„Communicating European Integration“ 8th History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS) Conference 2012

Veranstalter: History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS) Berlin; Manuel Müller, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; Tobias Reckling, University of Portsmouth; Andreas Weiß, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
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In debates about the „democratic deficit“ of the European Union it has been argued that the political developments have not been sufficiently communicated to the people they concern. The perceived urgency of the problem meant that political circles and academics alike were and still are primarily concerned with reducing the alleged deficit rather than with examining its historical dimension. While not neglecting the current situation, it was precisely this long-term perspective which was at the heart of the conference „Communicating European Integration“.[1] Organized by MANUEL MÜLLER (Berlin), TOBIAS RECKLING (Portsmouth), and ANDREAS WEISS (Berlin), this 8th conference of the History of European Integration Research Society (HEIRS) took place at Humboldt University Berlin on March 30–31, 2012. It was co-founded by the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), the ZEIT Foundation Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, the Representation of the European Commission in Germany, the Collaborative Research Centre 640 „Representations of changing social orders“ (Humboldt University Berlin), the Instituto Cervantes Berlin, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Berlin.

HARTMUT KAELBLE (Berlin) opened the conference with an overview of the state of research and highlighted new areas of interest. Based on their respective academic disciplines, the keynote lecturers HAGEN SCHULZ-FORBERG (Aarhus), HANS-JÖRG TRENZ (Copenhagen) and JUAN DÍEZ MEDRANO (Madrid) also identified a wide range of yet unexplored topics and methods for further research on the history of European integration.

Despite the focus of attention being on the second half of the 20th century, various contributions illustrated that European integration had already been promoted earlier, even though with other intentions in mind: Analyzing the print media discourses in Germany, Britain and the USA between 1914 and 1945 FLORIAN GREINER (Potsdam), for instance, found that the idea of European integration was very much present in the newspapers, especially in terms of its social and cultural dimension. According to Greiner, „integration“ should therefore be understood as broadly as „communication“, as the actual integration after 1945 would have been impossible without this kind of previous „integrational thinking“.

Several contributors analyzed the communication strategies employed by particular European institutions as well as their ways of dealing with public opinion: NICOLAS VERSCHUEREN (Luxembourg) showed that the High Authority of the ECSC paid great attention to its image among workers from very early on and even tried to win them over by investing in housing projects at a time when housing was still scarce. The unions, on the other hand, played an important role in the emerging European framework by not targeting the new institutions and thereby serving as some kind of „air bag“ between the workers and the High Authority. ALEXANDER REINFELDT (Hamburg) examined the information policies as pursued by leading supranational actors such as the Commission and its predecessors since the early 1950s. Given that a „permissive consensus“ was largely seen as not just sufficient but rather decisive for the success of the European project, he pointed out that at least until the 1970s the rationale of informing Europeans was essentially at odds with the rationale of integrating Europe. According to Reinfeldt, the supranational actors themselves were only partially interested in providing information to Euro-

[1] For the full conference program see <http://www.sfb-repraesentationen.de/veranstaltungen/tagungen-und-workshops/communicating-european-integration> (16.07.2012).

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pean citizens. Instead, they saw their information efforts primarily as a means to foster transnational integration between leading actors in not yet integrated policy areas. ERIC O'CONNOR (Madison, Wisconsin) analyzed the rather diverse European suffrage movement in order to examine the European Community's relationship to democratic participation prior to the first direct European parliament elections in 1979. In this context, O'Connor argued that the motive for referring to the democratic deficit changed over time: While those who had initially criticized the lack of public participation on the European level tried to improve the European project, critics later focused on the democratic deficit in order to undermine the legitimacy of the EC or to prevent their countries from joining it.

Over the last two decades communication and public opinion nevertheless became a top priority for the European Union and its various institutions: ANNELIES VAN BRUSSEL (Ghent) highlighted that while the European Commission was initially not even interested in informing European citizens, since 2001 it has been eager to move gradually from communication as information to communication as interaction. NIKOS VOGIATZIS (Hull) took a closer look at the European Ombudsman office as one of the most prominent efforts on the part of the European Union to establish a link with the public and to prove the EU´s willingness to be held accountable. By analyzing the Ombudsman's annual reports, he showed how the to date only two office holders have created an effective public image and thereby strengthened the moral authority of the office among citizens as well as within the European framework – despite a lack of resources and actual power.

Nearly half of the contributors focused on the various means of communicating and representing European integration, visually and otherwise: EUGEN PFISTER (Trento/Frankfurt am Main) analyzed German, British, French, and Austrian newsreel reports to find out what Europeans quite literally „saw" of Europe and the European integration process. Up until the 1960s newsreels were shown prior to most movie screenings and were therefore widely accessible. Despite national particularities, Pfister identified a set of images that were commonly referred to in newsreels on Europe such as images of opening barriers or the signature of treaties. Similarly, ANNE BRUCH (Hamburg) examined informational films that were being distributed by various transnational and European institutions as well as member states during the 1950s and 1960s in order to promote European identity and legitimize the new supranational institutions. In the same way, the introduction of the Euro was far more than an economic issue and also served to make European integration tangible and visible: ORIANE CALLIGARO (Florence) analyzed the design selection process for the common European currency while also retracing earlier private initiatives to design and mint coins as a means of expressing yet unfulfilled visions of a united Europe. In contrast to most researchers who characterize the Euro as post-cultural and symbolically empty, Calligaro interpreted the iconography of the common currency as an „aesthetic tour de force" that provides a rather essentialist and teleological vision of the European project.

The national press remains a crucial factor when it comes to shaping people's understanding of European integration and was at the centre of various papers: ARIANE BRILL (Potsdam) analyzed the discourse on Europe in German, British and US-American newspapers between 1945 and 1980. She found that newspapers presented and framed „Europe" as either a sphere of peace and security, as a political and economic sphere or as a cultural and social sphere. While European integration was an important point of reference for all papers, the extent of reporting depended largely on each country's involvement in the process and was always highest during times of crisis. JESSICA BAIN (Canterbury, New Zealand) explored the perception of European integration in a non-European country by analyzing political cartoons in leading New Zealand newspapers. The cartoons portrayed New Zealand's politicians as rather ineffective and naïve in their efforts to secure their countries' trade interests and to gain access to the European „fortress", despite the fact that New Zealand achieved a much better agreement with the EEC than many other coun-

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tries. The perception of European integration was, however, always about the triangular relationship between New Zealand, the UK and the EEC.

In the context of enlargement and neighbourhood policy, the issue of communicating European integration became even more complex: ALICE CUNHA (Lisbon) looked at the communication strategies employed by European institutions during the first three rounds of enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s, only to find that they paid nearly no attention to explaining the purpose and benefit of enlargement to the citizens of the Community. According to Cunha, a comprehensive EU communication strategy was only developed for the eastern enlargement in 2004. In Finland the 1994 referendum left its mark on the representation of European integration in the nation's history textbooks, as PAULI HEIKKILÄ (Tartu) stressed: While the European integration process had been referred to from early on, the coverage increased significantly, yet only temporarily, in the context of Finland's negotiations with and subsequent accession to the European Union. On the whole, coverage of European issues in history textbooks remained extremely limited in Finland as well as across Europe. The national perspectives and narratives were adapted, but not revised. Several other papers focused on the promise that „European integration“ was or still is for many countries: Analyzing the case of Spain, CARLOS LÓPEZ GÓMEZ (Madrid) explained how European integration or „Europe“ came to be identified with democracy and welfare. While the Franco regime rejected the vision of a united Europe and wanted to preserve its independence, the emerging European Community excluded Spain due to its dictatorial regime. According to López, joining the EEC in 1986 was therefore less of a rational choice based on actual knowledge than a response to previous isolation. The same seems to be true for eastern European countries that have not yet been granted the official status of „candidates“: While IRENA MYZEQARI (Tirana) investigated the case of Albania, OLEG SVYELTLOV (Kiev) took a closer look at the particularly interesting case of Ukraine. The call for a „return to Europe“ has been an important, yet in terms of actual results often unfruitful factor in Ukraine's foreign and domestic policy since the country's independence, whereas the EU's response has not been entirely dismissive, but overall rather cautious. Hence, the interactions between the Ukrainian and European elites have been marked by constant misunderstandings as well as disappointments regarding the supposed lack of results on the respective other side.

The conference made clear that even long before the 1990s there were indeed various, if often haphazard communication processes at work. Although more consistent communication strategies have only been developed within the last two decades, there is no doubt that various actors used a wide range of means to inform the European public or specific groups about the ongoing political integration and to promote identification with the European project, albeit to often very different ends. This is even truer if „integration“ is not reduced to its political and economic dimension, but also understood as a cultural and social phenomenon. Considering that several contributors pointed out that the purpose of communicating European integration was often not so much informing the public about European integration but rather in itself a means of integrating Europe, this needs not to be seen as a weakness.

Given that the starting point of the conference was the diagnosis of a „democratic deficit“, understood as a lack of people's participation in and identification with the European project, the European citizen remained a blank spot: Most papers still focused predominantly on the supranational or national level, being it EU institutions, national governments or national media. The broader public was only of interest if organized in unions or pro- or anti-European movements and initiatives. The individual citizens as well as the local communities they live in still seemed to be more or less on the receiving end of the examined communication processes rather than part of it. Without more research focusing on the local level, however, the issue of „communicating European integration“ cannot be fully understood.

Conference Overview:

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Greeting: Stefan Forester, Representation of the European Commission in Berlin

Welcome Address: Hartmut Kaelble (Berlin)

Keynote Lecture 1: Hagen Schulz-Forberg (Aarhus): The Public Sphere in European and Global History

Chair: Tobias Reckling (Portsmouth)

Panel 1: Sideways: Before Integration and alternative paths

Chair: Jan-Henrik Meyer (Aarhus)

Florian Greiner (Potsdam): Communicating European Integration during the „Second Thirty Years War" – Printmedial Discourses on the Unity of Europe, 1914–1945

Christian Methfessel (Berlin): Communicating Cooperation between European Imperial Powers Before 1914

Jakub Drábik (Prague): The National Party of Europe and Oswald Mosley's concept of the United Europe. A contribution to the study of the Pan-European nationalism.

Panel 2: Representing Europe 1: Films and newsreels

Chair: Christian Henrich-Franke (Siegen)

Anne Bruch (Hamburg): 'To Advertise Europe': The medial Construction of European Identity through Information Films within the Context of European Information Policy. A Multilayered Approach to the Analysis of Political Communication Processes

Eugen Pfister (Trento/Frankfurt am Main): What did Europeans see of Europe? European identity in Austrian, British, French and German newsreels

Panel 3: Communicating Policy Reform

Chair: Laurent Warlouzet , PhD, (Arras)

Ulrike Zschache (Lancaster): Communicating the European agricultural reform project: A media analysis of the discursive negotiations over the European 'agricultural turnaround' in the Spanish and German broadsheet press

Maria Chen (London): Communicating Changes in European Community Wine Policy in France: 1974–80

Panel 4: Representing Europe 2: National Images of Europe in the Press

Chair: Christian Domnitz (Frankfurt/Oder)

Alena Hvozdzeva (Vienna): Media Discourses on Europe in Lithuania and Latvia after 1990

Ariane Brill (Potsdam): From the idea of Europe to a „dying myth"? Discourses on European unity in German, British and American newspapers 1946–1980

Keynote Lecture 2: Hans-Jörg Trenz (Copenhagen): Reconsidering the European Public Sphere

Chair: Andreas Weiß (Berlin)

Panel 5: Communication strategy and public opinion 1: the early years

Chair: Simone Paoli (Padua)

Alexander Reinfeldt (Hamburg): Communicating European Integration? – Information vs. Integration

Nicolas Verschueren (Luxembourg): The ECSC and the European Working Class: Exclusion and Inclusion

Eric O'Connor (Madison, Wisconsin): A Vote for What? Voters Address European Unity, 1950–1979

Panel 6: Enlargement and neighbourhood 1: The North

Chair: Katja Seidel (London)

Alice Cunha (Lisbon): Good to Know about EU Enlargement: The EU's Communication Strategy towards Enlargement

Benjamin Leruth (Edinburgh): „Ja", „Kyllä" and „Nei": a Comparison of the communication strategies used in the Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian 1994 Referenda campaigns on EU Membership

Pauli Heikkilä (Tartu): European Integration in Finnish History Text Books

Keynote Lecture 3: Juan Díez Medrano (Madrid): European Integration and the Public Sphere: Lessons and New Directions in Research

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Chair: Manuel Müller (Berlin)

Panel 7: Communication strategy and public opinion 2: after Maastricht

Chair: Marianne van de Steeg (Berlin)

Annelies van Brussel (Ghent): From informing to interacting? Exploring the European Commission's interest in keeping its ear to the ground

Nikos Vogiatzis (Hull): Communicating the European Ombudsman's mandate: An Overview of the Annual Reports

Daniel Ivanus (Portsmouth): European identity, representation and the discourse of self-identification in European Commission speeches: exploring the role of ERASMUS programme

Panel 8: Enlargement and neighbourhood 2: The South and East

Chair: Brigitte Leucht (London)

Carlos López Gómez (Madrid): Europe as a Symbol: The Struggle for Democracy and the Meaning of European Integration in Post-Franco Spain

Irena Myzeqari (Tirana): Communicating European Integration in potential candidate countries: The case of Albania

Oleksandr Svyetlov (Kiev): Communicating „Europe“ within and without: the case of Ukraine

Panel 9: Representing Europe 3: The Euro

Chair: Aline Sierp (Siena)

Oriane Calligaro (Florence): Communicating Europe through its Currency: the Iconography of the Euro

Georgios Papadopoulos (Rotterdam): Euro and the Imaginary of European Integration

Panel 10: Representing Europe 4: Alternative views from within and without

Chair: Jens Ruppenthal (Cologne)

Jessica Bain (Canterbury, New Zealand): Retracing Europe: Images and Perceptions of European Integration in New Zealand History (1950s–1970s)

Pieter Huistra/Marijn Molema (Leuven): Presenting the European Past: European Integration in Dutch and European History Museums

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