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Sven Leif Ragnar de Roode. *Seeing Europe through the Nation: The Role of National Self-Images in the Perception of European Integration in the English, German, and Dutch Press in the 1950s and 1990s.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. 269 pp. $68.99 (paper), ISBN 978-3-515-10202-5.

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In the last two decades, media studies and communication history have paid growing attention to the topic of European integration. At the same time, researchers on the history of the idea of Europe have increasingly started to use media-based sources. Moreover the European Union (EU) has become aware of the importance of communication for fostering a European consciousness and has intensified its media policy since the early 1990s. Apart from investigating the contested issue of a European public sphere that is usually still seen as "an unfinished project,"[1] scholars have especially asked how mass media reflected and sometimes contributed to the process of European unification after 1945.

In his book based on his dissertation, Sven Leif Ragnar de Roode focuses on the coverage of European integration treaties in the 1950s and 1990s by Dutch, German, and British newspapers. By selecting this timeframe, he concentrates on what are arguably the two most important decades in the development of a united Europe, namely, its beginning and its intensification with the creation of the EU. De Roode has analyzed more than one thousand editorials, examining two dailies (one left-center and one right-wing) and two weeklies (again, one left-center and one right-wing) in each country. He aims to investigate how national self-images influenced the perception of European integration and were in turn influenced by that process. Following a constructivist approach, the author tries to make "a contribution to the challenge of de-constructing historically based national self-images" (p. 60). Methodologically, the study combines a traditional media content analysis with elements of a discourse analysis. The relevant editorials are thus viewed "as a representation of an intellectual crossroad of the intertwined discourses about the nation and Europe" (p. 62). Correspondingly, de Roode justifies the selection of quality newspapers instead of higher-circulation tabloids by arguing that the former represent the opinion of the sociopolitical elites, which dominated national debates.

The book offers a diachronic and synchronic comparison and is accordingly structured. The first part provides a rather lengthy overview of the different prevalent national self-images in the Netherlands, Germany, and England. By adopting a *longue durée* perspective on national discourse since the Renaissance, de Roode traces changing notions, interpretations, and self-images of the different nations as well as processes of national "othering." While there are obvious distinctions between the countries, he also spots striking similarities. Most notably, besides the impact of Protestant master-narratives and the importance of economic developments for national self-identification, essentialist ideas about primordial nations remained prevalent everywhere. The analysis is restricted to secondary literature, but the author has amply dealt with the current state of research in three different languages.

The second part presents work based on primary sources, where de Roode analyzes the print media debates about the various European integration treaties of the 1950s and 1990s in the three countries. Listing no fewer than fourteen (!) research questions in the opening paragraph, his central argument is that perceptions of Europe were inseparably intertwined with national self-images. Journalists and other commentators used references to national traits either to emphasize the need for a stronger European cooperation or to criticize the unification of the continent. Thus, on the one hand, in the 1950s, the (nationally connoted) legacy of the Third Reich and World War II was jointly responsible for a clear commitment to the European community in Germany and the Netherlands. On the other hand, English editorials about the Treaty of Paris in 1951 that established the European Coal and Steel Community and the (ultimately failed) founding of the European Defence Community one year later approved of the British absence mainly

due to the continuing belief in the Commonwealth and Britain's lasting global power.

De Roode's comparison shows important differences not only between the countries under research, but also between the individual newspapers. Most notably, in England in the 1990s, a downright clash between center-left and right-wing publications occurred. Whereas the former emphasized British belonging to Europe and generally acknowledged the need for federal integration, the latter viewed the intensification of the European project in connection with the Maastricht Treaty (1992) as dangerous for the country's sovereignty and instrumentalized the European Commission (EC) as a national "Other." Nevertheless, de Roode also underlines some parallels in the depiction of Europe in the various national newspapers. Self-images as free-trade nations, for example, were important for perceptions of European integration in Britain as well as in the Netherlands. Not surprisingly in the context of the Cold War, anti-communism served as an important tool in all countries to justify a European federation. Finally, while the idea of political integration of Europe was highly contested, most editorials agreed on the need for economic unification.

By addressing the relationship between national and European patterns of interpretation, de Roode obviously focuses on one of the crucial points in the process of European integration. The reader will find his main assumption that "Europe was essentially thought 'through' the nation" in basically the same wording not only in the title and on the back of the book, but also in nearly every chapter and in the concluding remarks (p. 228). While the thesis possibly will not come as a big surprise to the alert observer of present-day European politics, historically, it seems quite one-dimensional. Unfortunately, the author provides less analysis with regard to the second part of his main research question: only at the end of the conclusion does he offer some observations on how, in turn, processes of Europeanization influenced national self-images (p. 242). However, on the one hand, the notion of "Europe" cannot be equated with the process of European integration. On the other hand, even in the latter case, other studies have shown a more dialectical relationship between the "national" and the "European."[2] Indeed, there is surprisingly little reference to the vast amount of existing literature on the relationship between European unification, mass media, and national cultures. Astonishingly, the author does not refer to many of the major works and scholars on that subject, although some of them even evaluated the same sources.[3] Moreover, it is regrettable–from more than a media history point of view–that de Roode restricted his source analysis to the published editorials. While he argues that he could not incorporate biographical sources about the authors as most editorials were published anonymously (p. 63), an examination of editorial office archives would have enabled him to find out about the individual newspapers' guidelines and policies concerning European integration.[4] Hence, statements like "the newspapers deliberately tried to influence the political process" sound rather speculative and too generalized (p. 230).

Despite these criticisms, de Roode has provided a valuable and timely contribution. Its strengths lie in the discussion of national images of the "Self" and the "Other" in relation to influential debates about European integration. As studies about processes of Europeanization usually focus on the big players of European politics, Germany, Great Britain, and France, the inclusion of the Netherlands is laudable as well. The analysis provides further evidence for the emergence of a European communicative space that fostered transnational contacts and interactions in the media sector. Last but not least, the book is a useful reminder that early European integration was neither designed nor perceived as an idealist project, but rather as a pragmatic political necessity, which might help us to put into perspective some of the current struggles within the EU.

Notes

[1]. Hans-Jörg Trenz, "Uniting and Dividing. The European Public Sphere as an Unfinished Project," in *Manufacturing Europe: Spaces of Democracy, Diversity and Communication*, ed. Inka Salovaara-Moring (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2009), 35-52.

[2]. Cf. Maximilian Müller-Härlin, *Nation und Europa in Parlamentsdebatten zur Europäischen Integration: Identifikationsmuster in Deutschland, Frankreich und Großbritannien nach 1950* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008); and Stefan Seidendorf, *Europäisierung nationaler Identitätsdiskurse? Ein Vergleich französischer und deutscher Printmedien* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007).

[3]. For example, Juan Díez Medrano, *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jan-Hendrik Meyer, *Tracing the European Public Sphere. A Comparative Analysis of British, French and German Quality Newspaper Coverage of European Summits (1969-1991)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2010); and Hans-Jörg Trenz, "Media: The Unknown Player in European Integration," in *Media, Democracy and European Culture*, ed. Ib Bondebjerg and Peter Madsen (Bristol: Intellect, 2008), 49-64.

[4]. However, de Roode undermines his own argument by pointing out that, for example, in the case of the Dutch *De Telegraaf* (C. Gerretson and H. A. Lunshof, p. 152) and the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Günther Nonnenmacher, p. 196) in the 1990s, individual journalists wrote nearly half of the editorials that he investigated.

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