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1.   Introduction

The Intergovernmental Conference, which took place in Nice in December 2000, had to fulfil ambitious expectations. The heads of government gathered in order to accomplish the necessary institutional reforms to prepare the European Union for the entrance of the considerable number of applicant states. This joint effort was not achieved without harsh bargaining between the member states. Since all of them were equally involved, the IGC seemed to be a premium issue for a comparison of the national public debates with the guiding question: Is there a europeanisation of national public discourses? Object of scrutiny was the coverage of the Council in different national print media.

There is a lively theoretical controversy going on among political science scholars, who engage themselves with the question of how to solve the "democratic dilemma" of European policy-making (Dahl 1994). In this context the concept of "public sphere" has come to a new rise. Some argue that with the emergence of a European public sphere citizens will be enabled to participate effectively in the democratic process. Within this argument, the literature can be divided into a very ambitious normative approach presented by Jürgen Habermas and more empirical approaches, such as the one of Jürgen Gerhards and Reiner Grundmann. Others, with Peter Graf Kielmannsegg in the lead, defend the thesis that a European public sphere will never occur due to the lack of a common language, common experiences and other reasons. We did not want to align with either of them and therefore chose the centre position: looking empirically for the status-quo, hoping to find a European public sphere, but not expecting it.

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[1] This Working Paper draws on a collective term paper, in the framework of a research seminar by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Liebert, with Stefanie Sifft "Europeanisation and national public spheres" (Europäisierung nationaler

Reviewing the literature is the content of the first part of this paper. After discussing the different approaches, we came up with three major research questions:

1) Is there a similar mass media coverage of the IGC Nice in the chosen member states? And if so, is there a synchronisation amongst the countries of the issues related to the conference?

2) Is there also a synchronisation of actors? Who are these actors and are there cross-border linkages between them?

3) Do the chosen newspapers discuss these European issues from a European point of view?
   Is there any evidence that they mostly confine their coverage to national interests?

The second part is considered to present our research design and the methods we used, i.e. how we operationalised the questions. We selected the internet archives of eight daily newspapers from four different countries in order to gather our data material.

The empirical findings are presented in the third part and, concentrating on the German and the British national debate, are qualitatively interpreted in the last section of this paper. In the end the results are summed up: There are promising hints with regard to the synchronisation thesis, but, as the emergence of a common European public sphere is concerned, there is still a long way to go.

2. Theoretical framework

Our leading assumption was that a public sphere on a European level is a necessary precondition for legitimising European policy making. Moreover, without such a platform the European people can not articulate a common will with regard to the policies they want their representatives to achieve and in addition hold them accountable if the demands are not satisfactorily met. The function of a European common interest would than be to legitimise the binding decision making on the supranational level (Bellier 2000).

To begin with we had to define a public sphere. In other words, we had to answer the question: What is a public sphere? A broad definition, supplied by Friedhelm Neidhardt, states that a public sphere is an "open communication space for all those who want to say something and those who want to listen" (Neidhardt 1994: 7). This definition above all stresses an important element of a public sphere: This is the accessibility, a recurrent demand in the literature, which suggests that everybody should be able to make his/her and in case of collectives its position available to the public (and the other way round information has to be publicly obtainable) (see also Peters 1994: 44).

What are the other elements of a public sphere? Jürgen Habermas' normative concept of a deliberative democracy locates it at the intermediary level between the "vermachteten" political sphere on the one hand and the "autonomous" society on the other. The decision making process is supposed to have a discursive character: Individual and collective actors mainly from within the civil society refer and try to convince each other by using rational arguments (Habermas 1990: 352-359).

The discursiveness thus increases the level of rationality and will lead to a more sensible result on the basis of a consensus. The ultimate functions of this discursive, deliberative public sphere are to optimise the legitimacy of decisions and also to enhance the sense of community by achieving a consensus or a supported majority vote.

Gerhards undertook the effort to apply the Habermasian criteria to the §218 debate in Germany and came up with the result that especially actors of the civil society did not reach up to the high expectations that were imposed on them. He convincingly showed that it is hard to find empirical evidence for deliberation (Gerhards 1997). This lead us to look for a more basic concept enabling the mass media to play a prominent role in it.

According to Gerhards, the main function of a public sphere is to provide transparency, more precisely the visualisation of issues, which serves as a means for the agenda-setting in a given society (Gerhards 1997:12).

Following this idea, it becomes most evident that if people are not informed about the specific contents of political decisions they are not able to develop interest at all. Furthermore, they will therefore remain indifferent towards the political system, which has a different quality than in case of a deliberate decision against participation, because in the

first case citizens might withdraw diffusive support from the political system in general. (Easton 196? : 391-394)

The most basic precondition for a lively public sphere is therefore the demand for transparency and information, which is, in democratic polities, usually met by societal organisations as well as by the personal surroundings of individuals. Since cross-national personal bonds are still an exception and the significance of European parties, social movements, unions etc. is marginal (Grundmann 1999), we expected the mass media to be the most likely place for a public sphere to emerge. In times of declining party- and organisation membership (see Höreth 1998) the media tend to be the main source for monitoring and communicating information not only in the national context. This should be even more true for the European public arena.

The mass media help to define political issues and to shape public opinion. In short, the essential relationship between the media, a possibly emerging public and the political system is that a) the media provide the information, which is needed to b) enable the public to pursue the agenda-setting function in order to c) produce a demand, which than serves as an input for the political sphere. Therefore participation "depends crucially on the interest, knowledge, and motivation of citizens" (Grundmann 1999: 129).

As the Commission put it in the *Green Paper on the Establishment of the Common Market for Broadcasting especially for Satellite and Cable*: "Information is a decisive, perhaps the most decisive, factor in European communication.... European unification will only be achieved if Europeans want it. Europeans will only want it if there is such a thing as European identity. A European identity will only develop if Europeans are adequately informed. At present, information via mass media is controlled at national level" (CEC 1984).

This is kind of our starting thesis. The question remains, though, what exactly it means to be "adequately informed".

The media act rather different compared to traditional intermediary organisations, because they are not representing the interests of their members in order to reach a common aim, or even a general good, but are in fact primarily concerned with making money. Their interest is to sell information (and entertainment) to the customers, the recipients. This has two major implications: the first is that the media therefore depend on

those who supply this information and on those whose positions in the society naturally generates public interest. This is the case with politicians for they are by definition concerned with public problems. The second consequence is that the media also have to take into account the political attitudes of the "paying audience" (see Neidhardt 1994:36).

These can be manifold, the best known for the medium newspaper is probably the differentiation between rather liberal or on the opposite rather conservative oriented papers. Another example might be that journalists may well consider the great amount of sympathy a certain politician enjoys within the population before criticising that person's politics too harshly. In short, one can either consider the media as being a part of the political sphere or as concerned with meeting the customers opinions most adequately. But even if both options are balanced out perfectly, which would make them the best of all possible intermediaries, one has to keep in mind the distinct self-interest of the Media.

It is precisely the different dependencies why it is important to carefully scan the information supplied to the public by the media if we consider it's stark impact on the public opinion, and the way the eventual opinion is constructed (Neidhardt 1994: 11, Grundmann 1999: 127).

In searching for a European public, we will not follow a normative approach, but will restrict ourselves to the empirical task of looking at the status-quo of the European media landscape.

Transparency of political systems is indispensable for their legitimacy :"The deficit of public precedes the often-discussed democratic deficit [...] of the EC, is indeed one of it's causes."(Gerhards 1993: 99). In order to gain insight on the shape of a public on the European level, it is important to analyse this indispensable precondition first of all in regard to the coherence of the information that are distributed by the media in the different member states. The non-existence of a European media system is in this line of the argument the severest barrier on the way to a European public. Gerhards even defines "a uniform European public" as "uniform European media system" (1993: 100).

In order to approach a possibly emerging public sphere on the European level, however, we looked for an additional empirical tool enabling us to compare the different patterns of how national newspaper cover the chosen issue. It should, above all, consider

suitably the need for coherence in regard to the given information. We decided to follow Reiner Grundmann, who starts out with detecting a "threefold European deficit" (Grundmann 1999: 125) in regard to the democratic deficit of the institutional structure, the lack of an European identity and the missing condition for both: the Public Sphere. He, too, believes that the latter is the basic level of analysis if "…the main task of European unification is the creation of a legitimate leadership" (1999: 126-127). Regrettably he does not differentiate between the public sphere as such and the media as only a certain part of it: "Political issues are mainly defined through mass media and public opinion is to a large degree influenced by the mass media" (1999:127). The terms are therefore often interchangeable.

He distinguishes between two proposals in order to achieve a public sphere on an European level. The first is the "Europeanisation" of national public spheres, which he believes would already "facilitate" justifying binding decision making. In this state of the development of a European public sphere the same issues would be discussed in the national public arenas at the same time, and thus can be considered of some importance to the voters. He calls this the "Synchronisation of public attention across member states" (1999:126). The argument is that, if there are distinctively European issues, a synchronisation between the national media arenas will occur, i.e. the media in the different European states will cover this issue at the same time, because it is besides being of European interest also of concern to the respective national sphere. To really europeanise national publics this is not sufficient, but rather issues have to be discussed from a European perspective. This is why Synchronisation in Grundmann´s line of argument is only the precondition for a "homogenisation", which would occur after the national media had become synchronised for some time. This second approach means to look for the development of <u>a single European public sphere with the media not only covering the same issues at</u> <u>the same time but also with the same relevance and with considering them to be originally European</u> (1999: 136).

The term "Europeanisation" in Jürgen Gerhards work already involves a coverage of European issues with a non-national approach, but he also still differentiates between a single European public and the Europeanisation of national publics. A "European perspective" would mean that the general perception of what is of interest for national communication is extended (Gerhards 1993: 102).

Grundmann is well aware of the fact that his second proposal is a far more challenging one. The obvious advantage in terms of legitimising EU-policies is that a European public would be able to exercise its agenda-setting function appropriately. "Only under this condition could citizens choose political answers to these issues and, on this basis, elect their leaders" (1999: 127) (and vote them out of office if their demands are not met). A homogenous public sphere would subsequently lead to a supranational identity. To our great regret he does not exactly give reasons why this should automatically be the case.

Grundmann did a cross-national study comparing a selection of articles in three major newspapers (Financial Times, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) on the mad-cow-disease and the Euro for the years 1995 to1998 in order to test his synchronisation thesis. In our comparative newspaper study we will start out the same way, but will also undertake the task to see if homogenisation in a trans-national manner has occurred by adding a qualitative content analysis of selected parts of the newspaper coverage.

We chose to try Grundmann´s framework on the issue of the intergovernmental conference, which took place in Nice in December last year. Bearing his approach in mind, and being rather sceptical about the outcome, regarding especially the homogenisation thesis, we took a look on how the national media cover the IGC and also the actors involved. The reasons for our scepticism lie on the one hand in the nature of the IGC itself (being primarily about bargaining the different positions on how the reform of the EU-institutions should look like) and on the other hand in the logic lacking in Grundmann`s concept. Homogenisation does not seem to be an automatic consequence of an accomplished synchronisation of an European public sphere; there is a qualitative step and he does not explain through which mechanisms this "upgrading" shall be achieved.

The analysis of such an abstract phenomenon seemed rather difficult. We took advantage of examination tools others had developed before.

Neidhardt proposes some categories which can be used in order to analyse a public sphere. The communication space is composed of different characteristics, the first being a certain set of actors, whom he calls speakers: representatives of intermediary organisations, advocacy groups, experts, intellectuals, and journalists. He adds a defined range of communication patterns as well as the differentiation of the "ruling" public opinion in contrast to the so called "*Bevölkerungsmeinung*" (Neidhardt 1994: 12) These distinctions seem

to be useful categories for analysing the given material. We will also use the work of Jürgen Gerhards, who provided us with some facts limiting the probability of the emergence of a public sphere, which are most likely to be found in the mechanisms of the media itself.

Although we did not primarily look for discursive communication patterns, we nevertheless included the underlying question if the media could eventually function as a platform for a deliberative public sphere.

3. Research design and Methods of analysis

Working in a group required an efficient division of work. Since our resources were limited, we were not able to compare the media coverage on the IGC in all of the 15 EU member states, but had to make a sensible choice for only four of them (this seemed manageable because our team consisted of four people). The same is true for the number of analysed papers and the time span we were going to scrutinise.

3.1 Selection of issue and time span

The guiding research questions made it indispensable for us to pay attention to only one European topic which seemed to attract mutual interest among the chosen papers.

The Intergovernmental Conference in Nice in December 2000 was such a topic. The conference was a two year process, ending with the European Council which took place in Nice from the 7th to the 9th of December 2000, at least this was for how long it was originally scheduled to last. Actually it took the Heads of states two more entire days and nights to come up with an ambivalently perceived result in form of the Treaty of Nice. This choice also determined the time span of our analysis. We considered two full weeks around the IGC as sufficient to capture on the one hand the expectations and positions the national papers would stress before the beginning, the coverage during the IGC itself and on the other hand the perceptions and reactions afterwards.

The often-cited aim of the conference was to "make the Union fit for enlargement" which meant to follow up the "leftovers of Amsterdam". This involved reforming the

structure and decision-making procedures of the institutions, namely first of all of the Council, but also of the Commission and the Parliament. This was why, for the first time, the governments of the applicant countries from the MOE-states were invited and took part in the conference. The major problem was the question of how to enable the institutions to continue working efficiently in the face of nearly doubling in size once the entries start for real.

What we did not think of in the first place was that, of course, this was only an overall issue containing many others, to be more precise: The above mentioned institutional reforms, but also the extension of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSFP) and the rather important, but as we will show, by the papers not as such perceived, "enhanced (or closer) co-operation" mechanism, which was constructed to allow countries to co-operate beyond those common policies which have passed the council by majority or unanimity, modelled after the Euro-zone or the Schengen-Agreement.

Those were the issues as they are posted on the internet-page of the European Commission (http://europa.eu.int/comm/archives/igc2000/geninfo/index_en.htm#agenda):
– Qualified majority voting
– Closer co-operation
– Defence
– Statute for political parties (Commission contribution)
– the size and composition of the Commission;
– the weighting of votes in the Council;
– the possible extension of qualified majority voting in the Council; and other necessary amendments to the Treaties arising as regards the European institutions in connection with the above issues and in implementing the Treaty of Amsterdam

3.2 Selection of countries

We decided to examine newspapers from Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Austria whether there is a synchronised way of reporting about European topics, or not. We arrived at the decision to select these particular countries on the basis of two criteria:

The first was the date of entering the European Union, i. e. the duration of membership, because we assumed that the longer the media of the respective countries

have been dealing with European issues, the larger the chance (through learning processes and confidence building) that they would take on a European perspective in covering them. Therefore we chose one founding member and one from the following enlargement stages.

The second criteria was the ruling public opinion in terms of being rather supportive or rejecting towards the EU since this would probably reflect itself in the media. In order to be able to compare we wanted a sample containing two pro-European and two euro-sceptic countries. The position taken on by each country's population should certainly have an impact on the coverage of the IGC being more open for really European solutions or, on the opposite, more concerned about the respective national interests. To classify those attitudes we relied on the Eurobarometer, No. 53 (Spring 2000). EU-wide the support for membership of one's own country (determined through the question "Generally speaking, do you think that (our country's) membership of the European Union is a good thing/a bad thing/neither good nor bad/don't know?") was at that point of time in the true sense of the word average with 49% of the respondents answering "a good thing".

Germany, being one of the Big Four and among the founding members, has ever since the end of the foundation of European Economic Community been one of the strongest advocates for a united Europe. Taking this and the long duration of membership into account lead us to classify Germany as a pro-European country, although the support for EU-membership is, with 41% under-average. There are on the other hand only 15% of the Respondents considering it as "a bad thing", leaving 74% *not* rejecting the membership (which is rather much in comparison with the euro-sceptic countries).On the opposite (side of the channel), *Great Britain*, entering the EU in 1973, has gained the reputation of being an "uncomfortable partner" (Volle 1998), because it has not only been quite reluctant in its efforts to actively support the integration process but has often tried to block developments especially towards the deepening of integration. The public Euro-scepticism is deep-rooted and wide-spread as the Eurobarometer data show: Only 29% of the population is supporting the British EU-membership with 24% being in opposition. This makes only 54% not rejecting it.

Spain has proved to be one of the most committed members of the European Union. Deriving from a political and economical isolation during the Franco era, membership

(since 1985) will eventually help to consolidate a newly emerging democracy as well as the transformation of their ailing and underdeveloped economy. The numbers prove this: 67% answered in favour of membership, which is way above the EU-average, and a mere 6% are against it.

And, last but not least, **Austria**, latest member of the EU since 1995, has had some stark problems with the recent elections at the end of 1999, when the anti-immigrant Freedom Party joined the new coalition government creating massive demonstrations in the country's capital as well as creating tension among the other EU countries. As a result of the Freedom Party's inclusion in the coalition, all EU Member States broke off bilateral contact with Austria in February, 2000. This explains why the Austrian people, who used to be rather sceptic, but in the preceding surveys were on their way to render their opinion, only supported the membership by 33%, while 25% are opposing it.

Selection of newspapers

In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the national attitudes towards European issues we decided to opt in all cases for a rather left-winged and a more right-winged newspaper. To make a reasonable decision we also had to take into consideration the respective availability, that is whether or not the chosen newspaper provided an accessible internet archive. Thus we chose the German dailies *"Die Süddeutsche Zeitung"* and *"Die Welt"*, *"El Mundo"* and *"El Pais"* in case of Spain, *"The Daily Telegraph" and "The Guardian"* for Great Britain. We would have preferred the *"Times"* for the conservative perspective, but it does not offer an online-archive. The Telegraph did prove itself as being perfectly "right" enough. The most appealing newspapers for Austria turned out to be *"Der Standard"* and *"Die Presse".* For Great Britain and to a certain extent also for Austria this selection also provided us with an euro-sceptic and a rather pro-European attitude.

	left	right
Germany	Die Süddeutsche Zeitung	Die Welt
Spain	El Mundo	El Pais
Great Britain	The Guardian	Daily Telegraph
Austria	Der Standard	Die Presse

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3.3. Method

By using the search mode supplied by the internet versions of the newspapers we gathered our data, i.e. newspaper articles from December 1st to December 14th. The according articles were found by the help of using the individual search engines from the newspaper pages by typing in search words, e.g. "Nice summit", "IGC Nice", "Europäischer Rat", "Regierungskonferenz" and such like according to the national languages.

Due to a multitude of newspaper articles revolving around this conference we had to make a preselection to reduce the sheer number. We did so by looking at the headlines of all the matching articles and the first paragraphs to determine the contents and find out which were the most discussed issues. Departing from that result we proceeded by transferring the remaining articles into the ATLAS.TI computer-based program, which is designed to support quantitative as well as qualitative analysis by providing a frame within which "often extensive amounts of data (can be) managed, extracted, compared, explored and reassembled" (ATLAS.Ti manual). By coding (see below) all the articles for the issues as well as the mentioned actors we were then able to compare the data and look for similarities and accordingly differences (quantitatively) and then try to capture of what nature these are and where they stem from.

Coding: For the sake of comparison we marked the content of the articles using a set of umbrella terms, i.e. codes. For example, in the first working step we coded only the headline and the first paragraph with codes naming the issue(s) it was about: Enlargement, German-French relationship, Veto/QMV (Qualified Majority Voting) and such like. ATLAS was then able to show us that enlargement was the most discussed issue. To guarantee the reliability, especially when working in a group, of the coding process it is absolutely necessary that the set of codes is fixed beforehand, new codes should be agreed on by the group and one has to make sure that each member of the group will code the same way, that means that all of them would attach the same code to the respective content. It is advisable that the group will code some articles mutually and does so from time to time during the working process to ensure the comparability of the data.

It is also useful to mark the kind of article one is dealing with, since there are national differences in the use of reports, comments or leading articles. Naturally it makes more

sense to compare only comparable data. Especially for a qualitative analysis it is important to know if the article represents the distinct opinion of a journalist or someone else (as it is the case with comments) or is primarily stating facts like reports do.

From the accumulated data we became ever more aware of the differences between the German and the British newspapers in the way they reported about the IGC 2000. That fact gave us reason enough to pay more attention to these two countries in terms of history, political as well as economic positions in order to explain the apparent diversity and the existing problems that exacerbates synchronisation amongst the newspapers in the European member states.

Research design:

We opted for two different methods to operationalise the guiding research questions (listed below), combining quantitative and qualitative tools.

1) Is there a similar mass media coverage of the IGC Nice in the chosen member states? And if so, is there a synchronisation amongst the countries of the issues related to the conference?

The first question addressed the amount of coverage, which was easy to answer by counting the articles concerning the IGC as a whole. The degree of Synchronisation on the other hand was measured by calculating the salience of topics as they occurred in the different papers. As mentioned above the IGC itself had to deal with a number of issues. We wanted to see if there were different perceptions of their relevance in the national public arenas or if some issues discussed in e.g. German papers were no issue at all in the Spanish ones. We then analysed closer only those articles revolving around the issue enlargement regarding question 2) and 3).

2) Is there also a synchronisation of actors? Who are these actors and are there cross-border linkages between them?

Coding the actors and their home countries within ATLAS.Ti enabled us to calculate the space the respective national papers grant domestic and foreign actors in percentages. This includes the mere mentioning of names of actors as well as quoting them in the

articles. We also coded for references actors made towards other actors, primarily foreign or from EU-institutions with the intention to find out about cross-border linkages between them. Equally important seemed to us to record the function of the actors mentioned, i.e. were they from the political sphere, experts or from civil society, in order to be able to have an impression of the accessibility of the Public sphere represented by the media.

3) Do the chosen newspapers discuss these European issues from a European point of view?
Is there any evidence that they mostly confine their coverage to national interests?

To answer this we again did a ranking of the relevance of the articles that seemed to be primarily concerned with the enlargement issue, but still dealt with several topics from the IGC-agenda. The intention was to qualitatively analyse how national positions as they are described by the media differ or if they approach a European perspective. To do this we looked for returning key-concepts, positive and accordingly negative perceptions of certain issues, differences in value-based attitudes and also took into account historical, political and economic developments.

4. Empirical Findings

4.1. Is there an indication for a similar media coverage (synchronisation) of the IGC in Nice amongst the selected newspapers?

The total number of articles that we found by using the set of search-words in the given time period amounted in German newspapers to 129, in Austrian to 138, in Spanish to 66 and in British dailies to 88 articles. Evidently, there is strong indication that the IGC is of joint interest in all selected member states. What we drew from this result is the assumption that we can talk about a considerable synchronisation in terms of issues related to a common European topic.

However, for a more thorough media analysis we had to limit the number of articles to generate more detailed results. Therefore we decided to concentrate on only one particular issue at stake during the IGC.

To avoid any arbitrary choice of topic we began our analysis by reading the headlines as well as the first paragraph of all the relevant articles to reveal the most discussed topic. The results of the analysis of all the selected articles coincided: the enlargement-topic turned out to be of major interest in each of the countries (see table below).

Table 1: Salience of issues in national newspapers regarding the IGC Nice 2000

Issues/Countries	Austria 1)	Germany 2)	Spain 3)	UK 4)
Enlargement	**17,4%**	**19,40%**	**39,4%**	**17,0%**
Council Reform	3,60%	7,60%	0,0%	11,3%
Veto/QMV	5,80%	5,40%	15,2%	22,7%
CFSP	5,10%	6,20%	1,5%	12,5%
Charta	5,80%	3,10%	0,0%	1,3%
Institutional Reforms	22%	10,10%	3,0%	2,3%
Structural Funds	0,00%	0,00%	30,0%	3,4%
National Interest	17,40%	0,00%	3,0%	6,8%
Other Nat. Interests	7,80%	4,70%	7,6%	1,1%
Relation Ger-Fr	9,40%	12,40%	3,0%	2,3%
French presidency	5,10%	12,40%	0,0%	10,2%
Protests	2,20%	3,90%	7,6%	5,9%
Summit Failure	13,00%	1,60%	13,6%	3,4%
Finality/Outlook	5,10%	7,00%	6,0%	0,0%
Others	0,00%	6,20%	0,0%	0,0%

Legend: 1) Die Presse, Der Standard; total of 138 articles

2) Die Welt, Süddeutsche Zeitung; total of 129 articles

3) El Mundo, El Pais; total of 66 articles

4) The Guardian, Daily Telegraph; total of 88 articles

To comment comprehensively on this (to us) rather unexpected result it would be important to recall the individual domestic position and attitude towards each agenda topic individually (cp. part II.). Nevertheless, amongst the national newspapers there is a synchronised trend retraceable in focusing on particular topics.

Apart from the mutual interest on the eastwards expansion of the EU, the national media do show interest in more country-related issues, e.g. the German-French relationship was a major concern of the German papers and also picked up by the Austrian ones, but nearly no one noticed it in Spain and Britain. Similar results apply to the interest for the CFSP as well as for the discussion about quality majority voting. Here, too, we found no synchronisation in the numbers. There is no really convincing evidence for an overall issue congruence, but since this was not to be expected because of the special bargaining nature of the European Council, we must have a closer look at what they actually agree on. (s. 5.)

What we can conclude from this first analysis is, that there appears to be a strong indication for a synchronised media coverage concerning a particular EU-related topic. The different national arenas seem to agree that the enlargement process is the major issue in the context of the IGC 2000, but what conclusions do they draw from that concerning the reforms which have to be made in order to enable the EU-institutions to continue working efficiently? To what extend the various newspapers differ or accord with each other is subject to subsequent investigation.

4.2 Is there a synchronisation of actors? Who are the actors and are there cross-border linkages between them?

We assumed that in considering the IGC as an European issue, the statements of the European actors would be of some importance to all the related countries.
In order to answer that question in a satisfying manner, one has to recall the normative idea of what an actor is and from what public arena he derives. Friedhelm Neidhardt argues in his normative approach towards the actor's importance in the public sphere, that there is the need for a variety of different actors to appear in the mass media. His basic assumptions are taken from the Habermasian idea of a deliberative public sphere, where a number of representative actors are advocating the different opinions and interests of, e.g. special interest groups, labour movements, parties, experts, in order to eventually have the chance of influencing legislation. "Öffentlichkeit erscheint als ein offenes Kommunikationsforum für alle, die etwas sagen oder das, was andere sagen, hören wollen. In den Arenen und Relaistationen dieses Forums befinden sich die Öffentlichkeitsakteure, die zu bestimmten Themen Meinungen von sich geben oder weitertragen: Sprecher und Kommunikateure" (Neidhardt 1994:7).

Since some of the mentioned scholars have repeatedly pointed towards the importance of these actors in the national public spheres, we took on this assumption and applied it to the supposed emergence of a European public sphere. Here we paid most attention to the occurrence of international actors in the selected national newspaper articles and coded them accordingly.

The result of our empirical research, which was solely put into the context of the enlargement issue, was a striking one. We found out that the national newspapers were any good to be used as a platform for the emergence of a European public sphere. Not only the issues in the national newspapers turned out to be primarily of national interest and only vaguely synchronised, but also the actors were almost invariably national ones. Just in a few cases and with a selected group of internationally renowned politicians, mostly heads of states, it was different.

To be precise, the Spanish newspapers mentioned their domestic politicians to the amount of 31,9 % of all mentioned actors. In Germany (35%) and in Austria (31%) the preference of national actors was even more significant, but in Great Britain the newspapers seemed to be least interested in what other countries' politicians have to say: 52 % of all the mentioned actors were British.

In Germany the government actors (G.Schröder, J.Fischer, R. Scharping (in the proper rank) had a large share of the total appearances, but also the opposition was represented quite well (Stoiber, Merkel, Gerhardt). Altogether there were 14 different German actors (compared to the one next in line: only 7 from the EU-institutions).

In Great Britain there were 12 different actors, but in total appearances the government actors (Blair, Cook, British Officials, Campbell) clearly outnumbered the oppositions voices (Hague, Maude, Tories).

Most of the countries mentioned in the analysed papers were represented only by their Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. The oppositions position was not made apparent.

One initial hypothesis was that there is hardly any existing cross-border communication between actors to be found in national newspapers. Otherwise, if there was an exchange of opinions to be registered, the question would be whether there is any indication for synchronisation of actors amongst the national newspapers.

In order to test this, we additionally looked for cross-border references, i.e. the exchange of arguments between actors or merely a reaction on a position someone else had stated before, e.g. Fischer referring to something Blair said, - but found nothing. Although this must have taken place in the negotiations, none of it can be detected in the papers. This may account to the exclusiveness of the Council meetings itself, and the fact that information is gathered to a large degree at press conferences, in which single politicians declare their respective positions and interpret the progress of the conference. In either case it shows that the public sphere in European terms as it is resembled in the print media is not a discursive one; there is no exchange of rational arguments as the Habermasian model suggests. Detrimental to it is also that actors of the autonomous civil society have no appearance in the media.

Cross-border linkages therefore do exist, but not in a discursive manner. Within the national public arenas this more marked, especially in GB, where for mainly the euro-sceptic *Telegraph* uses references of well-known Tories (W. Hague, F. Maude) and interestingly of Ch. Patten to underline the critique it puts on Blair´ s strategy.

Apart from that, there is indeed <u>synchronisation to be discovered</u> amongst the international actors who were more frequently quoted in all of the newspapers. The German and the French actors, in particular Jaques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder, made their appearance in all of the papers on a strikingly high level. That Chirac had an outstanding position while representing the presidency of the Council accounts for some of the appearances, but we suppose that the statements and actions of the ”French-German motor” of European integration are always considered of value, because it is them that provide the guidelines and speed of the process. Proving this would require a longitudinal analysis which we can not provide. Tony Blair´s positions were obviously not of major interest to the other scrutinised papers; although GB is one of the large states, it is not considered a leading actor (contrary to its self-perception).

That means however, that we could not find a wide range of national actors to be mentioned in the international mass media, but the seemingly most important European actors do play a major role in all over Europe.

Another interesting result is the above-average appearance of EU-institution actors in the newspapers. Even though they usually don't seem to be considered worth mentioning, EU actors did frequently appear when serving the purpose of reinforcing the immanent opinion of an article about national interest. All in all in Germany 7 different actors of EU-institutions made their appearance, starting with German MEPs (J.Leinen (SPD), E.Brok (CDU)) and R.Prodi, upon the EP and the Commission as actors, up to J.Delors and G.Verheugen. In GB it was also Prodi who is leading the list ahead of national MEPs (T.Currie (Tories)) and Ch. Patten.

As an additional result of the figures presented in the attached table, we found a strong suggestion that the media seem only to serve the purpose of heralding the interests of national politicians: only them were given the room to boast about their opinions. Most of the time direct quotations were selected from speeches or press conferences delivered by a small selection of national politicians encompassing the national government. Unfortunately we did not find any other actors like experts, organisation advocates, or some intellectuals to make themselves heard in any of the scrutinised articles . We found quite opposed to this demand only one set of speakers, or two if we consider journalists as an independent group. The dominating group is the political class and within this group the government representatives have the greatest share of coverage and are being quoted much more extensively. There was only one quotation of an independent expert to be found in both German papers. The openness of access is obviously not a given preposition when you look for it in the media. Therefore it is highly questionable whether the mass media, and the newspaper in particular, is the right platform to give all the normatively required actors the chance to contribute evenly to any given discussion. Needless to say that without the appearance of a wider range of speakers and an increasing interest in the international political spheres monitored in the national media, an evenly recognised European public sphere will never occur.

Another interesting point in this contest was that there were yet 4 of the candidate states among the frequently mentioned actors, among whom the Polish speakers (Bartoszewski, Buzek and Kwasniewski) were the ones the papers in our sample were most

interested in. An exception were again the British papers which display a below average interest in the MOE-states in general.

Table 2: Frequency of domestic and foreign politicians being mentioned in national newspapers

Countries	Austria	Germany	Spain	GB
Austria	**29,90%**	1,50%	0,70%	0,00%
GB	4,50%	4,60%	0,70%	**52,20%**
Czech Rep.	4,50%	2,70%	0,00%	2,00%
Denmark	1,20%	0,70%	0,00%	2,40%
EU Institutions	6,50%	11,50%	not coded	10,70%
France	12,30%	9,60%	21,00%	17,80%
Germany	11,10%	**35,40%**	12,10%	6,30%
Greece	0,00%	0,40%	2,90%	0,40%
Hungary	3,90%	4,20%	0,70%	0,80%
Poland	12,90%	5,70%	8,50%	0,80%
Portugal	1,20%	0,14%	8,50%	0,80%
Slovakia	1,90%	1,50%	0,00%	0,40%
Spain	3,20%	4,50%	**22,00%**	0,40%
Sweden	3,20%	1,50%	0,00%	0,40%

Legend: only enlargement-related articles

Austria: 24 articles (14 Der Standard / 10 Die Presse)

Germany: 26 articles (15 Die Welt / 11 Süddeutsche)

Spain: 26 articles (18 El Pais / 8 El Mundo)

Great Britain: 30 articles (11 Guardian / 19 Daily Telegraph)

4.3. Is there Homogenisation in regard to the coverage of the issues from a European point of view?

The following part is supposed to answer our third research question, which is: Do the national newspapers discuss the enlargement of the EU in an European way (see page 4)? Do national differences persist or disappear? We attempted to answer this by looking for

synchronisation, respectively for homogenisation, i.e. if the media cover the issues with the same relevance.

As mentioned above, the Intergovernmental Conference is in this respect a difficult issue for it is by nature about bargaining between states, which will of course be reflected in the national print media.

Therefore one can not expect national interests to stand back. We did not expect to find the same opinion in the media presentation regarding for example the weighting of the votes in the council of ministers since most of the chosen countries have a very distinctive interest in this matter, which they are most unlikely to abandon.

One reason for picking the enlargement process in order to investigate it further was, besides that it is widely discussed in the states of our sample, that it is a very broad issue. The complex "enlargement" includes on the one hand the institutional reform for the ultimate achievement and on the other hand policy issues like the distribution of the financial subsidies (structural funds); connected to both, the status quo and the national interests. This openness of the term "enlargement" as the most discussed issue within the conference debate enabled us to look more closely if there really is synchronisation or even homogenisation.

We found that there is indeed a wide range of issues to cling to enlargement. For this diagram we included only the five most mentioned enlargement-related issues and ranked them according to the percentages: Veto/Qualified majority voting (QMV) in the council, the Council reform (redistribution, weighing of the votes), the commission reform (limiting the number of commissioners in order to stay capable of acting), the financial subsidies and the enhanced co-operation project. So we made the right choice in picking the enlargement topic out of the whole amount of our articles since this seems to contain the reporting of what was on the Nice conference agenda: the institutional reforms to make the Union feasible for the entrance of the candidate states.

Nevertheless we are convinced that it is possible to generalise from our data that the media apparently talk about the enlargement process, but they are actually not describing the same thing. That is why we are sceptical in regard to the homogenisation thesis.

Since they also put most clearly emphasis on different issues (see table 3), synchronisation within the enlargement topic can not be taken for granted, not to speak of homogenisation. For example, while to the Spanish and the British papers the QMV extension is of primary interest, the Austrian ones occupy themselves rather with the enhanced co-operation project and in Germany the major point of concern was the council reform due to conflict with the French about the weighing of votes.

As one can easily see the percentages of hits are not very evenly distributed, which makes it unlikely that there is synchronisation. What differs here from the first figure is that not even within the most mentioned issue veto/QMV a reasonably similar coverage in the articles can be detected.

But most importantly, from reading the articles and comparing them to each other we know that even if to a certain extent the same issues are covered, the content is a quite different one. For example, what the table (see below) does show is that the veto/QMV issue is obviously much more important for Spain (37,5%) and Great Britain (44,8%) compared to Germany (11,8%) and Austria (10,1%), what it does not show though is that the first are strongly pro veto and against the extension of majority voting in more than one policy field while the latter, especially Germany, is very much in favour of the frequent use of majority voting procedures. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported after the summit: "Schröder said, he would have wished for more especially in the modification of the power of Veto." Points of issue were first of all the transition of social security policy and taxation into the QMV procedure, which failed in Nice due to the British refusal. Other issues were the structural funds, cultural and financial matters and immigration and border control.

Table 3: Positive or negative attitudes towards "enlargement-related issues"

issues/countries	Austria	Germany	Spain	GB
veto/majority voting	10,10%	11,80%	37,50%	44,80%
council reform	7,20%	13,60%	4,50%	20,00%
commission reform	11,60%	6,40%	3,40%	8,10%
financial subsidies	4,30%	2,70%	9,00%	3,40%
enhanced cooperation	14,50%	5,50%	5,60%	1,40%

Legend: Austria: 24 articles (14 Der Standard / 10 Die Presse)

Germany: 26 articles (15 Die Welt / 11 Süddeutsche)

Spain: 26 articles (18 El Pais / 8 El Mundo)

Great Britain: 30 articles (11 Guardian / Daily Telegraph)

The quantitative analysis did discover an apparent similarity of issues, but in the following part we will show that the way the national newspapers cover them was to a high degree related to their national attitudes and interests, which is absolutely understandable and not problematic at all in the case you are not looking for a European public sphere. Furthermore we found that the domestic political situation in the other member states was not taken into account by the newspapers. A public sphere is necessarily based on some rudimentary understanding of the partners' approach to and understanding of the issue that is to be debated.

In order to further investigate with what the national public arenas were concerned and what perspective they assumed in regard to the European issue Enlargement, we took an additional look at some articles we considered representative for the attitude displayed in most of them, trying to take into consideration the respective historical and situational context, which seem to influence the national coverage to a great extent. Germany and the United Kingdom as the two poles on the Europhil/Eurosceptic-scale seemed suitable objects to exemplify our concern.

5. Data analysis and Interpretation

While looking for a synchronised, i.e. homogeneous media coverage amongst the given national newspapers concerning the IGC Nice, one has to acknowledge the peculiarities of any given country. The history of the countries' EU politics, the overall political system as well as the style and tone of their national newspapers are chiefly important to fully understand their handling on EU-related issues to draw a reasonable conclusion about the potential emergence of a European public sphere.

In this part of our work we try to catch the essence of the respective national discourse and where it arouses from in order to see if they at all compatible. The question is why the national public spheres perceive the given issues from a certain perspective. As V. Schmidt puts it:

"Nations, just as individuals, exercise choice. And the future of [...] European integration depends upon nations and their citizens continuing to choose openness and integration. For this, however, the public has to be convinced that the choice is appropriate and beneficial (...) This is facilitated by the construction of a discourse that projects a coherent vision of how the nation fits into and integrating Europe [...] that also taps into deeper structure of national identity." (1998:1)

These discourses or "frames" differ extensively in Great Britain and Germany. Aside from a non-existent European media system (Gerhards) and the obvious lack of a "communication community" due to language barriers (Kielmannsegg 1996: 55), there are other limitations to a homogeneous European public: "Cultural and historically specific conceptions colour the ways in which new ways of doing and thinking are adopted and adapted to the political context, and set the limits to the adaptability of the new ideas" (Schmidt 1998: 9).

Institutional structures and party systems as well as economic interests also play a major role in helping to understand certain national perceptions of European issues.

5.1 Qualitative analysis of British newspapers

The history of British reluctance to participate in the creation of ECSC, and later EEC - the institutional face of new Europe - is well known; so is the perceived need for Britain to be a part of it.

The key concept in the British discourse seems to be <u>sovereignty</u>, in the economic context as well as in the political.

The refusal to join was for "constitutional" reasons (even though this term was not used), while the desire to join was determined by economic arguments and "political" ends. Though simplified, this dichotomy, which has not yet altered, goes to the heart of the difficulty in accounting for British attitude and, therefore, policy, which has always been one of rejecting any loss of British identity. Many people in the UK are worried about loss of sovereignty within the EU. "We would lose the pound, the Union Jack Flag, the Queen, control over our own affairs" is a recurring statement once the issue is on hand.

An examination of the UK constitutional behaviour concerning the British "union" (resurrecting the fact, but not the rhetoric, of its geopolitics) results in the identification of a number of features which have evidently remained constant. These features focus on the government at the centre; we have here a centre-perspective which is more than merely the sum of the institutions of government. However, the "ruling opinion" is only a projection of the centre-perspective and, importantly, requires a broader background if it is to be properly explained.

Moreover, when the overall thrust of policy concerning the UK-union is placed alongside policy concerning UK and the EU, it becomes evident that in certain important respects UK-EU policy is simply the reverse, a mirror image, of the UK-union policy. The fact of the UK "union", as understood in its proper historical context, appears to exert a determining influence on the UK attitude to "union" at the level of Europe, and elsewhere. This line of thinking is predicated upon the identification of a continuing "self-interest" of the centre as an un-stated guiding principle of action over longer periods. A constitutional self-image, reflected in the attitude of the British centre to UK "union" plays an evidently important role in defining British EU attitudes.

But there is more to explain the stark resistance of the British to fully engage into the EU project. It has seen "its interest served by not joining the Euro, in order to keep its options open with regard to the strong links and ties with the Commonwealth countries, the US, the countries of Eastern Europe, as well as the far East" (the economist 14.09.2000).

Great Britain has now the lowest inflation rate in Europe, even the lowest unemployment rate for two decades, the number dropped from 8,9% in 1996 to an all time low in December 2000 with 3,9 %. In rather prosperous times it fears to loose advantages once it gives up it's currency and lose economic control. On top of that, for many the loss of the Central Bank represents a potentially significant erosion of nation sovereignty.

A difficult chapter in the British economy has always been the import/export trade exchange rate. S. Pollard judges: "Certainly many imports from the continent were at the cost of the British economy. Calculations showed that it's losses in the British market since joining of the EC add up to some billion pounds" (Pollard 1998: 303). These negative experiences also marked the British mistrust of the EMU, which is a recurrent topic in the British media even in the enlargement debate, when the German papers did not seem to recognise a connection. While Great Britain is greatly in favour of the European free market, which means that withdrawal from the European Union is hard to contemplate, it is strongly opposed to a political Union.

Therefore even more improbable is the possibility that any British government, constituted under the present arrangements, would actually support the deepening of the integration process towards a federal model as it is discussed in Germany.

In the UK over time sovereignty passed away from the King to Parliament (the House of Commons and the House of Lords). Thus now we talk of the sovereign will of Parliament (which, in practice, means the decisions of the House of Commons). Parliament is sovereign over those matters, and only those matters, which it can determine simply by choosing that they should be so. In some countries there is a constitution which limits the sovereignty of the ruler or ruling council (e.g. the Parliament). In those cases national sovereignty is not the same thing as the sovereignty of the ruler. However, in the case of the UK National sovereignty is almost identical with Parliamentary sovereignty, so here we shall treat them as the same thing. This is why the House of Commons does influence the

public debate to a larger extent than other parliaments do: "The British House of Commons is, because of it's public sessions, more visible than any other parliament in the world" (Döring 1998: 163). Because of this visibility and the lack of a written constitution, British governments are not as free to negotiate in the European Council as most of their continental partners – and they are similarly closely watched by parliament and the media.

British politicians approach the whole issue of Europe from a totally different set of assumptions than the political elite of Germany and France. On the one hand, British politicians artificially separate the national and the European, ignoring the strong existing links between them. " [...] Blair said, that he will judge the package not by what it does for Germany, France and Spain, but by what it does for Britain" (Guardian, 9.12.00)

Ideas about British "otherness" with regard to Europe, which are aired so regularly and so hysterically, not only by the tabloid press, took root only relatively recently. They are, however, widespread. The belief that the British are not Europeans is by no means restricted to right-wing, extreme nationalist circles (as especially Germans might be quick to assume). It is common practice in English to refer to Europe as an entity entirely distinct from Britain. " [...] The question is the extend to which each country is prepared to sacrifice the right of veto in return for the prize of enlargement, which- it is believed, perhaps wrongly- will bring greater political stability to the continental mainland" (Telegraph, 3.12.00). However, this distinction is not 'natural'; it was introduced into the English national discourse at the end of the sixteenth century, at a time when political and military events were forcing English rulers to entrench themselves on `their' side of the water.

Another important feature of the British discourse is <u>conflict.</u>
The politicians' approach to Europe is resembled by the way the newspapers publish about the EU. The tone of the media concerning the IGC in Nice contributes to this British "awkwardness", or "otherness" in tone. In an attempt to bully their way into the public's conscious, leaders of the opposition (for the lack of parliamentary power) as well as their medial counterparts, have to apply a rather harsh ton to attract the people's attention. We believe that the reason for this lies in the institutional structure of the "Westminster model" of democracy (Lijphart 1984: Ch.1) With it's winner-takes-all principle of the majoritarian election system, which makes it necessary for British politicians to stress party differences much more than their counterparts in proportional representative systems on

the continent. This conflictual manner of agenda-setting is resembled in the British print media.

Thus the historically and institutionally determined rough tone of the newspapers, the clear cut positioning of the selected newspapers in terms of political disposition and its ensuing debates help to understand the extraordinary position of the British press amongst the other member states. Precisely here we can most evidently begin to mistrust the concept of a synchronisation amongst the national newspapers.

It does have even more severe real, rather than medial, consequences for British politicians in their approach to European policy-making procedures, which are primarily based on a consensual model like it can be found first of all in Germany. It may not be too far fetched to say that British membership in the European Union is probably the best spur to constitutional change this country has ever had in its long history, but the palpable hostility towards this decision is regularly repeated in the national media.

Although one can consider the British public sphere coming close to the Habermasian "arguing" , this seems to be of no benefit to construction of a cross-border public, because, to readers from consensual democracies, the tone of discussion is unusually hard: "A culture of conflict as a means to reach a consensus? ... to a German observer this must seem as a contradiction in itself" (Döring 1998: 172).

So sovereignty and conflict are the terms that describe best the attitudes which are in charge of the media coverage of the Nice conference:

"The Guardian", but even more so the "Daily Telegraph" are taking a rather limited view upon the general outcome of the IGC. Most of the articles, that were taken into account for the qualitative media analysis, expose a high degree of topics that do only apply to national interests.

The national gains seemed to be the most attractive field for a high number of the journalists, respectively the national readership. One excerpt can be taken as an example for the hegemonic tone and style of the British media coverage on EU-related topics: . " Blair came home able to boast about his victories, having got the most for Britain out of Europe" (Telegraph, 12.12.00).

Another article reveals the British attitude even better: "Mr. Blair said the Nice summit was a chance for Britain to gain a fairer share of votes in the council of Ministers, the EU's law-making body, and to reform the EU's creaky machinery to allow for the accession of 12 new members from eastern Europe and the Mediterranean – accomplishing one of Britain's long-term strategic objectives" (Telegraph, 8.12.00).

What we can draw from this article is the assumption that it has become a national habit to paint every little detail revolving around the European Union in British colours to make the recipients acknowledge the decisions, which can e.g. have a long-lasting effect on domestic policies. Furthermore, Blair was seemingly well aware of the strong impact his performance would eventually have on the outcome of the (by that time imminent) domestic election.

Much different to the German newspapers and due to history, the differing political system and the strong Euro-sceptic wave, which is fuelled by the fear for the loss of state-sovereignty, British newspapers can evidently not afford to loose sight of the British role and their gains from all of the decision made on behalf of the European Union. Even if both countries are talking about the same topic, e.g. enlargement, the starting point as well as the recipients accepted customs are disproportionate.

5.2. Qualitative analysis of German newspapers

As indicated in the previous section, the German discourse as it is noted down in the papers is rather different from the British one due to different experiences.

To begin with, we will shortly go back to the first table and discuss an issue, that distracted not that much attention in Great Britain, but sheds light on the German attitudes.

As the first table shows for both German newspapers the German-French relationship is with 12.4% one of the most important issue. Together with the discussion of the bad performance of the French presidency in the media the coverage of this meta-issue complex sums up to almost 15%. Does the sympathy between Chirac and Schröder really make such a difference to the outcome of the enlargement reform process as those

numbers will make us believe? It is of course more than that, reminding of the utmost importance of the German-French "motor" for the European integration process. And it also uncovers the German media's focus on what they perceive interesting their circle of readers. The amount of coverage of this complex is not nearly as high in the British papers. It is interesting though that this kind of a meta-issue, which has on the first sight nothing to do with the conference agenda, became so important. One of the reasons was (as we will show) that the French government did not behave as "Good Europeans", as especially the German newspapers were quick to realise, because the presidency is usually considered to let its own national interest stand back behind the Community's. It was considered bad luck that just one of the large states hold the presidency at this point of time. One could assume that this aspect - the blaming of the French presidency for the low outcome of the conference - was the real European issue in terms of a Europeanisation of national media arenas, since all the papers we conducted had a similar (negative) perception of it.

The key concepts that describe the German discussion of the Nice conference are tying it´s fate to the Integration process and a consensual tone of the public arena.

For Germany there is a deep-rooted consent of "self-binding" its fate to the success of the European integration project, which is intact since the founding of the federal republic after World War I and resolves from the view that Germany has to be saved from itself. Since journalists are Germans as well, they are very aware of this *"ever stronger self-binding of the West Germans to a Europe which had become the character of a nation substitute (at least we were on the **right** way)."* (Die Welt 08.12.00) The presence of this feeling of doubt about the own identity and the feeling of guilt could be detected in the adoption of the Goldhagen - debate, which was still able to rise high emotions in Germany as well as in the constant success of TV-documentaries on this issue.

While on the one hand, this consensus is due to the negative experiences in the context of World War II, it is on the other hand based on the very sound, positive experiences (especially economic ones) Germany as a nation made during it's membership. Schmidt describes very well the ruling consent in Germany versus the conflict in GB: "For most European countries, though, Europeanization has been used by governmental elites only in a positive way, as an exhortation for the nation to respond to the challenge, as in France, Germany, and even more so in Italy. In those countries, negative rhetoric with

regard to Europe has largely been taboo for mainstream politicians of both the left and the right, who have a tacit agreement not to question European integration (...). Only in Britain has the negative rhetoric been significant, with invocations of the incursions of national sovereignty to European integration." (1998: 13)

Therefore it is not the case as in the United Kingdom that there is a euro-sceptic paper on the one and a pro-European paper on the other hand. On contrast, we found that the German media stick to the official line, regarding the European project as one of the constitutional aims, and are not able to pick up and formulate the more sceptical tone of debate with arose in the public since the mid-nineties. As mentioned above the Eurobarometer data show that support for membership is below the EU average among the German citizens. This allows for doubt in our presumption that the papers will not only act as a platform for politicians or manipulate the public on their own behalf, but are actually honestly interested in the peoples opinion, because it is them who will pay for the newspaper.

The flipside of the coin "tying" was of course that the French intention at the founding of the ECSC was exactly the same: to keep "the Americans in, the Russians out and the Germans down" (Chapter 9) The post-war period was therefore dominated by a balance between the French political and nuclear weight and the German economic strength. These resentments are still not outdated as the new balance debate around the Council reform during the IGC 2000 showed

Helpful for bringing Germany back in the community of civilised states was the fact that the Cold War had already taken shape and therefore the USA had a strong interest in supporting a strong and united western Europe. This accounts for the for the Marshall plan as well as for the relatively early granted German membership in the NATO in 1955.

This "self-tying strategy" has ever since influenced the character of Germany's European policy making and the way governments behaved in introducing and mediating these policies and has found its latest manifestation in the handling of the Reunification.

This need to act very carefully on the European and International floor helped to overcome the anxieties of the partners, especially France's, during and after the reunification process. Germanys almost natural reaction as the largest and "with a GDP

more than 25% greater than those of either France, Italy or the UK" (Chapter 9) was to lull fears through tying herself up in the EMU, although it was not perceived as such as it was the case in France or the UK. EMU can be considered as the safest way to make a united Europe irreversible.

This whole complex was the content of more than one article under the label of "enlargement", because the long foreseen institutional reform turned out to be such an intense and emotionally loaded bargaining process over status quo interests that the media could not but jump on it.

The question why this *"Egoism of the states is as strong as ever"* (Die Welt 13.12.00) is one of the central concerns of German journalists. In order to answer it they above all name the End of the Cold war and the lack of pressure it put on the necessity of integration. The media did not come up with <u>institutional reasons</u>, e.g. the possibility that the German government has much more room for negotiating than its French or British counterparts due to the pro-European consent within the political class. There is no effective parliamentary control of the government reducing the options for concessions and package deals with are necessary for achieving consensus on the European level. Prime minister Tony Blair went to Nice facing an domestic election that was scheduled for spring of this year. Considering the eurosceptic public opinion in the United Kingdom, he could not but stick to a very narrow range of concessions he could possibly make. The British government is also much more subject to parliamentary control and is in parts only exercising instructions. The German papers did not recognise this instance at all and were therefore mediating a distorted image of the British behaviour at the council summit, which was principally negative. As the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* puts it: *"The Englishman Tony Blair and the Spaniard Jose Aznar were fighting (...)rather ruthless for their national interests"* (SZ 12.12.00) German journalist are obviously more aware of the French situation, since the restraining impact of the cohabitation was mentioned more than once in order to account for *"Jaques Chirac (...)giving the Egoist in Nice".* (ibid.): *"The French cohabitation proved to be a retardant for Europe."* (ibid.) As in the British case, German journalists do not seem to be aware of these fundamental differences in the institutional constituencies, which account for different attitudes and therefore actions as well. If the European citizen are not informed about the distict characteristics of the (yet) 15 member states beyond cliches, they are not able to develop acceptance and tolerance towards each other, which seem of utmost importance in regard to a common public sphere.

Since German Governments have always tried to present their interests as Franco-German initiatives it is ever more surprising that Schröder did risk this very special relationship in order to gain more votes in the council. The media regarded that as on the one hand stupid but on the other hand as the return of Germany as a normal nation.

Generally spoken the German media presents itself as being mainly pro-European and in comparison to the British papers as being concerned not only with the German political options but at least trying to inform their readers about the other countries as well.

The <u>historical analysis</u> of the current agenda is still an important part of the newspaper comments and a tool for analysing the German Understanding of the EU. Articles are titled for example *"The German Question"* (Die Welt 13.12.00). Some quotes might concrete the omnipresence of the special German history. *"The Shadow of the Past",* which the small states might bring up (SZ 12.12.00), *" To Paris the binding of the neighbour was and is a sort of guarantee against a too mighty Germany"*(SZ 07.12.00) What is implicit in this sentence is that this is not only the French interest regarding a powerful, reunified Germany but also the self-perception. There is no critique of this French position which could be expected to be perceived as an offence by a journalist of an sovereign nation with fifty years of democratic, peaceful experience, but it is stated as a fact, not questioned at all.

The German political identity is explicitly analysed as an issue of concern and a tool for understanding Europe, for the necessity and the behaviour of the own and the other member states.

Another line of argument revolving around the necessity of enlargement is the reminding of a <u>common European history</u> and the founding common norms and aims of the Union: Peace and economic welfare. The loss of the *" old, trusted spirit of the Rome treaty and of the ideational blueprints of the founding generation "* (Die Welt 08.12.00).

There are two main strings in the <u>coverage of the enlargement issue</u> to be looked at in the media: First there is the traditional German, political correct handling of the enlargement and the institutional reforms due to it. Critical comments do not relate to the necessity of enlargement as such, but are very moderately stated and concern the handling of problematic consequences for the German economy, namely the demand of the opposition for the need to inform the German public about them. The papers went very

conform with the "ruling" opinion here, which has been consensual for the last forty years, that Germany can only act in Europe within and through the European Union. This has connotations of enduring this burden and is increasingly difficult to sell to the German public. It is astonishing though to which extent the political elite managed to install a national discourse, which is carried by most political parties, intermediary organisations and the media as well, although it does not represent the public opinion defined with Neidhardt not as the ruling but as the people's opinion.

The second string of argument has its roots in the thrust of the government to gain more influence in the council and in the fact that it turned to the demand when it became apparent that sticking to it would mean to severely endanger the German - French relationship, thus becoming the only government that acted on the behalf of the European Union, (although of course Germany has the biggest interest in the East and Central European states to join the Union, because of her geographical and economical situation, which would allow her to profit both in terms of security and of economical advantages.) This was interpreted by the papers as a new sign of strength that lies diametrical to the first string. The German- French relationship was such a big issue in the German papers, because it was always considered to be the motor of the European integration process. Since the German political identity depends to a great deal on being a "Good European" the risk of breaking this alliance and the consequences this would have on further Integration were very present all of the time. The papers followed the line of the German government, which was to *"resolutely"* (SZ 12.12.00) demand a stronger consideration of Germany's economic and demographic size in the re-weighing of the votes in the council. "Satisfaction " was not a term that was used but it describes pretty well how the papers greeted this new German face personalised by Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder shaking off the historical burden of political correctness. Nevertheless Schröder's retreat and his giving in to equality of votes with France was picked up with relieve. He is being quoted with the statement: *"If it is about Europe, I am standing in the tradition of the chancellors from CDU and SPD."* (ibid.)

We believe what was rated so high here was the moral superiority, which allowed for a feeling of pride or importance that Germany is despite and because of her history the only country whose identity is already very deeply rooted in the consensual conflict solving processes which make up the distinct characteristic of the EU and therefore is paradoxically predestined to be the one who has to take up the responsibility for Europe to

further integrate. This is not formulated very carefully, again following the government's line of understatement not wanting to damage the image of the "Good European and Democrat."

Going beyond the quantitative analysis by taking into account the distinct features of the German and the British ruling discourses, confirmed our assumption that the appearance of a homogeneous public is very unlikely in the near future, because the perception of the European issue enlargement is not a European one, but seen primarily through national "glasses".

6. Conclusion

In order to answer our research questions sufficiently, the Intergovernmental Conference in Nice served our group the purpose for investigating whether there is the emergence of an European public sphere amongst the member states. More precisely, we embarked upon the undertaking to find evidence of synchronisation and homogenisation regarding the mass media coverage of the IGC Nice.

As a first result we did find evidence for synchronisation since all the chosen newspapers covered the IGC extensively. The enlargement issue turned out to be a well discussed agenda topic with an evenly high amount of articles dealing with that particular issue in all of the chosen newspapers. Moreover, we found some additional issues of equal importance like the bad performance of the French presidency or the traditional question of authority between Germany and France and the questionable ascendancy. The coverage of these "meta"-issues has a strikingly different quality than the program-related issues, which points beyond mere intergovernmental bargaining. The occurrence of such a consistent set of the same topics amongst the newspapers proved that there is a synchronisation of issues.

The articles, which we gathered from national newspapers, at first glance seemed to show a large consistency in being mainly about enlargement. This was actually not the case. The articles within the enlargement topic contained a similar broadly spread range of issues as those on the IGC as a whole (s.fig.1) did and it resembled it to a large extent. Our

method therefore superficially seemed to confirm Grundmann's thesis of a Europeanisation of the national media arenas, but we discovered by taking a further look beyond the title and the first paragraph at the content of the articles the fundamental differences in the perception of the conference issues - and with it the limited range of his empirical base.

In terms of actors we also investigated the articles in order to determine the nature and the origin of the relevant speakers. But interestingly enough, here we found out that all the national newspapers did not care too much about the international actors, but took most evidently more stocks in their national actors from the political sphere. Nevertheless we should not forget to mention one exception: the German and French actors. They were apparently more frequently mentioned in the international mass media coverage than any other international actors. Although the selection of actors seems to be very limited and a thorough international communication (or public sphere) is therefore very unlikely to emerge, a synchronisation of actors is yet to be detected. We also discovered a respectively high relationship between the states and the EU-institutions (commission and EP), which is particularly interesting if you consider the role these actors play at the IGC; that is a rather marginal role in terms of negotiating. One could speculate that one of the reason for this is that the institutions increasingly serve as intermediaries between the bargaining countries.

But the very nature of the mentioned actors did not quite accord with the normative ideologies. Apart from very few exceptions we merely came across one type of actors in all of the articles: the politician. That indicates a strong distortion from the theoretical demand for a well functioning public sphere, which is according to Neidhardt the platform "for all those who have something to say". However, there are cross-boarder linkages which appear to be of a different sort depending on national interests and preferences as well as regional proximity.

Regarding our third research question we concentrated on the individual national set of favoured issues considering the IGC. There was a strong sense of similarity amongst the countries towards the given range of enlargement –related topics to report on. However, the way the individual newspapers covered them turned out to differ quote extensively due to the national attitudes and interests. We expected to find descriptions of the existing institutions und about the challenges which they have to handle in the future and therefore

have to be changed in one way or the other, we expected to find information about the pre-ins, the candidate states, for whom the whole effort is taken on for. We also thought maybe that we would find the emphasis on harsh discussion between the government representatives and bargaining processes ending up with package deals, but most important of all we thought that the differences in the national coverage would mostly deal with the different positions of the governments regarding the single institutional reform projects. This openness of possible divergent opinions but also for mingling coalitions were one of the reasons to chose the issue in the beginning.

The gap between synchronisation and homogenisation is even larger than we expected it to be. We found out that the difference of national public media discourses regarding the leading policy guideline of their governments are a lot more complicated and not only concerning the differences about how to reform the institutions, but that they depend on causes which lay much deeper grounded in the history, the self- perception and the political systems of the analysed states and their publics.

The media emphasise those issues which are important for their own country.
Even more so, they did not seem to take the domestic political situation of the referring countries into account, e.g. there is not a single hint in the European newspapers pointing towards the imminent domestic elections in Great Britain to have an effect on Blair's performance at the IGC in Nice. Apparently there is a lack of communication between the national public arenas or, in other words, a missing European public sphere.

The second tremendous limitation to the occurrence of homogeneity is the fact that the national discourses can not simply merge into one, because they are not compatible, too different. While in Britain national sovereignty is highly valued, to Germans this is an attitude they are not really able to understand anymore, because their political identity is tied up To the "ever closer Union". Institutional arrangements account for the public arenas completely different tone and culture of criticism, which makes it unlikely that, even if there was a European paper, its content would be perceived the same way by Britons and Germans. The real problem, however, is that citizens in either country are not aware of these differences and the papers have no interest to communicate this.

From these results we draw the conclusion that despite an existing synchronisation, a homogenisation, which would eventually lead to a European public sphere could ever

evolve in the media. The media act on their own logic (Neidhardt): They want to sell newspapers and they want to sell them to national customers. So there is no incentive for them to write about European issues in an other than domestic fashion as long as the citizens themselves are not interested and demand these information. We believe, a public sphere can only be achieved in two different ways: Firstly one could imagine that new forms of participation are created through institutional reforms thereby "functioning as an agent of consciousness" (Shore 2000), but this is of course a top-down approach. The second possibility is to opt for the long-run perspective and supporting the development by well directed strategies like campaigning in favour of Europe and strengthening especially personal and cultural ties through education and exchange programmes. This might eventually lead to a European identity with an accompanying public sphere and the suitable all-European mass media.

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