

UNDERSTANDING THE EU - **Reporting of Local Newspapers on the** **Treaty of Lisbon**

Master's Thesis

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Table of Content

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 State of the Art.....	7
1.2 Content of the Thesis.....	8
2. The Nature of the Democratic (input-) Deficit of the European Union.....	9
2.1 Democratic Legitimacy.....	9
2.2 Legitimacy of the EU.....	10
3. The Concept of Political Knowledge.....	13
3.1 Political Knowledge and Democracies.....	13
3.1.1 The Importance of Political Knowledge for Democracies.....	15
3.1.2 What Is Adequate Knowledge or Information?	18
3.2 Communicating Political Knowledge: the Media and Agenda Setting.....	19
3.2.1 The (European) Public Sphere.....	21
3.2.2 Agenda-Setting and Framing.....	24
3.2.3 Knowledge Gaps.....	29
4. Choice of Medium.....	29
5. Methodological Approach.....	32
5.1 Time Frame and Issue.....	33
5.2 Analysis of Articles.....	33
5.2.1 Quantitative Analysis.....	34
5.2.2 Qualitative Analysis.....	34
6. Results.....	37
6.1 Newspaper and Readership Data.....	37
6.2 Quantitative Results.....	38
6.3 Qualitative Results.....	41
6.3.1 Qualitative Analysis of Articles.....	41
6.3.2 Qualitative Analysis of Commentaries.....	44
6.4 Conclusion	46
7. Discussion.....	48
8. Appendix.....	51
8.1 Figures and Tables.....	51
8.2 References.....	55

Figures and Tables

Figure 3.1: Relation between political knowledge and interest.....	14
Figure 3.2: Basic model of mediated communication.....	19
Figure 3.3: Relation of political interest and media exposure.....	20
Figure 3.4: Relation of political interest and media exposure extended.....	21
Figure 3.5: Mediation and deliberation in the public sphere.....	22
Figure 3.6: Agenda-Setting.....	25
Figure 3.7: An integrated process model of agenda-setting and framing.....	28
Graph 6.1: Coverage of the Reform Treaty: weekly.....	40
Graph 6.2: Positioning of articles in the SZ.....	41
Graph 6.3: Source of articles.....	42
Graph 8.1: Coverage of the Reform Treaty: total.....	53
Table 6.1: Number of articles per month per newspaper	38
Table 8.1: Articles per day per newspaper.....	52
Table 8.2: Readership data SZ and NOZ.....	54

Abstract

Political knowledge of the citizenry is argued to be a prerequisite of any democracy. Knowledge is gained from information.

Modern democracies have to rely on the news media to mediate information between decision-makers and citizens because of the distance between these two groups. The dependency on the media to channel information of an international regime as the European Union is even larger, as the distance is wider.

The debate on the EU is often described as being elitist, which would hint at the exclusion of large parts of the European citizenry: possible due to a lack of information in news media which are not only consumed by elites – like local newspapers.

This thesis finds evidence that adequate political knowledge which would enable to participate in the EU can indeed be derived from following local newspaper news, as those do not fall as short as assumed of the level of coverage of national high quality newspapers.

1. Introduction

Learning and its result – knowledge – is a process which can only take place and be derived from information: European citizens need information in order to gain knowledge on the European Union. In political science, political knowledge is supposed to generate interest, but also to be a condition for will- and opinion-forming and is therefore vital for democracies because information and knowledge are needed to trigger critical debate. As democracy functions in a circular way in which both input-legitimation and output-legitimation is important, citizens must be enabled to perform the task of giving input-legitimacy (e.g. in elections) and must be able to evaluate the performance of their elected government (output).

“People learn about a subject if they have the ability, motivation, and opportunity to do so.” (Luskin 1990, in: Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 179)

Delli Carpini and Keeter explain, what is actually implicated by the three variables of the triad of ability, motivation and opportunity cited above. Ability such stands for the possession of adequate cognitive skills, motivation for the desire to learn and opportunity for the availability of information (ibid.). While ability and motivation are at least partly individual parameters, in that they can be influenced from the outside (e.g. through formal education and campaigns) but are also inherent to personality, opportunity must be granted and provided by external institutions (e.g. the government, NGOs, the mass media¹).

There are various sources of information on political processes in the EU which are accessible to European citizens. Most direct is information directly published by the European Union on its websites. However, the main source of information on political issues to most individuals are the mass media. Merten (2007) argues that nothing is relevant what is not in the media and such names another aspect of media coverage: agenda-setting and issue salience, which are supposed to impact not only on what people know about an issue, but also on what they think about it. Assuming that low salience generates little interest in an issue and *vice versa*, this effect of the media is especially important to an institution like the EU which does not figure highly in the daily lives of its citizens. Especially with hindsight of the

¹ The terms mass media and media will be used equivalently in this thesis. Even though “media” encompasses also the technical tools for communication, here it will refer to mass or news media as commonly used.

debated democratic deficit of the Union and the often stated lack of knowledge of citizens on political processes in general and those of the EU especially and the feeling of “remoteness” of the EU (AIM Research Consortium 2007: 38) it is important to ask the question what citizens can actually learn from the information they are provided with and how this might affect their perception of the EU:

“[...]media coverage of the European Union has the ability to contribute to the image of the EU as a legitimate source of political power.” (Hodess 1997: 3)

The debate on the European democratic deficit, but even on the EU itself, has often been characterised by being “elitist” and such only taking place among an elite of citizens. This has also been attributed to the respective level and quality of EU reporting in the media. It is assumed that more elitist media, such as high standard newspapers provide most information and such enable their readers better than others to deliberate on and participate in the EU. Already Dahl called for inclusiveness in democracy (Dahl 1998) and supporters of deliberative democracy follow suit. Also, the broad hypothesis of research on political knowledge and the impact the media have is that knowledge is required for will- and opinion-formation, such generate interest and in the long-run even participation: in elections, grass root organisations and in debates (deliberation).

This thesis will therefore look at local newspapers as means of the more “ordinary” citizen to be informed and form an informed opinion on the EU and therefore focus on Luskin's third parameter: on the provision of information through the media – namely local newspapers.

The research question is therefore as follows:

Does local newspaper reporting enable citizens to adequately inform themselves about the European Union?

To approach this questions step by step, sub-questions are needed the answers to which will add up to the answer to the research question:

1. What is adequate information?

As what level of information can be considered “adequate” is a subjective decision, for this thesis it is necessary to establish a common ground on this term, which will be done first before the theoretical discussion of the importance of political knowledge follows.

2. How can the media (especially newspapers) affect the knowledge of their recipients?

This question will be answered by the theoretical discussion on political knowledge and how it is transferred to the citizens in the third chapter. This theoretical part then leads over into the actual content analysis of newspapers which is guided by the next two sub-questions.

3. What level of information do newspapers provide on the EU?

4. What information is provided in local newspapers in comparison to what could be provided?

The answer to these two questions will be derived from the actual analysis of newspaper articles. The approach is introduced in chapter 5 on methodology. The standards of what “could” be provided as asked in sub-question 3 are derived from the theoretical discussion on adequate knowledge or what citizens can be expected to know and the comparison between a national quality newspaper and a local newspaper, in which the former functions as a “guideline”.

5. From the respective coverage, can it be assumed that a gap in knowledge on the EU exists between the readers of local or regional newspapers and high standard national newspapers?

The results of the analysis, which will answer the fourth question will then – together with the answers to the previous three questions – draw the circle to the answer to the overall research question.

1.1 State of the Art

Research on media coverage of political issues and its connection with the level of political knowledge of citizens has for a long time been highly theoretical or based on the US alone (Palmgreen 1979, Chaffee/Kanihan 1997, Culbertson/Stempel 1986, Delli Carpini/Keeter 1999). However, more recently the lack of research in this field on the European Union was depicted and a growing number of scientific papers focusses on the European Union (Dursun 2005, Schuck/de Vreese 2006, de Vreese et al. 2006, Meyer 1999).

Closely linked to the concept of political knowledge is the theory on the agenda-setting effect of the media. A number of scientists busied themselves with the process of agenda-setting and its effect on issue salience in the public opinion

(McCombs/Shaw 1972, McCombs 1997, Peter 2003), as issue salience is understood to affect the interest of the public on a certain issue and therefore possibly participation levels. The understanding that agenda-setting and political knowledge are important aspects to democracy in the EU as well brought with it a strand of research on the content of different news media in Europe (e.g. AIM Research Consortium 2007 on all European countries, Baetens/Bursens 2005 on news media in Belgium).

This thesis touches upon all these different theories and concepts and which are applied in a content analysis of two German newspapers, investigating their level of coverage on the Reform Treaty of the EU.

1.2 Content of the Thesis

The following two chapters aim at introducing the theoretical framework of this thesis. It is important to define the nature of the European Union's democratic deficit in order to find possible solutions to it or at least to identify processes that contribute to this deficit. The second chapter will therefore deal with input-deficit or participation deficit of the EU and its possible sources.

The third chapter will introduce the concept of political knowledge and highlight and clarify its importance for democracies. Here there will follow a more lengthy debate on how political knowledge can be transferred by the media and to what extent and result scientists have found these mechanisms to work considering the European Union, following the argument that *“greater insight into the effects of media on public opinion has significant implications for the democratic deficit debate in Europe.”* (Dursun 2005: 23) The chapter will establish an understanding of how agenda-setting of the media may influence the public agenda and the public's perception of certain issues. Afterwards the choice to analyse the coverage of newspapers – especially local newspapers – is explained in chapter 4.

The methodological part in chapter 5 shortly explains the methods used to answer the sub-questions above and lastly the overall research question. To do so a newspaper content analysis is conducted on two German newspapers: a national quality newspaper and a regional newspaper. The sixth chapter will afterwards show the results of this quantitative and qualitative analysis, before the discussion chapter aims to answer the questions posed, using the theoretical framework and the research results.

2. The Nature of the Democratic (input-) Deficit of the European Union

This thesis is broadly set within the debate on the democratic deficit of the European Union. While the lack of democratic input in the EU is not consistently considered a problem by all scientists (Moravcsik 2002), many (or even most) scholars on the EU or on democracy theory agree that this lack poses the most prominent difficulty the EU has to overcome in order to increase its legitimacy.

Most reasons considered responsible for this lack are located within the institutional framework of the EU and the seemingly low interest of European citizens in the processes on EU-level. It is hypothesised that many citizens feel detached from an institution so far away from their everyday life and therefore interest in the EU is low (Moravcsik 2002, Baetens/Bursens 2005). As one of the arguments of this thesis is that interest and even participation can be furthered by knowledge it seems necessary to introduce the nature of the democratic input-deficit of the EU and the deficit in legitimacy resulting from it first, before the next chapters deal with the concept of "political knowledge" as a possible solution.

2.1 Democratic Legitimacy

Many different theories exist on what makes a democracy truly democratic and what exactly of those requirements the EU lacks. Especially as democratic theories usually contain some normative approaches to democracy, it is difficult to generalise their main statements on legitimacy. There is, however, some agreement that a democracy needs to be legitimated by its population (e.g. Fuchs 2007 on liberal and participatory democratic theory). A short analysis of some theories on democratic legitimacy shows that the EU's main problem is the direct legitimation through European citizens.

Today, democratic legitimation in modern societies is bound to the system of representative democracy. According to Meyer (1999), such a system has three dimensions to legitimacy:

1. authorisation of power holders through elections,
2. responsiveness of power holders in the exercise of power through public deliberation,
3. accountability of power holders through justification of their actions. (Meyer 1999: 619)

Obviously the three dimensions are closely linked in that responsiveness and justification are prerequisites for the citizens to make a knowledgeable decision on whom to authorise for government. Beetham and Lord argue for a similar triad of conditions for legitimacy: governance has to be legal, normative justifiable and legitimated (see Baetens/Bursens 2005: 8) – legal according to established laws, normative justifiable through a social consensus on rules and rightful authority and legitimated through the support of subordinates (through elections) (ibid.).

Fritz Scharpf adds to the debate in introducing two sides to legitimacy: an input- and an output-side (Scharpf 1999). Combined with the conditions of Meyer and Beetham and Lord this leads to the conclusion that input- and output-side must be circularly linked: the performance of a polity (output) is communicated to and justified before the citizenry by political actors and then evaluated by the citizens. In a next step the citizens voice their opinion (approval or disapproval) on the performance, in free elections at least (input).

2.2 Legitimacy of the EU

The institutional framework of the EU does not disqualify the Union from being legitimate (Moravcsik 2002: 604). With every Treaty revision of the European Union a relocation of power has taken place between the three major institutions of the Union: the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament. Every subsequent amendment so far transferred some more power to the European Parliament and so to the only directly democratic legitimated body of the EU. With the Treaty of Nice the EP was granted co-decision on virtually all first pillar – meaning community related – policies, which was extended by the last amendment, the so called Treaty of Lisbon². This also lays one of its main foci on transparency and closeness to the citizens. In Article 11 (1) TEU it is written that *“The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action.”* And para. 2 adds: *“The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society.”*

The same tone is taken up in the second part of the Treaty: the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union. Here it says in Article 15 (1):

² The Treaty of Lisbon actually combines two treaties: the “Treaty on the European Union” and the “Treaty on the functioning of the European Union”. It will be referred to as the Treaty of Lisbon, the Reform Treaty or simply as the Treaty.

"In order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible."

It is for this institutional framework of the EU that Andrew Moravcsik argues against the existence of a legitimacy deficit of the EU. He makes the case for a democratic EU which is only measured against unrealistic – because ideal – concepts of democracy and for that reason must fall short against them (Moravcsik 2002). Institutional checks and balances (e.g. the power of the purse of the European Parliament), the indirect democratic control through democratic elected national leaders (in the Council) and the increasing power of the EP constitute a framework which allows for democratic governance (ibid. : 605). Still, even Moravcsik does not deny the direct input-deficit of the Union, even though he does not see it as problematic, as the mechanisms named above abide for it.

With the catchwords "transparency", "openness" and "closeness to civil society" the European Union seems to react to the fact that participation in European parliamentary elections has never been high and has been dwindling almost ever since the first election in 1979. Even though the institutional constitution of the EU allows for all of the named processes of democratic legitimation to take place, European citizens do not exercise their power through voting. When asked whether they feel that their voice counted in Europe, 31% of EU citizens (EU27) answered they would not think so (Eurobarometer 69: 3) and 61% even think that their voices are not listened to by the European Parliament (similar numbers figure for the Commission and the Council of Ministers). 41% of the European population think that the EP is too remote from European citizens (ibid.). With such figures in mind, it cannot surprise that voter turn-out is so low.

To Scharpf, there exists no solution to the lack of citizens' input in the European Union, because so far no all-European *demos* has formed (Scharpf 1999). In line with his understanding of democracy as "*rule by and for the people*" (ibid.: 16), he argues that the rule of a majority can only be legitimate if built on a fixed set of rules on which exists consensus within the *demos*. A *demos* is characterised by a collective identity or We-identity which makes agreement on a set of rules possible. Because of this collective identity minorities can be assured that their interests and well-being is not threatened by the ruling majority. – The system of representative

democracies always leads to the rule of a majority (those who voted for the government) over a minority (voters for the opposition, non-voters etc.).

Other authors would disagree with Scharpf's requirement of a European *demos*. Supporters of deliberative democracy and discourse theory, such as its inventor Jürgen Habermas, would argue that not so much a collective identity is needed, but a process of consensus finding through deliberation. A responsive society which "*allows the better argument to come into play*" (Habermas 1996: 24) functions through a public discourse on the political agenda in which it is possible to persuade others and to be persuaded by the best argument. Discourse theory integrates the republican model of democracy, on which Scharpf builds on, in that shared norms and values evolve out of deliberation, but are not a prerequisite of a democratic process.

The concept of deliberation, but also the concepts of legitimacy explained above, however, require availability of political information to the citizens in order to install responsiveness between the political sphere and public sphere. Responsiveness here means that decision-makers have to argue for their agendas and those arguments are later on weighted against those public interests that developed within public debate (Eriksen/Fossum 2000: 16ff, but also Meyer 1999). This process is especially important when considering that in a democracy the public is at the same time author of and subject to law (ibid: 21). In case deliberation only takes place in small circles of e.g. people with high political knowledge and does not encompass all citizens, people will still be subject of law, but no longer authors.

3. The Concept of Political Knowledge

Following Moravcsik's argument that *"in order to give individuals a reason to care about EU politics, it is necessary to give them a stake at it"* (Moravcsik 2002: 616), the following chapter will deal with the possibilities of informing individuals on the stakes they have in the European Union, despite its perceived remoteness from the individual citizen. Such information and – resulting from it, knowledge – is a necessary prerequisite for legitimacy as it not only enables citizens to exercise their power but also makes clear to them, why it is important to do so.

This already partly answers the question, what could be done in order to increase citizens' participation in the EU: the knowledge of EU citizens on the EU has to be increased. Robert A. Dahl called for enlightened understanding as a prerequisite of a democracy (Dahl 1998), meaning that learning and knowledge about important political processes is necessary in order for the citizens to make knowledgeable decisions at the ballot.

The following chapter will first of all give some insight into the literature on political knowledge and political interest. Fritz Scharpf is sceptical about whether a European collective identity will ever evolve and therefore he argues that little can be done concerning the lack of democratic input on EU level (Scharpf 1999). The basic argument in this chapter, however, is that who knows what is at stake for him/her will also be more prone to participate in politics – even though a European *demos* does not exist (ibid.). Therefore, the second part of this chapter will concentrate on the role of the media as the main source of information and knowledge on politics in modern democracies.

3.1 Political Knowledge and Democracies

"[...]a broadly and equitable informed citizenry helps assure a democracy that is both responsive and responsible." (Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 1)

The term "democracy" derives from the Greek words "demos" for people and "kratia" for rule. Rule of, or by, the people (and *for* the people, as Fritz Scharpf would add; Scharpf 1999: 16) bases its legitimation on a minimum participation of the citizens: to vote at elections. Elections in representative democracies are the ultimate means for politicians and especially governments to learn about the public interest, while for

citizens they represent the ultimate means to be heard.

Voting at elections is seen as the minimum of civic participation a democracy requires. It is for instance also the minimum input Fritz Scharpf requests for a democracy and misses at European elections because of the notoriously low voter turn-out (ibid.). Still, between different strands of democracy theory there is no agreement on how much civic participation is needed to support legitimate governance, depending for instance on the stance towards representativeness or direct democracy.

While republicans would argue that only a *demos* based on an understanding of shared norms and values can lead to the legitimate rule of a majority (in a representative system), supporters of deliberative democracy argue that essential to the functioning of democracy is political communication and public discourse on the political agenda (Habermas 1996). Such direct discourse is understood to further knowledge which triggers will- and opinion-formation of citizens. This will then lead to the development of interests and such participation (ibid.: 28). The basic idea is that those who know what is at stake, will take action to pursue their interest.

It is also for that reason that one of Robert A. Dahl's classic criteria of what makes a democracy is what he terms "enlightened understanding" (Dahl 1998). Enlightened understanding means that "*each member (of a community) must have equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences.*" (ibid.: 37)

In this tradition Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter argue that a democracy functions best with politically informed citizens (Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 1). Most scientists agree that some degree of political knowledge is necessary, if a

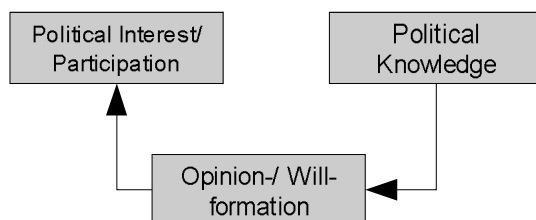


Figure 3.1: Relation between political knowledge and interest

democracy is not only to be just, but also to function as intended (ibid., also Dahl 1998 on "enlightment", Guo/ Moy 1998). Accordingly, most democracy theories require a more or less informed electorate. The following chapter aims at explaining why it is that knowledgeable citizens

seem to be a prerequisite for a functioning democracy.

The logic lying behind this requirement is that knowledge about politics helps

citizens to discern their personal interest (Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 3, 20, 187) and to be able to see which parties or politicians work towards this interest or which proposed policies for instance do not. Agreeing with this strand of thought, Guo and Moy distinguish three dimensions of political sophistication which build upon each other: political salience (transferred and emphasised by the media), political knowledge (through information on political issues) and lastly political conceptualisation (or understanding and will-formation as used in *Figure 3.1*) (Guo/Moy 1998: 26).

The next part will provide some reasons why exactly political knowledgeable citizens are a necessity for democracies, emphasising again the varying requirements of different democracy theories, but more importantly their similarities: they all require somehow politically knowledgeable citizens. Afterwards, a discussion on what would be an “adequate” level of political knowledge will follow.

3.1.1 The Importance of Political Knowledge for Democracies

“All things being equal. The more informed people are, the better able they are to perform as citizens.” (Delli Carpini/Keeter: 219)

As the two authors named above make factual knowledge about politics a requirement not only to enable citizens to discern their own interest but also to “take effective advantage of their civic opportunities” (ibid. 3), it is easy to understand, why knowledge on, for instance, the voting rules, parties and political actors for instance is important. If citizens do not know what possibilities to participate they have in the political process in their municipality, country, or in this case the EU, their participation – if they participate at all – cannot be considered an informed demonstration of their actual will and interest (ibid. 58)

Still, different democratic theories show a different understanding of what political knowledge of the citizenry is necessary for. While they all agree on the necessity of political information and knowledge, the importance put to them sometimes varies significantly. The following table gives a rudimentary overview on three strands of democratic theory and their conception of the citizen and his rights, information and knowledge and lastly will-formation, keeping in mind the thoughts on legitimacy in chapter 2.

Requests on		Liberal democracy	Republican democracy	Participatory democracy (e.g. deliberative democracy)
	Citizens	rights: negative – liberty to act freely within boundary of legal order	rights: positive – possibility of participation, “requirement” of participation	rights: positive; citizen expected to participate
	Information and knowledge	rules of the game people and parties	rules of the game people and parties on equally shared norms and values	rules of the game political processes and policies such enabling deliberation/discourse
	Will-formation	function: legitimising the exercise of political power	function: constituting society as a political community, “ <i>demos</i> ”	function: constituting a common will through e.g. debate

Table 3.1: Political knowledge in different democracy theories, on the basis of Schmidt 2000 and Zittel/Fuchs 2007

The required levels of political knowledge in the different democratic concepts vary, as can be seen in *table 3.1*. This is due to the concept of democracy and the concept of the citizen they apply. Liberal and republican democracy base on a system of representativeness, in which the citizens have at least to vote (and such legitimate the system, as in liberal democratic theory). The republican model – as taken up by Fritz Scharpf – additionally requires the feeling of a community or a “*demos*”, which bases on shared norms and values (Scharpf 1999, see chapter 2). Therefore, in the liberal model of democracy, knowledge on the “rules of the game” - meaning knowledge on how to vote – and the relevant actors is sufficient, while in the republican model, knowledge needs to be extended to what the community is based on. Both theories also put forward the concept of responsiveness of the representatives to the citizens (Fuchs 2007: 34, on liberal theory). Responsiveness requires information if the government is to learn the opinion of the governed in the prospect of the next election.

Participatory democratic theory puts the most salience to information. It asks the

citizens to participate lively and, most importantly, directly in the political sphere, for instance through debate on the salient political issues (ibid., also Schmidt 2000: 251). Thereby, individual opinions adjust to each other and promotable collective political wills are generated (Habermas 1996). This requires not only distinct knowledge on the rules of proceedings such as elections and relevant actors, but also, for instance, on policies, major interests in society and the capability to promote the own opinion.

Considering the figures on the perceived importance of the individual voice of citizens in the EU in the previous chapter and the possibly resulting low voter turn-outs in European elections, it becomes clearly visible that the EU lacks input-legitimacy as asked for by Meyer, Baetens and Bursens and virtually all supporters of participatory democratic theory (Meyer 1999, Baetens/Bursens 2005). Still, as can be seen, even liberal democratic theory requires the citizens to legitimise the exercise of political power by an elite. If voter turn-outs sink too drastically, this form of legitimation is not given any more.

All theories agree that knowledge is required if citizens are to judge the action of representatives. Galston, furthermore, links the level of political knowledge with political activity of citizens. (Galston 2001: 2)

Both, Galston and Delli Carpini and Keeter list a number of general reasons independent of theoretical paradigms, why political knowledge benefits democracies, which are not exclusively linked to a single democracy theory:

1. Already named is the possibility for citizens to be able to form and express their own interest on an informed basis. This leads to policy-plans not only being made public by politicians, but actually to be recognised and considered by citizens.
2. As it helps to generate interest and opinions it also may further active participation of citizens. If citizens understand which political attitudes promote their own cause and which do not, it is more likely that they will actively support the former and/or fight against the other – at the least by voting accordingly.
3. Knowledge furthers tolerance in that it counters the fear of the unknown. This is especially important for a multinational organisation like the EU. Debates about for instance fears, prejudices, disadvantages and benefits

characterised the time precluding the Eastern enlargement of the Union.

Most importantly, the value of political knowledge is collective (Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 219). Through this correlation of political knowledge and civic participation governments are provided both with legitimacy and by this also with authority to act on behalf of the people.

"[...]The informed opinions, participation, and consent of citizens is by definition the best measure of what is in the People's interest. And the opportunities provided citizens to make such informed choices is the best measure of how democratic a system is." (ibid.: 3)

3.1.2 What Is Adequate Knowledge or Information?

If a knowledgeable citizenry is vital for a democracy, it is necessary to find – if possible – generally acceptable standards of when a citizen is adequately informed on politics. In his 1979 paper on the relation of mass media and political knowledge Philip Palmgreen set a rather minimalistic standard of what citizens should know at least. Concerning a specific problem, it would be necessary for them to be able to identify the individuals or groups involved – the political actors – and the solutions that are proposed in the end of the process – the political outputs (Palmgreen 1979: 18).

These two conditions can be found in almost all standards of general political knowledge which were later verbalised by scientists (ibid., also Moy et al. 2003, Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996, Delli Carpini 1999). In 2003 Moy et al. restated Palmgreen's request on citizens' information. Citizens should be aware of basic facts, acquire factual knowledge about political actors and events and campaigns and should furthermore be able to recall the main news unaided (Moy et al. 2003: 538).

The most substantial standards of "adequate" political knowledge were phrased by Delli Carpini and Keeter. While they are also based on the standards set by Palmgreen twenty years before, they divide their parameters in three areas: rules of the game, substance of politics and people and parties. The first compasses knowledge on political institutions like the parliament, government, parties and their respective roles in the state and processes, but also on elections and governance (e.g. What institution is voted for? What electoral system is used? What is division of powers?). "Substance of politics" relates to the major current domestic and

international issues, social and economic conditions (possibly on different levels like regional, national and international) and important political initiatives. The last category aims at knowledge on political actors which are involved in the processes named above. (Delli Carpini/Keeter 1996: 14, 64f)

3.2 Communicating Political Knowledge: the Media and Agenda Setting

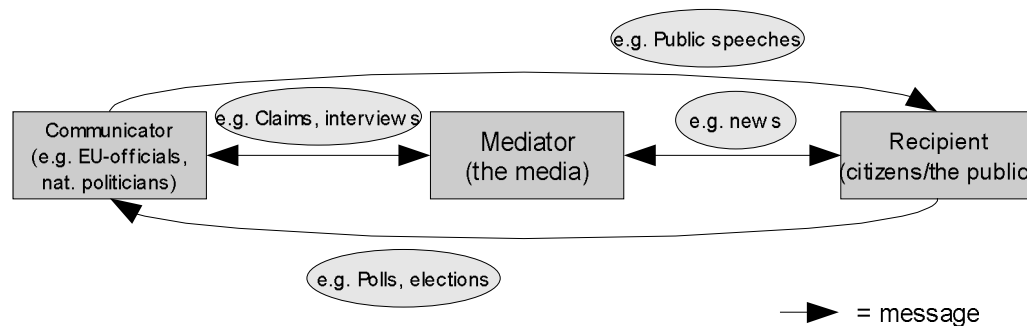


Figure 3.2: Basic model of mediated communication; on the basis of: Neidhardt 2005: 19
 The figure also foods on the so called Lasswell-formula formulated by the US-american political and communication scientist Harold Dwight Lasswell in 1948: Who says what in what channel to whom with what effect?
 The Lasswell-formula is the most basic model of mass communication (Jäckel 1999:70, Rühl 2005: 68). It follows a linear sequence, starting with the sender, followed by the message and the channel and ends with potential recipients (McQuail 1983: 150).

Learning about the “relevant alternatives”, as Dahl puts it, requires information on those alternatives in the first place. In modern democracies, information on politics is usually transferred by free mass media news, which take the role of mediator between the sender or communicator (e.g. politicians) and the recipient (e.g. the general public) in the basic model of communication (Neidhardt 2005: 19). The further away political processes are moved from the public, the more rarely “primary information” through own experience is available to people. Primary information is replaced by so called “secondary information” - information communicated by a sender and possibly even mediated through different channels before it reaches the recipient. However, secondary information is much less complete than primary information is (Hill 2005: 20). According to de Vreese et al., in most cases voters perceive politics predominantly through the media (de Vreese et al. 2006: 478) and Hodess adds that public knowledge and public beliefs can be considered partly as a function of news media coverage (Hodess 1997: 5).

There are cases in democratic politics which information is directly transferred from the sender to the recipient. In its “White Paper on European Governance” (2001) the European Commission subscribed itself to as much transparency as possible. However, some political scientists doubt whether transparency alone is sufficient. Thorsten Hüller (2007), for instance, argues that next to transparency, “publicity” is needed, a concept which includes that all have the same minimum level of knowledge. Mediators often also take upon themselves the responsibility not only to make information accessible but to transfer and *explain* it. Only this teaching function can help to establish a certain standard of common knowledge, e.g. about the EU, which in turn could be used as basis for public deliberation.

An equal (minimum) level of knowledge is of special importance if recognising that participation levels depend on knowledge levels. This indicates that the less knowledgeable will be under-represented. This “low-information rationality” (Samuel Popkin quoted in: Galston 2001: 3) argues that citizens with low knowledge levels do not actively participate in, and such be excluded from, political processes – against e.g. Dahl's request for inclusiveness, which means that equality must extend to all citizens within the state. Everyone has legitimate stake within the political process (Dahl 1989).

Because of the prominent role of the media as mediator between politics and the public, political communication research and research on political knowledge ask the fundamental question, of which nature and extent learning processes are which are triggered by exposure to the media (Palmgreen 1979: 5). This question, however, already assumes that indeed knowledge can be derived from media exposure (ibid.). On the other hand, Rühl puts a restriction to the possibility to acquire knowledge from the media. He argues that the media provide information and promote will-formation, but not necessarily knowledge and comprehension. (Rühl 2005: 74)

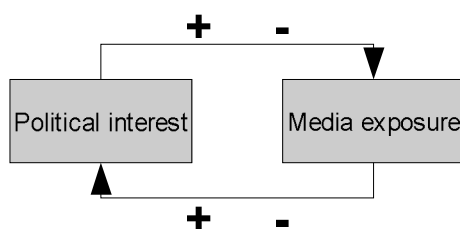


Figure 3.3: Relation of political interest and media exposure

Information in general may influence knowledge in a number of ways. It may simply confirm already existing knowledge, add to already existing knowledge on a certain topic, correct wrong or at least biased perceptions and knowledge and lastly even open up a new field of

knowledge (Hill 2005: 26). Providing such knowledge in modern democracies is to a large extent the role of the news media.

In a next step, knowledge might influence and even change attitudes and behaviour. Palmgreen found a direct connection between political interest levels of citizens and media exposure. Depending on whether the media covers an issue positively or negatively this relation is either positive or negative. The effect is also depending on possible prior interest in an issue. In case that there is some initial interest or that interest is generated by media coverage of an issue, this interest will most probably lead to the will to gather even more information on the topic, such creating a circular relation. (Palmgreen 1979: 12) He concludes that it is for this relationship that exposure to the media may indeed stimulate citizens to vote (ibid: 13).

Palmgreen also already includes the process of learning (ibid.: 36) which, in political knowledge literature is seen as vital intermediary step between media exposure and the generation of interest. If the basic *Figure 3.3* above is extended by the process of learning and the resulting knowledge, this results in the basic argument this thesis built upon (*Figure 3.4*), and which was formulated above.

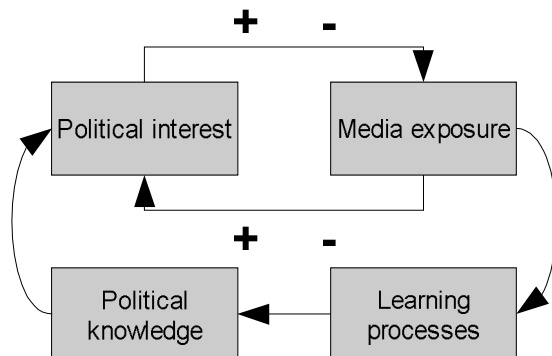


Figure 3.4: Relation of political interest and media exposure extended

McCombs and Shaw pointed out that the information people draw from the media often is the only contact they have with politics (McCombs/Shaw 1972: 176), which – outside election periods in which posters and election speeches to some degree circumvent the news media – probably holds true.

Summing up, it is possible to say that the (news-)media are the primary source of political information to the citizenry.

3.2.1 The (European) Public Sphere

“European integration from above must be accompanied by a Europeanisation of public communication in order to overcome its lack of legitimacy and popular involvement.”
(Koopmans/Pfetsch 2003: 1)

"[...]mass media is the linkage between the public and the institutional structure." (ibid.: 5)

Citing Tobler, Machill et al. define the public sphere as *"an intermediate system which mediates between society or its sub-systems and the political system or its core, the state administration"* (Machill et al. 2006: 60). It is the system in which information mediation through, for instance, the media and Civil society organisations (CSOs) and public deliberation take place. Mediation is a two way process: The citizens are informed about what is decided at decision-maker level and the decision-makers get to know the public's response.

The importance of a European public sphere lies in its potential for conveying information and triggering learning processes as well as will-formation. So far 27 national public spheres exist in which, to various degrees, information on the European Union is passed on. Scientists disagree on how likely a convergence of those national public spheres to an overarching European public sphere is. They agree, however, on the fact that such a development has not yet – at least not fully – taken place and will still need a considerable length of time (Mahrenholtz 2005: 45).

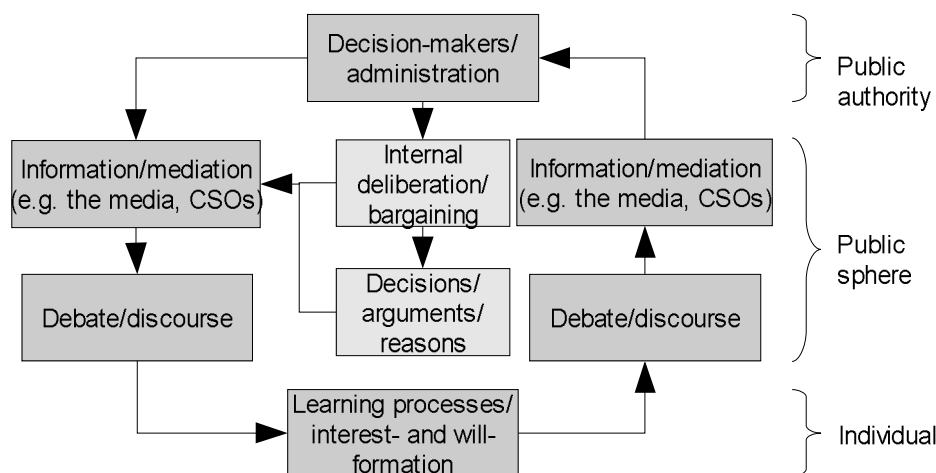


Figure 3.5: Mediation and deliberation in the public sphere

As already indicated, the European Union does recognise the need of reaching out to its citizens, as reflected in the subsequent treaty amendments. Accordingly, the Commission, for instance, set up a consultation regime which allows for direct contact between European citizens and Commission officials. It is meant not only to

increase transparency, but also to request and such raise (direct) participation as it addresses not only expert groups and stakeholders on a certain issue, but also the general public (Quittkat/Finke 2008: 195).

However, this consultation regime does not meet the necessary requirements for being able to add positively to the creation of a European public sphere. First of all it is to a large extent exclusive. It separates the more knowledgeable from the less knowledgeable, is prone to reach foremost those which speak the languages it is translated into and last but not least excludes all those which do not have access to a computer or do not feel confident to use the internet.

Language is probably the most difficult problem to solve when trying to set up a cross-national public sphere. Machill et al. argue that it is because of this lack of an all-European language that it is impossible to set up a pan-European public sphere independent of the national public spheres of the member states. The lack of European-wide (appreciated) media adds to this difficulty. (Machill et al. 2006: 61f) So far, attempts of the European Union to contribute to increased European cultural and political integration, e.g. through pan-European media channels, have failed (Semetko et al. 2000: 126).

An alternative way in which a European public sphere could emerge would be through the gradual Europeanisation of the different national public spheres.

“A hypothetical European sphere of publics would [...] (1) involve the dissemination of a European news agenda; (2) need to become a significant part of the everyday news-consuming habits of European audiences; and (3) entail that those living within the EU have begun to think of their citizenship, in part at least, as transcending the level of the nation-states.”
(Schlesinger/Kevin 2000: 228)

Machill et al. define four different indicators³ which, if discernible, would lead to the conclusion that a “European sphere of publics”, as Schlesinger and Kevin put it, indeed is emerging (Machill et al. 2006: 63f). After assessing the news reporting in different European member states they find that at least tendencies of

3 “1. Protagonists in the EU enter into a debate with protagonists in other places.

2. Protagonists in different EU states participate in debates on the same topics and agree with regard to the delineation of the problem.

3. Protagonists from EU states enter into a debate with protagonists at the EU level.

4. Protagonists debate uniform aims and the same means from the perspective of the entire EU area.” (Machill et al. 2006: 63f)

Europeanisation processes in the media exist. However, those tendencies have so far only led to “first signs” (ibid.) of a European public sphere. Still EU reporting only makes up for a small amount of overall reporting and the focus lies on national actors on national as well as European topics. Peaks in coverage, according to the authors, only appear around important European events like summits, but would even then not dominate the overall reporting (ibid.: 76f; Semetko et al 2000: 130; AIM research Consortium 2007: 20, 30).

Notwithstanding these findings that EU reporting is usually lower than coverage on domestic issues, overall EU reporting in national media has risen. Semetko et al. find that, while in 1979 EU issues did not enter the news before the actual campaigns on the elections to the EP started, EU news today make it on a regular basis into domestic political and economic coverage (Semetko et al. 2000: 129).

As a pan-European public sphere has not yet developed, the question is how much information on the EU is transferred within the domestic public spheres of the member states. As already indicated, EU news often does not rank as high priority on news agendas.

“[...] the higher a given issue is situated on the political agenda, the more likely it is to be selected for the news agenda as well.”
(AIM Research Consortium 2007: 33)

In the case of national or regional newspapers this means that national (and regional) political processes feature more prominently in coverage than do EU issues and that EU related issues are mostly linked to “European actions” of national politicians: statements, attendance of meetings and summits. Of all actors in EU news items, members of the respective national government feature most prominently (ibid.: 18). Except for high standard national newspapers and magazines, most print media (local and regional) find a direct EU correspondent too expensive and rather rely on news agencies as source. As those mostly apply a national angle to (EU) topics, the effect of “nationalisation” or “domestication” of EU issues is likely to be perpetuated.

3.2.2 Agenda-Setting and Framing

Öffentliche Meinung: *“Kollektive Vorstellungen von Bevölkerungsgruppen über das was wichtig, richtig und dann*

*auch dringend zu tun ist.*⁴” (Neidhardt 2005: 21)

*“Ich behaupte, dass wir die Medien erforschen müssen, [...] weil siedarüber entscheiden, in welchem Ausmaß es uns gelingt, unsere Welt zu begreifen, Bedeutungen herzustellen und diese mitzuteilen.*⁵” (Silverstone 1999: 11)

The media not only transfer messages from sender to recipient, but also influence the salience of issues in the public in that they, for instance, decide on how much coverage a certain issue receives (Merten 2007: 21). Issue priority of the mass media significantly correlates with issue salience in the public (McCombs/Shaw 1972: 180f, McCombs 1997: 433, Schenk 2005: 79, 89). Mass media structure the news supply and such have the power to shape the public's perception of reality (Schenk 2005: 79). This so called agenda-setting effect of the media forms the perception the reader gets of a certain issue: its general importance, its importance to his/her personal life and implications (Lippmann 1922; Dursun 2005: 3) but also effects what attributes of this issue are considered most important (“framing” or “second-level agenda-setting”; Dursun 2005: 4).

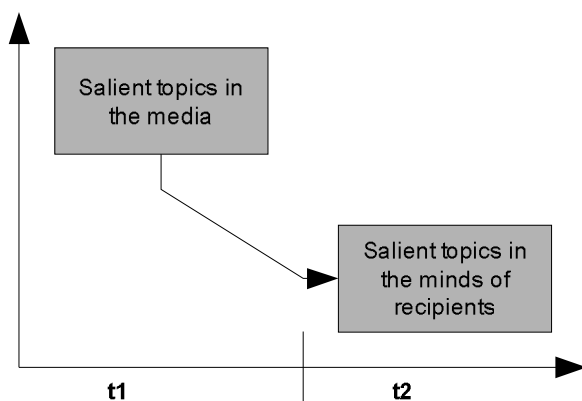


Figure 3.6: Agenda-Setting; on the basis of: Friedrichsen/Kurad 2007; 212

Most literature on political knowledge and media influence has been written on the US and this is also where most research was conducted. However, literature on the possibility of the development of a European public sphere also draws on political knowledge literature. Koopmans and Pfetsch (2003) analyse four German newspapers with regards to their coverage of EU related

topics and find that newspaper articles must be divided into two major parts: the newspapers' stance on the issue and what is said by so called claim makers (e.g.

4 Own translation:

Public opinion: “Collective understanding of parts of a population on what is right, important and also to do urgently.”

5 Own translation: “I argue that we have to analyse the media, because they decide about the extent to which we are able to comprehend our world, to put meaning to things and to communicate this meaning.”

politicians, administrative staff, officials etc.) and simply reproduced by the media. They find that the media have two major functions, which are already named: agenda-setting and framing and thereby will- and opinion-formation in the public (ibid.: 11, see also Friedrichsen/Kurad 2007: 206). Their research furthermore shows that German newspapers generally frame EU issues more pro-European integration than claim makers do. Dursun (2005) finds that what is true for the findings on research on agenda-setting theory for the US is also true for Europe. Her comparison between coverage on the Eastern enlargement process in French and British newspapers also shows a significant link between issue salience as depicted in newspapers and issue salience in the general public (first-level agenda-setting: 4, 14ff).

The two processes of agenda-setting (putting salience to issues) and framing (the presentation of issues) (de Vreese 2005: 53) both influence the perception of the public on what is to be considered important and how an issue is perceived. Even though there is no agreement whether the salience put to an issue by the media or the way the media present an issue can actually be related to the actions of the citizens (Palmgreen 1979: 14), the connection made above between information, knowledge and interest can hardly be rejected: *"In general, people tend to seek information about, talk about, and thus learn about, only those issues which happen to be in the media spotlight at a given time."* (ibid.: 36)

To a democracy it is not only important that the public has an at least basic level of political knowledge, but its existence also depends on the public's support to the political system (McCombs 2002). Applied to the European Union this means that it is not only of importance *that* people know about the EU, but just as important is *what* they think of it: whether it plays any role in their personal life, whether this role is positive or negative, whether it has any effect if one participates in EP elections and so on.

The visibility of an issue or an institution in the media therefore influences the salience the public puts to it, as it creates awareness (de Vreese et al. 2006: 482). Visibility also plays another important role: People hold certain perceptions and attitudes, which only change if the appeal to change one's attitude is higher than the appeal to stick to old perceptions (Jäckel 1999: 148). Change is therefore only possible, if, for instance, a new issue is considered important enough to be reflected. Jäckel names four preconditions which have to be met in order to promote

a change of attitudes in and lastly behaviour of the public: awareness has to be provoked, information must be provided, this information must lead to opinion-formation or -change, and those changed attitudes then lead to a change in behaviour (ibid.: 175).

The EU's problem here lies in its relative invisibility in national news compared to domestic issues, or put differently, the EU's lack of legitimacy results from its "communication deficit" (de Vreese et al. 2006: 478f). The already mentioned cyclical coverage of EU issues in national media around events (ibid.: 481), however, only allows for a patch-work picture of the EU.

De Vreese et al. name three aspects or conditions of news coverage which coverage of an issue has to meet in order to influence public opinion and the public agenda:

1. Visibility or quantity of coverage: As already explained, visibility of an issue in the news gives an indication of what issues are important at the moment. Dursun finds that issues which are prominent on the press agenda *"frequently become prominent in the public agenda"* (Dursun 2005: 3, see also: McCombs 1997: 433) as well. *"[...] the public agenda not only correlates with the media agenda, but it results from the media agenda."* (ibid.: 17)
2. Nature of coverage: De Vreese et al. argue that greater visibility of EU actors in contrast to national actors in news on the EU influence the public's perception of the EU positively (de Vreese et al. 2005: 479). More nationally or domestically shaped news on the EU (e.g. with claims of national politicians about the EU as "news hook") often tend to be more negative due to the widespread habit of national politicians to blame the EU for unpopular policies, while claiming positive developments to be their own achievement. (Hüller 2007: 574)
3. Tone of coverage: The tone of news coverage already refers to "framing". The mass media do not generate news or "messages" but relate their account of events (McQuail 1983: 150). Negative news or negatively tilted news of the EU can be linked to a negative perception of the EU in the public (de Vreese et al. 2005: 479). The authors find that generally political news in newspapers have such a negative tilt, which does not exclude news on the European Union (ibid.).

According to McCombs, agenda-setting effects may result from the sheer volume of coverage (or exposure to an issue). However, closer attention to the news – focus on details as “nature of coverage” and “tone of coverage” - provides a more detailed understanding and possibly leads to a stronger agenda-setting and framing effect (McCombs 2002).

Agenda-setting and framing both begins in editorial offices (newsroom) of news media or in news-agencies (Depending on where the source of an article is located.). *Figure 3.7* shows the process of agenda-setting and framing, starting in the newsroom. However, this thesis has its main focus on the agenda and the possible frames within news and the effect those might have on the perception and action of recipients.

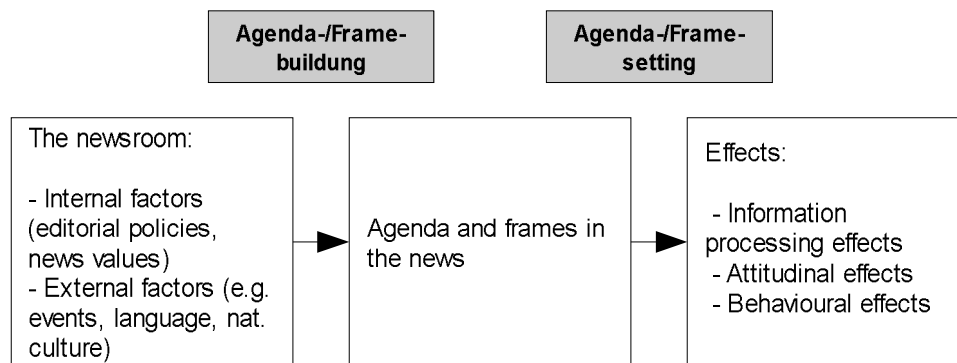


Figure 3.7: An integrated process model of agenda-setting and framing; on the basis of: de Vreese et al. 2005: 52

De Vreese et al. show in their version of *Figure 3.7* that framing might indeed impact not only on attitudes but also on behaviour, indicating again that news selection and news presentation in the media may effect participation levels. Dursun, on the other hand, finds no significant link between the salience put on attributes of an issue and the attribute salience in the public and therefore puts framing - or as she calls it “second-level agenda-setting” - to some extent into perspective. (Dursun 2005: 7, 23). These contrasting findings raise the question whether framing has an impact on citizens' knowledge about and perception on an issue. As the mass media in modern societies to a great establish extent the political reality citizens perceive, it seems likely that an issue which is framed continuously in the same way in a medium is also perceived this way by the recipients of this medium. The possibility to contrast and compare this secondary information conveyed by the media with primary information received through own experience is largely reduced because of

the distance between the sphere of politics and citizens.

3.2.3 Knowledge Gaps

Different parts of a society display different levels of knowledge in general but also specifically about politics. There are a number of factors that play into such knowledge gaps, such as formal education and social background. Choice of media also is a factor which contributes to differences in political knowledge. (Eveland/Scheufele 2000: 216) Robinson and Levy find that there are significant differences between the knowledge of people who do not read any newspapers and regular newspaper readers (Robinson/Levy 1996: 132), while people who regularly watch news on TV and those who do not do not show the same difference in knowledge. However, they do not distinguish between the use of quality newspapers and tabloids or public and private TV-channels.

Kleinijenhuis creates a formula to explain different learning levels from news coverage and thereby combines different factors of knowledge gaps: news complexity + news comprehensibility + information processing skills of readers = learning from news coverage (Kleinijenhuis 1991: 500). News complexity is partly due to the complexity of the issue which is covered in the news. Comprehensibility is in itself the sum of different factors, like for instance the medium in which the news are shown (TV, radio or newspaper) and the quality standards of the medium (quality press or tabloid). Information processing skills refer to the ability of the recipients to understand the news. Kleinijenhuis, however, misses the factor of "visibility". On issues which are covered to a greater extent than others, and such are more visible, more information is provided, making it easier for the public to learn about such an issue (Chaffee/Kanihan 1997: 422). Following Palmgreens and also Jäckels argument that people might seek more information about issues that they perceive to be of importance (Palmgreen 1979: 13; Jäckel 1999: 170), the quantity of coverage matters as much for political knowledge as its quality. According to Jäckel, such visibility and communicated salience of an issue is even able to reduce the dominance of formal education in the explanation of knowledge gaps, as it evens out existing gaps in political knowledge (Jäckel 1999: 293f).

This all sums up to the overall capability of the recipient (reader or watcher) to learn from the news.

4. Choice of Medium

In 1964 Marshall McLuhan stated that the media would be the extension of men. They help to grasp issues that without the media, one would probably not even know about. In a globalising world they bring close what otherwise would be outside the horizon of individuals. (Silverstone 1999: 14) While McLuhan had a very wide and therefore often disputed understanding of what "media" actually is (He would e.g. include trains) and communication scientists include "material" that is needed to get messages across (e.g. paper, air), this short chapter focusses on the so called "news media". The findings of research concerning different news media and their impact on learning processes and political knowledge differ sometimes substantially in their conclusion and thus their authors' opinions differ on which medium is best suited to transfer knowledge.

Most studies focus on TV-news and newspapers. While television is the most frequently used news medium, it is directly followed by the press (Baetens/Bursens 2005: 14). Interestingly, TV and radio are considered to give only insufficient coverage to the EU (EB 68: 146). 46% of EU citizens think that TV and radio devote too little attention to the EU, while only 31% say the same of the press.

Radio and TV news, furthermore, have the problem of being rather time-constricted. At most radio channels, the time frame for news is limited to approx. 3 minutes to up to 15 minutes. The main (mostly evening) news at television have a length of approx. 15 minutes as well. This gives virtually no time to do more than list a number of headlines and some details.

Radio news even have the disadvantage of being only auditive. The recipient or consumer needs to invest a large part of his attention and concentration to be able to learn something about a certain topic just from radio news. TV, on the other hand, combines visual and auditive effects, which makes it much easier to remember certain messages as they can be linked to the appropriate picture. Both, however, are media which do not necessarily call for a strong attention, while reading excludes most other activities (Culbertson 1986: 582).

Television news is said to especially benefit the learning processes and knowledge levels of those recipients with low prior knowledge on a topic (Shen 2007: 7, Kleinijenhuis 1991: 499). The straight forward and less detailed approach of TV-news requires less prior knowledge on a topic than the "inverted pyramid"-style of

newspaper articles in which the teaser already contains the plain facts, which, however, can only be understood if either the rest of the article is read or some knowledge on the respective issue exists beforehand (ibid.). But Fei Shen also recognises that this approach helps to inform the readers effectively about the major points of an issue (ibid.).

Newspapers are possibly prone to lead to exclusion in even another way: most of them are aimed at the middle- and upper-classes as those form the main clientèle of the advertisers (Eveland/Scheufele 2000: 218).

However, it is the complexity of an issue which to some extent dictates the news complexity or comprehensibility (Kleinijenhuis 1991: 500). The more complex an issue is by nature, the more information is needed to understand the issue fully. Newspapers are more capable of transferring difficult topics exactly because of the inverted pyramid structure and the opportunity to provide background info and details. Ultimately, a combination of different news media would probably yield the best learning results of recipients. In her Paper "Communication to an Ideal Audience" on news consumption patterns in Norway, Ingunn Hagen finds that most of her fellow countrymen fill up TV-news with background information from newspapers (1997: 410). This goes along with the "reinforce-by-repetition mechanism" (Shen 2001: 13) which basically implicates that people learn best by repetition, whether through consulting different media on the same topic or through continuous coverage over several days.

Local newspapers also provide information on a broad range of topics and from different political levels. In their area of distribution they often are the newspaper mostly read due to different facts: especially in more rural areas, the local newspapers quite often maintain a monopoly-like situation and are therefore – next to local radio stations – the first source of information on local developments. They also inform about national political developments and EU issues – news which is at least read alongside the local news – a process referred to as "incidental learning" by Guo and Moy (1998) or as "learning by skimming" by Kleinijenhuis (1991).

Concluding, it can be said that newspapers after all have the most "space" and "time" to "narrate": to feed-up an issue with background information and detail and so give a more over all view on an issue than TV- and radio-news are capable of. It is for this and the above reasons that this thesis focusses on the EU coverage of newspapers alone.

5. Methodological Approach

In order to answer the research question, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis on print media was conducted, namely a local newspaper and a high standard national newspaper from Germany. Research on the EU-coverage of different media types all over Europe has shown that print media are the source of 84.2% of items regarding the EU – national newspapers make up for 50.7% and regional newspapers for 23.7% and are such the largest and the second largest source of information on the EU (AIM Research Consortium 2007: 16) .

With the sub-question in mind whether there possibly exists a gap in knowledge between readers of different newspaper types, I decided to compare a national elitist newspaper with the regional newspaper and such highlight and analyse differences in their level (quantity and quality) of coverage.

As example for a national high standard newspaper, I decided on the Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) which I assume to cover EU related issues on a high level and more extensively than a local newspaper. The SZ even maintains an office in Brussels and is therefore close to the processes of the EU.

As example for local newspapers, I analysed the coverage on the Lisbon Treaty of the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung (NOZ) – a regional or local newspaper in Northwest Germany. The NOZ is not rivalled by another daily local or regional newspaper in its area of distribution and so fits the prescription above. It also, furthermore, covers national or international news from the second page onwards (mostly with a “teasing” short news-article on the front page), while regional and local news follow only in the second and third part of the newspaper. The politics and economics part has therefore at least to be skipped through, even by those readers who are not particular interested in it.

This analysis will provide insight in what information can be received by the public from reading newspapers.

Concerning the sub-questions and drawing on the findings of the AIM Research Consortium, I expect especially the coverage on the EU of local newspapers to fall short of the standard “elitist” newspapers set, which leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *Local or regional newspapers do not provide the same level of coverage on the EU – neither quantitative nor qualitative – as national high standard*

newspapers do, because their focus differs in that it is more regional.

5.1 Time Frame and Issue

For the conduct of the analysis, the thesis will focus on newspaper coverage of the processes leading to and after signature of the Reform Treaty (or Lisbon Treaty) by the European Parliament. The developments alongside this treaty make up the most recent period of rather heavy coverage on the EU. Moreover, the Reform Treaty – if ever ratified by all 27 member states – will have a significant impact on the workings of the EU but also on its citizens. The latter should therefore be informed on the issue, with the main source of information being the mass media. I will therefore start analysis with October 1st, 2007 and end with July 31st, 2008. The former allows for almost three weeks of coverage on the issue leading to the agreement of the final wording of the Treaty of Lisbon by Heads of Governments at the European Council summit at October 18th /19th, 2007. The latter date is derived from the date of the negative referendum on the Treaty in Ireland on July 7th, 2008 and again allows for approx. three weeks of coverage on the debate following the referendum.

5.2 Analysis of Articles

Taking into consideration the concept of political knowledge presented above, the question remains whether newspaper coverage on the Reform or Lisbon Treaty in general and local newspaper coverage specifically can just by its quantity and quality impact on the perception and knowledge of the public on this issue and such possibly generate deliberation and participation. Even though this thesis will not be able to assess whether this actually happens I hope to be able to make some assumptions on whether such a process is possible at all, considering the level of coverage and all other things being equal. Secondary information – as the media convey it – is much less complete than primary information (Hill 2005: 20), which renders it even more important to assess to what level the news media can abide for the lack of primary political information in modern democracies and especially in the case of the European Union. The actual analysis of articles will therefore be the most conclusive part of the thesis.

The thesis combines a simple analysis of the presence of a set of keywords (Präsenzanalyse) with an assessment of how an issue – presented by the keywords – is presented (Imageanalyse). Here the two approaches will be separated under the headings of quantitative and qualitative analysis. (Heinisch 2007, in:

Wägenbauer 2007; 68ff).

5.2.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis of the newspaper articles is based on the argument that people learn by repetition (Shen 2007: 13). Fui Shen here relates to repetition through use of different media on the same day and on the same topic. However, the same effect may also appear if coverage of an issue lasts over a couple of days in just one media (Chaffee/Kanihan 1997: 422) and on the assumption that a larger number of articles also implicates a more detailed and reflective coverage on the Treaty of Lisbon, the quantitative content analysis will give a first insight in the standards of coverage of the two newspapers. It will furthermore show whether the two newspapers' editorial boards agree on which events and developments were worth reporting and which were not.

Keywords helped to facilitate the search for articles on the EU and the Treaty of Lisbon in the archives of the two newspapers.

Keywords: Vertrag von Lissabon, (EU-)Reformvertrag, (EU-)Verfassungsvertrag, Europäischer Rat von Lissabon, (Irishes) Referendum

For the quantitative analysis the number of articles on the Lisbon Treaty was compared and also an assessment made, how many articles there are on just one day, how long the articles are on average and where they are placed within the newspaper (ibid.: 77). This will give insight into how important the newspapers evaluate the issue and how much they think it interests their readers.

5.2.2 Qualitative Analysis

To facilitate the qualitative part, I chose to take samples of articles from the newspapers on a regular basis, starting with the first Monday of the set time frame, Tuesday the following week and so on. This led to a sample of 23 articles altogether. Following Mayring's understanding of qualitative content analysis, I phrased a number of categories and checked whether this category showed within the sample and if yes, in how many of those articles. Mayring perceives qualitative content analysis as a hybrid of quantitative and qualitative measures: it combines the systematic method of quantitative analyses while the such found samples are interpreted qualitatively (Mayring/Hurst 2005: 436; Lamnek 1995: 214; also Kromrey 2002: 318 ff). The categories reflect what, after reconsidering the literature on

political knowledge, I thought to be adequate and necessary information for European citizens.

Categories:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. History and development <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Events and processes○ Procedure○ Opinions and disputes○ Results and solutions | The Treaties generation out of the “European constitution”: history of and processes leading to the Treaty of Lisbon: summits and meetings, legislative procedure within the EU (Commission proposals, process within the European Parliament and its decision and finally the agreement between the member states' Heads of Government) |
| 2. Content of the treaty <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Novelties○ Changes○ Unaltered parts○ Overall aim | The EU itself lists 4 major fields in which the treaty introduces complete novelties or at least substantial changes to the existing treaty framework: democracy and transparency; efficiency; rights, values and solidarity and the EU as global actor (European Union main website: http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/glance/index_en.htm) |
| 3. (Possible) Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ National○ Local○ Personal○ EU | E.g. more power to national parliaments, new decision-making rules of the European Union (e.g. expansion of QMV), EU cooperation with the regions and municipalities |
| 4. Processes in other European member states <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ratification processes (e.g. referenda, parliamentary debates)○ inner-state debate and opinions○ results○ background on those processes | Processes within other European member states besides Germany: critical voices in for instance the UK, Denmark, Poland and Ireland, ratification processes and occurring problems |

Next to these categories I also checked on what the articles were constructed on: a quote or quotes from claim makers and their opinion (e.g. politicians, lobbyists) or were a report on specific events and processes. At the same time, the articles were also divided into those based on information from news agencies and those deriving genuinely from the newspapers' research.

This research will give some insight into qualitative differences between the two newspapers in question, based on which newspapers provides which pieces of information and how much background about the “pure” news is given.

With the argument in mind that media reporting is able to trigger and influence opinion- and will-formation among the recipients, I also assessed the commentaries of both newspapers within the time frame and covering issues relating the Treaty of Lisbon. Here five categories were applied in which the comments were sorted regarding their general “tone”: eurosceptic, eurosceptic tendency, neutral, pro-European tendency, pro-European. In line with the theory of framing, I also looked at the main issues, the commentaries dealt with.

Considering that polls repeatedly show that EU support is highest among more intellectual and “elitist” parts of the population of European Member States I also phrased a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *Commentaries of the Süddeutsche Zeitung and such national high standard newspapers will be more EU supportive than those of the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung or regional newspapers, as those newspapers are mainly written for an intellectual readership.*

6. Results

One of the first steps in the research after establishing a theoretical framework was to search the two newspapers databases for relevant articles. This is where the keywords played their crucial part. The differences of the two databases made a different approach necessary, but I still tried to stick to the keywords.

The indicated keywords worked well with the database of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in which I entered “Verfassungsvertrag ODER Reformvertrag ODER Referendum UND Irland ODER “Vertrag von Lissabon” ODER EU UND Lissabon ODER Lissabon-Vertrag”⁶.

The database of the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, however, did not work with free chosen keywords, but with predefined categories. Therefore it was necessary to search manually through the chosen categories for articles that applied best to the keywords. The categories chosen were Irland, Verträge_Abkommen, EU, Reformpolitik, Volksabstimmungen, EU-Ministerrat, EU-Gipfel_Treffen and EU-Verfassung⁷.

6.1 Newspaper and Readership Data

Obviously, as the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* are written for different and only partly overlapping clientele, their readership differs in number, level of education and average income.

The print run of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is 556.287 copies a day, while the *NOZ* prints 74.456 (figures for April 2008 excluding e-papers, IVW-Datenbank), which already indicates the different level of circulation: the *SZ* is a national or supra-regional newspaper, while the *NOZ* has a more restricted area of circulation in the North-western parts of Germany and therefore falls under the category of a local or regional newspaper.

Numbers also validate the assumptions that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is written more exclusively for intellectuals, while the *NOZ*, as a local newspaper, shows a different picture. 58% of *SZ*-readers have completed higher education (A-level, university) compared to only 15% of *NOZ*-readers. Just the other way around,

6 Translation of keywords: “Constitutional Treaty OR Reform Treaty OR Referendum AND Ireland OR Treaty of Lisbon OR EU AND Lisbon OR Lisbon Treaty”

7 Translation of categories: Ireland, Treaties_Agreements, EU, Reform Policies, Referenda, Council of Ministers, EU-summits, EU-constitution

people with a basic level of education account for 48% of the NOZ readership, but only for 14% of the SZ-readership (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Department for Marketing Research; see *table 8.2*, p. 54).

According figures can be found for income distribution. A relatively high monthly income is more normal among SZ-readers (above 2500 Euro: 58%; between 2000 and 2500 Euro: 16%; between 1500 and 2000 Euro: 11%, see *table* at page 55) than among readers of the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung where different levels of income are more evenly distributed among the readership (above 2500 Euro: 37%; between 2000 and 2500 Euro: 22%; between 1500 and 1000 Euro: 19%). (*ibid.*)

These differences show well the status of the SZ as a high quality (“intellectual”) daily newspaper with a rather intellectual readership, while the NOZ as a local newspaper has a more diverse (less intellectual) readership. There are only slight differences in respect of age distribution, gender and marital status. (see complete figures in *table 8.2*. at page 54).

6.2 Quantitative Results

The quantitative content analysis is based on counting how often the Treaty of Lisbon was the main content of articles in the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Obviously, coverage follows certain events. The relatively large numbers of articles in October and December 2007 and April, June and July 2008 confirm the theory that coverage on an issue usually peaks around some prominent event.

Month	NOZ	SZ	total
October 2007	16	14	30
November 2007	1	3	4
December 2007	8	11	19
January 2008	0	3	3
February 2008	0	11	11
March 2008	4	5	9
April 2008	5	11	16
May 2008	3	8	11
June 2008	20	43	63
July 2008	8	18	26
total	65	127	192

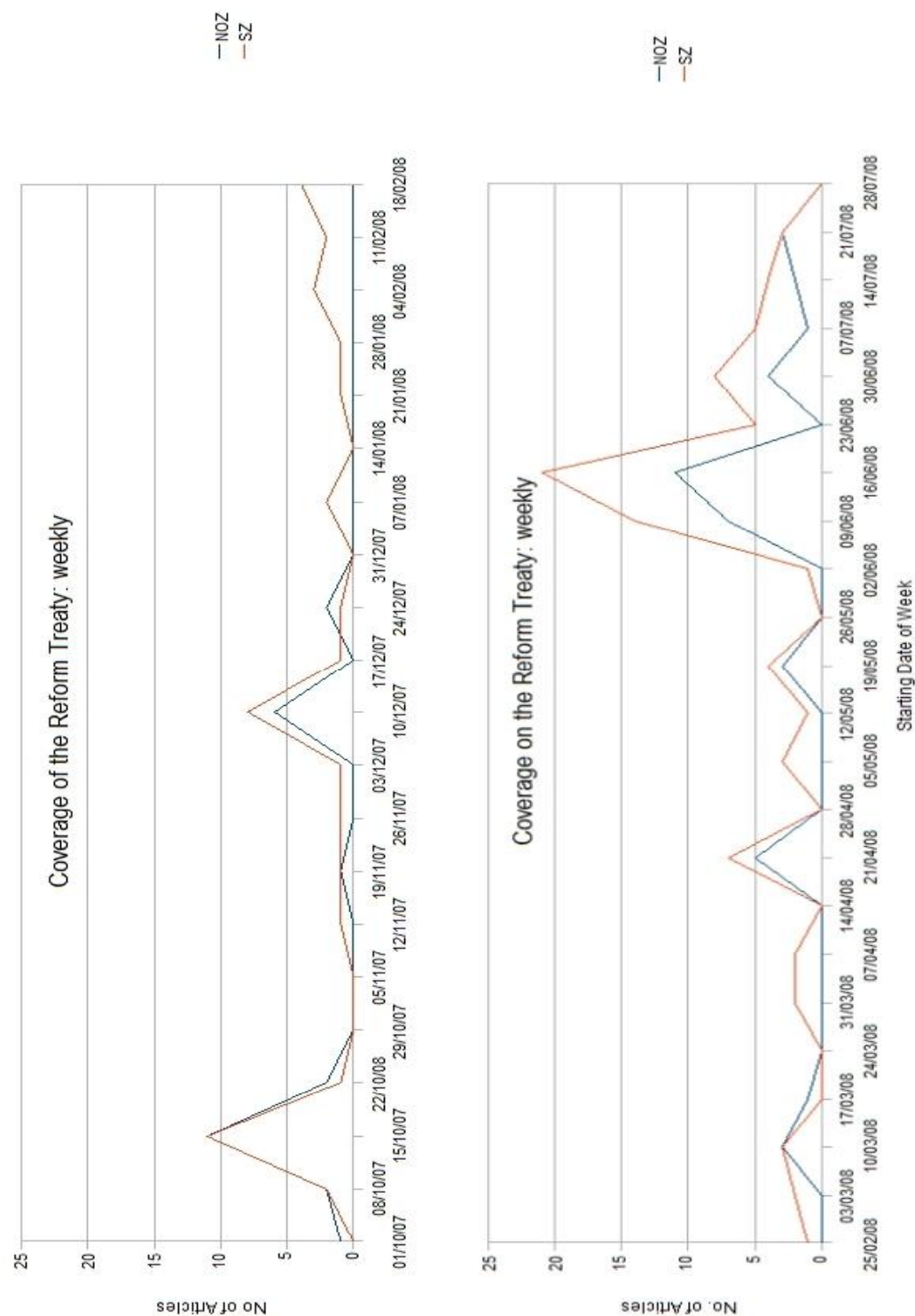
Table 6.1: Number of articles per month per newspaper

In this case, the peaks circle around the major events which took place in the process of decision on and ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon: The Treaty was agreed on by the heads of state of the 27 European member states at the European Council summit in Lisbon at October 18th/19th 2007 (30 articles) and signed on December 13th, again in Lisbon (19 articles). The peak in April 2008 signifies the ratification of the Treaty through the German parliament, the *Bundestag*, at April 24th (16 articles). Obviously the Irish no-vote on the Treaty in the referendum on June 12th 2008 is accountable for the 63 articles that month in both newspapers. The relatively large number of articles in July can be accounted to two developments: the aftermath of the Irish referendum and the decision of the German president on June 30th 2008 not to sign the Treaty until the Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic had decided on it. A German member of parliament had brought an action right after ratification through the *Bundestag*. According to those prominent dates, the weeks with the largest amount of coverage correlate with those events as well, as can be seen in *figure 6.1*, which further differentiates the numbers of *table 6.1* in the number of articles per week. The weeks with the highest level of coverage accordingly are the weeks starting with October 15th, June 9th and June 16th.

A closer look at *figure 6.1* below also reveals that the two newspapers correlate very much in when they cover events around the Treaty closely and when coverage decreases. This correlation shows that NOZ and SZ mostly put the same level of salience to an event – indicated through the number of articles. Both newspapers' coverage peaks around the already identified dates.

However, there is a difference in the overall numbers of articles which deal with the Treaty of Lisbon and their average amount of words/length. If the total numbers of articles on the Treaty in the respective time frame are compared, it shows that the total amount of articles in the SZ is almost twice as large as in the NOZ (SZ: 127, NOZ: 65). *Table 6.1* also shows that the SZ almost always displays the larger number of articles per month. Only in October 2007 the NOZ actually published more articles on the Treaty than the SZ. Following this picture, the average length per article in the SZ is approx. 56% larger than in the NOZ. SZ-Articles were of an average 582 words, NOZ-articles counted 328 words.

So far, the first hypothesis has partly been validated. Articles of the NOZ on the Treaty are neither as many nor of the same length as those in the SZ. Quantitatively it is therefore true that the NOZ does not display the same level of coverage.



Graph 6.1: Coverage of the Reform Treaty: weekly

6.3 Qualitative Results

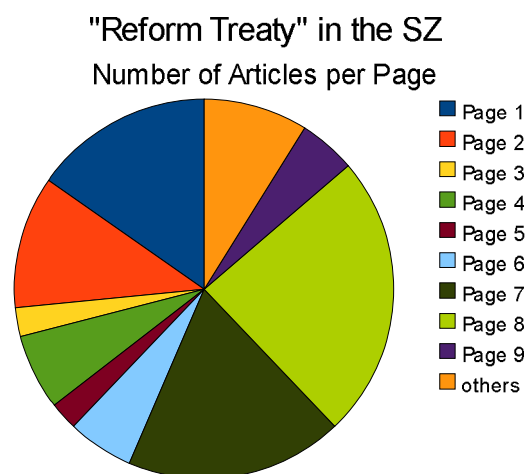
From length and number of articles the conclusion could be drawn that the articles of the SZ are more detailed, so that the newspaper gives more information than the articles of the NOZ are capable of in the small amount of words that are available. The following qualitative analysis therefore deals with the second (qualitative) part of the first hypothesis.

6.3.1 Qualitative Analysis of Articles

When starting the qualitative part of the analysis I first evaluated in which parts of the two newspapers articles on the Treaty of Lisbon appeared. Unsurprisingly most articles could be found in the politics section of SZ and NOZ. There also were 3 articles which figured in the reports section of the SZ, the so called “3rd Page” and 14 times the events surrounding the Treaty made up the topic of the day in the SZ (page 2). Within the time frame there were also seven articles on the Treaty within the feuilleton/feature section and one in the economics section (numbers above out of the overall amount of articles found, see *table 6.1*).

In the NOZ articles only featured in “politics”. Unluckily the database of the newspaper does not give exact page numbers, so that comparison between the two newspapers in that regard (for instance on the number of articles on the front page) is not possible.

However, the SZ displayed 14 articles out of 127 on the front page. Another 44 articles could be found on the first 4 pages, including the important “Topic of the Day” and “3rd Page”-sections. - Page 2 for instance (“Topic of the Day”), is completely reserved for a single topic, which is then reflected from different angles. Most articles were located on page 7 and 8, which are reserved for European



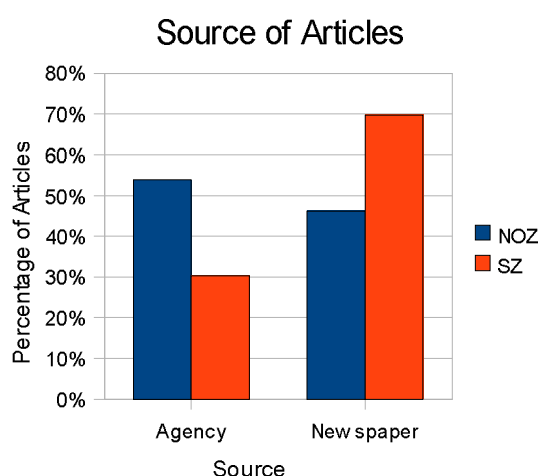
Graph 6.2: Positioning of articles in the SZ

and international news. These numbers indicate that the Treaty of Lisbon was considered an important topic by the Süddeutsche Zeitung during the time of analysis, as in newspapers only important issues are featured on the front page.

In a next step I had a closer look at the respective newshooks⁸, the “reason” an article was written in the first place, among the articles of the sample. I distinguished between claims or quotes by in this context important persons, events that took place and “general information” on the Treaty by the newspaper. If one of the three different newshook-“categories” is used more often than the other this might give some insight into what the newspaper considers most important and where it focusses on: events, people or background information.

Out of the eight articles of the sample of the NOZ three articles dealt with events, three based on a quote and two reported background information. More significantly, eight out of 15 articles from the SZ-sample were written on certain events, only three on quotes and four gave general information on the Treaty. However, most of the time the simply informative articles followed an article on an event in the same edition of the newspaper, so that this event still was the actual newshook. Problematic is that a strong focus on events might impede the acquirement of knowledge on all the parameters of adequate knowledge named by Delli Carpini and Keeter: the level of information on people and parties is much lower than that on “substance of politics”.

Another important aspect is the articles' source. As already discussed, news agencies have a more national or domestic focus in the way news is framed, even with international – or in this case European news. It is therefore of some importance to see where most articles of a newspaper derive from. *Graph 6.3* shows the percentage of articles in SZ and NOZ which derived mainly from news agencies and which are genuine articles of the newspaper. In case of the NOZ, the relation is



54% (agencies) to 46% (newspaper). In the SZ, only 30% of the articles had their main source in agency reports, while 70% were written by the journalists and correspondents of the newspaper. (*Graph 3*)

Surprisingly these figures do not correlate with the main focus of the articles content. Only 51% of the

Graph 6.3: Source of articles

⁸ Newshook: the initial cause for the writing of an article

SZ's articles in the sample put their main focus on the EU only (meaning that the impact of EU processes on national or even local level was not considered in these articles) and 49% had a more national focus. On the other hand, it's bigger reliance on agency reports did not impact on the focus of the NOZ in that this newspaper's articles were even more domestically focussed. 87.5% of the NOZ articles did not deal with national or local aspects of EU processes but with all-European aspects and impacts instead. Only 12.5% had a domestic focus. None of the two newspapers dealt with possible impacts on regional or local level, which seems especially surprising for the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung. In case of the Süddeutsche Zeitung the personal level is missing altogether as well, while at least one article of the NOZ deals with the impact of the Reform Treaty on the individual in that it names policies which have to be decided at EU-level, but affect the personal life of EU citizens directly – like particulate matter and the policy on low-energy light bulbs. In such cases of direct impact it would be advantageous if the EU was more efficient in decision-making. (NOZ, Article *“Ein neuer Präsident für Europa – Fragen und Antworten zu den europäischen Verträgen”*, October 18, 2007)

The other categories, which were established in the methodological chapter, are also covered to different extents. “History and development” is the category which is most substantively covered by both newspapers and in which all sub-categories are covered as well. As both newspapers base most of their articles on events relating to the Reform Treaty, it is to no surprise that the content of the articles has a strong focus on such events, procedures and developments. From the sample six (out of eight) articles of the NOZ and nine (out of fifteen) articles of the SZ belong in this category.

The actual content of the Treaty is less well presented. Only three articles of the NOZ and four of the SZ (again, from the sample) deal with the content of the Treaty. While both introduce the novelties of the Treaty and the major changes that have been introduced in comparison to the previous Treaties, neither one of the two papers deal with passages and parts that remain unaltered. As people already know little about the Treaty of Lisbon, or the legal framework of the European Union in general, this is potentially problematic: the impression is given that all major parts are changed.

Processes in other member states - like ratification processes, possible referenda, parliamentary debates etc. - feature highly in the SZ (ten out of 15 articles), but not

to the same extent in the NOZ (four out of eight articles). However, again both newspapers cover all sub-categories. This is important considering the potential development of a European public sphere. Coverage of going-ons in other European member states – even though it concentrates on the decision-making level – forms the foundation on which a European public sphere could evolve.

Considering the assumption on the qualitative standards of the two newspapers in the first hypothesis, the qualitative analysis cannot completely confirm the difference in quality of the articles. On the one hand the local newspaper relies harder on the input of news agencies which, however, did not at all affect its focus of EU coverage in the expected way. But at the same time there appears almost no significant difference in the coverage of the categories established: both newspapers cover almost all subcategories and the only major difference lies in the SZ's strong focus on processes in other member states, which does not feature in the NOZ.

The hypothesis on quantitative and qualitative differences between the two newspapers can therefore only be validated on the quantitative part. Concerning the content there are no significant differences and only the larger average word count of the SZ and the larger number of articles on the Reform Treaty indicate the possibility that articles are more detailed and provide more differentiated information.

6.3.2 Qualitative Analysis of Commentaries

With the qualitative analysis of the newspapers' commentaries on the Treaty of Lisbon the approach was not so much different as the approach on the articles. However, a difficulty appeared with the more general focus of the commentaries: less stringent on the Treaty alone, but more on the EU in general, or the Treaty next to many other different aspects of European integration. It is therefore that the categories I used were phrased to fit with commentaries on the EU. This difficulty was especially apparent with commentaries of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* which covered a variety of EU-integration issues at the same time.

Altogether, 13 commentaries of the SZ and 16 commentaries of the NOZ in the defined time-slot dealt with the Reform Treaty.

Unsurprisingly, none of those commentaries could be allocated to the category "eurosceptic". However, the overall result is to some extent surprising with regard to the second hypothesis. 12.5% of NOZ- and 7.7% of SZ-commentaries were

completely pro-European and 68.8% (NOZ) to 69.2% (SZ) showed pro-European tendencies, meaning that the articles were in favour of European integration, the EU and/or the Reform Treaty but also commented on negative aspects and processes. Most often the articles commented on the negative impact of national interest-bargaining on the integration process and the image of the EU. Both newspapers agree in their commentaries that it is those harsh and often opaque bargaining-processes which inflict most damage to the EU and which alienate citizens (e.g. NOZ Oct. 19th, 2007: *Lauter niedrige Hürden*; SZ: June 21st, 2008: *Der Preis der Geduld*).

The rest fell in the category "neutral"⁹ (NOZ: 18.8%; SZ: 23.1%), which meant that either positive and negative aspects were balanced or that a position of the author on the EU was not discernible. All three neutral commentaries of the SZ fell in the last category, as they dealt foremost with the action of political protagonists on EU level (e.g. the French President's reproof of the Irish course of action following the negative referendum).

However similar the position of the compared newspapers is, in this case the assumption that SZ articles might be more differentiated in their presentation of an issue and more detailed in information was confirmed. An average SZ-commentary had a length of 511 words, compared to only 205 words of commentaries of the Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung. Allocating the commentaries into the most fitting category was often complicated by the variety of different aspects of European integration and the Reform Treaty (e.g. domestic affects, opinions of political protagonists and opinions of the author on the action of those actors) which were presented within the commentaries. NOZ-commentaries generally were more directly focussed on the Treaty or a certain event and possibly one or two effects/aspects.

Nevertheless, concluding from the findings of the content analysis of the commentaries, the second hypothesis has to be rejected. Both newspapers' commentaries – the national high quality newspaper and the local newspaper – were predominantly pro-European. From editorial proceedings (even commentaries have to meet the newspaper's position on a certain issue) it can be concluded that both newspapers have a pro-European stand. This is also reflected in the most prominent frame both newspaper's commentaries display: From the articles the

9 Only one commentary of the NOZ had a eurosceptical tendency. None of the SZ.

opinion was discernible that the Reform Treaty only is the marginalised version of the “Constitutional Treaty”, the ratification of which would have been preferable. Two SZ-commentaries miss a “European soul” and European identity in the Reform Treaty as were incorporated in the “Constitutional Treaty” (e.g. paragraphs on the European hymn and flag).

At the same time both newspapers agree that the Treaty of Lisbon is necessary for the EU to be able to function and for European integration to move forward.

Again the strong focus of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on developments in other EU member states is obvious. Seven commentaries from 13 overall dealt with ratification debates and processes in other member states, compared to only four out of 16 in the NOZ, which focussed on proceedings on EU-level (ten out of 16). Both newspapers again almost neglected the domestic developments – possibly due to the fact that ratification of the Reform Treaty through the *Bundestag* never was doubted. Those few articles that considered processes in Germany covered the legal action of a Member of Parliament against the Treaty before the Constitutional Court.

6.4 Conclusion

Compared to the theoretical approach to what can be considered adequate political knowledge of citizens, the analysis has shown that adequate knowledge can be derived from both newspaper types. There is, however, a slight difference whether the standards of Philip Palmgreen (1979) or those of Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) are applied. Palmgreen's understanding of adequate political knowledge required the ability of citizens to identify the major political actors and the political outputs at the end of a process. Even though the two newspapers' coverage was strongly event-driven, the main actors – member states, Council of Ministers, EP, Commission and individuals speaking for them (e.g. national leaders, Commission President) – have been named. Even more so, by reading the NOZ's and SZ's coverage on the Treaty of Lisbon “good” knowledge can be established on processes, problems and solutions, the “political outputs”.

On the other hand, the already indicated focus on events partly impedes the possibility to meet Delli Carpini and Keeter's parameters of what citizens should know about politics. The analysis shows that much information is given on the major current political issues – the Reform Treaty and its surrounding developments

("Substance of politics") but not so much on the rules of the game – laws, institutional framework etc. Relevant actors ("people and parties") are only named alongside the events taking place.

Nevertheless, both newspapers covered processes around the Reform Treaty rather extensively – so that learning processes triggered by following the reporting are possible – and positively.

Differences between the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* are distinguishable but surprisingly small. Still, the lower quantity of coverage on the Treaty in the NOZ (by number and by length of articles) is prone to have an impact on the knowledge that can be derived from this coverage and the salience which is put to the issue by NOZ readers compared to SZ recipients. To give a straight forward answer to the fourth sub-question: Compared to what information could be provided – measured by standards developed in theory and by comparison to the SZ – the *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung* does not fall short significantly. The shortcomings of its coverage are either similar to those of the SZ (e.g. one-sided focus on events) or can be attributed to the "nature" of a local newspaper: a bigger variety of issues as different levels of politics have to be covered (local, regional, national and international) and a less homogeneous readership as the newspaper is not edited for a certain clientèle but for a region. While the politics section of the SZ covers approx. 8 pages, only 2-3 pages of the NOZ are allocated to national and international politics. By far the biggest part of the newspaper covers events in Osnabrück and surroundings.

From this it is also possible to deduce an answer to whether a knowledge gap might exist between readers of the two newspapers: Based on the argument that repeated information supports learning processes, such a knowledge gap may indeed develop over the course of time – all other things, like consumption of other news media, being equal – because of the higher quantity of articles on the EU in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In addition the more differentiated nature of SZ articles ("quality") possibly leads to a more detailed knowledge of its readers, than can be gained from relying on NOZ articles alone.

However, at this stage it is not possible to make assumptions as to the size of this gap in knowledge. At the same time, the question also remains unanswered, whether additional knowledge to the basic level of knowledge which can be derived from both newspapers, actually has a positive effect on interest and participation.

7. Discussion

The thesis started with the question whether adequate knowledge on the EU can theoretically be derived from following local newspaper coverage. In the first section a theoretical framework was developed which set out to introduce and explain the major theoretical concepts the analysis builds on. First of all a standard of adequate political knowledge of citizens was established against which the actual information in newspapers could be contrasted. The result of the analysis showed that there is a surprisingly small difference in coverage between the respective local and national high quality newspaper, while both fall short in the same respect: the strong focus on events and on national and international level, while the local level is disregarded. A possible reason for the missing local focus is the international and national “meaning” of the Treaty of Lisbon. Treaty revisions at the first sight appear to have little direct impact on local level, such as e.g. revisions of the CAP would have on local farmers. It is possible that the thematic focus on the Reform Treaty also is responsible for the finding that both newspapers focus on events and to some extent neglect the categories of “people and parties” and “rules of the game” of Delli Carpini and Keeter (see page 15f). A broader thematic frame, such as coverage on the EU in general would have given a better insight in whether those categories are generally neglected or whether this finding can be attributed to the nature of the frame of this thesis. Still, the thematic frame, as well as the time frame helped to operationalise the research, which was necessary considering the restricted scope of a Master's Thesis.

Nevertheless, it can also be concluded that a basic level of knowledge on the EU can be derived from the coverage of both newspapers. The major difference appeared in the quantity of coverage, which leads to the assumption that coverage of the SZ – as this newspaper displays a higher number of articles and longer articles than the NOZ – is possibly more prone to add to political knowledge in this respect, than the NOZ is.

The focus of this thesis was, however, on the possibility to derive knowledge from newspaper reading. It did not test whether such a process actually takes place. A next step in research would therefore be to test the actual gain in knowledge readers receive on the EU from reading newspapers and see whether any differences appear between the readerships of different newspaper types. This step is important if any reliable statement on newspaper's impact on citizens' knowledge

shall be made. Even more importantly, with respect to the European Union but also to modern democracies in general, it has to be investigated, in how far a rise in political knowledge does effect interest and participation levels among the citizens. Concerning the coverage of local and high standard national newspapers, the findings of this thesis indicate that theoretically information on the EU in these media is sufficient in order to raise the knowledge of the readers. If the hypothesis of most scholars on political knowledge that knowledge effects interest and participation positively is true, other reasons have to be found to explain the lack of participation and the disparity in participation between intellectual levels then insufficient newspaper coverage.

However, it has also to be taken into consideration that the concentration on two newspapers alone does not allow for representative conclusions on the EU coverage of local or regional and national high standard newspapers. The findings of this thesis need to be verified by comparable research on other newspapers or simply a bigger sample of newspapers – especially with hindsight to the question posed above on the possibility to explain participation levels with information through newspaper coverage.

Concerning the EU and the possible development of a European public sphere it is also of interest whether these findings on German newspapers are transferable to other European member states' media landscapes as well. Especially coverage on going-ons in other European member states – even though it concentrates on the decision-making level – forms the foundation on which a European public sphere could evolve.

An affirmation could lead to a more positive evaluation of the chances of such a development of a European public sphere but also of the chances to develop higher interest levels in the EU among European citizens. Obviously a positive and adequate newspaper coverage on the EU in one member state alone is not sufficient to positively influence interest and participation levels for the whole of the European Union.

Future research will also have to concentrate on other media as well. While print media and television have been covered to some extent, the internet is only insufficiently researched regarding its growing importance in the everyday life of citizens and its possible teaching function. An interesting fact in this regard is that for instance in Germany 25% of those under the age of 25 consider the European

Union and its institutions to be transparent, while numbers above this age-group are approx. 10 percent lower. Undoubtedly, 25% already is a very low level considering the EU's self-demand to be transparent and close to the citizens. However, of interest here are the differences between different generations. A possible explanation could be that the EU is transparent in that it publishes all papers and makes them free accessible – or be it in the internet.

Thorsten Hüllers request for “publicity” gains importance here: it is not possible for all citizens of the European Union to have the same minimum level of knowledge (in this case ironically on the question, whether the EU is transparent or not) if vast amounts of information on this issue are mainly transferred by a medium which is not necessarily the main source of information for the majority of the European public.

Shen already applied a cross-media research on television and newspapers (Shen 2007). In the future, the internet will have to be included in considerations on political knowledge, but also participation as this medium makes new ways of participation possible (e.g. e-democracy). Such a study is also better fitted to investigate the possible added knowledge through cross-media learning, as most citizens will not reduce themselves to one news medium alone, but consult a variety of news media to search for information.

Some research in this direction has already been done and is named in the theoretical chapters of this thesis. Especially the comparative content analysis of the AIM research consortium gives insight into the diverse media landscapes of European member states. A conclusive all-European cross-media study, however, has yet to be conducted.

8. Appendix

8.1 Figures and Tables

Articles per Day per Newspaper

Zeitung/ Datum	01/10/07	02/10/07	03/10/07	04/10/07	05/10/07	06/10/07	07/10/07	08/10/07	09/10/07	10/10/07	11/10/07	12/10/07	13/10/07	14/10/07	15/10/07	16/10/07	17/10/07
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/11/07	02/11/07	03/11/07	04/11/07	05/11/07	06/11/07	07/11/07	08/11/07	09/11/07	10/11/07	11/11/07	12/11/07	13/11/07	14/11/07	15/11/07	16/11/07	17/11/07
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/12/07	02/12/07	03/12/07	04/12/07	05/12/07	06/12/07	07/12/07	08/12/07	09/12/07	10/12/07	11/12/07	12/12/07	13/12/07	14/12/07	15/12/07	16/12/07	17/12/07
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/01/08	02/01/08	03/01/08	04/01/08	05/01/08	06/01/08	07/01/08	08/01/08	09/01/08	10/01/08	11/01/08	12/01/08	13/01/08	14/01/08	15/01/08	16/01/08	17/01/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/02/08	02/02/08	03/02/08	04/02/08	05/02/08	06/02/08	07/02/08	08/02/08	09/02/08	10/02/08	11/02/08	12/02/08	13/02/08	14/02/08	15/02/08	16/02/08	17/02/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/03/08	02/03/08	03/03/08	04/03/08	05/03/08	06/03/08	07/03/08	08/03/08	09/03/08	10/03/08	11/03/08	12/03/08	13/03/08	14/03/08	15/03/08	16/03/08	17/03/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/04/08	02/04/08	03/04/08	04/04/08	05/04/08	06/04/08	07/04/08	08/04/08	09/04/08	10/04/08	11/04/08	12/04/08	13/04/08	14/04/08	15/04/08	16/04/08	17/04/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/05/08	02/05/08	03/05/08	04/05/08	05/05/08	06/05/08	07/05/08	08/05/08	09/05/08	10/05/08	11/05/08	12/05/08	13/05/08	14/05/08	15/05/08	16/05/08	17/05/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/06/08	02/06/08	03/06/08	04/06/08	05/06/08	06/06/08	07/06/08	08/06/08	09/06/08	10/06/08	11/06/08	12/06/08	13/06/08	14/06/08	15/06/08	16/06/08	17/06/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	
Zeitung/ Datum	01/07/08	02/07/08	03/07/08	04/07/08	05/07/08	06/07/08	07/07/08	08/07/08	09/07/08	10/07/08	11/07/08	12/07/08	13/07/08	14/07/08	15/07/08	16/07/08	17/07/08
HOZ																	
SZ																	

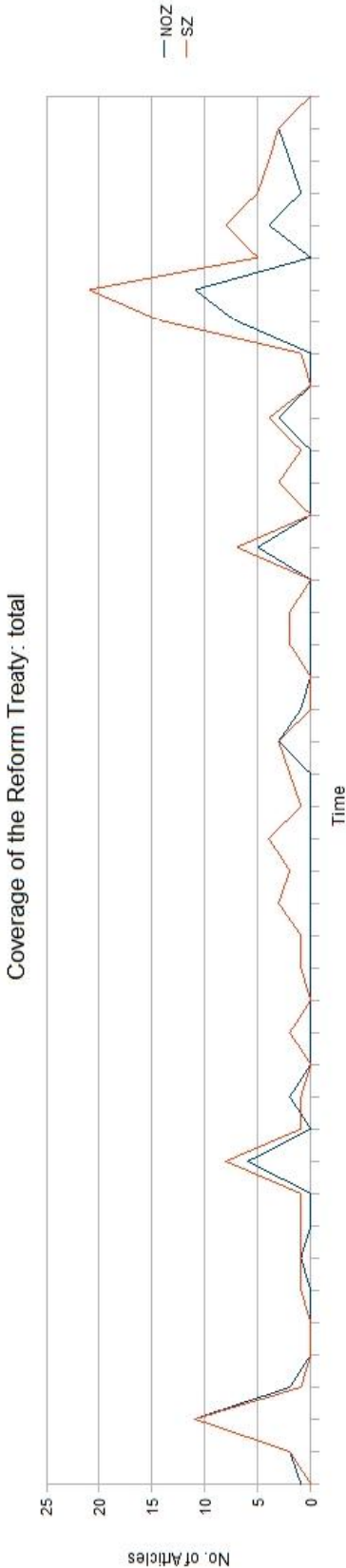
Articles per Day per Newspaper

18/10/07	19/10/07	20/10/07	21/10/07	22/10/07	23/10/07	24/10/07	25/10/07	26/10/07	27/10/07	28/10/07	29/10/07	30/10/07	31/10/07	SZ	Summe Monat
2 4	3 2	5 3	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	1 1	14	30
Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi		
18/11/07	19/11/07	20/11/07	21/11/07	22/11/07	23/11/07	24/11/07	25/11/07	26/11/07	27/11/07	28/11/07	29/11/07	30/11/07		1	
So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr		3	4
18/12/07	19/12/07	20/12/07	21/12/07	22/12/07	23/12/07	24/12/07	25/12/07	26/12/07	27/12/07	28/12/07	29/12/07	30/12/07	31/12/07	8	19
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	
Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo		
18/01/08	19/01/08	20/01/08	21/01/08	22/01/08	23/01/08	24/01/08	25/01/08	26/01/08	27/01/08	28/01/08	29/01/08	30/01/08	31/01/08	0	3
Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	3	3
18/02/08	19/02/08	20/02/08	21/02/08	22/02/08	23/02/08	24/02/08	25/02/08	26/02/08	27/02/08	28/02/08	29/02/08			0	
Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr			11	11
18/03/08	19/03/08	20/03/08	21/03/08	22/03/08	23/03/08	24/03/08	25/03/08	26/03/08	27/03/08	28/03/08	29/03/08	30/03/08	31/03/08	4	9
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5	
Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo		
18/04/08	19/04/08	20/04/08	21/04/08	22/04/08	23/04/08	24/04/08	25/04/08	26/04/08	27/04/08	28/04/08	29/04/08	30/04/08		5	16
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	
Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi		8	11
18/05/08	19/05/08	20/05/08	21/05/08	22/05/08	23/05/08	24/05/08	25/05/08	26/05/08	27/05/08	28/05/08	29/05/08	30/05/08	31/05/08	3	
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	
So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	8	11
18/06/08	19/06/08	20/06/08	21/06/08	22/06/08	23/06/08	24/06/08	25/06/08	26/06/08	27/06/08	28/06/08	29/06/08	30/06/08		20	
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	43	63
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		
Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo			
18/07/08	19/07/08	20/07/08	21/07/08	22/07/08	23/07/08	24/07/08	25/07/08	26/07/08	27/07/08	28/07/08	29/07/08	30/07/08	31/07/08	8	
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	18	26
Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So	Mo	Di	Mi	Do	65	127

Durchschnitt Artikel NOZ: 328 Wörter
Durchschnitt Artikel SZ: 582 Wörter

Table 8.1: Articles per day per newspaper

Coverage of the Reform Treaty: total



Graph 8.1: Coverage of the Reform Treaty: total

Readership SZ and NOZ

Leser-Struktur Interviews gewichtet	Gesamt		Süddeutsche Zeitung			Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung A-E Gesamt A-E		
	Mio	%	Mio	%	Ind	Mio	%	Ind
Basis	64,87	100	1,19	100	100	0,81	100	100
Geschlecht								
Männer	31,46	49	0,67	56	115	0,40	49	101
Frauen	33,41	51	0,52	44	86	0,41	51	99
Altersgruppen								
14 - 19 Jahre	5,12	8	0,05	4	54	0,05	6	76
20 - 29 Jahre	8,48	13	0,18	15	114	0,07	9	67
30 - 39 Jahre	9,67	15	0,22	18	121	0,12	15	99
40 - 49 Jahre	12,34	19	0,25	21	110	0,17	21	109
50 - 59 Jahre	9,85	15	0,23	19	126	0,15	18	118
60 - 69 Jahre	9,44	15	0,17	14	97	0,13	16	107
70 Jahre und älter	9,97	15	0,10	9	57	0,13	16	107
70 - 79 Jahre	7,54	12	0,08	7	56	0,10	12	107
80 - 89 Jahre	2,31	4	0,03	2	59	0,03	4	108
90 Jahre und älter	0,12	0	0,00	0	44	0,00	0	83
Schulbildung								
Volks-/Grund-/Hauptschule	28,82	44	0,16	14	31	0,39	48	107
weiterführende Schule ohne Abitur	23,48	36	0,33	28	77	0,30	37	103
Abitur, Hochschulreife, Studium	12,57	19	0,69	58	301	0,12	15	77
Berufstätigkeit								
in Ausbildung	7,28	11	0,15	13	112	0,07	8	73
berufstätig	34,19	53	0,74	62	118	0,43	53	101
Pensionär, Rentner	18,36	28	0,22	19	86	0,23	29	102
nicht berufstätig, keine Angabe	5,04	8	0,08	6	81	0,08	10	122
Familienstand								
ledig	17,30	27	0,35	30	112	0,16	19	72
verheiratet, keine Angabe	36,14	56	0,67	56	100	0,54	66	119
geschieden oder verwitwet	11,42	18	0,17	14	81	0,12	14	81
Haushalts-Netto-Einkommen								
bis unter 1.000 Euro	6,35	10	0,07	6	57	0,05	6	66
1.000 bis unter 1.250 Euro	4,81	7	0,04	3	47	0,05	6	79
1.250 bis unter 1.500 Euro	6,29	10	0,07	6	58	0,08	9	98
1.500 bis unter 2.000 Euro	12,96	20	0,14	11	57	0,15	19	94
2.000 bis unter 2.500 Euro	12,81	20	0,19	16	79	0,18	22	112
2.500 Euro und mehr	21,65	33	0,69	58	175	0,30	37	112

Table 8.2: Readership data SZ and NOZ

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung, Department for Marketing Research

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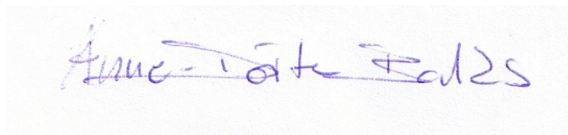
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Ich versichere an Eides statt, dass ich diese Arbeit eigenständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt und mich anderer als der in der Arbeit angegebenen Hilfsmittel nicht bedient habe. Alle Stellen, die sinngemäß oder wörtlich aus Veröffentlichungen übernommen wurden, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht.

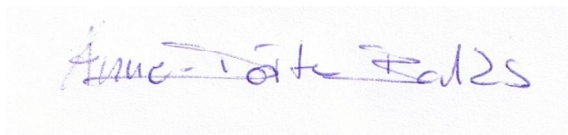
Münster, 30. März 2009



Anne-Dörte Balks

I hereby declare and confirm that this paper is entirely the result of my own work except where otherwise indicated.

Münster, March 30th, 2009



Anne-Dörte Balks