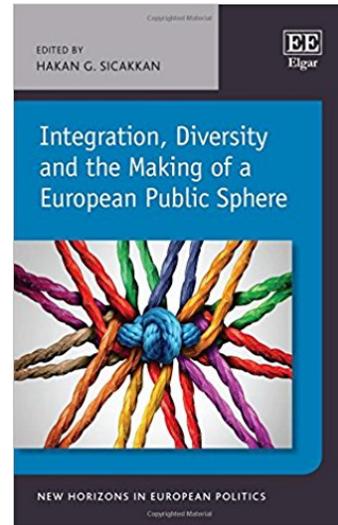


Hakan G. Sicakkan (Ed.), **Integration, Diversity and the Making of a European Public Sphere**, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016, 272 pp., \$119.18 (hardcover).

Reviewed by
Cigdem Bozdağ
Kadir Has University, İstanbul

The lack of a shared public sphere is considered to be one of the most significant democratic deficits of the European Union (EU) as a supranational governing entity. The edited book by Hakan G. Sicakkan, **Integration, Diversity and the Making of a European Public Sphere**, makes an important argument for adapting a new theoretical framework from an extended agonistic pluralism perspective of the public sphere for understanding the complex and contesting relationships in the making of the European public sphere. The book builds on the works of Chantal Mouffe, Jürgen Habermas, and Stein Rokkan and postulates that the public sphere is marked by diversity and conflicts. Political cleavages are constitutive of the (transnational) public sphere as they create shared agendas and interconnections between different publics. The case studies presented in the book stem from the Eurosphere project that was funded by the EU's Sixth Framework Programme (February 2007–July 2012).



Diverging from studies that mainly focus on the media channel (Koopmans & Statham, 2010; Triandafyllidou, Wodak, & Kryzanowski, 2009), the case studies in the book follow a three-channel model adapted from Rokkan as the channels of citizen intervention in the public sphere (p. xii). In addition to the media channel (chapters 3–5), the book also discusses the corporate-plural channel (chapters 6 and 7), which is about the direct interventions by civil society, and the numerical channel (chapters 8 and 9), which is about elections, political parties, and voters.

Developing the theoretical framework of the book, the first chapter, by Sicakkan, first discusses the term *Eurosphere* and defines it as a top-down pro-European, supranational, and elite-dominated public space initiated by the EU that connects the public spaces and publics in Europe by extending collaboration, contestation, and conflict at the European scale. Second, Sicakkan extends the notion of the agonistic-pluralist public sphere and argues that the public sphere consists of “multiple public spaces, multiple publics, at least one transcendent public space, at least one boundary trespassing public, boundary-transgressing groups and individuals in all types of public spaces” (p. 14). The Eurosphere constitutes the transcendent public sphere in the context of the agonistic European public sphere. After laying the groundwork for key concepts in the book, Sicakkan points out structural cleavages between the different types of public spaces and publics in the European public sphere.

The second chapter, by Wanda Dressler, gives a historical overview of the EU's territorial transformation (opening of borders) and policies to accommodate diversity. She analyzes how regions became the political units to manage the EU's territorial transformation. Dressler argues that the EU's

territorial structure, with its competing regional and ethnic identities and inequalities between the regions, is far more complex than the higher level of convergence in terms of languages, regions, identities, and political orientations that conventional theories presuppose to be the components of the public sphere.

The third chapter, by Monika Mokre, analyzes the EU's media policies from a historical perspective. After mapping the early media policies in the 1970s, Mokre discusses the failed attempts at building pan-European TV channels for informing European citizens about EU policies in the 1980s and 1990s. Parallel to these attempts, European institutions started to develop a common regulatory framework for audio-visual media in the 1980s to reduce national barriers for broadcasting and establish a single European media market. Mokre also briefly discusses the EU's digital channels and journalists' attitudes toward Europeanisation.

The fourth chapter, by Sicakkan, analyzes how transnational elites increasingly play a role in the dissemination of European citizenship discourses in national media through alliances with national elites. Sicakkan argues that the nationalizing discourses still have a dominant influence on national public spheres especially when it comes to issues of cultural diversity regarding native minorities and migrants. However, the communicative space that the Eurosphere creates through the networks between elites, journalists, think tanks, and civil society institutions contributes to the formation of a European citizen identity to some extent.

The fifth chapter, by Deniz Neriman Duru and Hans-Jörg Trenz, discusses the role of digital communication in the formation of the European public sphere, looking at Facebook groups and websites of expats in Denmark. These websites and Facebook groups are used for networking, community building, and exchanging practical information. Duru and Trenz argue that the social networking sites create "a transnational public sphere of a special kind" (p. 111), which goes beyond "cosmopolitan capsules" and connects the mobile European expats with local communities in Denmark.

The sixth chapter, by Marybel Perez, focuses on think tanks. Perez argues that European think tanks contribute to the formation of the European public sphere, first, by dissemination of information about EU policies and structures and, second, by creating a platform for networking between different actor groups and dissemination of EU ideas in these networks (pp. 124–125). However, this contribution is **limited** because of restricted access to these think tanks and the competition over information at the European scale.

The seventh chapter, by Jan H. van de Beek and Floris Vermeulen, analyzes the structures and degree of institutionalization of the EU's consultation system for ethnic groups (minorities and immigrants). The analyzed ethnic groups have different expectations and demands from the EU institutions, and the structures of consultation with these groups vary significantly. Therefore, the authors suggest that the EU should follow an agonistic-pluralist policy rather than an overall method relating to these different ethnic groups.

In chapter 8, Robert Sata examines the political parties and European party groups in the European Parliament (EP) with a focus on their role in creating a vertical trans-European public sphere.

Based on survey and interview data, Sata analyzes the attitudes of parties and party groups toward European integration. He also looks at voting behavior in the EP. The results show that most parties support European integration and mostly vote together with their party groups and the Euroskeptical parties are the most divided in the EP.

In chapter 9, Martina Klicperová-Baker and Jaroslav Košťál focus on the European demos and citizens' perspectives. Based on an analysis of the European Values Study, they develop a typology of different European mentalities (the secularized democrats, religious democrats, nondemocratic skeptics, intolerant economically deprived traditionalists, and authoritarian [anti-democratic] religious radicals). Although these individual orientations are present in all European countries in various degrees, the (non)partisanship attitudes are quite nation specific. Klicperová-Baker and Košťál conclude their chapter with a discussion on the potential of their findings in relation to diversity, democracy, and tolerance across Europe.

Chapter 10, by Sicakkan, concludes the book with a discussion of the case studies in relation to establishment of links between the citizens and the EU institutions through the numerical, corporate-plural, and media channels. One of Sicakkan's main arguments is that although Eurosphere succeeds in the dissemination of European discourses and in creating networks of transnational actors, it needs to include new forms of horizontal transnational publics in order to achieve its goals of legitimacy and democracy. Sicakkan then discusses how the European-level political cleavages and agonistic relations that emerge through the Eurosphere contribute to the creation of a shared agenda in the European public sphere. Thus, the current crises in Europe (the economic crisis, the refugee crisis, Brexit) can be seen as processes that strengthen the supranational bodies of the EU rather than weakening them.

Most studies on the European public sphere, looking for a (pan-European) civil society, a European citizenry, a European public opinion, and (pan-European) mass media (as emphasized in the classical understandings of the public sphere based on the Habermasian conceptualization), argue that there is only limited or no evidence for the emergence of a shared (transnational) public sphere and turn their focus to the Europeanization of national public spheres (de Vreese, 2007; Eriksen, 2005; Statham, 2010). The edited volume draws our attention back to the transnational public sphere and especially emphasizes the role of EU institutions' attempts at the formation of a European public sphere. It offers a multilevel approach to understanding the European public sphere as a complex constellation of old and new forms of existing and new ethnic, religious, minority-related, national, and transnational public spaces and publics that are connected through "collaboration, conflict and contestation" (p. 220). The book succeeds in its goal of showing examples of agonistic relationships between various institutions and publics emphasizing their role in the formation of a European public sphere.

As Sicakkan also argues, one of the significant contributions of the book is the evaluation of the Eurosphere's role for the formation of a European public sphere. Most of the case studies indeed focus on EU institutions and policies and their role in the European public sphere; however, some of the case studies only loosely relate to the theoretical conceptualization and terminology developed in the preface and chapter 1. More cohesion in the terminology and more links between the individual chapters of the book would have helped strengthen the book's claims. Another oversight is the lack of information about

the methodological design of the discussed research, which is mostly described between the lines in the individual chapters (except chapters 5, 7, and 9).

Overall, the book provides a rich and important source not only for those who are interested in understanding the European public sphere and its components, but also those who work on other types of transnational public spheres in other regions.

References

- de Vreese, C. H. (2007). The EU as a public sphere. *Living Reviews in European Governance*, 2(3). Retrieved from <http://www.livingreviews.org/lreg-2007-3>
- Eriksen, E. O. (2005). An emerging European public sphere. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 8(3), 341–363.
- Koopmans, R., & Statham, P. (Eds.). (2010). *The making of a European public sphere: Media discourse and political contention*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Statham, P. (2010): Introduction: Europe's search for a public sphere. In R. Koopmans & P. Statham, P. (Eds.), *The making of a European public sphere: Media discourse and political contention* (pp. 1–12). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Triandafyllidou, A., Wodak, R., & Kryzanowski, M. (Eds.). (2009). *The European public sphere and the media: Europe in crisis*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.