

*AIM Research Consortium* (Hrsg.): *Reporting and Managing European News. Final Report of the Project "Adequate Information Management in Europe" 2004-2007.* – Bochum, Freiburg: Projekt Verlag 2007 (= Reihe: Adequate Information Management in Europe). 233 Seiten. Preis: Eur 18,--.

*Katharine Sarikakis*

"Reporting and Managing European News" is not a research, but a research report in the form of a book: this monograph is an important factor that explains its shortcomings and contextualises the style of writing and the organisation of the book. The report is on a collaborative European project on the processes of news management about European news by media organisations in Europe. The complexity of the project is immediately evident to those studying the EU and the media. It requires a thorough understanding of the practicalities, administrative and political philosophies, policy processes and historical developments surrounding the polity *before* one begins to explore the ways in which news about the EU is handled. In that respect, the authors and researchers brought with them significant contextual knowledge which they attempt to summarise in the first chapter/section of the report.

The team lists several findings and conclusions explored in the chapters in more detail. Here I will concentrate on what I see as most exciting and with the potential for further stimulating research. The first regards the claim that Brussels is a "unique news site challenging domestic and foreign coverage cultures". Although this finding comes as no surprise to journalism scholars and practitioners, it does point to another important factor inseparable from the polity itself: the degree of "uniqueness" of this economic and political experiment, as far as the extent and depth of its development is concerned. Indeed, the EU is not literally a "unique" site of integration: Globalisation students situate it within processes of integration since the 16th century, moreover other forms of integration are ample such as the NAFTA or the African Union. It does however offer a taste of the increasing difficulties journalists and other public informers are facing when dealing with supranational and international organisations and even more crucially with international policy regimes and constellations, where information sources, codes and processes are diffused and not always transparent. As always, the complexity is in the detail – the hidden or nuanced subtleties that "make or break" a news report, access to background politics and the context within which decisions are being made.

Another interesting finding is that there appear to develop "diverging and converging practices in the development of European journalism in Brussels". The impact of the complex relationship between political institutions and administration and economic integration in regional and global scale for journalism practices is significant. Not only can

we see the importance of cultural and political capital in covering a geopolitical site such as Brussels, but also the effects of the lack of knowledge about the EU and its institutions are far-reaching. Some important ones noted in the study are those of homogenisation of journalism and internationalisation of communication cultures.

A final crucial element in the study is the discussion of the potential for European public spheres. Nothing new, one might add, as scholars have attempted to prove or disprove the existence of one or more public spheres for over a decade. Nevertheless, the important element in this discussion is the recognition that *mainstream* journalism has very little to offer in the construction of a European public sphere. A true European public sphere would be based on qualitatively treated news in terms of culture, analysis, interest and contextualisation – a mere increase in EU stories, as the team asserts, will not bring about any difference.

This summary is meant to highlight some of the interesting and most thought provoking elements in the study and the report. However, and this is the problem with the format of the analysis, this is not a reader-friendly document. Its set-up does a good job in reporting on the findings of the research, but it is not helpful in the classroom nor as a thought provoking source. The theoretical frameworks used – or dismissed – are not dealt with in depth and so there is little sense of progressing in our theorisation and conceptualisation, which is after all what a research project should be aiming at.

*Rucht, Dieter, Mundo Yang und Ann Zimmermann: Politische Diskurse im Internet und in Zeitungen. Das Beispiel Genfood. – Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2008. 224 Seiten. Preis: Eur 24,90.*

*Mike S. Schäfer*

Dieter Rucht, Mundo Yang und Ann Zimmermann nähern sich in ihrer (ursprünglich 2004 für den Deutschen Bundestag angefertigten) Studie einem relevanten, aber noch wenig beforschten Thema: der Strukturierung politischer Kommunikation im Internet. Vor dem Hintergrund oft formulierter Hoffnungen auf eine „Demokratisierung“ gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation durch dieses „neue“ Medium fragen sie, ob es tatsächlich einen „offenen Kommunikationsraum dar[stellt], in dem ein breitenwirksamer und wahrhaft authentischer, offener und machtfreier politischer Diskurs“ (13f.) stattfindet.

Diese Frage betten die Autoren zunächst in ein soziologisch inspiriertes Öffentlichkeitsmodell ein (19ff.). Anschließend arbeiten sie in einem Literaturbericht die „Besonderheiten der Internet-Kommunikation“ (22) heraus: Bei diesem Medium haben seine weite Verbreitung und die zugleich vergleichsweise niedrigen Zugangshürden dazu geführt, dass eine stärkere Repräsentanz von z. B. zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteuren und Inhalten erhofft wurde, die in „alten“ Medien oftmals marginalisiert sind. Umgekehrt wurden aber auch Befürchtungen laut, das Internet führe zu einer Fragmentierung der Öffentlichkeit.

Interessant an der vorliegenden Arbeit ist, dass sie diese Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen empirisch untersucht – auch wenn die Analyse nur für „ein Sachthema (Genfood), einen Sprachraum (deutsch), eine kurze Zeitspanne (Sommer 2004) und relativ kleine Ausschnitte“ (17), nämlich die von Google zum Thema ausgegebenen Internetseiten durchgeführt werden kann. Die Studie reflektiert diese Einschränkungen aber nicht nur