

The Democratic Integration of Europe: Interests, Identity, and the Public Sphere¹

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The term ‘public sphere’ is a spatial metaphor for a largely nonspatial phenomenon. To be sure, public spaces from the Greek agora to early modern marketplaces, theaters, and parliaments all give support and setting to public life. But public events also transform spaces normally claimed for private transactions—as parades transform streets. The public sphere is a “space” of communication, and as such transcends any particular place, and weaves together conversations from many. Publics grow less place-based as communications media proliferate, yet the spatial image remains apt.

As Hannah Arendt wrote, public speech creates a space among speakers and the possibility of institutional arrangements that endure beyond the lives and mere quotidian interests of those speakers (Arendt 1958). If Europe is not merely a place, but a space in which distinctively European relations are forged and European visions of the future enacted, then it depends on communication in public, as much as on distinctively European culture, or political institutions, or economy, or social networks.

Public communication takes place in, and helps to create, a ‘space’ of relationships among citizens. This space is not the whole of relatedness; it is only one ‘domain’ or ‘realm’ among many. And as Jürgen Habermas (1962) noted, ‘realm’ and ‘domain’ (which have their own spatial connotations) are in one sense precisely wrong, because the public sphere is constituted by the multidirectional communications of its participants, not any rule from above.

Such communication—the public sphere—has at least three dimensions important for European integration. First, it enables participation in collective choice, whether about specific policy issues or basic institutions. Second, public communication allows for the production, reproduction or transformation of a ‘social imaginary’ that gives cultural form to integration, making Europe real and giving it shape by imagining it in specific ways. Third, the public sphere is itself a medium of social integration, a form of social solidarity, as well as an arena for debating others.

The self-constitution of Europe through public communication is a relatively neglected aspect of European integration. Yet, because it brings a unique and crucial condition for collective choice, it is basic to the possibility that Europe’s integrated institutions can be democratic. The public sphere is also an important counterpart to

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forms of integration based on struggles and negotiations among specific “interests”. First, it opens the possibility that actors may redefine their interests in the course of public communication and shifting understanding of both collective good and individual or collective identity. Second, it offers the potential of a space constituted not as the sum of particular territorial locations, or political-economic locations, but by communication among strangers, addressing the public as such.² The growth of the public sphere in early modern cities was thus a different dimension of civil society from the growth of guild organizations or marketplaces, though related to each. It constituted an important aspect of the city itself as distinct from a location within it. Similarly, within the processes of national integration, public spheres played crucial roles in constituting the nation as such, as object and arena of discourse, distinct from the particular interests, regions, face-to-face communities and nodes of activity within it. How much this will happen on the scale of Europe remains to be seen.

The questions are not all about the relative organizational capacities of the EU and its member states. They are also about the relationship of both to transnational processes not contained within Europe (which we may call ‘global’ without implying that they obtain equally all over the world). They are also about the extent to which public life thrives at the geographical level of cities, and ways it is (or sometimes isn’t) produced by means of space-transcending media. Though it may be physically impossible to be two places at once, it is not impossible to inhabit simultaneously several of these metatopical spaces of public communication.

The Problem of Integration

Academic debates over European integration engage an impressive range of scholars. Some question whether there is societal integration to match economic or administrative integration and accordingly raise questions about legitimacy. Many question whether European integration necessarily comes at the expense of national identities, and if so, whether these are really fading. Others question what constitutional form might be created not only to legitimate but to govern the emerging polity, to shape how it will balance democracy with technical administration and judicial review. Still others take up the substantial extent to which European integration has advantaged capital, which moves freely, and disadvantaged labor and other social groups that remain both fragmented and bound by national laws.

In the present paper, I will touch on these issues but address more centrally the questions of what role participation in the public sphere is playing in European integration, what role it could play, and how much actual patterns of integration are furthering the development and effectiveness of a European public sphere. I will be optimistic on potential but pessimistic on actual achievement (and my emphasis will be

² The public sphere is not only translocal, but ‘metatopical’, in Charles Taylor’s (1995: 263 term. While there are a variety of topically specific public discussions (as of place specific public gatherings), the public sphere “knits together a plurality of such spaces into one larger space of nonassembly.” Parts of the same discussion circulate through a variety of topical or spatial locations but derive some of their significance from being related to the larger sphere of circulation (just as ‘the market’, in a national or global sense, knits together transactions in various marketplaces, but is a phenomenon of a different order). See also Calhoun 1988.

more on theory and conceptualization than on empirical measurement). I will also try to distinguish participation in the public sphere as one form or modality of integration from others—such as integration of markets, or functional integration more generally; development of a common culture or identity; creation of wider-reaching and more diverse networks of interpersonal relationships; and the sheer exercise of power, notably by states and the new EU administrative apparatus, but also by some economic actors.

For the most part, I will not enter debates concerning the overall pace of European integration. Such integration is happening, even though how fast, through what institutional forms, and to whose benefit can all be debated and are subject to further research. Integration could yet be diluted by the addition of new member states, and the legal framework of integration continues both to be disputed and to evolve. To what extent a more united Europe will remain organized by treaties among sovereign states, or itself become an integral state remains uncertain. A variety of creative prospects for shared sovereignty excite political theorists and may open a space in between creation of a new state and mere agreement among older ones. At the same time, it is clear that the EU's member states spend vastly more of the region's gross domestic product, wield more military force, and play larger roles in most governmental affairs save regulation of interstate commerce. While the EU has not yet become a very effective foreign policy actor, there is an important European voice in global affairs. This is articulated by leaders of European states, individually and interactively with each other. It is also articulated in non-state public forums by social movement activists, newspaper editorialists, academics, and other participants in public discourse. It is recognizable and recognized, even though it is not unitary in either content or institutional base.

Affirming that integration is real and substantial does not answer the question of just how Europe is—or is to be—integrated, nor how the specific ways in which Europeans are joined to each other affect the prospects for democracy, collective choice about the future, and recognition of difference within unity. Integration is not a simple good, always equally desirable whatever its form. Rather, the case of Europe offers a good empirical focus for considering the implications of different forms of social integration for democratic politics.

European integration has been driven importantly by two negative projects: avoiding war, and avoiding American (and sometimes Asian) economic hegemony. These have been justified mainly by appeal to presumably widespread interests. They (and the building of European institutions) have been implemented largely on the basis of agreements among the governments of member states. Insofar as the member states are democratic, this process is not intrinsically contrary to democracy. The actual operations of the new European institutions, however, have often turned out to be less transparent, less accountable, and less amenable to popular participation than those of most member states. They reflect the influence of an internal technocratic elite and they also appear to be more susceptible to the influence of business corporations and closely related external elites. This is the why they are criticized for a “democratic deficit”. At the same time, European integration has been a source of new inequalities between business and labor and between a cosmopolitan elite and less mobile (often less transportably credentialed) citizens. Professionals, including academics but also lawyers, accountants, and others have been among the beneficiaries of European integration. Even where they have not

been among its leading advocates (as they often have), they have usually adapted fairly readily to it and found new opportunities within or in dealing with European institutions. Skilled workers, by contrast, have often found less transnational recognition of their credentials and fewer opportunities. And while European integration has opened local markets to transnational corporations, labor law has remained mostly national and thus fragmented (Streeck 2001). Workers who move generally derive less benefit and protect from the EU than do firms that move capital. For all these reasons, the EU suffers also from a deficit in its perceived legitimacy. One indicator of this is the fairly consistent Eurobarometer finding that shows much greater support for “European integration” than for “membership of the EU”.

It is partly for this reason that appeals to a common European identity have increased to complement longer-standing appeals to common interests. While these commonly appear as transnationally cosmopolitan within Europe, they are also often linked to resistance to non-European immigrants (though of course, ‘European’ is a contested identity in this regard, e.g. vis-à-vis Eastern Europeans and Turks). This is a source of what might be called Pym Fortuyn’s paradox—the claim that in order to protect liberal society one must illiberally resist immigration. While political specifics vary among nations, ideologues, and movements, the paradox itself features in most European countries and at the level of Europe as a whole (and to some extent in most of the world’s more or less liberal societies). In any case, if internal coherence and external closure are basic features of the claim to be a “society” then appeals to common identity do double work by helping to bolster the legitimacy of the internal institutions that produce coherence while also giving an account of why borders should be closed to immigrants (though not, despite occasional populist gestures, to capital).

Appeals to European identity grow still more important to the extent that European institutions affect citizens in direct, not merely indirect ways. For most of the first forty years of postwar integration, the effects were mainly indirect. The EU administered an increasingly expensive common agricultural policy but the effects were filtered through member states and national prices. It created regulations that were administered by member states. Especially from the 1990s, though, the EU and European integration became more manifest in everyday life. EU citizenship changed queuing in airports, for example, and the Euro replaced national currencies. In foreign assistance and some other parts of foreign affairs, the EU struggled to present itself as a unitary and autonomous actor. While the range of “Euro-goodies” (including academic grants and exchanges) flowed most to elites, ordinary citizens were also now called upon to think of themselves as European (Schmitter 2001). There is debate about how much they do so, underwritten by fluctuating survey data. The fluctuations themselves are not surprising; there is no reason to expect European identity not to be in considerable part situational (Hedetoft 1997). After all, this is true of most identities. National identity is commonly understood as being immutable, but in fact its salience varies—increasing with travel, confrontation with immigrants, and war—and its character is neither fixed nor the same for all nationals.

Regardless of how readily European citizens self-identify as European, there are also a variety of ways in which behavior is becoming increasingly similar throughout Europe. Slang, clothing styles, music, and movies all circulate more widely. This may

lubricate European integration. Mere similarity, though, is different from mutual interdependence (as Durkheim 1893 famously argued) and is a very segmentable form of solidarity. Before the 19th century heyday of national integration, the internal regions of European countries were often more diverse than the whole countries were from one another—on dimensions ranging from wealth to birth rates and family formation (Watkins 1991; Weber 1976). On some dimensions of similarity and difference this may be happening again. At the same time, many similarities among Europeans reflect broader cultural and market flows and common circumstances. This is not only a matter of consumer culture but of learning English. In short: some of the ways in which Europeans are most similar, and growing more similar, are not specifically European.

In short, there are many limits to common identity as the basis for either legitimacy or solidarity in Europe. European identity could grow stronger and more uniform without supporting democracy. It could constitute nationalism on a continental scale. Common identity is, in any case, only one of several forms of social integration; others include markets and other autopoietic systems, networks of interpersonal relationships, and domination by those with one or another form of power.

It is common to analyze the extent of European integration—including questions of whether Europe is becoming a single society or polity—in terms of internal coherence and external closure. Both are important; pointing to the persistence of national difference or the importance of global flows challenges each. It is equally crucial to account, however, not only for coherence and closure (both of which can of course be no more than relative) but also for mutual commitments among the members of the polity—including commitments to the fairness of political processes. This is a central point of Habermas's appeal to constitutional patriotism.

Constitutional patriotism depends on a vibrant public sphere. As Habermas (1998: 160) says, "From a normative perspective there can be no European federal state worthy of the title of a European democracy unless a European-wide, integrated public sphere develops in the ambit of a common political culture." In this public sphere, citizens will join in debate over the kinds of social institutions they want. But we should not think of the public sphere as only an arena of rational-critical debate or of common political culture as formed in advance of participation in the public sphere. Rather, culture—and identities--will be made and remade in public life. Building on this, I wish to urge a richer conception of the public sphere as an arena of cultural creativity and reproduction in which society is imagined and thereby made real and shaped by the ways in which it is understood. It is because public life can help to constitute a thicker, more meaningful and motivational solidarity that it can help to underpin a modern democratic polity. A thin identification with formal processes will not do.³ Citizens need to be motivated by solidarity, not merely included by law.

³ I have discussed this further in connection to the ideal of cosmopolitan democracy in Calhoun (2002b). But see also the various defenses of cosmopolitanism in Archibugi (2002). A key motivation for relying on only a thin notion of identity is the perception that governmental (or quasi-governmental) power is organized at a variety of levels and therefore democracy might helpfully flourish at several levels as well, not be overwhelmingly organized in terms of nation-states. See Held (1995).

The problem of European integration, thus, is not simply to achieve solidarity or to make an effective union. It is to do this in a way that is conducive to democracy, fairness—and other normative values that citizens might choose or develop. Not all integration is equally benign; not all that is benign in itself is helpful for democracy.

Necessity and Choice

To what extent can the continuing formation of European society be based on widespread, popular, democratic choice? I say ‘formation’ advisedly, to emphasize the greater stakes in a process commonly discussed under the milder label ‘integration’. There is no such thing as a neutral integration, in which the various countries, regions, cultures, peoples, economic systems, and social movements of Europe fit together as though they were pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Each is unquestionably changed by ‘integration’ with the others. Moreover, the social ‘whole’ being created is not simply a sum of its parts, however integrated, but something new. This new entity is the product of several different processes of integration and creation. Its own overall form is shaped by a combination of conscious choice, a less conscious social imaginary that influences actors’ sense of what forms are possible, and various material and symbolic processes in which actors engage for other reasons, but with more or less unintended consequences for the formation of European society. The latter include engaging in markets; broadening consumer tastes; building transportation and communications infrastructures; attempting political domination; producing, circulating, and acquiring cultural goods; and participating in social movements.

Choice has not been unimportant so far in the formation of Europe, but (a) the choices of elites have been vastly more important than those of broad populations, (b) the self-conscious choices of broad populations have been mostly limited to yes/no referenda rather than choices of form, and (c) the most influential choices of broad populations are not self-consciously about the formation of European society but about a range of everyday activities in which they respond to particular interests and values in ways that shape Europe. The last range from buying food, listening to pop music and cheering football teams to demanding pay rises, complaining about bureaucrats, and responding to immigrants with acceptance or hostility. Getting people to use Euros proved easy; they integrated readily into everyday life. Getting people to care about elections to the European Parliament has been harder; the results have seemed remote from most people’s lives (whether because they rightly analyzed the limits on Parliamentary power within the EU, or because they more questionably judged the EU itself to be a minor influence, or because they thought simply that they could have little influence by voting for the actual candidates presented to them).

Moreover, much discussion of the reasons for European integration stresses not choice but necessity. The discussion not only presents integration as necessary, it presents specific institutional forms of such integration as either necessary or at least to be assessed on grounds of technical efficiency rather than explored in terms of social consequences. The necessity of, say, resisting the “American model” (any American model, in media or markets or multiculturalism) is presented less as an occasion for choice among the potentially innumerable other models than as justification for specific institutional arrangements and policies. Yet institutions are sustained and shaped not only

by mechanisms of reproduction that individuals cannot alter, but also by choices of participation, rejection, struggle.⁴ Of course, many choices are highly undemocratic, reflecting differences of power. Nevertheless, many, perhaps especially in modern European countries, are potentially open to more or less democratic processes. The rhetoric of necessity obscures this. Once centered on preventing war, the rhetoric of necessity is today overwhelmingly economic. However, as Larry Siedentop puts it, “If the language in which the European Union identifies and creates itself becomes overwhelmingly economic, then the prospects for self-government in Europe are grim indeed” (Siedentop, 2000: 32).

I propose first to distinguish choice from mere response to interests or necessity on the one hand, or reflection of collective identity on the other. Interests and identities certainly influence choices, but I want to defend the idea that choices are actions (individual and collective) that imply the availability of multiple possibilities. The choice itself therefore matters, and is not strictly determined by pre-existing conditions. Choices are shaped by social imaginaries—that is, more or less coherent socio-cultural processes that shape actors’ understandings of what is possible, what is real, and how to understand each. The influence of both interests and identity is refracted through such imaginaries—thus, not simply through culture generally but through specific formations that naturalize and give primacy to such ideas as individual, nation, and market.⁵

Secondly, I want to suggest the central importance of the public sphere not only as an arena in which individuals debate collective choices, but as a setting for communication and participation in collective action that can shape identities and interests, not only reflect them. Many treatments of the public sphere, including Habermas’s classic *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (and also much of the early modern political theory on which it was based), have approached it as an arena in which individuals fully formed in private may communicate about public affairs. These individuals have “private” identities and interests which they ideally set aside in order to maintain high standards of rational critical discourse. On such an account, the public sphere is not an arena in which culture and identities are formed and in which participants may redefine who they are and what interests move them. Indeed, if it takes on this culture-forming character, Habermas (1962) sees this as a problematic dedifferentiation or falling away from its more rational potential (compare Calhoun 1992, 1995; Koselleck 1988; and Warner 2002). The focus is on the socio-cultural bases for sound collective judgment. Habermas’s model has the considerable advantage of offering an account of

⁴ Three options roughly equivalent to loyalty, exit, and voice; see Hirschman (1970). Of course, there are a variety of small modes of struggle that don’t involve much open voice, of refusals of participation that don’t amount to complete exit, and of actual participation under duress that falls short of loyalty. And it is worth recalling that Hirschman’s book focuses on responses to decline in states, organizations, and firms. It does not address equally the kind of cathexes that bind people into thriving social systems, the investment in personal projects that connects individual choices and desires to the reproduction of social fields that make those projects possible (whether or not they allow them to succeed); see Bourdieu (1990).

⁵ The notion of ‘social imaginary’ is most associated with Cornelius Castoriadis (1998), who established the extent to which social reality depends on production and reproduction in imagination. Benedict Anderson (1991) developed a partially similar account of the material and social processes underpinning the role of imagination in forging nations. For further considerations, see Gaonkar, ed. (2002).

how actual social inequality might be kept from distorting public discourse (by disqualifying diversity of interests and identities). A disadvantage is that this doesn't seem to have worked very well (his book is about the 20th century 'degeneration' of the public sphere as well as the 18th century ideal for it). Moreover, the observable formation and reformation of culture, selves, and interests in public life means that these are themselves potentially open to choice.⁶ The women's movement offers ready examples, but though less commonly remarked the same process is also important in the shaping and reshaping of ethnicity. With regard to Europe this means that mutual engagement in public need not depend on prior cultural similarity or compatibility of interests.

Thirdly, but in very close relation, I would argue that participation in public life can accordingly be itself a form of social integration or solidarity. I don't mean that this is necessarily the outcome of all public communication, or that such communication is always harmonious. I do mean that participation in the public sphere integrates people into discourses and projects and collective understandings that connect them to each other. It is literally 'voice', in Hirschman's terms, but voice which can engender loyalty—if not always to what is created at least to the process of collective participation. When the public sphere is active and effective in shaping the choice of social institutions, it invites even those who would reject or change existing institutions into a collective process of mutual engagement with others—a form of solidarity whether or not it is precisely one of harmony. The argument I present is thus related to Habermas's notion of constitutional patriotism, but I want to stress the importance not only of loyalty to created institutions but of participation in the process of creation and recreation. With the last in mind, though, I will suggest that so far actual European integration has relied less on such a public sphere than might be hoped, and more on other ways of achieving connections among people, organizations, and states. These other ways—such as functional integration, sheer exercise of power, development of a common culture, and formation of more diverse interpersonal relationships—are not necessarily bad, but do not offer the possibilities for democratic choice inherent in a public sphere.

Interests and Identities

A variety of prominent and influential actors have clearly 'chosen' European integration. States have signed treaties and statesmen issued ringing declarations. Some, like Jacques Delors, have committed their careers to it. Others, like Helmut Kohl, have invested their political fortunes in it. Even among elites, however, choice has often been disguised in a rhetoric of necessity: the necessity of avoiding war, of choosing sides in the Cold War, or of competing in global capitalism.

Necessity is an extreme form of argument based on interests, in which interests are understood to be both associated with specific actors and their social circumstances and objectively constraining or determining. Thus it has been argued—successfully--that Europeans, or European countries, or European corporations, have an interest in more

⁶ Arendt's (1958, 1963) account of public space as an arena for speech which is both world disclosing and world-making may be more helpful in this regard (and one need not adopt her denigration of the merely 'social'—i.e., material and necessary—to see this). See also Taylor (1989) on the ways in which the modern notion of self includes potential for self-reformation, including wanting to have better wants.

effective integration. Having established an interest in integration, there can then be arguments about what form of integration better serves the interests of actors (noting the potential tension among different kinds of actors with different amounts of power and influence). Should the integration be federal or confederal? Should it give more power to the European Parliament, or Commission, or Council of Ministers? Should it include more integration of labor laws, or corporate laws, or of markets or legal sovereignty?⁷ So long as this is understood as an argument about serving interests it can be pursued in a more or less utilitarian rhetoric. The best solution is that which maximizes aggregate interests. There is, however, a catch which arises from the differences among recognized actors: persons, corporations, and states not only have different power with regard to pursuing their interests, their diversity of form creates a problem in aggregating interests according to the Benthamite maxim of the greatest good of the greatest number. By what calculus does one integrate into a single equation the interests of a corporation and an individual person? They would seem to be incommensurable.

This problem is solved, at least in academic treatises and some political and economic rhetoric, by asserting that ultimately only ‘individuals’ have real interests. It was in this sense that Margaret Thatcher asserted that there is “no such thing as society.” Thatcher echoed Jeremy Bentham, who wrote that “the community is a fictitious body composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its members. The interest of the community then is, what?—the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it” (Bentham 1789: 12; see also Mansbridge 1998, Calhoun 1998). Conceivably, Thatcher and those who follow her line of reasoning would argue equally that there is no such thing as a corporation or a state—but only the individuals that make it up. This is, in a sense, the point of contractarian theories in which both corporations and states are presumed to be created simply by the voluntary choices of autonomous individuals entering into contractual relations with each other (and states are thus treated as simply a special form of corporation). Simply posing the question reveals that arguments from interests depend also on arguments about identity. The latter establish the subjects that have and act upon the ostensible interests (and thus implicitly, the interests themselves—as Coleman 1989 noted, though one need not follow him in arguing that identity itself can be analyzed internally to rational choice theory).

Individualism has certainly been the most widespread rhetoric of identity, constituting ego-centric persons as putatively autonomous actors, with interests of their own. Almost as prominent as individualism, however, is nationalism. Margaret Thatcher was not above appeals to British patriotism (say in the context of the Falklands/Malvinas War) that went beyond treating the country as a merely contractual and voluntary arrangement among autonomous individuals. More generally, nationalist assertions of collective interests have been vital both to securing the compliance and support of non-elites and also to motivating elites themselves. These establish nations or ‘peoples’ as unitary subjects (individuals of a kind), which have interests, are represented by states, and grow richer or poorer in international economic accounting (e.g., of GNP, GDP, or

⁷ See Streeck (2001) for a compelling argument on whose interests were served, and how power relations and forms of citizenship were altered by the combination of an integrated European market with fragmented sovereignty and national citizenship.

various reckonings of development and life chances). Following this rhetoric of identity, one may assert the primacy of nations as contracting partners in European institutions, while denying autonomous existence to Europe (in the same way that the Thatcher-Bentham position denied that communities or societies were anything other than the sum of their members). Or, however, one may also assert that Europe itself has or could have the status of unitary whole, as an encompassing polity not reducible to the sum of its members. Such arguments fuel the considerable industry of debate and research on questions of whether there is, or is coming to be, a European identity. For, modern ideas of legitimacy depend on the notion that a government or political power serves the interests of its ‘people’ (whether we understand these strictly as legal citizens or in some more encompassing way; see Calhoun 1997; Taylor 2002). Either directly at the level of Europe, or indirectly at the level of constituent states, thus, there must be an appeal to some determinate link of people to state. This is what nationalism commonly provides—not only in legal criteria for membership but in accounts of a common history, participation in a community of fate, or dependence on a shared culture.

To speak of an interest in European integration, thus, is to enter a discussion in which establishing the identity (or identities) of relevant actors is crucial. At the very least, the two are coeval and mutually interdependent. For particular analyses, it may make sense to treat one as underpinning the other: identification of actors with each other may be a source of shared interests, or common interests may lead to greater sense of shared identity. There is, however, no escape from the need to establish identity at some level in order to establish interests. For interests to be anything other than completely ephemeral preferences, they must be analyzable in terms of the identities of social actors—interests as a woman, for example, or as a worker, or as a Muslim. But while there is an aspect of actors’ identities which is a more or less objective reflection of social position and shaped by processes of ascription, there is also a politics of identity and a personal process through which people do or do not take up various possible identities, give them differing meaning and variable salience.

Identities (as well as interests) are influenced by material social processes. For example, the 19th century development of transport and communications systems substantially increased the density of linkages within countries. It contributed to an increase in relatively long-distance trade within state borders. This very likely helped to foster a shared sense of national identity. So did military service, national education systems, and development of newspapers with national readerships. All of these helped to produce not only more “sense” of national identity but greater actual similarity of behavior within nations and difference from neighbors. As Watkins (1991) shows, for example, fertility behavior (including not just birthrates but legitimacy and age of first birth) varied more among provinces within countries up to the early 19th century than it did in aggregate between countries. By the mid-20th century this pattern had been reversed. The change was due apparently to sharing of both knowledge and norms within communicative networks that were increasingly organized on a national basis. Conceivably, new media and other networks of European integration could reverse this

pattern again, reducing national differences while allowing regional and local ones to grow.⁸

Identity is both a matter of actual similarity and self-understanding. One can influence the other, and both can change. The idea that national identity, for example, is simply an ancient inheritance is clearly false. It was itself made and continues to be remade in socio-cultural processes that could in varying degree be paralleled on a European scale. Bits of this are already apparent—a progressive rewriting of national history texts to include more of a pan-European story, for example, growing exchange of students among European universities, linked editorials in newspapers, and shared entertainment television (though not, so far, a great deal of it).

Some writers privilege the processes by which nations have already been formed, suggesting that it is intrinsically impossible to duplicate them on a larger scale, for example by means of new media of communication. This seems not merely to underestimate new media, but to exaggerate the ways in which older national identities were formed partly in technologically mediated communication and indeed formed on very different scales, some larger than the EU. According to Smith, ‘no electronic technology of communications and its virtual creations could answer to the emotional needs of the “global citizens” of the future, or instruct them in the art of coping with the joys, burdens and pain and loss that life brings’ (Smith 2001: 136). But this is comparable to saying that speaking or reading could not provide the instruction. It confuses medium with content and social context. Electronic technology surely could help mediate emotional attachments to large categorical identities—nations, for example, or religions—and carry messages that answer to emotional needs and offer instruction. It is unlikely that it could be effective in this standing alone, without the complement of face-to-face interaction, any more than newspapers have been. That is a different matter, though, and in itself does not speak to the scale of attachments or identities.

Some sort of appeal to pre-established ‘identity’ is implied by the way even Habermas (1998: 141), in common with much of political and legal theory, poses this basic, orienting question: “When does a collection of persons constitute an entity—‘a people’—entitled to govern itself democratically?” The suggestion of a temporal order, that the people must somehow mature into readiness for democracy, has been a staple of

⁸ On the rare occasions when the Eurobarometer or similar surveys gather systematic subnational data across Europe, these suggest interesting variation. EB44 was the last time the sample size was large enough to present intranational patterns of regional variation on such important questions as how much and how often do respondents feel ‘European’, or whether they think their countries’ membership of the EU is a good or bad thing. Variation within some countries exceeded that among all countries, and it was considerable in most countries. All but two member states had at least one region where more than half of respondents thought their country’s membership of the EU was a good thing. At the same time, all but three had at least one region where most residents thought their country’s membership was a bad thing (see discussion in Manners 2001). One should not exaggerate the level of intranational difference. It did not exceed the international difference in 1996 for any country other than Finland, but national means do mask great differences—a point which merits further study. Most analyses of Eurobarometer surveys simply point to national differences. Indeed, the Eurobarometers are so insistently organized in terms of nations as units of analysis that they partially constitute a ritual reaffirmation of the “Europe of the nations” theme. They reinforce the notion that European integration is a matter of the coincidence or difference of ‘national’ opinions.

dictators and elites who think popular democracy should be postponed to some future in which the people are ready. It is importantly challenged by the suggestion that democratic participation is itself the educative process which potentially makes a people ever more ready, not only by developing democratic capacities, but by developing democratic solidarities. In this regard, Habermas is rightly critical of the kind of answer to his orienting question that is typically incorporated into the idea of nation-states: “In the real world, who in each instance acquires the power to define the disputed borders of a state is settled by historical contingencies, usually by the quasi-natural outcome of violent conflicts, wars, and civil wars. Whereas republicanism reinforces our awareness of the contingency of these borders, this contingency can be dispelled by appeal to the idea of a grown nation that imbues the borders with the aura of imitated substantiality and legitimates them through fictitious links with the past. Nationalism bridges the normative gap by appealing to a so-called right of national self-determination.”

Nationalism disguises the extent to which both borders and solidarities are creatures of power. To place nationalism on the side of “mere history,” and thus implicitly of power without justification, is to encourage too thin a view of culture. To see civil society as simply a realm of voluntary action is to neglect the centrality of systemic economic organization to it—and of the public sphere to the self-constituting capacity of civil society. To see the public sphere entirely as a realm of rational-critical discourse is to lose sight of the importance of forming culture in public life, and of the production and reworking of a common social imaginary. Not least of all, both collective identity and collective discourse depend on social organization and capacities for action—whether provided by states or civil society.

There is no intrinsic reason why either nationalism, even nationalism with strong ethno-cultural components, or constitutional patriotism could not flourish on the scale of Europe. Both states and markets are already contributing to the production of European identity, as both contributed to the development of national self-understandings earlier. The EU does engage in some of the kinds of knowledge-producing practices that have previously been used by states to render regional diversity an aspect of national unity: producing maps, surveys, inventories and celebrations of heritage, administrative classifications, etc. It has not yet gotten into the museum business in a major way, but museums not run by the EU itself have organized exhibitions that present Europeanness. The capacity of the EU to guide such processes remains, however, low relative to its constituent states, in a way that was generally not true for earlier national states relative to constituent provinces (though obviously these had more power in some settings—notably Germany—than others).

Habermas (1998: 115) suggests that “the nation-state owes its historical success to the fact that it substituted relations of solidarity between the citizens for the disintegrating corporative ties of early modern society. But this republican achievement is endangered when, conversely, the integrative force of the nation of citizens is traced back to the prepolitical fact of a quasi-natural people, that is, to something independent of and prior to the political opinion-and will-formation of the citizens themselves.” I share the concern for political opinion and will-formation. Surely, though, Habermas’s formulation collapses too much into the distinction of civic from ethnic nationalism. As we have seen,

the production of similarity among members of the nation (or in their cultural practices) need not derive from either civic-political or ethnic-national sources (indeed, if it is in some sense ‘ethnic’ it is certainly not ancient or prepolitical; see Calhoun 2001).

The Public Sphere and Solidarity

What kind of solidarity does a democratic Europe require?⁹ The public sphere—and thus participatory conceptions of citizenship—is only one of several ways in which solidarity can be created. Families, communities, bureaucracies, markets, movements, and ethnic nationalism are among the others.

All of these are arenas of social participation: all are institutional forms in which the members of a society may be joined together with each other. Exclusion from them is among the most basic definitions of alienation from contemporary societies. Among the various forms of social solidarity, though, the public sphere is distinctive because it is created and reproduced through discourse.¹⁰ It is not primarily a matter of unconscious inheritance, of power relations, or of the usually invisible relationships forged as a byproduct of industrial production and market exchanges. People talk in families, communities, and workplaces, of course, but the public sphere exists uniquely in, through, and for talk. It also consists specifically of talk about other social arrangements, including but not limited to actions the state might take. The stakes of theories and analyses of the public sphere, therefore, concern the extent to which communication can be influential in producing or reshaping social solidarity and producing or reshaping the social imaginary that guides participation in other forms of integration.

The classic 18th century ideas of the public sphere saw it as a dimension of civil society, but one which could orient itself toward and potentially steer the state. In this sense, the public sphere did not appear as itself a self-organizing form of social solidarity—though another crucial part of civil society—the market (or economic system) did. Rather than a form of solidarity, the public sphere was seen as a mechanism for influencing the state. Civil society provided a basis for the public sphere through nurturing individual autonomy. But the public sphere did not steer civil society directly; it influenced the state. The implication, then, was that social integration was accomplished either by power (the state) or by self-regulating systems (the economy). If citizens were to have the possibility of collective choice, they had to act on the state (which could in turn act on the economy—though too much of this might constitute a problematic dedifferentiation of spheres). Not developed in this account was the possibility that the public sphere is effective not only through informing state policy, but through forming

⁹ In the context of European politics, the term ‘solidarity’ is often narrowed to refer to certain specific social policies, especially those designed to reduce inequalities among groups, rather than in its more basic Durkheimian sense. Though terms like ‘participation’ are used, the conception is technocratic and top down; see Cohen (2000).

¹⁰ Elsewhere (Calhoun 2002a) I have tried to lay out more formally different types of social integration, especially: functional or autopoietic systems, power or domination, categorical identities such as nation, common culture (which is not the same thing as common identities), networks of directly interpersonal relationships, and public communication. The list could be longer and more fine-grained. The important point here is that all usually operate in some degree in any actual case, but with varying implications.

culture; that through exercise of social imagination and forging of social relationships the public sphere could constitute a form of social solidarity.

Publics are self-organizing fields of discourse in which participation is not based primarily on personal connections and is at least in principle open to strangers (Warner 2002). A public sphere comprises an indefinite number of more or less overlapping publics, some ephemeral, some enduring, and some shaped by struggle against the dominant organization of others. Engagement in public life establishes social solidarity partly through enhancing the significance of particular categorical identities, and partly through facilitating the creation of direct social relations. Beyond this, however, the engagement of people with each other in public is itself a form of social solidarity. This engagement includes but is not limited to rational-critical discourse about affairs of common concern. Communication in public also informs the sharing of social imaginaries, ways of understanding social life that are themselves constitutive for it. Both culture and identity are created partly in public action and interaction. An element of reasoned reflection, however, is crucial to the idea of choice as a dimension of this form of solidarity, to the distinction of public culture from simple expression of pre-existing identity.

Collective subjects are formed in part in the public sphere, and it accomplishes integration at the same time that it informs choice. Of course other dimensions of identity and integration matter, but they are not discrete prior conditions. Just as it is not the case that individuals are fully formed in private life before they enter the public sphere, so “peoples” are not formed entirely in processes prior to political discourse. Wars, state-making, markets, and the reproduction of culture all matter and are all at least partially outside the determination of public life. But because public life also matters for the very constitution of society, there are limits to proceeding in the manner of much political and legal theory by saying, “here is a society, how should it be governed.” As Guéhenno (1998: 1) says, “the democratic debate has focused on the distribution and use of power within a given community rather than on the definition of the community.” Likewise, the democratization of Europe should not be deferred, made to wait on its integration, as though internal coherence and external boundaries must be settled first; it needs to be considered as part of the same constitutional process. And here, the question of whether Europe needs a formal, written constitution needs to be considered in relation to this broader process of creating and reshaping society itself.

Activity in the public sphere is not only about steering a state distinct from society, in other words, it is about constituting society. The intense public discourse that was part of the English and French Revolutions was constitutive of collective identity at the same time as ‘steering’ capacities. So too was that associated with the ‘social question’ and the rise of labor movements in the 19th century (not only within labor ranks but in broader public debates over inequality, rights, and social participation). The same is true today with public debates over immigration, globalization, and indeed the EU itself. They help—or at least can help—to achieve integration through democratic communication and collective action, rather than in advance of it.

Rather than treating ‘cultures’ or ‘peoples’ as unitary wholes, we should see such identities as shaped by a variety of contradictions, differences, overlaps, and partial disengagements. Such identities become effective not only as commonalities in relation to others but as semi-autonomous fields with their own hierarchies of exalted and denigrated membership and their own distinctive forms of cultural capital. Similarity, thus, is not the only form of cultural bond. And it is misleading to treat European or national collective identities as simply matters of commonality, ‘thicker’ the more similarities they involve. Culture also frames inequalities, and individuals are embedded in culture for a sense of their specificity and differences. European integration implies the production of a plurality of new and actively created but equally European identities. That it is not limited to reconciliation of pre-existing identities is important not only in relation to “member” nations but also to immigrants from outside Europe.

Advocates for “pre-existing” identities are skeptical. Thus Smith (1995: 131) argues that, “if ‘nationalism is love’ ... a passion that demands overwhelming commitment, the abstraction of ‘Europe’ competes on unequal terms with the tangibility and ‘rootedness’ of each nation.” It is precisely in response to such nationalist ideas of solidarity that Habermas proposes his notion of “constitutional patriotism” in which citizens would be loyal to institutions and procedures (1997; see also 1992, 1998). This would involve only a thin notion of collective identity, and we need to ask whether that offers solidarity enough to underwrite both effective internal participation in a polity and collective response to its external engagements. Indeed, Habermas (1998: 117) himself has asked “whether there exists a functional equivalent for the fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation.”

Habermas hopes the public sphere will produce a rational agreement that can take the place of pre-established culture or mere struggle over interests as the basis for political identity. He focuses especially on what would make identity—political unity—legitimate and emphasizes fairness criteria embodied in a formal constitution.¹¹ Citizens ought rationally to choose such a constitution because it will offer procedural justice. Habermas seems to avoid an appeal to solidarity in this context because it appears too much like an appeal to pre-established culture or sentimental attachment (and he is influenced especially by discussions of German identity). But a greater emphasis on solidarity would be consistent with his larger project, and would avoid a limit common to approaches to European integration that focus primarily on interests and identity.¹² These typically foreclose attention to capacities for choice and collective construction of social forms. In addition to positing prior interests and/or prior identities, they reduce the process of choice to a more or less technical implementation of that which “must be done” and reduce public debate to ratification by plebiscites.

Solidarity and democracy may both be better advanced by participation in collective struggle for a better society than by appeal to an already realized identity or an already achieved constitution. A purely formal constitutional alternative deals poorly with political belonging, assimilating solidarity too directly to legitimacy, and treats culture and social actors as essentially formed in advance of participation in the public sphere. A strong account of membership cannot be derived solely from loyalty attendant on the belief that one has chosen the best available governmental system (conversely, evaluations of what is best are apt to be heavily influenced by what seems to be one’s own). Choice takes place not in the abstract but in the historically and culturally specific contexts of actual social life, among people already constituted both individually and collectively in relationships to each other. Habermas’s arguments on constitutional patriotism thus seem to reflect less commitment to location of immanent potential for social change in existing historical circumstances than does some of Habermas’s other work.¹³ They also, I think, underestimate the solidarity-forming potential of the same public sphere which he celebrates for its contributions to reason.

Public discourse is central to any capacity for ordinary people to exercise choice over and participate in the construction of the institutions under which they live together. It does not replace elections, or social movements, or litigation, but it informs each. Or at least, it potentially informs each. The public sphere is not simply present or absent but variable in extent, liveliness, critical reason, internal compartmentalization or plurality, and efficacy.

¹¹ He poses this argument specifically in response to Dieter Grimm’s (1997) suggestion that a constitution might be a mistake because it would raise expectations for goods Europe would not be able to deliver and thus imperil legitimacy.

¹² Schmitter (2001) offers proposals to increase “sense of belonging” or commitment by increasing formal political and economic rights and participation at the EU level—e.g., referenda, separation of EU from national elections, transfer payments.

¹³ In general, Habermas’s work since the late 1970s has relied much less heavily on the idea of immanent critique than his earlier work did. Instead, transcendental and/or evolutionary arguments (e.g., from the nature of communicative action) predominate.

Place and Media

How a European public sphere might flourish, and whether it can help forge a democratic solidarity, are questions about the spatial and social organization of communication. Europe has been ‘mapped’ not just by EU membership, state borders and market reach, but also by communicative relations. These have been changed over time in a variety of projects and institutions. Newspapers and later broadcast media, linguistic standardization, state schools and curricular reforms all played a role in organizing communication at the level of the nation state. Indeed, road networks, railways, and expanding markets (and market towns) also shaped and enabled communication as well as the exchange of goods. The new and largely national patterns displaced older ones such as those of the Church, Latin as a lingua franca, and pilgrimage routes.

In contemporary Europe, nations continue to organize a great deal of public communication. The growth of English as an international language has not superseded national languages as the primary means of communication in everyday life and politics. European newspapers are puny beside the major national dailies. For the most part, magazine journalism also either remains national or partially transcends that into global form (like *The Economist*, which uses the slogan “Business knows no boundaries. Neither do we.”). How widely languages are spoken (and read) outside the national context shapes how effectively print and broadcast media both can be exported and potentially be organized on a transnational basis. It is worth noting, though, that even English media are minimally organized at a European scale; they are national (in the fuzzy sense that includes both Britain and Scotland) or they are global. Likewise, Spanish publications sell outside of Spain, but mostly in Latin America, not other parts of Europe.

Educational systems, which are not only preparation for communication but institutions of communication, remain basically national. Universities played a crucial role in the historic growth of both national consciousness and public spheres. It is striking that there is no European university but instead only exchanges of students among national (and to some extent sub-national) institutions and the building of specialized scientific centers. The European University Institute in Florence is important, but more a cross between exchange program and research center than itself a university. British institutions, perhaps most prominently the London School of Economics, play a central role as places of connection, partly because of the status of English. *Insead* and a variety of less famous European business schools help to forge an increasingly integrated international (but largely “European” business elite), but their graduates do not dominate in any national business networks nor are companies and business communications primarily organized on a European scale.

In both print media and educational institutions, there are (a) increasing content about Europe, and (b) increasing similarity across nations in the way many issues are addressed. Indeed, many opinion articles are published in multiple versions, and at least at the elite of the trade, journalists maintain an awareness of what is being reported in other countries and languages. Television has its own analogous formats. Once again, though, growing cultural similarity is not the same as the development of an arena for mutual engagement and collective discussion. In this latter sense, existing print media do not support much of a European public sphere. To the extent that they do, it is a very elite affair. On the other hand, though, it is not trivial that there is increased reporting in most

European countries of the public discussions that take place in others. This provides for links among democracies, and provides a supportive context for transnational social movements. These last play an important role in opinion-formation on a European scale.

On environment, food safety, concerns about globalization, and threats of war there is an incipient European public sphere. At present, this is more vibrant in links among grass-roots organizations than it is effectively represented in large-scale politics in most countries or on the scale of Europe. It has an ambivalent relationship to the mainstream media, which report on it episodically but generally do not provide a forum for its own communication. It is not accidental that critiques of contemporary media, like Pierre Bourdieu's (1996) challenge to television's "cultural fast food", are an aspect of most of these movements. Their internal communications are considerably aided, however, by the Internet. And they reach publics not only through alternative newspapers, small presses and magazines, but through the radio.

Radio occupies an important, but somewhat neglected, niche in the European mediascape. Discussion programs flourish and are significant in reaching various minority publics—whether defined ethnically, politically, or in generational terms. Radio audiences may not be any more multilingual than readers of newspapers or viewers of TV, but radio discussions seem to tolerate a more polyglot participation. To be sure, this is seldom a matter of multiple participants each speaking a different language fluently, but rather of slightly varying creolizations of a common language being tolerated. Much of this radio-public sphere is an urban (not always a national) phenomenon.

The Internet is also clearly important. It is often cited as a basis for transnational civil society and political mobilization, and there is indeed evidence for its efficacy in this regard. It is clear that the "new media" (of which it is the most prominent face) will be vital to transformations of the public sphere and that in some cases these will mark extensions. Nonetheless, caution is indicated. First, the Internet and other information technologies enable markets, powerful business organizations, cultural access, and critical discourse among ordinary people each to grow. But these do not necessarily grow at the same speed or wield the same influence over institutional arrangements. The new media have so far done more to enable the global organization of business than effective social movement responses or public sphere activity.¹⁴ Second, while there is a good deal of talk about on-line communities, most of these are in fact discussions among categories of people who share a specific common interest (parenting, say, or religion). A good many focus on sex. The senses in which they constitute communities are very limited (though like other categories of identification among strangers they may offer the illusion of community). Two different phenomena coexist on the web: (1) an easy transcendence of space that is an aid to cultural circulation and sometimes political mobilization (but also global finance), and (2) a supplement to communities that remain largely local—keeping people in touch, aiding in planning, facilitating information-sharing, empowering

¹⁴ Not only has the Internet been positively enabling to business, its commercialization has been disabling to other users. The proportion of Internet activity that is altogether "amateur", organized by non-profit organizations, social movements, or hobbyists, has been in decline for years. The costs of gaining attention for a new web site have risen. Type almost anything into a search engine and most of the first sites identified will be commercial.

citizens in relation to local government. These are not necessarily opposed, though the first can be part of an overall political economy that encourages people to invest themselves more in larger-scale and longer distance relationships, organizations, and identities.

The issue is not only the way medium influences message, but also public investment in both. A key basis for democracy in European states was the growth of national communications media (though in themselves these did not guarantee democracy, of course, even where they did contribute to socio-cultural integration). Newspapers were one of the most important vehicles for building national culture and identity. During the early years of television and radio, government investment in most European countries helped to make the new media function in a national manner. Willingness to subsidize national culture and national public spheres in this way has declined substantially in recent years, though not yet disappeared. As state media declined and private media importance grew, a veritable industry grew to assess whether the new media were becoming effective agents of European integration (e.g., Humphries, 1996; Mansell and Silverstone 1997; McQuail 2001; Schlesinger 1992, 1997; Venturelli 1998).

One finding of this research is that while international media consumption has grown, especially in certain kinds of entertainment programming, people still prefer to hear the news in their national languages and with attention to national content. When planes crash in Asia, the European media report the number of French—or British or Swedish—passengers, not the number of Europeans.

Media offer less specifically European public communication than might be thought. They tend either to remain contained within national or linguistic audiences, or to transcend Europe into some version of the global. Consider one simple example, the origin of TV fiction programs from a study of one week in 1997:

TABLE ONE:

Origin of TV Fiction Programs by Country of Broadcast (Bondenbjerg 2001: 7)

Country	Domestic	US	Other EU
England	51%	36%	0%
Germany	29%	60%	5%
France	25%	58%	14%
Italy	17%	64%	2%
Spain	12%	62%	5%

In any event, it should be clear that the media are not at present well-organized to support a European public sphere. They do an increasingly good job reporting in each European country on others, but not underpinning a common process of opinion, will, or identity-formation and especially not a critical mutual engagement. For all the talk of the

Internet, broadcast media remain the most influential. They also remain organized overwhelmingly on a national basis (except for some regional and city-specific versions).

To the extent that the beginnings of a European public sphere are visible in the media, they take three forms. First, there is the “official” Europe of the EU and the common affairs of its members. This receives considerable mainstream media attention, though (as elections demonstrate) it excites little public enthusiasm except in moments of rejection. It is a top-down affair in which Europe is represented to Europeans from Brussels (and to some extent Strasbourg) but there is little multidirectional flow. Second, there is an elite discursive community that is much more active in public communication, is often multilingual (on the continent, at least), reads more and more internationally, and consists largely of leaders in business and finance, parts of higher education, the media themselves, and to some extent government. This ‘public’ does indeed debate European affairs, but largely in technocratic terms and with considerable attention to specific interests. Third, there are the widely ramifying networks of activists that have most recently been visible in the antiglobalization movement but in fact join those committed to many different causes from whole foods to human—and indeed animal—rights. Though most of these movements are global in their aims and to some extent their ultimate scope, Europe is overrepresented among their participants. The networks among activists are densest within Europe (though not remarkably dense anywhere), and flow across borders more effectively than most (certainly more than labor). In important ways, European identities may influence the activists and grow stronger through their activism (partly because of the contrast of their own orientations to an “American model”). Nonetheless, it is significant that the movements have so far not developed a very active discourse about shaping Europe. Their language has either been global, with aspirations for humanity or the world, or defensive (and thus national or local).

There are links among these three versions of a European public sphere, but they are impressively distinct. Moreover, they do not, even cumulatively, offer an effective way for European citizens democratically to choose their institutions and their futures.

Print media were basic to the rise of the modern public sphere, but the capacity of media to relate strangers did not obviate the importance of local settings. Face-to-face discourse in cafes and coffee houses mediated the consumption of early newspapers and anchored the 18th century ideal of bourgeois public life. Pubs and taverns figured comparably in more popular practice. Along with theaters, salons, and other institutions, these spaces shaped urban publics, and the public sphere has remained importantly rooted in cities (Sennett 1977). This kind of urban life also underpins cosmopolitanism. Of course, it is not everyone’s experience of cities and in even the most cosmopolitan of them some residents lead very circumscribed lives, by different combinations of choice and necessity. One issue in contemporary Europe is the relationship between cosmopolitan urbanites (disproportionately but not exclusively elites) and those in both cities and smaller towns whose loyalties to particular “communities” is stronger. These ‘locals’ may be connected by the Internet, but relate quite differently to issues of difference and identity, including, not least, to European integration.

Cities have been especially important as settings in which people from different contexts enter into discourse with each other. Cities are also, however, one of the

dimensions of the European public sphere that is currently being transformed. Americans are wont to romanticize the public character of European cities, dwelling perhaps more on novels written in Vienna's cafes a hundred years ago than on present day Vienna. Nonetheless, many of Europe's cities have been distinctive in their pedestrian character and their scale. Urban centers in which people of different classes, ethnic origins, and occupations rub shoulders and enter into conversation, however, house less and less of Europe's population.¹⁵ There is still neighborhood life in European capitals, and there are still vital urban centers and intellectual districts. But Banlieux sprawl around Paris and Greater London stretches through five counties and what were a century and a half ago still dozens of separate towns and villages. Cities have lost much of their centrality to the organization of European public life even while they have continued to grow.

One of the challenges for the future of Europe's public sphere is to find replacements for the kind of public life that flourished in face-to-face urban relations and yet spoke to the concerns of the nation as a whole. London and Paris, for example, are both remarkably multicultural; can they become bases for discourse constitutive of a democratic Europe? There are reasons for doubt. In the first place, in a long trend, public communication became more national. What were once the great newspapers of different cities increasingly became competing national newspapers (or fell by the way). The connection of TV to locality was never strong. Universities that were once closely tied to the character and politics of different cities are increasingly competitors to place graduates in national labor markets. Local intellectual and professional associations have generally ceased to play a major role. In short, urban public spheres lost strength.

Nonetheless, cities remain important to the future of the European public sphere. The space-transcending media will not obviate all need for mediation in face-to-face conversation. It will be crucial that there be both environments and institutions that bring together people of different identities and interests to facilitate mutual understanding and mutual engagement in both debate and the search for viable ways of living together. This matters for Europe's absorption of non-European immigrants and for transcending a variety of differences including political-economic interests not only nationality.

Finally, one of the biggest questions about European integration is why the borders of Europe should be important (never mind just where those borders should be). It was more plausible (if still always ultimately tendentious) for nation-states to assume territorial autonomy, the containment of citizenship and public life within the national space. Nations were never as bounded as they seemed, and a unified Europe seems destined to be much less so.

Many of the issues, mobilizations, and media that link Europeans are in fact not specific to Europe. Europeans may have specific collective interests in global economic competition (though it is always worth asking which Europeans have which interests) but it is not clear that Europe is really a single unit in the international economy. It has more coherence in the world of international aid than of international military action but in all

¹⁵ This erosion is a trend at least as old as Hausman's attack on the Paris *quartiers*; see Harvey (1985). It has gained pace in the last few years, propelled forward by neoliberal policies and shifting relations among public authorities on different scales.

these cases the issue is not simply that individual nations are stronger than the EU, or diverse amongst themselves, but that to find a common denominator that includes all of Europe, one is usually forced to a low enough level of coherence that parts or even all of the rest of the world come into the pattern as well.

It is not enough to look inside Europe. Any understanding of European solidarity must address the different ways in which Europeans are tied to others outside Europe. These ties will obviously differentiate among Europeans—by nation, class, industry, and involvement in social movements or concerns like human rights or the environment. There has been a great deal of attention to how Europeans may remain divided on nation-state lines, as indeed they may. But analysts exaggerate the extent to which the issue is simply inheritance of either cultural identities or specific domestic institutional regimes. Divisions will be produced and reproduced by differential incorporation into global markets, production systems, and indeed publics. Some Europeans will minimize their investment in the internal organization of Europe and maximize their commitment to firms or other organizations operating across its borders. This may be as important a form of dual identity as that of migrants. Other Europeans will mobilize global social movement ties (or international corporate power) to challenge institutional arrangements within Europe.

Nonetheless, the EU (and its member states) put a lot of effort into their collective boundary-work. This is not merely a matter of material borders, as in resisting immigration and debating enlargement of the EU. It is also a matter of giving the EU a unitary international image, representing it as an actor in a variety of global contexts, making clear its distinctive collective values. As a whole, thus, it is committed to human rights and expresses that through conditionality (Smith 2001). It is committed to capitalist economic growth and more or less liberal policies and expresses these through its central bank, its relations to global economic institutions, and (more ambiguously) its trade policies. Precisely because of the protectionism involved in the last, and in the Common Agricultural Policy, the EU also represents itself globally as internally conflicted.

In short, the EU has an international (that is, global or supraEuropean) identity as a whole greater than the sum of its parts, even if not perfectly integrated, and as an actor (Manners and Whitman 1998; Whitman 1998). It gains an identity from its material actions, from its symbolic self-representations, and from the interpretations of both by others. Its identity is thus not purely fixed by treaties or legal arrangements, not entirely a reflection of material interests, and always subject to construction and re-construction. Like that of any nation or state, it is in part a matter of ‘style’ as well as substance, motivation, and status.

Arguably, globalization makes it harder for any geopolitical unit to maintain external closure, and certainly for “a territorially defined political unit which is not the nation-state” (Waeber 1997).¹⁶ At the same time, it is a misleading aspect of nationalist

¹⁶ The key distinction between the EU and a nation-state, in Waeber’s view, would seem to be that the EU lacks sovereignty. Others point to somewhat different definitions, like Weber’s idea of maintaining a monopoly of legitimate violence. At the same time, one of the useful points of recent analyses of “cosmopolitan democracy” (e.g., Held 1995) has been pointing to the extent to which states—even classically recognized ones—are increasingly subject to shared sovereignty.

ideology to understand and represent nation-states as internally coherent and externally bounded; this is perhaps a typical nationalist project but never a fully evident reality (Mann 1998; Calhoun 1997). The EU, like nations, derives a considerable part of its identity not from its internal arrangements and boundary maintenance but from its action and representation in the world. Globalization is thus an occasion for the construction or assertion of identity, not simply a challenge to it. As we have noted, this has long been a factor in the development of the EU, and one which over time gained ascendancy over the original project of securing Europe's internal peace through prosperity and interdependence. It appears not only in the pursuit of material prosperity but in the representation of the EU as already prosperous and indeed powerful (if indeed more in economic and diplomatic ways than military). Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has been fairly clear also that it positions itself as in some sense comparable to the US and Japan (Manners 2001). This is both symbolically effective and to some extent misleading because it situates the EU in comparison to states. But of course, this also reveals that some imagine the EU as a potential state.

In Waeber's (2000) terms, Europe weaves its international identity out of a combination of reference to a mythic narrative of its own past and its contemporary actions. The latter are by no means limited to those of the EU itself, but include all that present themselves or are seen by others as specifically European. Not only nations but corporations and social movements may at various points appear as European not merely as discretely themselves. One of the implications of this is that public discourse is potentially pivotal to Europe's international identity. European discourse not only addresses European identity, it forms it partly by how it represents Europe and also by how it engages the rest of the world. Yet, in Bondenbjerg's words, "we do not have an adequate national public sphere, a European public sphere or a global forum, in which this new European or global experience can be imbedded and debated in a proper democratic way" (Bondenbjerg 2001: 3).

The point has long since been made that "the public sphere" is not seamless and integral but composed in the relationships among multiple publics and specific arenas of discourse. This is true within nation states, on the scale of Europe, and globally. Nothing dictates that Europe will develop a strong public sphere, but if it does, this will grow in part out of the relationship of European public discourse to that of various transregional circuits of communication. How much this happens will depend not just on whether Europeans grow more similar or share interests, but on whether a mutual engagement with other Europeans becomes a central way in which they develop and come to understand identity and interests. The search for collective voice in relation to global affairs, in other words, could drive one version of European integration. Through the public sphere, it could provide a meeting point between the foreign policy aspirations of EU officials and the global concerns of movement activists, and it could provide an occasion for choice about what being European means, for life both inside and outside the lines on the map.

Conclusion

I have argued that European integration is a problem in and for democracy. It is not merely an "objective" process to be monitored, or a response to necessity, but at least

potentially also a choice. Making that choice in a democratic way is intrinsically related to having democratic outcomes from the process of integration.

I have argued also that the process of integration is not adequately understood in terms only of the interests and identities of actors. These are both important, and very closely intertwined with each other. Neither clearly comes “first” before all action, and thus neither can explain all action. Both are not only subject to change, but can in varying degree be formed and reformed in public life and made the object of at least partially conscious choice. At the same time, culture itself is not only a pre-existing condition but also a continually renewed product made partly in public life. And part of culture is a social imaginary that shapes the way in which we construct not only our own identities but also our senses of what is real in the world and how it should be understood. The social imaginary most common in Europe today constructs corporations (whether business firms or states) as real and unitary. So too nations and communities--though some fight for a different way of imagining the world in which only individuals have standing. For Europe to be altogether real to its citizens (and indeed to others) requires in part a change in the social imaginary, which public discourse can encourage or resist and shape in various ways.

For all these reasons, the public sphere is a crucial setting for the production and shaping of European integration. Indeed, I have argued that it can be not only a mechanism for debate and choice but also a form of and a process for forming solidarity. That it can be, however, does not mean that it will be. There are many obstacles to the development of an effective European public sphere, including the fact that this has not been a priority for the political and economic elites who have led the integration of Europe.

In thinking about the future of the European public sphere, finally, I have argued that we ought not to project false notions about internal coherence and external closure from nationalist ideology onto our expectations for European public life and integration. Plurality and heterogeneity of identities, locations, media of communication, perspectives and arguments are all to be expected. The public sphere is most valuable as an arena in which differences are mediated, not one simply for the expression of similarities. Moreover, it is not strictly unitary but a congeries of overlapping publics at various scales, and it is no more necessarily bounded at the edges of nations—or of Europe—than markets are. Public discourse can be more or less vital, and participation in it more or less dense at any scale and the relations between scales more or less effective. Equally the overlaps and relationships among different dense arenas of public discourse (nations, cities, media) may be strong or they may be so weak that sharp fault lines divide the different smaller public spheres within or from the potential larger one. If public life grows at the scale of Europe, not least of all, it is important to see this as partly a matter of how Europe fits into a more global discourse, not only how Europeanness is contained in Europe.

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