Adequate Information Management
in Europe

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The Case of Germany

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1: Information/News Management

1.1: Origins and developments of an ambiguous phrase

The phrase 'information/news management' ('Informations-/Nachrichtenmanagement') and more or less related 'compound management nouns' are used within the German scientific community in an ambiguous way. Due to the disparateness in definitions and applications it seems to be utterly impossible to propose a clear-cut systematic typology of concepts.

First, the notion of information management is used by various academic disciplines. It describes mechanisms of coping with huge amounts of data in information and communication technology (ICT), mathematical and natural sciences as well as in library and documentation studies. Analogous with that, education and economics information management is understood in the sense of knowledge management ('Wissensmanagement'). In ICT (online) journalism, content management ('Inhaltsmanagement') can be seen as a special form of information management.

However, in German communication science the concerned branch of study is public relations (PR) and communication research. This branch focuses, among other research interests, on political PR and political communication, investigating strategies and instruments of communication management ('Kommunikationsmanagement') which generally aims at professionalising media competence (Plasser & Sommer 1996). Strategies are subsumed under the concept of agenda setting. One of these agenda-setting strategies is the so-called issue management ('Themenmanagement') that means a targeted setting of issues in the mass media. Avenarius (1995: 210) reminds of the U.S. PR consultant Howard W. Chase (cited Avenarius 1995: 210) who introduced the phrase 'issue management' in the late 1970s. 'Issue management is the capacity to understand, mobilize, coordinate and direct all strategic and policy planning functions and all public affairs/public relations skills toward achievement of one objective: Meaningful participation in creation of public policy that affects personal and institutional destiny.' Political (PR) actors use instruments of issue management such as event management ('Ereignismanagement') (Kepplinger 1992) and symbolic politics (Sarcinelli 1998) as well as a tool box of e.g. personalisation, negativism, dramatisation, and staging pseudo-events (Kepplinger 1998).

One observes two specified forms of issue management: information management and news management. Although both are often used synonymously, one has to differentiate between their origins and developments. Information management can be considered to be the superordinate concept of news management. The latter is that kind of information management that is 'adopted to the media logistic and media formats' (Pfetsch 1996a: 339).

In the context of modernised and professionalised military and security political PR, information management is used against the backdrop of concerted and networked measures of censorship and secrecy, especially in times of conflict, crisis and war. In the 1970s, for instance, the Pentagon and the U.S. armed forces realised the relevance of media-related PR with regard to their defeat in the Vietnam War which was the first war ever covered by television. Therefore, they have introduced what they call perception management ('Wahrnehmungsmanagement') as a strategy of psychological and information warfare (Dominikowski 1993; Löffelholz 1993a, 1993b, 2001a, 2001b). Löffelholz (2002: 198) states that 'military information management will become more successful, if media get only rare information from other sources and if information provided by the armed forces and security politics seem to be "authentic" and "relevant"'. In this context, again, the term 'information management' is often used as a synonym for 'news management', which Alali and Eke (1991: 9) criticise as a euphemism for censorship. Other authors call this military and security political PR strategy even 'media management', reporting e.g. that 'the media management operation was planned as carefully as the invasion itself' (Stanyer 2004: 425). But this inaccurate equation leads to confusion because of the widely accepted usage of media (organisation) management. Today, the U.S. government in its so-called 'war on terrorism' waged since the terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists on 11 September 2001 has turned back to the more acceptable notion of issue management (Leyendecker 2004: 50,52,131), which is becoming more and more important within its foreign affairs related 'public diplomacy' (Rid 2003).

From a historical perspective, information management and, again synonymously, news management are both used to analyse propaganda activities (Dominikowski 1993; Löffelholz 1993a, 1993b, 2001a, 2001b) and spin doctoring strategies (Esser 2000a),

although there is no evidence found that any conflict party used the phrases explicitly in either World War or in earlier military operations.

In *The Fourth Branch of Government*, Cater (1959: 157-158) quotes the then Washington bureau chief of *The New York Times*, James B. 'Scotty' Reston, as having introduced the phrase news management at a 1955 congressional hearing in the aftermath of the Geneva Conference of the heads of state, held in July the same year. Evaluating U.S. governmental PR related to the failed summit of the four victorious powers on European security and the future of divided Germany after World War II, Reston is quoted as saying before the Moss Committee investigating the 'Availability of Information from Federal Departments and Agencies'[1]:

> Most of my colleagues here have been talking primarily about the suppression of news. I would like to direct the committee […] to an equally important aspect of this problem which I think is the growing tendency to manage the news. […] I think there was a conscious effort to give the news at the Geneva Conference […] an optimistic flavor. I think there was a conscious effort there, decided upon even perhaps ahead of time for spokesmen to emphasize all the optimistic facts coming out of that conference and to minimize all of the quarrels at the conference with the results which we all have seen. […] That is what I mean by managing the news. And I would urge your committee to look into that a bit, because, while it is bad to suppress a bit of information, it would seem to me to be even worse if all of the newsmaking powers of the Federal Government were to blanket the newspaper situation with the theme which perhaps they did not believe was quite true, but might be an instrument of their thought (Cater 1959: 158).

In addition to the observations by the charismatic correspondent Reston (Stacks 2002), Cater (1959: 158) states that 'the business of 'managing the news' has cropped up in other areas'. In terms of the prevalent *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert/Peterson/Schramm 1956) of the era, Carter (1997) considers U.S. governmental news management as an authoritarian PR strategy. But journalists in that same era underline the social responsibility of the press having the task to inform the public. Thus, the exchange relationships between journalists and governmental spokespeople were characterised by a mutual distrust.

According to this reading, news management aims at influencing, changing, piloting, and controlling the journalistic everyday business and is considered to be a PR-key strategy. At first sight, news management is often criticised as 'treacherous': 'News management could be understood by a naive contemporary to be something that happens within a newsroom of a media organisation: the daily coping with the news stream, containing and channelling the news flushing into a newsroom. But news management is something completely different – it is the management of the media from the outside, it is the more and more targeted remote control of the news coverage through PR' (Ruß-Mohl 1992: 311). According to this reading, the process of news management can also be cynically described by the PR concept of 'spoon feeding' (Cater 1959: 167) which means 'the spoon-by-spoon feeding of journalists, and thus the public, with information snacks being virtuously and carefully precooked in the PR kitchens of huge organisations' (Ruß-Mohl 1992: 311).

Particularly high-ranking political actors and official decision makers, namely governments, apply efficiently the strategy of news management because they continuously attract political journalists' attention ex officio. Estimating official news sources such as democratic governments to be qualified and credible authorities, news agencies in particular are highly permeable for managed news. Journalists often adopt a passive attitude *vis-à-vis* official news sources, no matter whether they work in democracies or non-democratic systems (Zschunke 2000). By launching seemingly relevant and newsworthy issues, high-ranking political news managers try to prepare political decisions and to legitimise already taken decisions through communication. Applying this top-down-strategy of news management, central political actors may determine the media agenda. Thereby, they intend to influence other political actors, as well as the public, about who should deal with certain issues. At the same time, news manager set parameters to build decision corridors (Jarren & Donges 2002 b: 111).

According to a less PR-oriented and rather business administrational approach, issue management can be understood to be a process that takes place within a

newsroom of a media organisation. This approach allows differentiating between:

(a) issue management on an intra-organisational micro-level;
(b) newsroom (or editorial) management ('Redaktionsmanagement') on an intra-organisational meso-level;
(c) media (organisation) management ('Medien(unternehmens)management') on intra- and extra-organisational macro-levels (Meckel 2002: 310-311).

While issue management describes journalistic tasks, newsroom and media management consists of business administrational functions such as piloting and controlling financial, material, and human resources (Meckel 1999).

1.2: Spectrum of theoretical approaches and empirical findings on news management

Previously, we have mapped the phrase 'information/news management' and related 'compound management nouns' in German academia to systematise hierarchies, similarities, overlaps, complementarities and differences in a historical retrospective. We have shown that information management and news management have synonymous connotations. Therefore, it is legitimate to mention both concepts in one breath. Nevertheless, we have to take into account that information management in comparison to news management is a generic term. It describes a range of diverse communication phenomena that are not entirely subsumed under the concept of news management. The latter, following a more narrow perspective, seems to be the stronger concept focusing on processes and aspects of news making. Thus, there is a need to explore the status, the meaningfulness and the range of the news management concept in the state-of-the-art. Consequently, this chapter conceptualises theoretical reflections and empirical findings regarding news management in German communication science.

Studies on the academic concept of news management in German communication science are still rare. Therefore, the term 'news management' and particularly the underlying concept still appears uncertain and, to some extent, unexplained. Apart from a few outstanding examples, communication science has been widely reluctant to analyse and interpret news

management and its consequences in the past (Pfetsch 1999b: 12). It has to be questioned whether this is due to the fact that the phenomenon of news management in daily communication practice in the German-speaking context does not play a significant role and/or communication science simply considers it not a major subject. However, studies dealing with aspects of news management might exist, but they avoid the unclear term 'news management' for the following reasons: On the one hand, describing initiatives outside the newsroom the term 'news management' can be misleading. On the other hand, to understand news management as procedures taking place in the newsroom is either dismissed to be naïve (see chapter 1.1) or needs further explanations and definitions. While news management does not play a significant role in communication science, news management practitioners heavily rely on theoretical reflections and empirical results of communication science. Just as the wider field of communication management, news management in practice has only developed thanks to the achievements of a high standard of knowledge about (mass) communication and its effects, operations and permeability (Pfetsch 1999b). In the following summary, we will exclusively concentrate on those studies explicitly dealing with the term and concept of news management (Nachrichten-Management).

1.3: Research contexts

The term 'news management' evolves from the Anglo-American context and has been imported into German communication science in the beginning of the 1990s (Ruß-Mohl 1992). It queues with other neologisms and anglicisms as e.g. personalisation ('Personalisierung'), 'talkshowisation' ('Talkshowisierung') and 'entertainisation' ('Entertainisierung') that have been implemented into the technical language of communication science since that time (cf. Tenscher 2003: 69). These notions describe phenomena that are often related to changes of the political communication described by 'Americanisation'. This refers to the increased importance of the mass media taking up functions of the political systems and the adaptation of political messages to the needs of the media (e.g. Blumler/Gurevitch 1995). The concept of Americanisation is highly contested, because it is not clear whether changes in the communication culture of the U.S. can be generalised and compared to po-

litical and mass media systems in Western European democracies (e.g. Swanson/Mancini 1996). Most of the studies dealing with news management are linked to this question and investigate the notion of Americanisation of European politics in terms of election campaigning and other political marketing practices (Plasser/Scheuer & Senft 1998; Plasser & Sommer 1996).

Plasser and Sommer (1996: 93) believe 'new politics-conception' to be responsible for the emergence of news management in the United States and question its potential transferability to the German-speaking nations, particularly Austria. The new politics-conception considers politics primarily as communication and successful politics as carefully planned and professionally controlled communication. This understanding has evolved in view of the American presidential elections. According to the authors, these marked an irreversible change of the traditional roles of the political and the media system, culminating in the dissolution of their respective autonomy. As a consequence, during the election campaign journalists would have been targets of subtle and technocratic communication management. Although the Austrian political process has been Americanised to some extent, it reflects specific European characteristics. Traditional media structures, specific editorial standards, differences in the political culture are contrary to the Americanisation process.

Other studies on news management take a more practical perspective and refer to political marketing practices. Political marketing (Jarren & Donges 2002 b: 64-66) describes news management as part of election campaigning primarily not by political actors, but by external PR and marketing experts – a practice which also has its origin in the United States. Plasser, Scheucher and Senft (1998) ask for the endurance of a specific European style of political marketing against the background of the fascination of importing U.S. innovative campaigning technologies and marketing strategies including news management. On the basis of interviews with 50 experts they carefully conclude that the political marketing in Europe has modernised and professionalised through the orientation towards the U.S. at least in some countries, e.g. Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy, in comparison to the Scandinavian countries.

Another particular concept in relation to which news management is mentioned is 'spin doctoring' (Esser

2000a). Spin doctoring became popular in the context of the Clinton presidency when a team of spin-doctors had been in charge in an attempt to turn negative public opinion into positive against the background of the president's love affairs (Esser 2000b: 37). Because Germany is still in the phase of 'low gear' spin doctoring, while in the Anglo-Saxon countries it is 'high gear' spin doctoring (Esser 2000a: 19), German communication science has framed news management in the context of spin doctoring mainly in contrast to the United States and Great Britain.

In this respect, and also from a theoretical point of view, the study of the *Spiral of the 'Spin'* by Esser and Spanier (2003) is important. The authors ask if the concepts of 'media politics' and 'meta-coverage', originally developed for the American context, can also be applied to the British case. With reference to the American political scientist Zaller (2000), the authors define media politics as a modernised way of conducting politics by which individual politicians seek to gain office (in election campaigns) and make policies while in office (governing as permanent campaigns) through communication that reaches citizens through the mass media (Esser & Spanier 2003: 4). Furthermore, meta-coverage is understood as 'coverage of (a) the behaviour patterns and roles of the news media as political agents who participate in, and shape, political events and outcomes, and (b) the presence and roles of communications media in candidates' publicity efforts, including their advertising and public relations strategies, and the activities of their media advisors and consultants …' (Esser & D'Angelo 2003; D'Angelo & Esser 2003 cited in Esser & Spanier 2003: 4-5).

This theoretical approach reflects that apart from analysing news management in the concrete context of election campaigning, there is a need to conceptualise news management while referring to a more general development of political communication which is often also connected to the phenomenon of Americanisation (Esser & Spanier 2003, Esser 2000a; Pfetsch 1999b). The latter is often described as a 'permanent campaign': 'The underlying assumption of the permanent campaign is that [government] chief executives seem to assume that in order to govern successfully, they must proactively determine the public agenda …' (Pfetsch 1999b: 2). This means that strategies of campaigning are not only limited to concrete election campaigns, but appear rather as political routine. This

communication style aimed at mobilising the electorate and the media for public support at any time has become an enduring task of professional communication management.

According to Esser (2000a: 18-19), the use of communication strategies outside elections, but originally designed for elections, has led to the introduction of news management as a new central concept. News management in this framework is understood as news piloting ('Nachrichtensteuerung'). Pfetsch (1999b: 1-2) considers the origins of permanent campaigning as a starting point for the development of news management in what has been described as 'media democracy' since the 1980s (e.g. Donsbach/Jandura 2003). This is linked to the assumption of the increasing importance of the government as well as the media since that time, leading to a fundamental change of their respective structures, namely the adaptation of the governmental institutions and practices of politics to the central role of the mass media as well as the integration of the latter into the political system.

Against the background of media democracy, news management might, for example, be understood in the light of a general change of governmental public information. Traditional press release policy in the shape of interpersonal exchanges between politicians and journalists has paved the way for a professionalised and specialised process of strategic communication (e.g. through new communication technologies). News management, in this regard, is understood as a practical solution for governments to strategically communicate their messages and to use the media to distribute their political and policy goals (Pfetsch 1999c).

Apart from the direct influence of the Americanisation process, Pfetsch (1996a, 1996b) has related the concept of news management to general circumstances as well as to specific changes in German political and media culture. In this regard, news management is first of all understood to be designed to counteract common problems regarding the mediation of politics and policies (Pfetsch 1996b). This is considered to be necessary because of the fact that long-term and latent administrative and political processes normally do not comply with the formats of media communication. Instead, mass media would stage symbolic forms and surrogates of politics. This situation has become even more difficult in the context of the deregulation of the electronic media system in Germany since the 1980s (Pfetsch 1996a). As a consequence, political PR in the form of news management has taken up the strategy of launching political issues that are directly aligned to the media logistics and formats.

Finally, news management has been made a topic of the changing appearance of leading politicians in Germany, particularly demonstrated by the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his political PR. After the change of government in 1998, Pfetsch (1999a) pinpoints a new era of communication policy towards the media shown by the huge media presence of the so-called 'media chancellor'. Nowadays, these findings have to be relativised as the behaviour of the chancellor towards the media has changed to some extent since the beginning of 2004 by, for example, refusing interviews by the biggest tabloid in Europe, BILD. Weischenberg, in this context, argues that Schröder could now de-mystify himself whereas once he had been the one to initiate the myth of the 'media chancellor' (Restle & Zeitler 2004).

1.4: Definition of News Management

Having described the contexts in which German communication science deals with the concept of news management, there is a need to define and sum up its essential characteristics according to the state-of-the-art in the following. Generally speaking, news management outlines the management of political information and communication processes as well as the mediation of politics and policies by putting forward specific topics (Tenscher 2003: 71-72; Pfetsch 1999a). It is a top-down process steered by political actors, mostly a government, in a sort of remote control (Pfetsch 1999b: 28-29; Ruß-Mohl 1992). Its objectives are to inform the public about specific policies, to legitimise political decisions and particularly to create popular consent that leads to an increase of political power (Pfetsch 1999b: 28-29).

Therefore, probably the most important aspect of news management is its strategic character, which aims at influencing public opinion through controlling the news media agenda (Pfetsch 1999b). The news media, in this regard, have a double function. They are perceived to be crucial strategic means as well as targets because of being effective channels of transmission, serving as links between a political body, the government and the citizens, setting the public agenda, be-

ing recognised as political actors and having a warning function with regard to forthcoming conflicts and problems (Pfetsch 1999b: 5).

Apart from this general definition of news management, one has to take into account that the term might be understood quite differently in various cultural frameworks. Namely, the style and the means of news management are shaped by specific institutional settings of political PR as well as normative and structural contexts deriving from a respective political system, media system and media culture and their interplay (Pfetsch 1999a: 12, 1999b: 2-3). Thus, the news management approach, originating from the United States, is only *partly* transferable to European countries because it requires a strong, central and powerful political actor to be found in a presidential democracy (exceptions are countries like France, Lithuania etc.). In contrast, news management in coalition governments lacks a coherent political objective whereas the options for a central news management e.g. in the British parliamentary system with its majority voting system are much better. Furthermore, in a federal parliamentary system such as Germany the political actors of the federal states, the 'Länder', have got their own issue agenda. Due to the diverse variants of constitutional settings, news management and its strategies might appear in diverse forms (Jarren & Donges 2002 b: 112-114).

The differentiation between political news management and media-centred news management, introduced by Pfetsch (1999a, 1999b), might shed light on this although this categorisation is at most an analytical one as both types of news management are in equal measure realised by the mass media (Jarren/Donges 2002 b: 112). Nevertheless, the functions of the media vary with regard to the different dimensions of news management.

Regarding political news management, the 'media are the means but not the ends of the action' (Pfetsch 1999b: 10) whereas they attain much more importance within the media-centred news management strategy. Here, news management 'focuses directly and only on creating positive news coverage and popular support' (Pfetsch 1999b: 10). Political actors therefore adapt their messages to the formats, news values and the logistics of the media; the political content as such is secondary in comparison to its presentation form. As a consequence, political issues and images appear

in form of symbolic products. Pfetsch (1999b) bases her assumptions on Mazzoleni's (1987: 85) theoretical concept of 'media logic' explaining the 'values and formats through which … events and issues are focused on, treated, and given meaning' by journalists and the media. Furthermore, empirical knowledge about media reception and media effects is a precondition for the realisation of media-centred news management through the techniques of political marketing, particularly personalisation, dramatisation, image management as well as the creation of pseudo-events (Pfetsch 1999a: 13, 1999b: 10; Plasser 1996: 90). Tenscher (2003: 71-72), without differentiating between media-centred and political news management, also refers to image-building and the management of politics and policies which seem to fit in this framework.

In contrast to media-centred news management, political news management aims at 'minimizing the adaptation to the media'; its objective is 'to maximize the political aspects in message production' (Pfetsch 1999b: 10). Shaping a message with regard to the political objectives of one actor against the opinions of other potential actors in the 'political concert' is the main task. Thus, political news management stands for the enforcement of a specific position in a competitive environment. To reach its goals, political news management attempts to instrumentalise the mass media production standards and selection criteria. The respective techniques are negativism, political attacks, framing and nondisclosure (Pfetsch 1999a: 13). Plasser and Sommer (1996: 90), in this context, also add spin-controlling and de-thematisation. All the listed techniques, which Pfetsch (1999b: 12) describes as 'action repertoire', might blur in reality and are again analytic distinctions.

Finally, both types of news management can be categorised with regard to specific areas although one has to keep in mind that characteristics of news management, at first sight similar, might have a completely different meaning from an in-study into different political and media contexts (Pfetsch 1999b: 15). Pfetsch (1999b: 3) stresses that for example the media-centred model is most likely to occur in the United States because of a 'media-driven political communication culture' (2003, 2001a: 47). Pfetsch bases her assumptions on an exploratory study of semi-structured focused interviews with 112 political spokespeople and journalists in the U.S. and Germany. She characterises the U.S. political media culture as a presidential system, a highly

commercialised media system and a predominance of adversarial journalism. In comparison, the political model might for example be found in Great Britain as well as in Germany. Both states resemble each other, having parliamentary political systems, strong party governments, a strong public service television and keeping a political press (Pfetsch 1999b: 3).

1.5: Outlook: News Management a strictly top-down concept?

According to the description above, news management in the framework of existing research literature is conceptualised to be exclusively a top-down strategy leaving nothing to chance. At least in some contributions approaches to broaden this perspective shimmer through (cf. e.g. Esser & Spanier 2003). In the following, we would like to argue for the inclusion of the part of journalism into considerations of news management for the subsequent reasons.

First of all, news management itself will always have a backlash on the originating side meaning that it directly affects policy-making with regard to the preparation, negotiation, and implementation of political programmes (Linsky 1986). Thus, the policy-making processes, as well as the political actors behind it, to a certain extent depend on news management, its strategies and potentials originating from the media logic (Esser & Spanier 2003). We would like to call this an 'indirect steering process by the media', their actors and their environment.

In addition, the outcome of news management, regardless of which human and financial resources are mobilised, might not be predicted in advance because of the fact that the logic of the political as well as the media sphere do not usually coincide. 'News management then is a process with high risks and uncertainties. It is a management of contingencies for political actors, for even if they feed the media with information they have no control over the actual news coverage …' (Pfetsch 1999b: 7).

Although the media, on the other hand, are somehow fascinated by news management, writers such as Esser and Spanier (2003) can prove with regard to the British case that they are independent factors and, to some extent, even an incalculable variable in the process of news management. We call this the 'direct

steering process by the media' which is either originating from the media's dependency on 'situational factors and inner organizational arrangements' (Pfetsch 1999b: 7) or rather from a 'relative autonomy' of the media, in the sense that 'journalists insist that it is their professional prerogative to determine what counts as news and they resent what they see as the incessant efforts of politicians to manipulate them' (Zaller 1999: 56, cited in Esser & Spanier 2003:9).

This does not mean that journalists automatically reject input by news management measures, but ideally only take it as a starting point for further investigation. Following Zaller (1999: 21-26 cited in Esser & Spanier 2003: 10-23), the journalists' countermeasures with regard to news management derive from specific circumstances: Journalists compete with politicians and political PR experts to gain power over the 'news control'; they take up an adversarial position to express an independent and distinctive 'journalistic voice'; in terms of 'market pressures' and competition, politicians and their consultants are not an exclusive source for journalists; in the dimension of 'career success'; finally, they try to foster their 'role legitimisation' through pursuing a sophisticated concept of journalism. These ideas parallel the conception of U.S. journalism and media culture, which builds the foundation for media-centred/media-driven news management. If this is also valid for the German case will, of course, have to be proved. It might be the case that German journalists, despite following the paradigm of British and U.S. journalism, do not take such a critical position towards the influencing of news management and, in economic terms, seek rather to profit from such information activities (Kopper 2003: 116-125). This leads to the assumption that the applicability of a broadened concept of news management might differ with regard to diverse cultural frameworks. In this respect, the concept of journalism culture gains importance.

2: Concept of Journalism Culture

In the EU member-states, the mass media's reaction to news management applied by EU institutions cannot be understood without regarding the contexts of different national journalism cultures. They lay down sets of political, legal, economic, social, historical, cultural, linguistic and technological parameters that determine the journalistic practices, professional stand-

ards and ethical considerations. Consequently, they lead to a distinguished inhomogenity in EU reporting. Pan-European transnational and transcultural mass media such as the European cultural television channel ARTE (Hahn 1997a, 1997b) and the European news television channel EuroNews (Machill 1997a) are so far rare exceptions. But Thomaß (2004: 59) states that 'it has been a mistake made by previous 'European media' to anticipate the emergence [of European public sphere(s); the authors]. They suppose an audience which does not yet exist.' Taking these premises into account, one has to question (a) whether a 'syncretic' EU journalism culture already exists, (b) in how far it is evolving, and (c) if it is desirable at all (Sievert 1998; Ruß-Mohl 2003, 2004).

This chapter does not aim at summing up exhaustively all sets of parameters determining the German or German-language journalism culture. It only spotlights some of them as typical examples. It deals rather with the academic conceptualisation of journalism culture, by proposing a typology that only serves systematisation. In reality, the proposed conceptualisations of journalism culture are often overlapping. Especially but not only German social science-oriented communication science – even cultural studies-driven media science and journalism studies – has hitherto rarely dealt with cultural aspects of communication, media and journalism. Since the 1990s, the academic branches in the German-language area and in non-German scientific communities focussing on this area deal with the concept of journalism culture. They all do so, often as case studies, by always comparing German or German-language journalism culture to different journalism cultures in other nations or transnational cultural spheres (e.g. Esser 1998; Lünenborg 2000). Altogether, analyses of especially German journalism culture focus mainly on post-World War II developments in the Federal Republic.

2.1: Cultural and linguistic premises

The research deficit in relation to journalism culture may be due to the notorious ambiguity of the concept of culture itself. Definition attempts of the term 'culture' fill libraries. In the mid-1970s, approximately 300 definitions of culture were counted (Steinbacher 1976). In the European history of ideas, many contrasting concepts of culture such as 'civilisation', 'technol-

ogy', 'nature', or 'non-culture' have been developed. Many of the abstract philosophical approaches to culture are based upon thinking within classical universalism and humanism. Many of these concepts of cultures – often characterised by a Eurocentric attitude – have been misused in order to build up ideologies. Actually to date, there is no general theory of culture integrating historical, social, and aesthetical factors, without reducing some of them. Furthermore, the understanding of culture is always culturally specified (Ludes 1991).

The German sociologist Weber (1982: 217) defines culture in a broad sense as the 'totality of living appearances and living conditions'. Thus, culture can be conceived as a 'social heritage' (Camilléri 1982: 16-18), and not as a genetic heritage in the sense of biologism approaches. Broad definitions of culture as the entirety of expressions of life are strongly linked to the ethno-linguistics concept of (human, natural, verbal) language, reflecting ideas and ways of thinking of its respective culture. The so-called Sapir-Whorf-Hypothesis states linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism (Sapir 1921; Whorf 1956). It has roots in Humboldt's ([1836-39] 1960) anthropological-oriented linguistic philosophy and theory, observing that 'in every language a typical world outlook' can be found.

According to these rather general definitions of language and culture, Langenbucher (1994: 7) calls for an understanding of journalism as a 'specific cultural competence' that is 'comparable to literature, theatre, arts, philosophy, or science'. Based on this reading, Duchkowitsch et al. (1998: 10) define 'journalism as culture', being 'a perspective in which journalism is understood as a societal and cultural competence of the modern age'.

But all these rather general definitions do not meet the criteria of scientific operationalisation. In order to analyse cultural aspects of communication, media and journalism in international comparison Löffelholz (2002: 191) proposes four aspects in a modern understanding of culture: '(1) culture evolves by communication as a social process; (2) culture clots in forms of social standardisations and cognitive schemes; (3) culture stabilises orientations and consequently leads to building models of interpretation and behaviour relatively long existing; and (4) culture is not a static fact, but remains a dynamic process which is time-dependent and may be generated and changed.'

2.2: Media anthropological and geocultural conceptualisation

The fundamental research on cultural aspects of communication, media and journalism in international comparison goes back to early findings in cultural anthropology. In the 1950s, the U.S. ethnologist and semiotic researcher Hall[2] (1959, 1966, 1976) has introduced the concept of intercultural communication in the context of the prevalent-of-the-era understanding of culture (civilisation) which is congruent with the concept of nation. According to his findings in the tradition of cultural relativism (not essentialism!), cultures across the world tend to differ in their communication systems despite the fact that they are constantly in contact with each other. He analyses different senses of time and space by individuals in different cultures, referring to the interpersonal context and to the direct interpersonal communication. He groups cultures on an open scale between two tendency poles with regard to their respective typical information context as well as to their respective typical senses of time and space (chronemics and proxemics). The two tendency poles are: (a) informational extensive, monochron, and contact distance keeping Low-Context Cultures; and (b) informational intensive, polychron, and contact proximity admitting High-Context Cultures. The communication style or logic in Low-Context Cultures is rather instrumental (digital) as well as sender- and goal-oriented while in High-Context Cultures it is rather affective (analogue) as well as receiver- and process-oriented (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1988).

Conclusions drawn from this anthropological approach to interpersonal intercultural communication have been further thought about and applied to mass media's intercultural and multilingual communication. Stating the fact that mass media always reflect typical patterns of interpersonal communication within a specific culture, Schroeder (1993, 1994) analyses preponderantly print media in different European countries, namely so-called transfer titles that appear in different countries and adapted to the different national contexts, against the backdrop of communication anthropology. Investigating French and German broadcasting journalism cultures synthesising within ARTE, Hahn (1997a: 149-176, 1997b: 138-145) finds out that the fundamental research of communication anthropology is also fully applicable to the 'classical' electronic mass media. Both authors differentiate between Low-Context (Media) Cultures

found more in Protestant Northern Europe and High-Context (Media) Cultures more often located in the predominantly Catholic Southern and Mediterranean Europe. They both conclude that German-language journalism culture in Europe is characterised by all aspects of a Low-Context (Media) Culture with its specific communication style or logic.

This way of conceptualisation of journalism culture can be named *media anthropological and geocultural*: (a) It stresses the fact that any item of information in both individual and mass communication is culturally conditioned and coded. An information item is not unequivocal per se; it acquires meaning only within its cultural context. Different cultural contexts and communication systems lay down different sets of parameters within which their respective mass media operate. They do not operate within hermetically sealed cultural spaces but within their respective cultural contexts and with the communication systems of their respective target recipients. (b) It also underlines that in an international and especially European context, the processes of encoding and decoding of information within interpersonal and mass media communication often lead to intercultural frictions (Bartholy 1992; Watzlawick/Beavin & Jackson 1967).

2.3: 'Complex interrelationships' conceptualisation

The *complex interrelational* conceptualisation takes into account that there is no metaphysical nucleus or national character of *the* journalism culture of a specific country. Instead, a journalism culture evolves in a 'netting of relations' ('Beziehungsgeflecht'). Machill (1997b: 13) compares the concept of journalism culture to the mathematical number Pi: 'By further calculating its value, one will always get more positions after decimal point without finding its exact value. The journalistic culture of a country is no absolute value; it bares its traits only in dependence to its frameworks.' According to this conceptualisation, one cannot accurately define the concept of journalism culture, but only approach it by analysing the self-conception of journalists, the conception of other actors in the journalistic environment, the journalistic work organisation, the related national scientific discourse, the journalistic products in direct comparison to others, as well as the media system and its social, political, legal, economic, and cultural frameworks (Machill 1997b: 14-20).

2.4: Systems theoretical conceptualisation

The *systems theoretical* conceptualisation focus on journalistic systems, avoiding the notion of culture (e.g. Löffelholz 2000; Blöbaum 1994). Scholl and Weischenberg (1998: 298) state that 'there is no *single* journalism of *the* society but journalism *in* society (or societies)'. According to this reading, one cannot approach journalistic systems by means of identity theory, but instead by means of difference theory. A journalistic system is seen as a dependent part or sub-system of a social system and defined with regard to its main task which is providing issues for mass communication in order to construct social reality (Weischenberg 1998: 61). 'From a strict system-oriented perspective, journalism is not the sum of all journalistically acting persons, but a complex structured social figure which is networked to other social systems in various ways' (Weischenberg/Löffelholz & Scholl 1993: 23). Therefore, Weischenberg (1998: 210) differentiates between the following categories which are interdependent: (a) the context of norms describing historical, political, and legal differences of a system; (b) the context of structures referring to the processes of journalistic production; (c) the context of functions marking the conditions linked to media products; and (d) the context of roles dealing with self-conception of journalists and society's conception of journalists (Scholl & Weischenberg 1998: 217). Sievert (1998: 66-158) analyses these contexts with regard to EU journalism.

2.5: Fundamental patterns conceptualisation

In order to conceptualise journalism culture in Germany, Kopper (2002: 113-126) develops, from a critical structuralism perspective, a catalogue of ten cultural *fundamental patterns*. One pattern includes the experiences and undisclosed elements of experience from the Nazi-regime. He criticises that the enquiries in terms of connections between media and institutions during World War II took place much too late and furthermore insufficiently. As a result the journalism of this era still influences the journalism of the present. Another pattern is the Anglo-American journalism that influenced German journalism, especially after World War II. American and British journalists, in particular, started to teach their German colleagues in terms of using special headlines or separating news and comment; as a consequence these values were inherited by following generations. Other patterns are the marginal professional reflection of German journalism having experienced different ideologies; limited experiences and conflict repertoires in terms of questions referring to the freedom of press, the pluralism of opinions, and the appropriate reflection of a history, in which the freedom of press had to be fought for. Furthermore, the importance of journalism education and advanced training are underestimated. As a matter of principle the journalistic profession is open to everybody, with a range of training and qualifications. Advanced journalism training happens more or less on a voluntary level. Another pattern is the chronic underestimation of the recipients: journalism and public requests are putatively contradictory. Additionally, one has to mention the pattern of 'excluded return' which means that there is practically no career-oriented exchange between the different elite spheres. Another significant pattern consists in the adaptation of journalism to structures and processes of corporatism that reigns over Germany (Kopper 2002). Moreover, one can observe a serious ignorance of other journalism cultures in Europe, leading to a lack of comparative horizons. Finally, there seems to be a disposition to arrange political party alliances and even career arrangements. It is not unusual that journalistic careers develop because of their membership in a certain political party.

To conclude, Kopper (2003: 126-127) criticises the lack of genuine theory building in journalism culture, hitherto drawn or adapted only from more or less relevant super-theories developed originally in social sciences, history, or economy. Furthermore, he stresses that the communication science community in Germany barely considers the ideological moment of journalism in different social systems.

2.6: Systemic modelling conceptualisation

The most recent conceptualisation of journalism culture can be called *systemic modelling* approach. Hallin and Mancini (2003: 15-25, 2004: 87-248) develop three models of media and politics in order to be able to compare different international media systems: (1) 'The Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralistic Model' (e.g. in Greece or Spain); (2) 'The North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model' (e.g. in Germany and Scandinavian countries); and (3) 'The North Atlantic or Liberal Model' (e.g. in the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom). Due to the fact that bor-

ders between these models are variable and groups of states are not homogeneous units there are some additional overlapping models.

Both authors come up with their modelling conceptualisation in order to explicitly re-think and broaden *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert/Peterson & Schramm 1956) that had been, for a long time, the only and outstanding scientific approach to describe what in modern terms can be called political communication culture or journalism/media culture. The four theories aim at understanding the connections between media systems and models of different political and societal developments. According to them, the press always adopts the shape and colour of those social and political structures in which it works. It represents the system of social control that regulates the relationship between individuals and institutions. Developed over time, the four theories are 'Authoritarian', 'Libertarian', 'Social Responsibility', and 'Soviet Communist'. The 'Authoritarian' model, referring to the situation in England in the 16th and 17th century, underlines that the press supports the politics of the government in power. According to the 'Libertarian' model, which is based on the writings of the liberalism-representative English philosophers of the Enlightenment like John Milton (1608-1674), John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the press aims at discovering the truth. The 'Social Responsibility' model of the press stresses that the public has a 'right to know'. The 'Soviet Communist' model is again authoritarian as well, describing that the press is loyal to the single political party in government (Carter 1997). Although these four press theories are in fact obsolete because of some serious weaknesses in theory building (Nerone 2002), Meckel (2001: 149) still refers to and extends it by the factor of globalisation in order to declare in the end 'Five Theories of the Media'. Hallin and Mancini (2003: 11-12, 2004: 1-17) criticise that the four theories simply outline philosophies of how the press has to be, instead of analysing the development of concrete media systems or their connections in a systemic and historical context.

Hallin and Mancini (2003: 20-23, 2004: 143-197) group Germany and the German-language area in Europe under their second scheme, namely the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model. According to this reading, Germany or German-language journalism culture is generally dominated by the democratic corporatism which is defined by the

following characteristics: (a) opposite social agenda are brought together (referring to the overall concept of solidarity); and (b) a powerful system of organised social groups and a tradition of voluntary and informal coordination of conflicting objectives through continuous political bargaining between interest groups, state bureaucracies, and political parties. The journalism itself combines a fact-oriented approach similar to Anglo-American journalism, but with a tendency to comment. Studies have shown that German journalists possess the tendency to see themselves as 'missionaries of public opinion'. Journalistic professionalism is strongly distinctive. This concept is less linked to notions of 'neutrality' or 'objectivity', but rather to an 'external pluralism' and 'annotation'. This includes, nevertheless, high standards and independence. More than 90 per cent of German journalists belong to journalist trade unions.

With regard to print media, it seems to be typical for the second model that a newspaper landscape developed early in history. In 1609, a weekly edited paper named *Aviso* was published in Germany. Before this, several pamphlets and broadsheets had been circulating (Pürer & Raabe 1994: 16). Looking at broadcasting, the so-called dual system, meaning the co-existence of public service and commercial broadcasting, has been introduced in Germany in the mid-1980s. Guaranteed by law, public service broadcasting is independent. But it is also strongly regulated. While other countries subsidise public service broadcasting, Germany remains an exception. Even private mass media are considered to be more than simply capitalistic companies. On the contrary, they are seen as social institutions as well, having to serve the public. Altogether, the German media landscape is characterised as having 'voluntary self-control'. Adjustment comes from the German press council ('Presserat') – a body also composed of media representatives who reprimand offences against the press codex. But it does not have any legal competence to penalise, e.g. to impose a fine (Deutscher Presserat 2004).

3: Concept of European Public Sphere(s) (EPS)

The question whether news management is an adequate concept to analyse information policies and communication strategies of the EU institutions as well as EU journalism cannot be answered without taking the framework of (a) European public sphere(s)

into account. In the following, we will therefore summarise theoretical approaches and empirical findings regarding the academic concept of (a) European public sphere(s) (EPS).

3.1: Theoretical approaches

First of all, the phrase 'European public sphere(s)' is only an artificial translation of the German 'europäische Öffentlichkeit'; the Germanic notion 'offen'/'Öffentlichkeit' leads to different connotations than the derivate of the Latin 'public' which includes a spatial dimension. The German 'Öffentlichkeit' is built upon a more than two-century research tradition, which focuses in particular on literary and aesthetic issues. Since the late 1980s, the concept of 'public sphere' has been fostered by the English translation of Jürgen Habermas' (1990 [1962]) study *Strukturwandel der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit*. In contrast to the relatively low perception of Habermas in German communication science, European communication science eagerly adopted the public sphere concept and furthered its emergence as a research paradigm (Kleinsteuber 2004: 31-32; Kleinsteuber 2001). This, of course, had repercussions on German EPS research. In general, however, German EPS research, with the EU as a reference point, has emerged since the early 1990s when the EU was founded and increasingly competencies were transferred to the European level. Interestingly, EPS research since that time has developed separately from the classical European integration theories (Liebert 2003). The controversial theoretical approaches of functionalism (Haas 1958), neo-functionalism (Rosamond 2000) and liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik 1998) stress that European integration has emerged as a project of elites in disregard of European public sphere(s). Nevertheless, EPS research in the German context originates from a large breeding ground, including such disciplines as, for example, social sciences, media and communication sciences, journalism studies, political science, law and economics. Particularly in the last few years, research activities in the field of EPS in Germany have gained momentum. To a great extent this led to more heterogeneity and differentiation than to consistency. The German understanding is dominated by three different EPS conceptions: the traditional-sceptical model, the liberal-representative model and the deliberative-discursive model.

3.1.1: The traditional-sceptical model

Representatives of the traditional-sceptical model follow a homogeneous approach and neglect the existence of a European public sphere. Neither do they expect it to emerge soon because of the following reasons: (1) The EU lacks a collective identity. Enlarging and furthering the European integration process has not led automatically to stronger cultural linkages between the European peoples. Furthermore, Europe is not a communication community, barely a commemorative community and only to a limited extent an experience community (Kielmansegg 1996: 58). (2) The development of a collective European identity would require a Europeanised communication system based on a unique media system. Grimm (1995: 294) argues that an intensified coverage of European issues by the national media would not be sufficient while being directed solely at a national public and characterised by national perspectives and communication habits. Europe, in this respect, would rather need a common news agenda and a common audience as well as a communicative structure appearing as public political discourses through mass media (Scharpf 1999: 674; Kielmannsegg 1996: 60-61; Grimm 1995: 294). (3) Both, the development of a European collective identity and a unique Europe-wide media system fail because of the lack of a common European language. Only members of the elites are able to communicate successfully in European languages other than their mother tongue. A European *lingua franca* learnt and understood by every European would be desirable (Grimm 1995).

Because of these problems a European *demos* supporting the EU political system does not exist. This fosters the European democracy deficit. Democracy in the EU context is constituted by the member-states loosing significance while increasingly transferring competences to the EU governmental structure (Lepsius 2000: 333-340). The democracy deficit as well as the public sphere deficit in this context is mutually dependent. The representatives of the traditional-sceptical model follow high normative demands.

3.1.2: The liberal-representative model

The liberal-representative model builds upon the definition of the national public sphere in a democratic system. This demands that the interests and the will

of the citizens to be strongly related to political decisions, particularly through elections. To be able to vote, the citizens have to be informed about political actors as well as their actions and programmes. The mass media are understood to be the most important information source (Gerhards 2000: 286-287). This minimalist notion concerning the functions of public sphere is directly transferred to the European level although the target group of EU political decisions is not the same as the *demos* who has legitimised the decision-makers (Gerhards 2000: 287). This indicates the democracy deficit in the European context. Furthermore, the liberal-representative model assumes the incongruence between the Europeanisation of economic and political processes and the media coverage of European issues. This leads to the conclusion of a public sphere deficit (Kopper 1997: 13). The second model is less distinctive than in the framework of the traditional-sceptical model for the following reason: While the requirements of the first model are too idealistic to (ever) be reached, the liberal-representative model reduces its demands to the category of transparency. According to this, the political processes and decisions would have to be reflected as precisely as possible. Christoph O. Meyer (2002: 69-70), in this context, stresses the need to control political accountability through mass media. This idea goes far beyond the responsiveness of the political system. Accountability does not only imply the adaptation of politics to the interests of the people, but can also mean the dismissal of political actors. The liberal-representative model furthers the idea of the Europeanisation of national public spheres in contrast to a homogeneous concept of EPS. Prerequisites are the coverage of EU issues and actors and their evaluation through a European perspective (Gerhards 2000: 293). The EPS deficit is regarded as a consequence of the democracy deficit. Improvements would require a democratisation of the EU.

3.1.3: The deliberative-discursive model

The deliberative-discursive model assumes a broader definition of public sphere symbolised through arenas of public communication. This includes day-to-day communication as well as communication by actors of the civil society and the mass media. In this respect, EPS is regarded as being shaped by thematic interrelations between national media arenas through common European topics. This assumption goes back to Habermas' notion of European political mass communication emerging when national media discuss the same issues at the same time applying similar aspects of relevance. Just as in the traditional-sceptical model, the deliberative-discursive approach pinpoints the importance of a European mass media agenda including equivalent interpretations and opinions with regard to the various issues (Eder & Kantner 2002: 79-81). In contrast to the first model, the latter does not regard a common language and a European *demos* as a precondition. Cohesion solely develops through issue-specific communication communities above the nation-state (Eder 2000: 167-184). From a social sciences' viewpoint in this branch of study, public sphere is understood as an intermediate space between governmental structures and society. This implies that communication does have limits, however, these are not (necessarily) attributed to the national public sphere (Neidhardt 1994). The representatives of this model oppose the pessimistic understanding of the public sphere deficit, which they regard as theoretically fruitless (Eder & Kantner 2002: 307). They stress rather the emergence of trans-national communication in Europe. Hereby, conflict and dissent are not conceptualised as hurdles, but as proofs of communication processes (e.g. Kantner 2003: 222; Risse 2002: 19). Although the deliberative-discursive model is demanding, because it goes beyond national dimensions, it seems to make concessions with regard to the European dimension. Formal high normative demands seem to be lower than those of the other models.

To conclude, the three models basically show contradictory conclusions in view of the question of the existence of EPS. It seems that this is due to the underlying grade of normative demands. One hypothesis is that high normative demands inevitably lead to the denial of EPS whereas low normative demands permit the understanding of the emergence or existence already of EPS.

3.2: Empirical findings

According to a recent evaluation of the leading German mass media by Medien Tenor (2004: 10-11), only 9.7 per cent of all contributions in the different media branches refer to the EU or its institutions and only 3.4 per cent of the overall news coverage place a prime focus on EU issues. Certainly, there are huge differ-

ences with regard to single media organs which need further explanation. For instance, the weekly newspaper *Zeit* refers in 15 per cent of all its articles to the EU and its institutions whereas the commercial TV channels *RTL*, *SAT.1* and *ProSieben* almost completely ignore these issues. Existing empirical studies so far only provide snapshots instead of an in-depth view into German reporting about the EU. Therefore, one has to be precautious with regard to rash generalisations against the background of a lack of representativeness of most of the findings. Nevertheless, a common trend seems to be visible: EU issues appear as a grey area in comparison to topics regarding domestic and foreign affairs which receive much higher interest (Eilders & Voltmer 2003). This seems to be valid for all media types.

The television coverage is even below the average: In only 3.4 per cent of the cases there are references to the EU; 2.4 per cent focus directly on EU issues (Medien Tenor 2004: 10-11). This is alarming because television is the most important information source for the citizens to become informed about EU issues (European Commission 2004: 12). But Germany does not seem to be an exception to the rule, as Peter (2004) proves by means of a content analysis of the main newscasts in Germany, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark. Additionally, a comparison of TV news bulletins of public service broadcasters in Germany, France and Great Britain backs up these empirical findings (Groothues 2004). With regard to the print media, Eilders and Voltmer's (2003: 267) analysis of political discourse in German quality papers' commentaries shows that EU policy – in comparison to other policy fields – forms only a small part of the print media agenda regardless of the importance of EU decisions. Furthermore, one has to consider that the amount of EU coverage in national newspapers exceeds by far that in regional newspapers (Kevin 2003: 55). In addition, Sievert's (1998: 214) study on international synchrony of EU coverage in news magazines reveals that EU issues covered by the *Focus* (2.9 per cent) and *Spiegel* (2.1 per cent) is also fairly low.

EU coverage is dominated by a national perspective because of the fact that national actors shape the news agenda. Only those EU issues will gain popular importance that have been brought up by national politicians or have a direct influence on national political discussions (Media Tenor 2004: 11). This can be verified with regard to the coverage of specific policy fields. On the basis of a political claim analysis of four dailies, namely two nationals *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, *BILD* (yellow press) and *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (regional paper), in the framework of the EUROPUB.COM project[3] Koopmans and Erbe (2003: 19) for instance state that two-fifths of all claims in the field of agriculture remain within a purely national reference frame although over time a lot of competencies in this area have been transferred to the EU level. Similarly, the *Spiegel* e.g. in the run-up of EU enlargement covered the latter from an exclusively national perspective (van de Steeg 2003: 188-189). Generally, applying the national perspective to EU issues is equivocal. On the one hand, it prevents certain topics being put on the news agenda. On the other hand, it helps to align EU decision-making processes and their outcomes to the social environment of the national audience and does not necessarily lead to manifesting national egoisms (Eilders/Voltmer 2003: 267).

The EU policy-formation is mostly framed negatively and conflicts sometimes seem to be staged purposefully (Medien Tenor 2004: 11). This again leads to ambiguous conclusions: At first, a more or less negative EU coverage seems to act against EU integration and policy-making. Secondly, negativism might be understood as a consequence of journalistic professional routine leading to a 'typical dramaturgy' of the media. Mass media coverage is usually based on critical debate and antagonistic discussion. Against the background of normative demands with regard to the media's function of critique and control and their conceptualisation as a 'fourth estate' (e.g. Meyn 2004), this may be assessed as a positive contribution to the legitimacy and the responsiveness of EU political processes (Eilders & Voltmer 2003: 268). The latter assumption is backed up by the journalists and correspondents' pro-European attitude and self-conception that most of them also assume for their audiences (Pfetsch 2004: 17). Though attention towards EU issues is relatively low, there exists a high degree of support for European integration' even with regard to the enlargement of the EU's power and competencies. This style leads to an overcoming of the traditional national conflict lines regarding political-ideological left/right schemes and to a frequent usage of 'the Europeans' as a *topos* in German public discourse (Pfetsch 2004: 19; Peters et al. 2004: 5; Koopmans & Erbe 2003: 267). Moreover, in comparison to other actors of German political elites, the state and even the civil

society, the media – if they address EU issues – more likely foster ideas of European integration as well as the European dimension of political topics appealing to common European values. Koopmans and Pfetsch (2003: 30) therefore argue that 'the caricature of media as scapegoats for the lack of European public spheres' can not be maintained. German media would rather 'act as motors of Europeanisation and thereby contribute to the opening up of spaces for transnational communication'. Empirical findings by Scherer and Vesper (2004: 202-206) seem to lead in the same direction. An analysis of press citations in the two German quality papers *SZ* and *FAZ* shows increasing attention towards other European countries and their respective newspaper coverage since the middle of the 1990s. Interestingly, this is particularly valid for countries which are geographically more distant than others, but have strong links to Germany cultural and economic aspects. For instance, both newspapers refer more consistently to these countries that have introduced the euro than to those outside the euro zone. In this respect, it is remarkable how quickly the euro has become a European frame of reference dominating public communication in monetary politics (Koopmans & Erbe 2003: 18). Despite these positive signals there are more reasons to worry. First of all, there are policy fields for which the EU has gained huge competencies, for example agriculture, but which are not as prominently covered as e.g. the European Monetary Union (EMU). Secondly, references to other EU countries are mostly made with regard to the big countries as France and Great Britain whereas the new Middle and Eastern European countries are neglected (Scherer & Vesper 2004: 210; Koopmans & Erbe 2003: 13). Finally, at least some of the positive results regarding the Europeanisation of media coverage derive from the elite-orientation of the national newspapers which are the most frequent objects of study, but which only hold a low percentage of the overall circulation in the strongly regionalised press market in Germany (Adam & Berkel 2003: 27).

Nevertheless, the German media in general support the EU institutional system and its basic values (Eilders & Voltmer 2003: 268). Since the beginning of the 1980s there has been a significant increase in references to EU institutions whereas similar attention towards the UN and NATO cannot be demonstrated (Peters/Brüggemann/Kleinen v. Königslöw/ Sifft & Wimmel 2004: 3). This is particularly valid for the executive organs: In the centre of media attention is the European Commission (24.6 per cent) and the Council of Ministers (10.5 per cent); only 4.5 per cent of the news coverage refers to the European Parliament (EP). Whether this is generally due to the large competence transfer to the European level or rather to the news management strategy of the respective EU institutions will have to be object of further research. Certainly, the 'executive bonus' (Medien Tenor 2004: 12) originates from a direct accessibility of these institutions for media actors. Furthermore, Schäfer (2004: 144) who studied the working conditions and procedures of the Brussels' office of the *Deutsche Presseagentur (dpa)* pinpoints that the issue agenda of the German wire service as the first link in the news chain is shaped by the EU institutions. Nevertheless, one must cast doubt on the ability of the EU news management to define and communicate the news agenda. Specifically, the antagonism between the media and the political sphere in the European framework is more difficult to overcome than in national contexts. In addition, because of structurally conditioned consideration of public needs by national governments and despite of having enormously enlarged its communication activities, the European Commission often desists from making its actions public (Pfetsch 2004: 11-12). Furthermore, it might be assumed that institutional constraints and everyday political power strategies do not allow the EU institutions to be effective arbiters of their media image.

3.3: Research Deficits and Desiderata

Altogether, empirical research on EPS in Germany is mostly restricted to media-output analysis and case studies which only refer to a limited number of states, media (particularly national quality newspapers) and events/issues (e.g. EU enlargement or EP elections). We argue that empirical research, regarding EPS as constituted by the media and journalism, should not be restricted to media outlets, but also take into account structural conditions and preceding processes which shape the media coverage. So far, there are only a few exceptional studies in the German framework (e.g. Meyer 2002). News infrastructures, including questions of professional experience and formation, for instance, are still underexplored. In particular, data concerning news agencies and television is missing. Furthermore, the importance of regional newspapers in the German press market is not reflected in empirical studies. This is alarming because of the fact

that, for example, regional newspapers belonging to the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ)* suffer serious problems regarding information procurement because of a strong elite orientation of European actors (Adam/Berkel 2003: 12). This example also shows that the exchange relations between political and media actors in the EU framework as well as the routine working conditions of Brussels' correspondents and journalists and editors in the home-countries need further attention. Existing studies cannot compensate for the lack of extensive field studies.

Furthermore, theoretical approaches of EPS suffer certain problems: First, they mostly concentrate on assumptions attributed to the national public sphere which might not be one-to-one transferable to the European context. Second, they are limited to specific segments such as, for example, transparency, discourse or identity. These do not completely suit the broad context of the public sphere. Third, the academic debate is mingled with normative demands. Because of contradictory assumptions, this either inevitably leads to the denial of respective arguments for the reason of the missing empirical evidence against the background of excessive requirements, or it leads to determining operationalisations and empirical outcomes as well as an adaptation of theoretical assumptions to the empirical results. Following these lines, EPS research needs a re-start. We therefore propose to detach EPS research from existing formulas and take up a more rational, inductive and practice-oriented perspective. This will help to re-think the described models or to find a comprehensive concept of EPS in the long-run.

4: Conclusion: News Management a concept to research European public sphere(s)

The news management concept allows to draw attention towards practical phenomena and conditions in the framework of European public sphere(s). For this, we will provide some concrete examples as well as further theoretical ideas in the following.

Although the EU Commission is increasingly developing into an executive suprapower, it does not have the same strategic arsenal as national governments. With regard to the media coverage the European institutions often seem to be incapable to set the news agenda (Gramberger 1997). The economic and technocratic nature of the EU often prevents an in-depth reporting about decision-making processes (Ward 2001). These are mostly administrative processes – especially if one thinks of the rather unpolitical Commission's decision-making. This consists, for example, of regulations for the implementation of EU law. Additionally, the spokespersons of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the assembly of national diplomats, estimate that up to 90 per cent of the background information concerning the more political decision-making of the Council is given to the correspondents only off the record (Meyer 2004).

In comparison to the United States, one may state that news management in the European countries and regions appears quite different, in accordance with the diverse variants of constitutional settings. Therefore, it may be questioned whether the top-down strategy of news management within the EU political context is successful at all (Meyer 2002). News management, at best, requires a strong, central and powerful political actor which can be found in the presidential democracy in the United States (Pfetsch 1999b). With the European Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, there are three main senders of political messages within the EU framework, sometimes even conflicting, according to their respective interests (Gerhards 2002). Therefore, news management in the EU only exists in the form of varying news management processes.[4]

Furthermore, the EU member-states follow their own news management strategies, which sometimes conflict with those of the EU. This often leads to a re- or misinterpretation of EU messages for the benefit of the political actors of the member-states, including negative stereotypes regarding the EU as a whole as well as its actions. This is particularly valid with regard to the Council's decision-making processes that take place behind closed doors; press representatives are only allowed for a few symbolic meetings. After delicate Council decisions most of the national ministers and their spokespersons immediately leave Brussels without giving a press conference or different national press briefings take place at the same time so that the journalists are not able to check other national interpretations (Meyer 2004). The European Commission, which has extensively increased the human and financial resources for its information strategy during the 1990s, is mostly not able to reach the national audiences (Gramberger 1997; Lob 2004). Its information

output is too complex, too specific and not tailored for different target audiences/cultures.

Altogether, news management processes do not suit the values and formats of the media while the media often lack substance with regard to EU reporting. The reason is a missing journalistic competence in the field of EU journalism. This means a lack of knowledge about EU institutions and decision-making processes as well as their effects on various policy fields, the incapability to interpret these with regard to the national context and to comment upon the interplay between the European, national and regional levels and also a lack of in-depth knowledge regarding specific EU policy fields (Kopper 2001). Additionally, due to the profit-oriented media business and a highly competitive market, the media are not willing to take any risk. In this respect, the self-referentiality of the media system seems to lead to a 'herd effect'. As a consequence, the mass media, in the framework of the different national journalism cultures, follow a common style of EU reporting often even showing ignorance of unattractive, but important topics. Therefore, the journalists often do not fulfil their duty to observe and mediate adequately the political process at the EU level. Although there are demonstrable structural deficits on the part of the media (Kopper 1997, 2001), journalists actively control, through their decisions, news management processes and their outcomes. One of the famous examples of this has been the investigative reporting in the context of the withdrawal of the former Commission (Meyer 2002).

Furthermore, the EU needs a more media-driven information strategy adapting its messages better to the formats, news values and the logistics of the media. One starting point could be to adjust the output to the requirements within the mission statements of the media. This also includes a view on national press codices regarding the publication of political content. This desideratum of a more media-driven information and communication strategy does not imply the requirement of a EU centralised political system analogous to the U.S. It rather means enhancing concerted information and communication efforts within the EU multi-level governance system for the profit of a dense and substantial flow of information to the media.

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[1] Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, 84th Congress, 1st Session, 7 November 1955, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

[2] Edward T. Hall has taught future U.S. diplomats (and later on business managers as well) how to comport and to communicate in foreign countries. He gave lectures in a special Foreign Service Institute that had been founded within the legal framework of the Foreign Service Act passed by the Washington Congress 1946 to reform diplomacy.

[3] The EUROPUB.COM project set out to study Europeanisation in terms of communicative linkages in the public space of seven countries, namely United Kingdom, France, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. It conducted a quantitative content analysis of newspapers based on claims as unit of analysis. A claim is defined as an instance of strategic action in the public sphere.

[4] Additionally, the question, what kind of government body (function) the EU Commission and adherent institutions are must be further discussed.

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