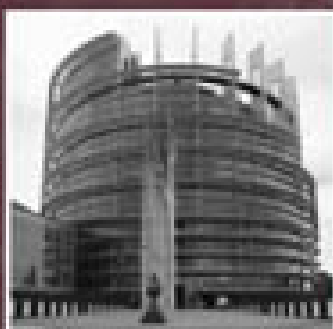# Building a European Public Sphere

From the 1950s to the Present

Un espace public européen en construction

Des années 1950 à nos jours

Robert FRANK, Hartmut KAELBLE,
Marie-Françoise LÉVY & Luisa PASSERINI (eds./dir.)
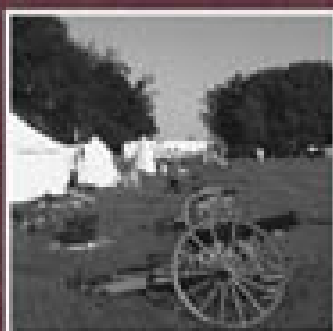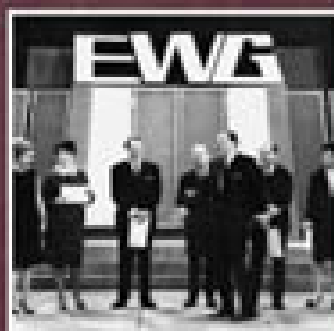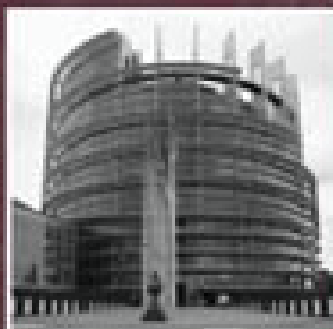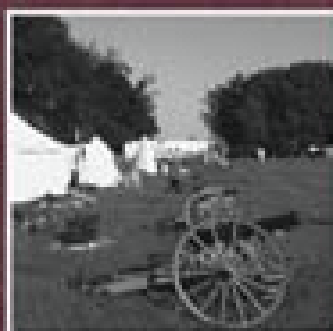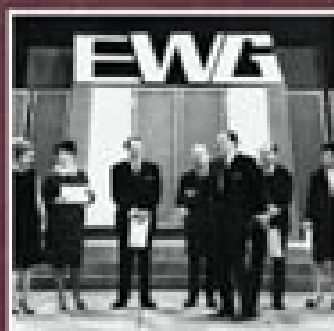
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Preface

Hartmut KAELBLE

The European public sphere has become the subject of intensive research in social sciences and history during the last years.[1] The research is primarily inspired by two questions: It is motivated on the one hand by the question of the democratic deficit of the European Union and the danger of a weak democratic control of the rising power of the European Commission, in the future possibly also of the new president of the European Council and the new European foreign minister. The European public sphere is one of the crucial forces of control besides the

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[1] Some references to publications by social scientists: Brüggemann, Michael, "How the EU Constructs the European Public Sphere: seven Strategies of Information Policy," in *Javnost/ The Public* 12, 2, 2005, pp. 57-74; Eder, Klaus, "Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie," in Jachtenfuchs, Markus and Kohler-Koch, Beate (eds.), *Europäische Integration*, 2nd, unaltered reprint, Wiesbaden, Verlag für Sozialwissen-schaften, 2006, pp. 85-120; Gerhards, Jürgen, "Das Öffentlichkeitsdefizit der EU im Horizont normativer Öffentlichkeitstheorien," in Kaelble, Hartmut, Kirsch, Martin and Schmidt-Gernig, Alexander (eds.), *Transnationale Öffentlichkeiten und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2002, pp. 135-158; Gramberger, Marc R., *Die Öffentlichkeitsarbeit der Europäischen Kommission 1952-1996*. PR zur Legitimation von Integration, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 1997; Deirdre, Kevin, *Europe in the Media. A Comparison of Reporting, Representation, and Rhetoric in National Media Systems in Europe*, Mahwah, N.J., London, Erlbaum, 2003; Klein, Ansgar *et al*. (eds.), *Bürgerschaft, Öffentlichkeit und Demokratie in Europa*, Opladen, Leske und Budrich, 2003; Machill, Marcel, Beiler, Markus and Fischer, Corinna, "Europe-topics in Europe`s Media. The Debate about the European Public Sphere: A Meta-Analysis of Media Content Analysis," in *European Journal of Communication* 21, 2006, pp. 57-88; Peters, Bernhard *et al*., "National and Transnational Public Spheres: the Case of the EU," in Leibfried, Stephan and Zürn, Michael (eds.), *Transformations of the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 139-160; Preuß, Ulrich K. and Franzius, Claudio (eds.), *Europäische Öffentlichkeit*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2004; Risse, Thomas, "Zur Debatte über die (Nicht-)Existenz einer europäischen Öffentlichkeit," in *Berliner Debatte Initial* 13, 5/6, 2002, pp. 15-23; Shore, Cris, *Building Europe. The Cultural Politics of European Integration*, London, Routledge, 2000; Steeg, Marianne van de, "Rethinking the Conditions for a Public Sphere in Europe," in *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, 2002, pp. 499-519; Trenz, Hans-Jörg, *Europa in den Medien. Die Europäische Integration im Spiegel Nationaler Öffentlichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2005; Trenz, Hans-Jörg, "The Democratization Dynamics of a European Public Sphere. Towards a Theory of Democratic Functionalism," in *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, 2004, pp. 5-25.

European Parliament, besides the European civil society, and besides the special European separation of powers between the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Court. On the other hand, the European public sphere is often seen as closely connected with European identity. The rise of the European public sphere is seen as crucial for European identity. If public spheres in Europe exist only as national public spheres, European identity will emerge either not at all or only in diverging and contradictory national versions.

In spite of these basic inspirations, however, research so far did not really investigate the impact of European public sphere on the European decision-making, nor did it explore the impact on the rise of a European identity. It concentrated on the much more fundamental question of the existence or lack of the European public sphere.

This volume will also raise this more fundamental question, but in a way, which is different from the majority of the social science studies. It will not investigate the treatment of Europe in the media by quantitative methods. Many highly refined and innovative studies of this topic exist already. To be sure, they do have shortcomings: Research often neglects the small European countries and the new members of the European Union. It also concentrates on the period since the 1990s and neglects the *longue durée*, i.e. the entire period since the beginnings of European integration in the 1950s or the even longer perspective. Newspapers and journals are the privileged sources, whereas radio and television were rarely investigated. But sooner or later research will be complemented in these respects.

The volume tries new dimensions of the study of European public sphere in five respects:

First of all, the *historical dimension* will be in the centre of this volume by historians. The historical dimension was strongly neglected in social science research on the European public sphere, partly because only very few historians worked on the European public sphere.[2] The

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[2] Cf. Frank, Robert, "Les contretemps de l'aventure européenne," in *Vingtième siècle* 60, 1998, pp. 82-101; Frank, Robert, "Cultural, Memorial and Reference Sphere, Public Sphere and European Democracy," in Loth, Wilfried (ed.), *Experiencing Europe: 50 Years of European Construction 1957-2007*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2009, pp. 152-168; Kaelble, Hartmut, "The Historical Rise of a European Public Sphere?," in *Journal of European Integration History* 8, 2002, pp. 9-22; Kaelble, Hartmut, Kirsch, Martin and Schmidt-Gernig, Alexander (eds.), *Transnationale Öffentlichkeit und Identitäten im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2002; Meyer, Jan-Henrik, "Was there a European Public Sphere at the Summit of The Hague 1969? An Analysis of Discourses on the Legitimacy of the EC," in Bitsch, Marie-Thérèse, Loth, Wilfried and Barthel, Charles (eds.), *Cultures politiques, opinion publique et intégration européenne*, Brussels, Bruylant, 2007, pp. 227-245; Passerini, Luisa (ed.), *Figures d'Europe – Images and Myths of Europe*,

neglect of the historical dimension and the lack of research by historians had important negative consequences. The debate on the European public sphere became too much a simplistic debate on the existence or lack of a European public sphere. Whether there was more or less European public sphere, whether it rose or weakened, whether it developed continuously or fluctuated was not really asked. Moreover, the social science debate was too much a debate on one single European political public sphere rather than a debate on the many particular public spheres of experts, of women, of ethnic groups, of migrants, also the European political public sphere in particular media. In addition, the crucial alteration of the boundaries between the public sphere and the private sphere in European history, which varied strongly between specific groups, were also not really taken into account. They do not get much attention, as long as the historical perspective is lacking and research is not aware of drastic changes in history. Moreover, the debate concentrated too much on the centre of Europe and on the large countries. The specific public spheres in the small European countries and in the European "periphery," the old Southern European one as well as the new East European one, also the relationship between centre and "periphery" were not really taken into account. The European public sphere was not explored as a hierarchy of interconnected national public spheres. Finally the public sphere was seen too often as a definite institution, which existed or was lacking. The diversity of public spheres, also the particularity of a transnational public sphere such as the European one was not really discussed. The various transnational public spheres in past and present Europe were rarely investigated. They were also not compared with non-European transnational public spheres. To be sure, these questions are not only asked by historians, but also by other disciplines. Still this volume, which is written mainly by historians, tries to introduce the questions in the research on European public sphere.

In addition the volume tries to encourage the reflection on the *concept* of the European public sphere. To be sure, there is a vivid debate on the concept of the public sphere, especially on the Habermas concept, i.e. on one or several public spheres, on the moral implications of the Habermas concept, on its inbuilt pessimism for the 19th and 20th century public spheres. But the conceptual debate on the *European* public sphere remained relatively weak. Four crucial conceptual dimensions are discussed in this volume: the boundaries between the public and the private sphere, the ethics of the public sphere, the peculiarities of the transna-

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Brussels, PIE Peter Lang, 2003; Requate, Jörg and Schulze Wessel, Martin (eds.), *Europäische Öffentlichkeit: transnationale Kommunikation seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2002.

tional European public sphere, and the reflections by historians of the past on the European space. Luisa Passerini in the article on the *Public and Private in European Perspective* proposes to reflect more the osmosis between the predominant political public sphere and the separate, subaltern and marginal public spheres, but also the drastic changes in the demarcation lines between the public sphere, the private sphere, and the intimate sphere in recent European history. Hagen Schulz-Forberg and Bo Stråth in their article on *Soft and Strong European Public Spheres* propose a debate on the European public sphere beyond the mere intensification of communication in the European space. They plea for more reflection on the role of the European public sphere for European values, on the impact of the public sphere on European democracy, on the participation of European citizens, also on the role of the European public sphere for the discussion of European visions in reaction to the experience of continuous change. Hartmut Kaelble argues that the European public sphere, as it emerged in recent history in connection with the integration of Europe, cannot be treated and assessed simply as a variant of a national public space. The European public sphere is different. It is a composite public sphere consisting of interconnected national public spheres. It is multilingual in a specific way, also so far more elitist than national public spheres in Europe, and it was for a long time also a space of communication not confronted with a centre of power. Susan Rößner in the contribution on historical representations of Europe among historians argues that a part of the historians became more conscious of Europe between the 1920s and the 1990s, were more interconnected especially after the Second World War, and worked with a similar narrative of European history. Europe in their view was primarily a cultural Europe in decline rather than a vision of a centre of decision-making. Hence a small group of historians participated in the European public sphere, inspired primarily by different sorts of crisis, crisis of Europe, national crises, and crises of the discipline of the historians.[3] On the whole the volume proposes to give up the simplistic idea of one single political European public space as the object of research and to reflect more on the wide varieties of past and present public spaces.

Moreover the volume treats the *activities of European institutions*, the European Union and the Council of Europe in creating a European

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[3] Cf. also Rößner, Susan, *Europäische Geschichte. Repräsentationen von Europa in der deutschen, britischen und niederländischen Geschichtsschreibung der Zeiträume 1918-30, 1945-1961 und 1989-2000*, PhD Humboldt-University Berlin 2008, published in 2009: Rößner, Susan, *Die Geschichte Europas schreiben. Europäische Historiker und ihr Europabild im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2009.

at the same the new openness towards the memory of the Shoa and the new awareness of the moral questions in the memory policy.

A fourth perspective of the volume is the research on the *visual* European public sphere. The visual side of the European public sphere was often neglected with the assumption that European identity is less emotional, more rational than national identity. Hence, European public sphere was seen as primarily based on written texts or speeches rather than on visual media. In addition historians as well as social scientists for a long time rarely investigated visual media and debates, because they were trained primarily in the analysis of texts rather than icons and because the standard art history was of limited help since it asked different questions. Historians as well as social scientists were restrained toward icons also because they often believed that the rational debates among participants of a public sphere were endangered rather than supported by icons with their much more emotional, overpowering, vague, ambiguous messages without meanings as clearly defined as in texts. In more recent years, however, historians started to realize that emotions played an important role also in European identity. Luisa Passerini's book on *Love in Europe – Europe in love* was a pioneering work. In addition because of the symbolic policy of the European Union since the 1980s historians started to understand that the visual side of the European public sphere was underestimated.[4] It became clear that the visual side of the European public sphere includes a wide range of topics, not only European symbols, but also public rituals as well as caricatures and *lieux de mémoire*, television as well as film, theatre as well as painting and sculpture.

Various articles of the volume cover the visual side of the European public sphere. Luisa Passerini stresses the important role that visual arts

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[4]   Pastoureau, Michel and Schmitt, Jean-Claude, Europe. *Mémoire et emblèmes*, Paris, Éditions de l'Épargne, 1990; Shore, *Building Europe*; Dumoulin, Michel (ed.), *Héros, valeurs, et symboles de l'Europe*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Institut d'études européennes, 1998; Poignault, Rémy, Lecocq, Françoise and Wattel de Croizant, Odile (eds.), *D'Europe à l'Europe – mythe et identité du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Tours, Centre de Recherches A. Piganiol, 2000; Schmale, Wolfgang, *Scheitert Europa an seinem Mythendefizit?*, Bochum, Winkler, 1997; Passerini, Luisa, *Figures d'Europe – Images and myths of Europe*, Bruxelles, PIE Peter Lang, 2003; Passerini, Luisa, *Il mito d'Europa. Radici antiche per nuovi simboli*, Florence, Giunti, 2002; Jones, Priska, *Europa – eine Karikatur? Europarepräsentationen in deutschen und britischen Karikaturen der 1920er, 1950er und 1980er/1990er Jahre*, PhD Humboldt-University Berlin 2008, published in 2009: Jones, Priska, *Europa in der Karikatur - Deutsche und britische Darstellungen im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2009; François, Etienne, "Europäische lieux de mémoire," in Budde, Gunilla, Conrad, Sebastian and Janz, Oliver (eds.), *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, pp. 290-303.

play for the European public sphere, but also for the exclusion from it. In the article, which was already mentioned, she intensively treats films from the recent past in which the burning theme of the European border is presented and discussed. Priska Jones treats a Quizshow, the *EWG*, produced in the 1960s and again in the 1980s by the German television for an international European audience, arranging encounters amongst Europeans for Quiz, a successful arrangement of a regular visual event in the European public sphere. Marie-Françoise Lévy and Marie-Noële Sicard describe in the contribution on Arte, which was already summarized, the visual side of the peculiar profile of this European television program. Maryline Crivello investigates the current practice of staged events of military camps and battlefields of the Napoleonic era, with participants from many European countries, a non-professional construction of a visual cultural public sphere with nostalgic goals of re-enforcing imagined historical virtues. Nirmal Puwar, to whom we come back, covers the cinema as a local public sphere for immigrants in Europe. Enrica Capusotti and Liliana Ellena treat the cinema of European film makers from migrant milieus. Two known directors are covered, the Turkish-German Fatih Akin and the Roma-French Tony Gatlif. Their films on migrants inside Europe and from outside Europe are discussed. Enrica Capusotti and Liliana Ellena show how these films are presented to a European public and how the films treat the colonial European past and the postcolonial context of Europe.

A final dimension of the volume is the comparison of the European public sphere with *non-European transnational public spheres*. The comparison is based on the assumption that the transnational European public sphere is not unique, but can be compared with multilingual or multinational public spheres in other continents or in the European past. In the ideal sense, systematic comparisons should be drawn with transnational public spheres such as the Arab world, black Africa, Latin America, North America, South East Asia or in East Asia. In addition, European public sphere ought to be explored together with transcontinental public spheres of migrants, ethnic groups or intellectuals and specific occupational milieus. In this respect the volume does not go as far as the editors originally intended, since some invited contributions could not be written. Just one contribution treats this perspective: Nirmal Puwar covers public spaces of migrants from the former European colonies to Europe, who navigated public spheres during migration and at the same time created particular public spheres in Europe. She wants to show the difficulties of these public spheres, which had been either too much celebrated or too much bemoaned. She describes a film project on a local as well as transnational public sphere, on a local South Asian cinema, the Ritz in Coventry, which was besides the church the major public space for South Asian immigrants of a specific generation.

The volume[5] is a cooperation by historians from three research groups: a group on the European cultural policy, coordinated by Robert Frank and Marie-Françoise Lévy at the Irice, Sorbonne Paris I, and Marie-Noële Sicard, Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin en Yvelines, a group on the European film under the direction of Luisa Passerini at the University of Turin (*Immagini dell'Europa 1989-2004: per una storia culturale della costruzione dell'identità europea attraverso il cinema*) and a group on European representations and the European public sphere under the direction of Hartmut Kaelble, Humboldt-University Berlin, in the research centre on *Changing Representations of Social Orders* (*Repräsentationen sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel*, SFB 640).[6] The three groups organised two workshops in Paris in 2005 and in Berlin in 2006.[7] The network will continue to work also in the years to come.

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[5] We have to thank for technical work on the manuscripts of the volume Priska Jones, Susan Rößner, Andreas Weiß and Andreas Spreier from the Sonderforschungsbereich "Changing Representations of Social Orders" at the Humboldt University Berlin.

[6] This is not the only group of European historians working on the history of the European public sphere. Another group was established in 2005 as an Institute for European history and public sphere in Vienna (Ludwig-Boltzmann Institut für europäische Geschichte und Öffentlichkeit), consisting of research groups in Vienna, in Zurich, in Gießen, and working on topics such as visual memory, cold war and European public sphere, migration and memory.

[7] Contributions of the first workshop are published by Marie-Francoise Lévy and Marie-Noële Sicard (eds.), *Les lucarnes de l'Europe. Télévisions, cultures, identités, 1945-2005*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008; for the second workshop in 2006 see the report: Kaelble, Hartmut, Jones, Priska and Rößner, Susan, *Tagungsbericht for a European public sphere in global context. 22.06.2006-24.06.2006*, Berlin, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 07.01.2007, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=1439>, inquired 07.09.2009.

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