

Andreas Hepp, Monika Elsler, Swantje Lingenberg, Anne Mollen, Johanna Möller, Anke Offerhaus: The Communicative Construction of Europe. Cultures of Political Discourse, Public Sphere and the Euro Crisis. Palgrave MacMillan, 2015, p. 296.

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Ewelina Gutowska – Kozielska

University of Gdańsk, Poland

The Euro crisis we are witnessing appears to be one of the most difficult challenges to the very existence of the European Union, threatening its powers and structures on numerous levels. The multidimensional character of the crisis has called into question the European Union's identity and governance. The member countries of the EU have suffered long-term effects of the phenomenon in terms of economy and politics, and the political divisiveness has resulted in the growth of support for EU opponents.

The Communicative Construction of Europe: Cultures of Political Discourse, Public Sphere and the Euro Crisis, a result of an extensive twelve-year research conducted across a carefully chosen representative country sample – in order to investigate the communicative construction of Europe during the course of the Euro crisis – offers a portrayal of the European Union and transitional Europe between 2003 and 2014. The book presents the European public realm as a “thickened communicative space articulated mainly through certain patterns of transnationalisation” and, simultaneously, provides empirical evidence confirming the existence and importance of the phenomenon. In the times of often prevailing narrative about the end of the EU in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, Andreas Hepp et al's analysis presents powerful arguments against a claim that it can and should be perceived as a phenomenon resulting in a collapse of the European communicative construction. The book examines the character of the communicative construction of Europe, and the way journalists and the public relate to the European public sphere and influence it in the context of the Euro crisis. *The Communicative Construction of Europe* is unique in its approach, focusing its attention not on the political and financial elites, but on the journalistic practices and the citizens' relationship with and reaction towards the public sphere, and explores the topic in eight well-constructed chapters. The first chapters of the book provide an analysis of communicative construction both in terms of the European public sphere and cultures of political discourse fundamental to the process of that construction. The interviews with EU and foreign news chief editors and editors and correspondents from quality, regional and tabloid newspapers together with a detailed analysis of the political news coverage (1982-2013) and newsroom observations (2008, two newsrooms per country) were carried out to present the framing of the European contemporary situation. Newsroom studies and a content analysis of increasingly transitional political news coverage in the press prove that despite the fact that particular elements of European public sphere remain segmented, its downfall - despite the Euro-skeptic attitudes – as a result of the Euro crisis did not actually take place:

“while the Euro crisis year 2008 has gained special prominence for political institutions, trends towards Europeanisation that were already apparent had been consolidated, there being only a small degree of instability, if any.” Nevertheless, the mediated representation of Europe, i.e. how journalists from Austria, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany and Poland tend to “re-articulate cultures of political discourse – national as well as transitional” - present Britain and Denmark defining Europe as, in a way, external – with “the Other”, the remaining countries normalizing European news, and Poland – at the time of research – leaning towards the latter approach. At times, the authors' not entirely unbiased perspective seems to surface: journalistic practices normalizing European news are seen as progressive in the right direction in contrast to those with the more distanced attitude towards the EU.

The second part of the book focuses on the way EU citizens participate in the discussion of the Euro crisis. The analysis of the social media content (125 comment threads from political news from social and mainstream media as well as political blogs) carried out during the Euro crisis summit of the European Council in 2012 demonstrated that the Euro crisis created a context for citizens’ engagement in the process of the communicative construction, and the qualitative audience research based on 182 thorough interviews with citizens representing different social backgrounds confirmed that “having a public connection to Europe is a common ground”. Andreas Hepp et al define three main types of European public connection – *noticing* i.e. acquainted and connected, *centered* i.e. interested in particular issues/phenomena, and *multi-perspective* i.e. representing a multiplicity of different, often contradictory views. Surprisingly, the interpretation of the Euro crisis appears to be, to a large extent, similar for the citizens of all six countries despite the fact that only three of them do in fact belong to the Euro zone.

The book concludes that the Euro crisis is not synonymous to, and does not result in a collapse of the European communicative construction or the fragmentation of European identity; on the contrary, the process of defining, understanding and surviving the Euro crisis contributes to the strengthening of that identity. As the question remains whether these conclusions are still accurate in the light of current events in Europe, *The Communicative Construction of Europe: Cultures of Political Discourse, Public Sphere and the Euro Crisis* is a landmark contribution to the field of European public sphere and political discourse, and a great introduction to further discussion, both political and academic.