Is European Nationalism failing because of a lack of myths?

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Abstract: *This article reflects on the consequences of the ratification crisis of the European Constitution in 2005. It was claimed that Europe lacked a collective identity, which is crucial to form loyalty towards the EU, and especially a common European myth. However, the debate about whether an identity is being formed at a European level is controversial. Based on a content analysis of the above mentioned communication event in four European media arenas, the author suggests that, in view of the result that no common myths could be found, attempts to create a European nationalism have been failing.*

Keywords: *European identity, European public sphere, European myths*

Introduction

In 2005, in the referenda on the draft European Constitution the French and Dutch electorates indicated by their voting behavior that at least some sections of the European population are no longer willing to tolerate the EU as an elite project with limited democratic legitimacy. Apparently, as soon as burdens increase and large-scale redistributions are expected, only a few loyalty dispositions in relation to the EU are recognizable. These, however, remain strictly limited to the nation state. This raised severe doubts about the impending European integration, and in particular about the successful structuring of its constitution. It was frequently argued that

such a process required a European identity, since a common democratic society necessarily required identity dispositions which enabled the acceptance of decisions on the part of the overruled minority of the electorate (Tobler 2006). Furthermore, observers argued that Europe lacked a common public sphere since collective identities can only come about within a public sphere regarded as generally accessible to the entire electorate (Lucht and Tréfás 2006). Based on a concept of identity which is created communicatively, it may be concluded that the (previous) combination of the principle of the public sphere with the nation state boundaries of political decision-making is the cause of the lack of a European public sphere, democracy and identity.

Indeed, in recent decades the EU started to act more and more like a nation state when implementing a range of identity policies. According to Wolfgang Schmale these policies are based on six pillars, which include introducing a set of symbols like an anthem and a flag, European citizenship, a common currency and cultural aspects, such as a common set of values and the use of history for political purposes. In so doing, the EU focuses on the creation of European museums, and especially on research into the Holocaust (Schmale 2008). The combination of these policies can be summarized under the expression European nationalism (d'Appollonia 2002) in the sense that they aim to achieve structures which are similar to those of nation states. These policies tend to imitate the construction of national identities. The officially maintained term "freedom project" creates a founding myth of the EU.

However, the debate about whether an identity is being, or can ever be, formed at a European level is controversial. Comparisons between the European and the various nation state projects repeatedly emphasize the claim that Europe suffers from a so-called myth deficit or at least from a shared view of history (Schmale 1997 and 2001). This claim is common in the discourse of intellectuals about Europe. Some intellectuals worry about this deficit, while others regard it as an advantage. They depict Europe as a mosaic, as a net, a narrative (Keller and Rakusa 2003). Parts of this literature are – as Richard Swedberg put it – based on rather dubious historical research (Swedberg 1994). Recently, Timothy Garton Ash also claimed that Europe has lost the plot: Europe no longer knows which story it wants to tell. "A fallen shared political narrative sustained the postwar project of (west) European integration for three generations, but it has fallen apart since the end of the cold war." Ash's autopsy is clear: "Most Europeans now have little idea where we're coming from; far less do we share a vision of where we want to go to. We don't know why we have an EU or what it's good for. So we urgently need a new narrative." (Ash 2007) He recommends constructing a new narrative along the strands of freedom, peace, law, prosperity, diversity and solidarity. However, he acknowledges that "our new European story will never generate the kind of fiery allegiances that were characteristic of the pre-1914 nation state. […] Europeanness remains a secondary, cooler identity".

Implicitly, according to Ash, myths are composed of two elements: a narrative with temporal references, and the dissemination of (political) core values.

All these reflections on Europe are signs of apprehension: the Europe-project seems to give cause for concern among intellectuals and academics. Most of these concerns and claims, however, are filled with normative implications, and neglect theoretical and empirical research. Likewise, the question whether Europe is a project of a new nationalism or, according to its institutional shape, a project *sui generis* has not been raised sufficiently. In this article, I examine whether, assuming that the nationalism-paradigm is correct, there is a European myth appearing in public communication. If it does appear, we can assume that the project is successful despite any political decisions taken by the French and Dutch electorates. If it does not, it may be true that European nationalism has not succeeded because of structural shortcomings, e.g. the lack of a common public sphere, or that the paradigm of European nationalism is simply not appropriate.

For this reason my objective is to define what role political myths play in shaping collective identities and what function they serve in nationalist ideologies. As myths can be regarded as narratives conveying values grounded in history, I will explore the implications for empirical research by referring to the narratology of Gérard Genette. Finally, based on an analysis of public communication in France, Germany, Hungary and Great Britain, I will deal with the question of whether there is a common European myth appearing or not, and the consequences to be drawn from the results of the media analysis.

A short definition of political myth

Thinking about myths requires a definition of the term itself. It can be used in various forms: as a polemic counterpart for the process of Enlightenment, as a timeless truth, as a function of culture, as a lifestyle (e.g. the American Dream), as a narrative, as a literary artifact, and as a holistic worldview (e.g. in the sense of Oswald Spengler) (Assmann and Assmann 1998). Concerning several items of this assemblage, one may ask whether myths are a normative need for political identities. This question is related to a more basic question about the sense of history as such. In archaic, pre-modern societies, according to the research of Emile Durkheim, all the past is inherent in a non-temporal worldview, thus, history is everywhere and nowhere at the same time. The step out of the enchanted garden, as Max Weber put it, means that this unity was sacrificed for a rational modern worldview (Imhof 2006). Religious orientation as an all inclusive worldview was replaced by ideologies promising benefits in human life and not in kingdom come. These short range ideologies had to anchor their origins in cultural traditions. Thus, a paradox role of

founding myths was achieved: they became dependent on the cultural traditions and the commemoration they helped to steadily reproduce, and thus created themselves. This mechanism is crucial for the observation of the construction of European myths. In consequence, European myths can only come to the fore in a European culture, and it may be assumed that a common culture corresponds to a certain ideology of Europeanness, or a so-called European nationalism.

This common culture becomes the basis of new nationality, based, according to Ernest Gellner, on a common language or common history. So, history becomes a part of the high (literate) culture in which people have been educated, 'their most precious investment, the core of their identity, their insurance, and their security'. Thus, Gellner concludes, "a world has emerged which in the main, minor exceptions apart, satisfies the nationalist imperative, the congruence of culture and polity". (Gellner 1983: 111) This high culture is based on the "invented traditions" Gellner mentions, and which are deeply analyzed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Inventions, once established, take on a life of their own that is neither enhanced nor curtailed by scholarly efforts to prove or disprove their authenticity or antiquity. Although myths are not mentioned explicitly, their function of social engineering relates to Gellner's theory of political legitimacy. Invented traditions in Hobsbawm's sense inculcate values, even though of an unspecific and vague nature, with the help of a "suitably tailored discourse (such as 'national history')". (Hobsbawm 1983: 14)

Hobsbawm emphasizes, however, that nationalism is bound to a specific age (Hobsbawm 1990), so the connection between myth and nationalism may be bound to a specific time period as well. The end of this specific time period has been declared several times, e.g. by postmodernists as Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard suggested that the master narratives of modernity were oppressing the plenty of micronarratives which in turn are characteristic for postmodernity (Welsch 2002: 31f). After all, to what extent there is a theoretical necessity for myths for the founding of nation states is to be questioned. Benedict Anderson points out the example of the Declaration of Independence in the United States in 1776, which refers in no way to Christopher Columbus, Roanoke, or the Pilgrim Fathers, while the mother of all national revolutions, the French Revolution, displaced the old Christian calendar by the year one in 1793. However, Anderson acknowledges that history became a crucial point for nationalist movements after imposing History as a new discipline in the 1810s. As a result, new awakening nationalisms transformed historical events into myths and used them as specific points of departure for the master narratives of their nations (Anderson 1983). Thus, in general, collective identities can be seen as the stories people tell about themselves in order to give continuity to their existence. Such narratives appeal to higher moral values (Swedberg 1994) on the one hand, and

on the other are the basis of memory (and forgetting), and express the performative and public aspect of identity (Delanty and Rumford 2005).

The grasp of history, that is to say stories, narratives of past, present and predicted political events, gives meaning to modern ideologies. Only the combination of stories and ideologies is potentially able to provide myths. As Christopher Flood put it, any ideologically marked political story has the potential to become a myth if narrated by an appropriate teller to an appropriate audience in appropriate circumstances (Flood 1996: 26), or more precisely an appropriate historical, social, and ideological context. Flood focuses on myth-making as a communication process.

Research design

As we have seen, myths are special kinds of narratives. Since they are socially relevant, when an appropriate teller communicates them to an appropriate audience in appropriate circumstances it is necessary to locate them in arenas where the degree of dissemination is far-reaching. The dissemination of political narratives and myths can in principle take place at three levels of the public sphere: at the encounter level, the assembly level and in the mass media (Neidhardt 1994). The encounter level includes spontaneous public communication on the street or at work: all participants are speakers and listeners, and the duration is limited. The assembly level includes specific systems of interaction, e.g. organized demonstrations, theatre spectacles and trade union assemblies. Assemblies can be spontaneous or organized, and differences between speakers and listeners are clearer than on the encounter level. In the mass media, interaction between speakers and readers/listeners is restricted. The media are long-term organizations; the public is permanent. Each participant at any level is part of a system of communication. For my purposes it is appropriate to concentrate on mass communication, that is the mass media. It is to be considered that there are also other sources where narratives are disseminated, e.g. schoolbooks or monuments, assemblies of any kind, military education and other forums. Media content analysis has the advantage that the media is in principle accessible to everyone living in a society and has a significant impact in shaping public opinion. This special segment of the public sphere can be explained by several models. An appropriate model for my purposes provides a foundation within a socio-theoretical horizon which summarizes the connection between the public sphere and culture. Such a model is the arena theoretical model of the public sphere. One core trait of the model is that the public sphere is not based on an imagined integrated "demos" but rather on the assumption that the "demos" is differentiated in terms of function, segment and stratification. Another core idea is the observation that social change

in modern societies finds its catalyst in public communication. In this way public communication becomes a power directly creating history and identity in periods in which public communication itself is radically altered. In no other periods do so many communicate about the same issue so intensely as in periods when the existing social order is fundamentally called into question. The discontinued resonance and relevance of these periods of crisis manifest themselves in the process of the increase and decrease of political validity and of political publicity in the form of a semantic difference with relation to the problems of various citizen environments. During these processes, political publicity is literally cordoned off, and public figures, topics and attention foci are replaced or shifted. This in turn can lead to an internal or external expansion or closure of the political sphere of validity.

The public sphere can be modeled as a communications network comprised of a number of public arenas which are connected via infinite waves of communication events. Communication events are units of the sense of different grades of abstraction and actuality which are centered thematically. These appear in the form of series of articles in public communication (Eisenegger 2003). If communication events create resonance in different public arenas simultaneously, they can then be construed as socially relevant events, usually indicating constellations of crisis or conflict (Lucht and Tréfás 2006).

The mass media play a decisive role in creating such communication events: they give public dispute durability and make the permanent observation of society and its sub-systems possible. The leading media of the political public spheres are of central importance, as the leading media pick up discourse from other public arenas fast, and bundle them into mass-media-observable communication events. They can therefore generate communication connections in these and other arenas, especially at the various arena levels of the political system. In consequence, narratives can be located in the mass media. The articles analyzed are bundled into communication events. The relevant communication event for the purpose of analyzing whether a European myth exists is the Ratification Crisis of the European Constitution in 2005, especially the period it was at its height between 13 May and 30 June. The arena theoretical model of the public sphere and the focus on the communication event allows the identification of the appropriate circumstances Christopher Flood required and the appropriate audience since the arena theoretical model also involves the audience in the analysis. As it is most likely that pure descriptions of events seldom contain elements of political myths, I focused on reflexive articles (editorials, commentaries) in two leading media in four different media arenas. I chose two assumedly EU-friendly arenas, Germany and France, and two assumedly EU-skeptical arenas, Great Britain and Hungary. For each arena I chose a centre-right and a centre-left newspaper, which were the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Süddeutsche Zeitung for Ger-

many, Le Figaro and Le Monde for France, The Times and The Guardian for Great Britain, and Magyar Nemzet and Népszabadság for Hungary.

As regards the appropriate teller, it is likely to find speakers in each arena who are accepted by the audience. These can be political elites from whom mass publics accept leadership and guidance, and from whom they take their ideological cues. In the beginning of the age of nationalism such elites were educated people like priests and teachers. However, in our times narratives and in particular political myths are also disseminated to a large extent by the mass media. While the media can be charged with ideological bias in reporting, it can be argued conversely that many myths which are also in the media are produced without any deliberate intention to mislead. The mass media are parts of a communication arena which is held together by a common cultural background and even more by a common shared belief or "collective identity". The language and the style of the transmissions have a special importance as,

> "only he who can understand them, or can acquire such comprehension, is included in a moral and economic community, and that he who does not and cannot, is excluded. All this […] follows from the pervasiveness and crucial role of mass communication in this kind of society. What is actually said matters little" (Gellner 1983: 127).

The core topic of interest, however, is the content of the articles. It is anticipated that different kinds of narratives will be found in the different arenas about the same topic. Thus, in order to be able to compare, it is important to find indicators for narratives in general, and especially for myths. It is common sense, at least since the linguistic turn and, in particular, the work of Hayden White in the 1970s, that history writing is a literary artifact (White 1973, Rüsen 2002). Thus historiography and, more generally, the dissemination of historical narratives, underlies the rules of literature. In Gérard Genette's narratology, for example, a narrative is constructed by order, frequency, duration, voice and mood. Regarding political myths as narratives, these categories are to be considered (Genette 1994). Vis-à-vis order, there are retrospectives, prolepses and analepses – elements which Genette subsumes as anachronistic elements. Frequency means how often a story is told. A teller emphasizes parts of the story by telling them several times or undervalues other parts by telling them in a shortened version or not at all. Frequency and duration are often intertwined: some stories are told once but in full detail whereas other parts are only summarized. The voice of the teller is either reduced merely to an opinion or the teller is identified with the writer or the author. The person addressed can be seen as the one who listens or reads. Writers and poets have a marked preference for games with this category (take Edgar Allan Poe). Finally, a narration is structured by the mood of telling it: whether it is simply a narration, reported speech, or a discourse matters. All these

techniques of narration are relevant options for telling political narratives. In our case the exposure to time and history in particular is crucial: which parts of a story are told and in what relation, and which ones are simply ignored.

In considering mythical narratives, two main elements need to be concentrated on. One is the narration of values and temporal references, more precisely references to events in the past and stories about the future. The other element is a set of values derived from the current Fundamental Values of the EU. This set of values outlines the dimensions of the essential European identity formed over the decades. Behind this construction lies the understanding that public communication containing semantics of identity is inflamed by imagined or actual threats to these identity-forming values. The values range from democracy, liberty and wealth to willingness to integrate. The latter can be described as EU-friendliness, a core trait of a (national) society. It is not my purpose to dismantle ideologies of known protagonists in Europe, since 'we shall not learn too much about nationalism from the study of its own prophets' (Gellner 1983: 125). Ideological and mythical narratives are also inherent in ordinary newspaper articles. I will therefore examine which value is debated in each article and the extent to which it is linked to temporal references mentioned in the article. For the research I selected a total of 244 articles in the four arenas of France, Germany, Great Britain, and Hungary. Firstly, I will examine which political values are debated in the specific (national) discourses (fig. 1–4). Secondly, I will extract the top 3 temporal references in each arena (fig. 5) and examine the most important links between values and temporal references (fig. 6) as this is where the relevant indicators for European myths in each arena are most likely to be found. The structure of the myths is analyzed with the help of the patterns of Gérard Genette's narratology.

Most frequently mentioned values in European media arenas

The discourses present in each arena are shown in the following four figures. This first step illustrates that the most debated values differ in most of the arenas. The analysis shows that in France the most debated values are EU Integration and – not surprisingly for the French arena – Liberty, followed by Progress.

**Fig. 1: Most mentioned values in the French arena (n=71)**
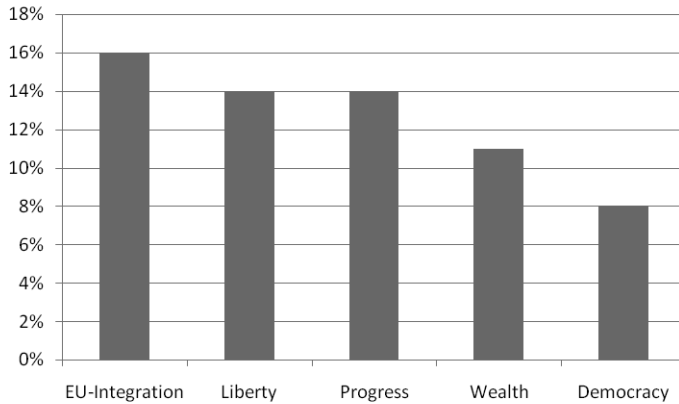
In Germany, neither EU Integration nor Liberty feature. The most important values are Democracy, Wealth, and Social Justice. This may be in part a result of the permanent election campaigns in some federal states and the heavy struggles between the opposition and the social democrat government in Berlin at that time. However, Democracy is a value permanently appearing in communication events since the 1950s.

**Fig. 2: Most mentioned values in the German arena (n=64)**
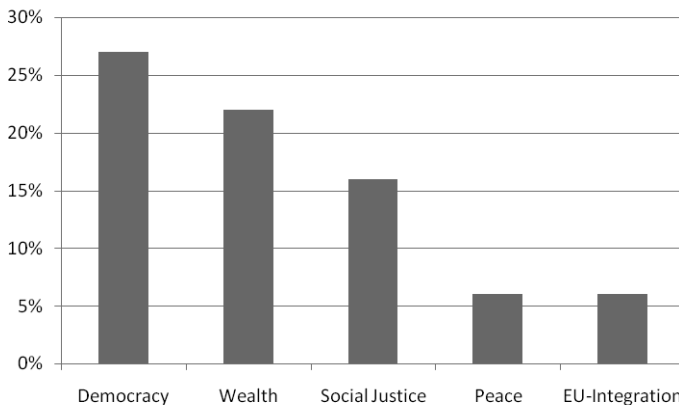
In Hungary the debate about values is apparently at a low level. Only Democracy is obviously largely discussed. This is, as we shall see later, due to the conservative media whereas the liberal media avoids specific value debates.

Fig. 3: Most mentioned values in the Hungarian arena (n=26)
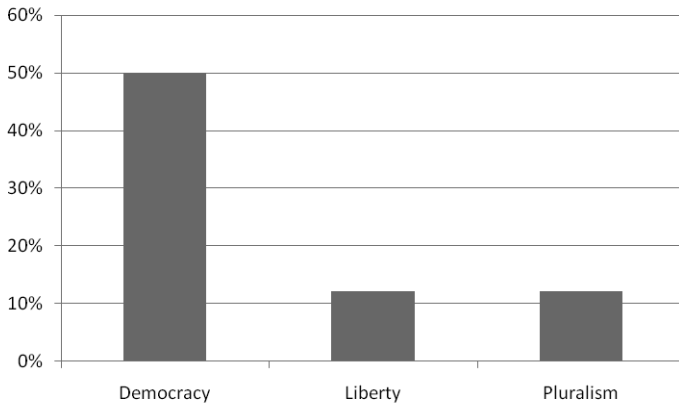
In British media the top 5 values are Defense, EU Integration and Wealth, followed by Democracy and Progress. Without going into a deep analysis of the British media coverage we can observe that the value Democracy is present in all media arenas as well as the value Wealth, albeit at a lower level. EU Integration is discussed in the arenas Great Britain and France, and so are all the other values debated. On the basis of these results it is improbable, however, that the conclusion that a European myth is necessarily about Democracy and Wealth can be drawn. It is the combination with temporal references that counts. Apparently, there are significant differences between the arenas. It seems that each arena produces specific debates about specific values, and these debates are embedded in cultural circumstances.

Fig. 4: Most mentioned values in the British arena (n=197)
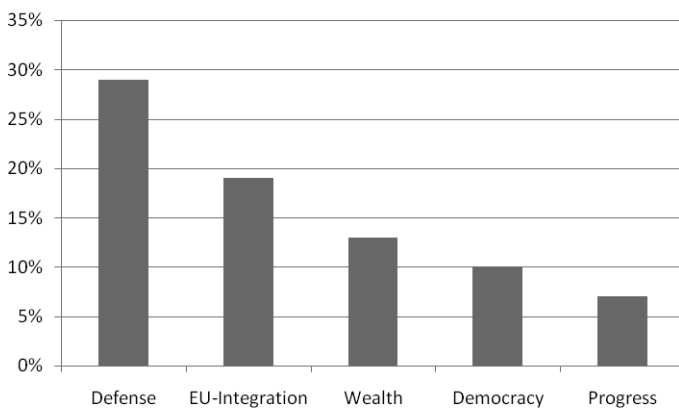
Most frequently mentioned temporal references in European media arenas

Less divergent results can be observed in the analysis concerning the most mentioned temporal references. At least in the three Western European arenas France, Germany, and Great Britain the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 and the Treaty of Nice in 2000 seem to be leading references. All of these arenas are in countries that have been member states of the European institutions for decades. Yet, in the case of Hungary temporality concerns the undefined past and the undefined future, somewhere in a historical vacuum. This can be explained by the fact that the Constitution Treaty is not of high importance; the country has already entered the safe haven of the Union, and there is no European past and no European future yet to refer to. The gap between the two parts of Europe can in part be explained by the different dates of entry into the Union.

The conclusion to be drawn from this result is that there are convergent structures of narration in the West and different ones in the East.

Fig. 5: Most mentioned temporal references across the arenas (n=170)

	France	Germany	Hungary	Great Britain
No. 1	1992: Maastricht (17%)	2000: Nice (21%)	Undefined future (47%)	2000: Nice (15%)
No. 2	2000: Nice (11%)	1992: Maastricht (11%)	Undefined past (11%)	1992: Maastricht (15%)
No. 3	1957: Foundation EEC (10%)	1989: Fall of Iron Curtain (11%)	Communism (10%)	Future entry of Turkey (11%)

Having extracted the most frequently mentioned values in each arena and the most frequently mentioned temporal references, the two results must be brought into relation. Due to the structure of analysis, it cannot be assumed that the myth about Europe is necessarily along the lines of EU-Integration/Maastricht in France and Democracy/Nice in Germany. The link between the two results shows that there are also other combinations between these two strands in the same article.

Fig. 6: Most significant crossings of temporal references and values across the arenas

	France	Germany	Hungary	Great Britain
No. 1	EU-integration / Nice	Democracy / Nice	Democracy / undefined future	No significant crossings
No. 2	EU-integration / Maastricht	Democracy / Maastricht		
No. 3	Liberty / Nice	Wealth / Nice		

This result shows that in France EU Integration is much more strongly tied to the temporal references Maastricht and Nice than Liberty. In Germany, Democracy is highly relevant to the top 3 temporal references. In Hungary, the ties between Liberty and the undefined future are less frequent than those between Democracy and the undefined future. By addressing those articles where the most significant links are presumed, it is likely to extract those texts where traces of European myths are to be found.

With reference to Gérard Genette's narratology, I will examine the whole communication event with regard to the dimensions of the order, frequency, and duration of the narration. Order is signified by the usage and arrangement of temporal elements. For the purposes of this study, the arrangement has no great relevance. The second dimension, frequency, is, however, highly important since it measures whether a myth is inherent in only a small or in a great number of articles which are elements of the narration.

European myth in the French arena

In the French arena, the frequency of potential articles containing elements of myths is at rather a low level. Of 62 articles, only 9 contain potential elements of a political myth, which is a rate of 14.5 %. However, within the chosen articles there are plenty of references to political myths, and these are also told extensively.

In general, in the French arena one can see that the myth about Europe is rather a myth about the role of France in Europe than about Europe itself. Accordingly, France has achieved all the important steps in integration, such as the Treaty of Rome 1957, the Treaty of Maastricht 1992 and the Treaty of Nice 2000. In doing so, France is protecting Europe against British pessimism and Turkey. France, in this view, is the motor of integration in the name of human rights and liberty. A typical example is this extract from Le Figaro of 25 May 2005:

> "Do we really realise that for the first time – yes, the first time – first six, then eleven, then fifteen, then twenty-five states have taken the free decision to unite their fate in peace? And that this totally new undertaking is by and large due to France. Just remember that it was the Monnet-Schuman plan from 1950 which led to the Treaty of Rome in 1957. […] Because pure liberalism refers to the arrangements of liberty, freedom of opinion, cult, movement, and enterprise; all these arrangements respect human rights given to mankind by France."

The same article continues even more clearly : "France has launched the European project, the Maastricht Treaty, and together with Germany the European Constitution."

It is remarkable how even speakers from abroad underpin the French mythology. A characteristic example of this is the statement of the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodriguez Zapatero in Le Figaro, 23 May 2005:

> "There were also Adenauer, De Gasperi, Spaak, Schmidt, Kohl, Gonzalez… But since the very beginning France has been heading a project which has developed by facing difficulties but has never, never stopped proceeding towards their first and ultimate goal of improving the lives of Europeans and of creating a place of peace, freedom, and social and territorial cohesion for our peoples."

The myth narrated in the French arena is close to the French self-image about the role of the country in European relations. It is a myth about shaping one's own environment along the premises of one's own set of values. It is not about giving Europe a French touch but about making Europe and disseminating universal values stemming from French history.

European myth in the German arena

The frequency in the German arena is among the highest of the countries analyzed. 8 articles out of 40 contain potential elements of European myths, which is a rate of 20%. However, three of the chosen articles contain no mythical elements, which is due to the fact that at least two of them are written by guest authors from abroad. In the articleswith mythical elements, these are very significant and penetrate the whole articles.

In the German arena the myth about Europe is closely linked to the German democratic tradition. In this narrative, the European elite in Brussels lives in fear of the people of Europe, and all the more so since the Maastricht Treaty brought democracy into the buereaucratic system of the EU. A typical sentence can be found in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, 20 May 2005: "Direct democracy broke into the diplomatic-technocratic complex in Brussels, paralysing a system called Europe that seems to be self-sufficient and inexplicable to the outside world." And on 1 June 2005 the Süddeutsche Zeitung explains: "The problem of democracy in Europe is caused not by the structure of organisation but by the gap between the people of the Union, and its representation in parliament." This is an issue deeply entrenched in German history and the German myth about 'learning democracy' in the Adenauer era. Hence, unsurprisingly, Chancellor Willy Brandt's remark 'mehr Demokratie wagen' [daring to have more democracy] from the 1970s is quoted several times, and an educational bias is more than obvious: "The good spirit of the Constitutional Treaty is still to be discovered by the European citizens." (27 May 2005, Süddeutsche Zeitung) In the German case it can therefore be concluded that a genuine national myth has been transposed to Europe.

European myth in the Hungarian arena

The Hungarian arena contains 6 articles out of 27 with potential elements of a European myth. At 22% this is the highest rate of all the examined countries. Despite the high frequency, the duration of the mythical elements is very short. A myth about Europe exists purely in traces.

The most difficult interpretation of a myth is the case of Hungary, where temporal differences and values are mostly unclear. Nevertheless it seems that the myth about Europe is actually a myth about new colonialism. Europe, in this view, lacks democracy and will keep lacking it in the future. Due to deep rivalry between the different ideological groups and the media in Hungary, there is a split between the liberal and conservative media. For the liberal media, the remedy will come from the European peoples, whereas the conservative media compare the EU to Soviet communism and detects the hostility of this new empire towards the nation state. Here, the myth of an enduring menace to Hungarian sovereignty is strong in the conservative media. Again, we find a national myth transposed to another entity.

European myth in the British arena

The quest for European myths in the British arena was in vain: There are only 4 articles out of 115 containing potential traces of European myths, which is a very low frequency. But even those chosen did not bear any elements of a political myth, temporal references and core values related to each other. In Genette's words concerning the duration, mythical parts are not existant. Hence, we may conclude that there are neither positive nor negative European myths narrated in the British media in this period of 2005. Although it is possible that political myths about Europe are disseminated in other contexts, the synchronous analyses suggest that British myths about Europe are "cooler" than elsewhere.

No European myth without a European public sphere

In the introduction I suggested that, if we assume that a common myth is necessary for a European identity and there are really no common European myths emerging in public communication, either the assumption is not appropriate or there are structural deficits hindering the creation of such a myth. I defined political myths as a significant combination of values and temporal references that can be analyzed in public communication based on the assumption that myths are constructed by com-

municating them. Hence, I suggested that a common European myth is not likely to emerge as long as Europe lacks a common public sphere.

In the content analysis of the communication event the Ratification Crisis of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 I focused on the communication arenas of France, Germany, Hungary and Great Britain. Not surprisingly, there was actually no pan-European political myth to observe. European nationalism has apparently not enough clout as an official myth cannot be discerned anywhere. Instead, there is a wider range of different myths in different communication arenas. In the Western European arenas, they rely on the convergence of temporal references and this result at least allows the assumption of a common structure of historical thinking.

Moreover, there is apparently a slight convergence of values: with the exception of France, Democracy plays an important role in every arena; Liberty is present in at least two, and EU-integration in three arenas out of four. However, the values and temporal references are not interlinked in a similar way, and in most of the cases, the reference to Europe is not given. In consequence it is not possible to talk about a common European myth. Indeed, only in the two arenas of France and Germany could I reconstruct a myth about Europe easily, while in Hungary the mythical elements were not so clearly interwoven, and in Great Britain there were no traces of a perceptible European myth whatsoever. This leads me to the conclusion that in each arena myths are structured along specific national and specific cultural narratives: different values are narrated with different strategies of temporal references. Even the frequency of articles containing elements of myths is different: in the Hungarian and German arenas the rate of potential articles is around 20%, whereas in the French arena the rate is 14.5% and Great Britain has a rate of only 3.5%. Despite Hungary having the top rate, the duration there is far shorter than in the French arena, where myths are spread through whole articles. From this aspect the German arena has very helpful traits as high frequency is combined with long duration.

Neither the myth in the French arena nor the myth in the German arena is a European myth. The French myth is about France only and its creation of a Europe built by France. The German myth is a projection of a genuine German myth on the European screen. The core value in France is Liberty and in Germany Democracy. Thus not even the closest partners in Europe since the very beginning deal with the same values. This finding can be explained in part by the lack of a European public sphere. As values are discussed in appropriate circumstances by appropriate speakers, one can conclude that these circumstances to communicate political myths do not prevail. Hence, the discussion of values remains curbed within national boundaries. Obviously, myths are dependent on cultural traditions and they reproduce themselves constantly. This is why there are various myths in different communication arenas or, as the case of Great Britain has shown, there is no myth about Europe.

A remedy is only to be expected when a common European culture emerges or when, at least, the value change is similar in each member state of the EU. And this can only be attained within an emerging European public sphere. As long as there is no remedy for the lack of a public sphere there will always be several competing national myths instead of a pan-European myth. This could mean that European nationalism is in fact failing.

Thus, it is likely that European nationalism promoted by the EU is not succeeding. Europe may be united politically but it is not culturally. As long as the EU is a point of reference in national communication arenas the diversity of narrations about Europe will not hinder but enhance the integration process as there are national societies which have to agree to the common project. However, communication arenas where contradictory narratives and especially myths are disseminated can put the whole project in danger if they become more and more numerous. As long as this does not happen, Europe can continue to be a "Hypertext", as Wolfgang Schmale put it (Schmale 2008), a network of narratives which in total construes a myth about Europe.

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