate a debate on European matters, rather than acting in the relative seclusion of diplomatic bargaining, will, in our view, be equally decisive.

Notes

1. Europub.com is sponsored under the Fifth Framework Programme of the EU.
2. Quoted from the 'Note' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999: 2, translation ours.
3. Quoted from the 'Note' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1999: 2, translation ours.
4. Interview with deputy director of the information department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, carried out by the authors, 13 November 2000.

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