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A European Football Family? German and British Television Broadcasts of the 2010 Football World Cup and the Representation of Europe

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Abstract: The Football World Cup tournament ranks amongst the largest international sports events, captivating vast live and television audiences. A key characteristic of football can be seen in its community-building function. Football provides opportunities for identification, strengthening local and national bonds. But does this also apply to the still vague category of Europe? Does the televised coverage of the Football World Cup hold the potential to foster a European identity? This paper employs a quantitative content analysis of the German and British live-commentaries of the 2010 World Cup matches between European and non-European teams. It analyzes and compares the description and evaluation of European and non-European participants. TV-commentaries have proven an ability to influence the audiences' perception of the match. It is therefore assumed that the commentaries contribute to a feeling of European identity and unity – *if* they make the European category salient. The analysis reveals some differences in the portrayal of European and non-European participants with the commentators paying more attention to participants from European countries. Whereas the evaluation of the European and non-European teams differs, the evaluation of the individual football players is well-balanced. In regard to the analyzed criteria, British and German commentaries tend to be very similar.

Keywords: European identity, Football World Cup, TV-coverage, content analysis

Introduction

In most European countries football is clearly more popular than other sports. First, there is a high number of active participants. According to a FIFA survey from 2007, 7.3 percent of the population in Europe or approximately 65 million are players (Kunz 2007). Second, football is extremely interesting for the media. It is considered a “telegenic” sport (Gerhard 2006) which guarantees high audiences, a high degree of attention and, therefore, an impressive share of advertising revenue. Thus, newspapers, radio stations and TV-companies dedicate a lot of time and space to the coverage of local, national and international events (Bryant/Raney 2000).

Watching televised football matches mainly fulfills an entertainment function (Schramm/Klimmt 2003). It has become a highly popular leisure time activity which peaks during the World Cup season. Over the past decades the amount of viewers has steadily increased. In Germany, for example, the matches of the 2010 World Cup accounted for an average of 10.85 million viewers which corresponds to an audience share of 48.2 percent (Gerhard/Kessler/Gscheidle 2010). Today, the live coverage of these matches attracts people of all age groups and an almost equal amount of men and women.¹

Besides entertainment, football also fulfills a community building function. In the stadium or at public screenings, the sense of community manifests itself through active participation: people meet and are united around a common cause. Mediatization plays a role for community building in two respects: First, broadcasting brings football out of the stadium and enables a vast amount of people to participate. International competitions such as the Champions League represent “a new ritual in Europe where a virtual audience gathers to watch the same event across the entire continent” (King 2003: 258). Second, the reception of televised football matches amplifies the attachment to the teams. Teams can function as the representative of a group (like a nation or a region) and team-identification is often transferred to this larger group.

Football events draw attention to national identity, expressed for instance through the waving of flags or singing of national anthems during the World Cup. However, no evidence suggests so far that the community building function of football also applies to the more abstract European identity. In covering international events such as football-matches the media can express both national disunity and European unity. This fact perfectly reflects the EU’s leitmotiv “unity in diversity”. To amplify the identification with Europe, national media coverage would have to assign relevance to the European category. This is the starting point for the empirical analysis of television commentaries on the 2010 Football World Cup in Great Britain and Germany.

A European football family?

Football, identity and community-building

Football teams and their players are often perceived as representatives of a social group and are compared with its established characteristics: “In every nation, the great teams define themselves with a style of their own, symbolizing the personalities of the cities that they represent” (Bromberger 2007: 128). In addition, national teams and their playing styles are often compared to the characteristics of their country. German football, for instance, is frequently associated with discipline, collective effort and efficiency (Crolley/Hand 2006).

¹ Since the 1980s women are following the televised World Cup matches almost as often as men (Eisenberg 2005). In regard to Germany, 43 percent of the last World Cup’s TV-audience was female (Gerhard/Kessler/Gscheidle 2010).

Identification with a football team is more likely, if the team reflects relevant characteristics of the (regional or national) group. The behavior of the team and its members can therefore be seen as a symbolic expression of the group's identity. Fans identify with a team strongly, if they evaluate the team's behavior as compatible to their own identity. This becomes obvious when essential attributes of a football club change: Both Liverpool and Schalke 04 used to be underdog clubs representing the traditional working class of their regions. As the clubs established themselves in the top ranks of their national leagues they had to fear for the continuing support of their fans – due to the fact that the teams' identity had changed but the regions' identity remained the same (Bromberger 2007; Kisters 2000). These examples illustrate that football fans do not want their team to be successful by any means necessary; first and foremost they expect it to match their identity and self-image. Football, thus, is strongly connected to feelings of belonging and group identity.

The identity of a group, such as a nation, a region or a town, is understood as 'collective identity' and is continuously constructed and re-constructed within the public discourse. It emerges through interaction and negotiation of multiple individuals through communication or symbolic acts and its results are always tentative (e.g. Delanty/Rumford 2005; Eilders/Lichtenstein 2010). In terms of Social-Identity-Theory (Abrams/Hogg 2004; Tajfel 1981; Tajfel/Turner 1986) collective identity is defined by the characteristics of an in-group as well as detachment from an out-group. This strand of research examines the conditions that promote a feeling of belonging. According to Brewer's (1991) "optimal distinctiveness theory", individuals desire to obtain a balance of assimilation and distinction within and between social groups. The more confined the identity of a group is, the stronger is the distinction to others (Hogg/Turner 1987). Inter-group differences also enable individuals to perceive commonalities of the in-group-members more clearly. As known from research on nationalism a sharp distinction from other groups often comes with aspirations of homogeneity of the own group members (Langewiesche 2000): This applies just as well to the world of football. Athletic de Bilbao, closely associated with regional identity, is known for its team of predominantly local players (Crolley/Hand 2006; Walton 2005) and in countries where the religious background was a crucial issue for a long time (e.g. Northern Ireland and Scotland) a lot of clubs did not allow Catholic players on the pitch (Bromberger 2007).

Whereas in-group-characteristics are mostly evaluated positively, the characteristics of an out-group are evaluated negatively. This in turn facilitates inter-group conflicts: If football teams define themselves in sharp contrast to each other, matches between them will usually be tense. Well known examples are matches between Germany and the Netherlands or between England and Ireland. Besides national and regional rivalries football can also stir and amplify traditional animosities (Bairner/Magee/Tomlinson 2005). In countries with a strong heterogeneity or separatist tendencies football is a catalyst for people with aspirations of autonomy and independence. Teams like Athletic de Bilbao and FC Barcelona are symbols for the minority groups of the Basques and Catalans in

Spain. By supporting these teams, people who identify themselves as Basques or Catalans can express their regional identity and reveal their protest against the national majority group (Duke/Crolley 1996). Group membership is thereby expressed through flags, tricots and football chants.

To sum up, a strong collective identity consists of a sharp distinction from an out-group and a high homogeneity of the in-group. Consequently, it is often accompanied by latent or even open aggression against the contesting football team which becomes obvious in the phenomenon of hooligans and violent incidents such as insults, rows and clashes between football fans. In this ideological form the concept of collective identity has often been criticized as nationalistic and racist (Niethammer 2000). However, a moderate form of collective identity is an indispensable resource for every society. The legitimacy of a political system depends heavily on the acceptance and identification of its citizens. This applies to regional and national as well as transnational communities like the European Union (Cerutti 2008).

Political and cultural European identities

The collective identity of every larger group refers to an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) as people identify with others they do not know personally. Identities that unite people to a political group can be conceptually divided into a civic and a cultural component (Bruter 2003). This distinction is particularly relevant for the concept of a European identity as the political EU is not equal to the European continent. The civic component (here understood as the vertical dimension) refers to the political institutions of the EU and encourages identification with the European Union as a significant super-state. People thus develop a group identity as European citizens with political rights and responsibilities. The cultural component (understood as the horizontal dimension) supports people to identify with a wider concept of Europe. It does not focus on political institutions and is, therefore, not restricted to the European Union but refers to the geographical European continent as a region with a common culture and history.²

Most researchers focus on the civic component and concentrate on a political European identity as part of the European integration (e.g. Meyer 2004; Habermas 2004). Survey data show that the EU and its institutions are regarded skeptically (e.g. European Commission 2010). A decline of the citizens’ support can be observed at least since the 1990s and is well captured in the term “Post-Maastricht Blues” (Eichenberg/Dalton 2007). It marks a transformation from “permissive consensus” (Lindberg/Scheingold 1970) with unconcerned, but benevolent citizens and enthusiastic elites to a “constraining dissensus” (Hooghe/Marks 2006) where the elites can no longer count on the quiescent consent of the citizens. The approval of a European identity furthermore varies

² Therefore, Switzerland and under certain circumstances even Turkey and Russia may be regarded as part of Europe.

between countries. Whereas citizens in Great Britain are rather skeptical towards EU-integration, German citizens are more supportive to the idea.³ Although national identity still prevails, there is growing evidence of an emerging public identification with Europe as a secondary identity (Citrin/Sides 2004). Other studies concentrate on analyzing identity in media content. Quantitative content analyses⁴ come to the conclusion that there is only a low degree of Europeanization (e.g. Brantner 2009; Tréfás 2010; Wessler et al. 2008).

The cultural component of European identity is less frequently taken under study (for an exception see Viehoff/Segers 1999) although both components are strongly interconnected. Culture as a framework for interpreting society and social interactions is highly relevant “for linking collective identities to political action and for motivating people and groups towards some actions and away from others” (Demossier 2007: 51). Furthermore, a common culture certainly strengthens a sense of togetherness and fosters solidarity. Experimental studies on fake sports events between European and non-European teams show that the participants tend to favor the victory of the European teams. This indicates an “underlying level of European identity that often seems to go unnoticed when one only uses the traditional Eurobarometer measures of European identity” (Bruter 2003: 1159). Content analyses on the Haider-debate (Risse/van de Steeg 2003) and the Mohammed cartoon affaire (ter Wal et al. 2009) reveal commonalities in the moral evaluation and a transnational solidarity within Europe. Nevertheless, specific national interpretations of common values (e.g. the freedom of the press) become apparent as well. Nation-specific perspectives on the EU are also stated in the qualitative content analyses by Díez Medrano (2003) as the perceptions in Great Britain differ strongly from those in Germany. Consequently, European identity cannot be seen as a homogenous, transnational identity, but as an additional component of the respective national identity and as strongly connected to the respective national culture (Delanty 2005; Tréfás 2010).

An emerging European identity in a European public sphere

For the emergence of commonalities and a collective identity European citizens first and foremost have to perceive Europe as a relevant and existing category of group formation. Campbell (1958) coined the term ‘entitativity’ to describe a group’s degree of having the nature of an entity and real existence. Individuals react positively if their in-group has a high degree of entitativity because it promotes a feeling of security (Castano 2004). Based on gestalt principles, Campbell (1958) suggests that factors like common fate, similarity, salience, and

³ On the European level only 49 percent of the respondents agreed to the question “Generally speaking, do you think that your country’s membership of the European Union is a good thing?” On a national level, in Great Britain 29 percent agreed, in Germany 50 percent (European Commission 2010).

⁴ Even if identity is a largely implicit concept, recent quantitative analyses measure European identity by counting ‘we’-references or using the framing approach. For an overview of quantitative methods on identity see Abdelal et al. (2009).

boundedness increase the degree of the perceived entitativity of a group.

With regards to the European Union a high degree of entitativity is unlikely: The political EU is an “unfinished category” (Breakwell 2004) as it is continuously growing and lacks congruency between the geographical, political, and economic community. Entitativity can be promoted through common symbols such as flags, currency or a constitution. The positive effects of symbols have been proven in the experimental studies by Castano et al. (2003) and Bruter (2005). In addition, Kashima (2004) points out the vital part of communication in perceiving entities as real existing. In modern societies mass media create the infrastructure for communication and can therefore play an important role in highlighting the entitativity of the EU.

Research on the European public sphere follows the differentiation between a political and a cultural public sphere (Habermas 1989) and mainly focuses on the political concept. It refers to the EU as a political unity and examines to what extent the EU is visible in national media coverage – especially in the political news coverage of quality newspapers. As the European public sphere is carried by national mass media it is possible to distinguish – similar to the civic and cultural components of identity – between a vertical and a horizontal dimension (Koopmans 2004). Regarding the vertical dimension, the representation of European politics in the media is analyzed. The focus is on the question if the political institutions and processes are made transparent and if the relevance of European politics for the respective nation is pointed out (Eilders/Voltmer 2003; Meyer 2010; Trenz 2004; Wessler et al. 2008). The few existing studies on TV-coverage and tabloid press point out a low degree of vertical Europeanization (Kleinen-v. KönigsLöw 2010; Peter/de Vresse 2004). However, research results show a moderate increase over time. Furthermore, data from the Europub-Project indicate a higher degree of Europeanization in the media when political aspects are covered for which the EU is responsible (Koopmans 2004; Koopmans/Erbe 2004). The political and the cultural public spheres are not clearly distinguishable. The cultural part has a democratic function as well and in consequence fundamental political importance (Gripsrud 2007; McGuigan 2005; Wallner 2010).

Culture is taken into focus in studies that deal with the horizontal European public sphere. The interest is on the one hand on the representation of other European member states. Information about these countries makes them familiar to the audience and can emphasize their relevance as political and economic partners. Results show that media coverage on the horizontal dimension is generally less common than on the vertical (Wessler et al. 2008). On the other hand it is of interest if the diverse national media discourses contain the same frame of reference for European issues (e.g. Downey/König 2006; Eder/Kantner 2000; Risse/van de Steeg 2003). Results differ in regard to the chosen issues and selected countries.⁵ There is, therefore, mutual consent that a fully developed European public sphere does not yet exist (Saurwein et al. 2006).

⁵ Especially conflicts seem to stimulate a European discourse (Berkel 2006). Regarding the different countries, the British media is for example less Europeanized than the media in other states and does not show an increasing trend over time (Wessler et al. 2008).

Although these studies include cultural elements they still focus on the political discourse. Up till now the fact that entertainment media content is also important for cultural knowledge and community building is mainly disregarded in research on national and European identity. However, entertaining narratives about other European states are part of the reciprocal perceptions of the EU's citizens. They are not genuine political events, but they show the multitude of the European continent and might strengthen a common bond in Europe (Kleinstauber 2008). Empirical studies on the European public sphere and entertainment media content are rare. As a consequence, there is a lack of broadly accepted indicators for such empirical analyses (Wallner 2010). Analyses on the Eurovision Song Contest show an identity-relevant ambivalence in such cultural events. On the one hand the broadcast of the Eurovision Song Contest highlights the European category and has, therefore, an integrative potential; on the other hand media coverage also shows a high amount of nationalism with explicit and strong expressions of national identity (Bohlmann 2004; Brüggemann et al. 2009).

European identity through mediated football games?

Football is an important part of culture in most European countries. International sports events provide the opportunity for countries to measure themselves against others. Due to its influence on national identity-building football appears firstly as a catalyst for conflicts and nationalism. Televised sport is a ritual that constantly re-creates the imagination of a nation and makes people "feel like part of a national community" (Gruneau/Whitson 1993: 2).

With regards to a European identity, there is therefore reasonable doubt that football can serve as an integrative element. Not only is the European continent fragmented but football itself is also divided into national, regional and religious antagonisms and it seems that sports are above all "a forum that allows the construction of the nation as ,us'" (Clarke/Clarke 1982: 65). Although Football World Cups aim to improve the intercultural dialogue (i.e. by celebrating the opening and closing events) the focus is on the competition of the participating nations.

Despite these divisive aspects there is still some reason to believe that football can create a European entity. With its powerful leagues, influential clubs, high salaries and successful tournaments, Europe is still the centre of international football. Today the European teams regularly interact with each other due to various competitions on the European level. International competitions such as the Champions League help "to reinforce, even to create, a sense of Europeanness by defining a common geographical space (...) with a circulation of common ideas and references" (Bromberger 2007: 127). Not only the regular European competitions but also the expanding transfers of players throughout Europe make encounters with other European states more likely. This was greatly contributed to by the "Bosman ruling" in 1995. The European Court of Justice stated the free movement for workers and ended the foreign player quota systems in EU member states

(Frick 2009; Magee/Sugden 2002) which led to a more international team structure in the European football clubs.

By covering European competitions, broadcasting introduces audiences to various European teams. Due to the Bosman ruling Europeanization also becomes obvious in the matches of the national leagues. The recruitment of Franck Ribery and Arjen Robben contributed to the Europeanization of FC Bayern Munich and can be interpreted as a bridging between Germany and France, respectively Germany and the Netherlands. This intensive “exchange” of players between the European countries is made visible by the media. Live commentaries are an integral and central part of football coverage. They account for additional information and provide the audience with a framework through which events can be ordered and interpreted (Tudor 1992). Commentaries have been proven to have an impact on the perception of the match by the audience. Danneboom (1988) and Schaffrath (2003) analyze the role of football commentaries in an experimental setting. Their research shows that viewers follow the evaluation of the commentator regarding the teams’ performance (see also Bryant et al. 1977, 1981; Sullivan 1991). Although commentators and television experts aim for a neutral coverage, they often resort to familiar narrative material (Billings 2009). They refer to players, teams and past events that are assumedly known by the audience. In regard to international competitions, this leads to an emphasis on national athletes. If their own nation is not involved, one can assume a similar finding for matches between European and non-European teams. European countries are generally more familiar to the European audience than countries from other continents and therefore, the commentators can be expected to focus on the European team. So far, there is no empirical evidence on how Europe as a social category is represented in mediated sports events. According to Billig (1995) and Cram (2001) one can argue that during international sports events we experience a time of “hot” nationalism – but nevertheless there might also co-exist a latent or “banal” Europeanism.⁶

Method

Media content analyses on the Europeanization of the public sphere and European identity mainly focus on the discourse on political issues in quality newspapers. As a consequence, Europeanized news coverage seems limited to an elitist audience and cannot support the assumption of the development of a European identity in the wider public realm. In order to analyze how the relevance of Europe is communicated to a mass audience, televised entertainment programs are to be examined. Following this idea, sports coverage seems to be of relevance for analyzing the creation of a (cultural) European identity.

Thus, our research question is: Do the British and German commentaries assign

⁶ Cram (2001) transfers Billig’s (1995) distinction between a ‘banal’ and a ‘hot’ nationalism to the EU. Whereas nationalism or Europeanism is intensive, a banal nationalism or Europeanism manifests for example in unwaved, unsaluted, unnoticed flags or other symbols of the community which nevertheless reinforce a consciousness of belonging. Sports events may be seen as occasions that provoke a hot nationalism – but may additionally be events for a banal Europeanism.

relevance to the European category and therefore hold the potential to foster a European identity?

As has been discussed above, European identity becomes particularly relevant in context to an out-group. The analysis focuses on the horizontal dimension of Europeanization as it examines the information about European countries in comparison to non-European countries which are both represented by the respective national football teams. A quantitative content analysis was employed to analyze the TV-commentaries of the 2010 World Cup matches in two European countries. To account for the diversity in Europe, we chose Germany as a traditional EU-supporting country and Great Britain as a traditional EU-skeptical country.

According to the theoretical outline we pose three assumptions. As connections between European countries are stronger than between European and non-European countries we hypothesize that

1) British and German TV-commentaries give more information regarding the participating European teams than regarding the non-European teams.

Due to the fact that in-group characteristics are mostly evaluated positively, we assume furthermore, that

2) The evaluation of the European participants is more positive than the evaluation of the non-European participants.

Our third assumption is based on the varying degrees of EU-identification in the two countries under study. As Germany shows a higher identification with the political and economic EU than the UK we assume that this is also true for the cultural dimension and that therefore

3) The assumptions 1) and 2) are more distinct in the German TV-commentaries.

During the 2010 Football World Cup a total of 64 matches took place. All matches in which a European team faced a non-European team were analyzed. As a participant of the Schengen agreement, Switzerland (even though it is not an EU member state) was included as a European country. Excluded were matches in which the commentators' own national team took part as a focus on and sympathy for the own team can be taken for granted. Due to the earlier exit of the British team slightly fewer matches were relevant for the German broadcasts. Altogether 62 matches were analyzed: 30 matches by German broadcasts and 32 by British broadcasts (see table 1; for a more detailed overview see Appendix A).

Table 1: Analyzed matches by stage

Stage	Analyzed matches broadcast in the UK	Analyzed matches broadcast in Germany
Group Stage	27	27
Round of 16	---	---
Quarter-finals	3	2
Semi-finals	1	1
Match for Third Place	1	---
Final	---	---
Total	32	30

Coding took place on three levels: the match, the teams and the players. Data was collected for the amount of information on European and non-European participants as well as for the tendency of the commentaries (positive, ambivalent or negative). The coding was conducted by eight students who are German native speakers and have an excellent knowledge of English. Intercoder-reliability was at .82 for the total of all variables.⁷

Results

1) British and German TV-commentaries give more information regarding the participating European teams than regarding the non-European teams

Roughly half of the 62 analyzed matches (51.6%) show an equal distribution of the attention paid to European and non-European contestants. However, in 41.9 percent of the matches the commentators dedicate more time to the European team and in only 6.5 percent of the matches they focus on the non-European team. This result indicates that British and German commentators might in fact have more background knowledge on European countries, teams and players and/or expect their audience to be more interested in them.

Looking more closely at the content of the commentaries, further differences become apparent. For each match, it was coded when commentators gave additional information about the participating countries which was not directly related to the tournament. The European teams are usually described by more aspects than the non-European teams. To mention only two examples: For European teams, commentators refer more frequently to other footballers of the nation (such as past football legends or still active players who are not part of the current national team) than for non-European teams (71.0% vs. 37.1%). Political references show a similar tendency. Whereas the commentators address the political system, political issues or politicians in 32.3 percent of the European participants, only 16.1 percent political references can be found for the countries of

⁷ Intercoder-reliability for the respective variables was at .86 on the level of the match, at .71 on the level of the teams and at .89 on the level of the players.

non-European participants.

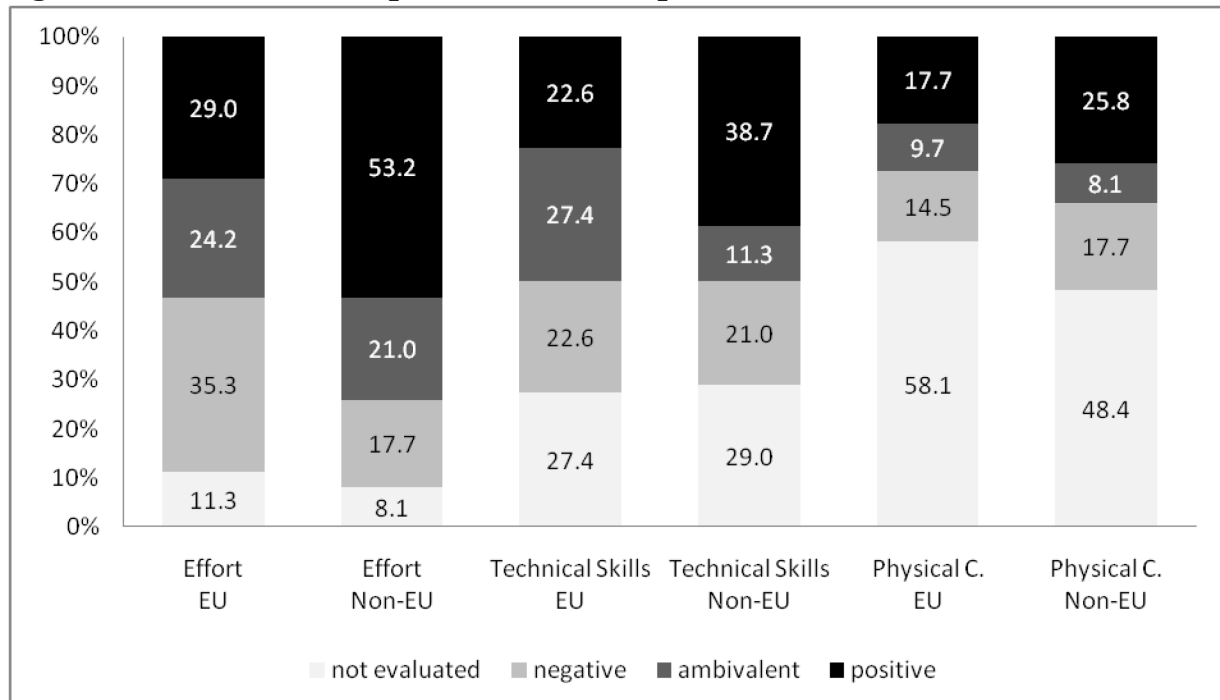
In addition, Europe as an entity is addressed as commentators refer to “European” characteristics, records and events. This reminds people of the existence of the European category and strengthens the perception of Europe as a group that stands in contrast to out-groups from other continents. On average, Europe as a group is mentioned four times per match. The commentators point out, for example, that “European teams have struggled so far, but it’s been going pretty well for the Asian teams” (Denmark-Japan, 24.06.2010, BBC 3) or (in regard to Spain) that it is “the first European country to win a World Cup outside its own continent” (Paraguay-Spain, 03.07.2010, BBC 1).

In conclusion, European countries do not only get more attention in the analyzed TV-commentaries than non-European countries but are also described by more aspects. These findings support our first assumption and indicate a certain degree of a horizontal European public sphere.

2) The evaluation of the European participants is more positive than the evaluation of the non-European participants

The evaluation of European and non-European participants was analyzed for the teams as well as for the individual players. In the following we present the results for three evaluations that were coded for both, teams and individual players: effort and fighting spirit, technical skills and physical condition.⁸

Figure 1: Evaluation of European and Non-European teams (in %)



Basis: n= 62 European teams and n= 62 non-European teams
Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

⁸ These three variables account for the most evaluations on the team level. Other variables that were coded are, for example, the evaluation of fairness, the good or bad luck, and the team spirit.

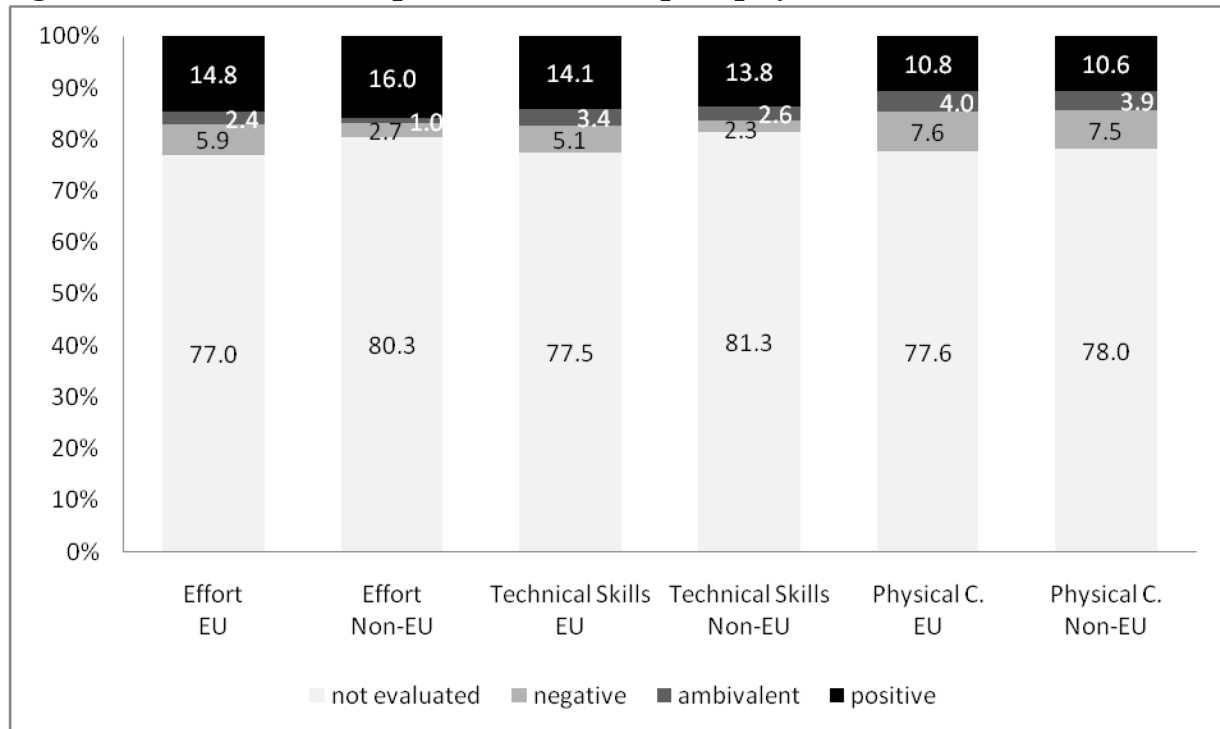
As figure 1 shows, British and German commentators evaluate the effort of the teams in almost all matches. Around 90 percent of both European and non-European teams are described as either putting a lot of effort into the match (positive), as starting well but decreasing their effort over the course of the match – or vice versa (ambivalent), or as not fighting enough (negative).⁹ Thereby the non-European teams are evaluated more often positively (53.2%) than the European teams (29.0%). The same is true for the technical skills of the teams. More than one third of the non-European teams (38.7%) are evaluated positively in this respect by the commentators – compared to 22.6 percent of the European teams. For example, the commentators praise the “samba style” and technical “talent” of the Brazilian team (Portugal-Brazil, 25.06.2010, BBC 1) or the “great technique” of the Dutch team (Cameroon-Netherlands, 24.06.2010, RTL). The physical condition of the teams is less frequently consulted in the commentaries. In the British and German live coverage judgmental comments are made about roughly half of the teams of both sides. The commentators mention for example the “speediness of the Korea Republic” although its players are “rather small” or the “advanced age” of the Greek team (Korea Republic-Greece, 12.06.2010, ARD). As well as for the effort and the technical skills of the teams, the non-European teams are evaluated more often positively (25.8%) than the European teams (17.7%) – even though the difference is less distinct.

In the analyzed 62 matches all 23 nominated footballers per team were coded. This accounts for 2.852 cases in total. The presented data shows the results for the players that were actually on the pitch – either throughout the whole match or by substitution for only a part of the match. In total, this adds up to 803 players of the European teams and 812 players of the non-European teams.

Contrary to the evaluation of the teams, the results regarding the evaluation of the effort, the technical skills and the physical condition of the individual football players show hardly any differences. Firstly, only around 20 percent of the 1.615 European and non-European players are evaluated by the British and German commentators according to these aspects (see figure 2). Secondly, the distribution of positive, ambivalent and negative evaluations is very much equal for the European and non-European players. If the individual players are evaluated by the commentators, positive comments outweigh ambivalent and negative comments.¹⁰ Summing up, non-European teams are evaluated more positively than European teams whereas no differences could be found for the evaluation of the players. Thus, the findings do not support the second assumption.

⁹ An example for a positive evaluation is the comment on the Japanese team that is described as being “on Duracell batteries, they just don’t stop running” (Denmark-Japan, 24.06.2010, BBC 3).

¹⁰ To mention only two examples: Arjen Robben was criticized for not being able to shoot with his right foot (Uruguay-Netherlands, 06.07.2010, ITV 1) and Karim Ziani from Algeria was praised for “running all the time and using his chances” (England-Algeria, 18.06.2010, RTL).

Figure 2: Evaluation of European and Non-European players (in %)

Basis: n= 803 European players and n= 812 non-European players
 Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

3) The assumptions 1) and 2) are more distinct in the German TV-commentaries

As the British are far more skeptical towards the concept of the European Union we assumed that the different attitudes also become visible in a cultural context. Therefore, we expected differences between the European and non-European participants to be more pronounced in the German live commentaries of the World Cup.

However, a comparison between the British and German commentaries shows almost balanced results. In regard to assumption 1, the attention paid to European and non-European participants is very similar (see table 2). Although British commentators dedicate in more matches greater attention to the non-European countries (9.4% vs. 3.3%), the differences have to be regarded as minimal. Furthermore, no discernable differences can be found for the additional information on the European and non-European countries or for the number of references to Europe as a group.

Table 2: Attention focus by UK and German coverage (in %)

Attention-focus	Analyzed matches broadcast in the UK (n= 32)	Analyzed matches broadcast in Germany (n= 30)	Analyzed matches in total (n=62)
Focus on European countries	40.6	43.3	41.9
Balance between European and non-European countries	50.0	53.3	51.6
Focus on non-European countries	9.4	3.3	6.5

Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

In relation to our second assumption, the evaluation of the European and non-European participants in the British and German commentaries does not differ either. Both teams and individual football players are evaluated almost identically in the TV-coverage of the two countries (see figures 1 and 2).

Summing up, British and German commentaries on the matches between European and non-European teams are rather similar for the analyzed variables. Therefore, our third assumption was not supported.

Conclusion

The Football World Cup in South Africa undoubtedly was the biggest media event of summer 2010. A vast amount of people from Europe, as well as from other continents, followed the matches live on television, enjoying the World Cup atmosphere whilst hoping for their country's success. Our aim was to examine if the live-coverage of the 2010 World Cup assigns relevance to the European category and therefore, holds the potential to foster a European identity.

First, our results show that Europe as a group category is mentioned regularly (on average four times a match) which gives salience to the European category. Highlighting Europe's entitativity is a crucial precondition for identification. By emphasizing information on European participants, the TV-commentaries contribute to the perception of Europe as an existing entity. Therefore, the FIFA World Cup is not only an occasion for expressing national identity but is also accompanied by a "banal" Europeanism. Furthermore, our results show that commentaries have the potential to foster a (cultural) European identity. British and German commentators pay greater attention to European countries than to non-European countries. This focus comes with more information on a range of aspects not directly related to the World Cup tournament. These results are contrary to research on the European public sphere that mainly focuses on quality print media and states a very low degree of attention to other European countries. Hence, television coverage of the 2010 World Cup definitely reflects a cultural bond between the broadcast nation and other European countries and contributes in making the European countries familiar to the British and German audience.

Second, we asked if the commentators refer to a European 'we'-feeling that is

expressed through a better evaluation of the European teams and players. Contrary to our expectations and the Social Identity Theory, the results do not demonstrate a bias towards a more positive description of the European teams and individual players. The depiction of the players shows no differences between the participants' origins and on the team-level it is actually the non-European teams that are more often described positively. This result is somewhat surprising. A possible explanation could be that commentators are more critical with the teams of their closer circuit as they have more background knowledge on them and might have higher expectations. By not evaluating the European participants more positively than teams and players from non-European countries, British and German commentaries do not construct a sharp contrast to a non-European out-group. In consequence, there is no reason to assume that the TV-coverage is strengthening a European 'we'-feeling.

Third, these interpretations apply for both countries under study. Differences between the British and German commentaries could not be found. The British skepticism towards Europe shown in the analyses focusing on the elitist political discourse is not reflected in the live commentaries of the 2010 World Cup. In the field of politics the thought of a united Europe is probably mainly associated with the political and economic integration in the EU that – due to the resulting dependency – leads to a reserved and defensive position in the UK. It can be assumed, that the coalescence of politics and economy is less present in the entertainment discourse which makes it easier for the British media to note and point out European-wide commonalities. This result indicates differences between the discourse in entertainment and political media content that might not only be limited to the UK. In order to substantiate this position, further analyses on entertainment programs are needed.

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Appendix A: Analyzed matches

Match	Date	Stage of the Match	Teams	Result	Channel UK	Channel Germany
1	11.06.	Group Stage	Uruguay : France	0 : 0	BBC 1	RTL
2	12.06.	Group Stage	Korea Republic : Greece	2 : 0	ITV 1	ARD
3	12.06.	Group Stage	England : USA	1 : 1	---	ARD
4	13.06.	Group Stage	Algerie : Slovenia	0 : 1	BBC 1	ZDF
5	13.06.	Group Stage	Serbia : Ghana	0 : 1	ITV 1	ZDF
6	13.06.	Group Stage	Germany : Australia	4 : 0	ITV 1	---
7	14.06.	Group Stage	Italy : Paraguay	1 : 1	BBC 1	RTL
8	15.06.	Group Stage	New Zealand : Slovakia	1 : 1	BBC 1	ZDF
9	15.06.	Group Stage	Côte d'Ivoire : Portugal	0 : 0	ITV 1	ZDF
10	17.06.	Group Stage	France : Mexico	0 : 2	BBC 1	ZDF
11	17.06.	Group Stage	Greece : Nigeria	2 : 1	BBC 1	ZDF
12	18.06.	Group Stage	Slovenia : USA	2 : 2	BBC 1	ZDF
13	18.06.	Group Stage	England : Algeria	0 : 0	---	RTL
14	19.06.	Group Stage	Netherlands : Japan	1 : 0	ITV 1	ARD
15	19.06.	Group Stage	Cameroon : Denmark	1 : 2	ITV 1	ARD
16	20.06.	Group Stage	Slovakia : Paraguay	0 : 2	BBC 1	ARD
17	20.06.	Group Stage	Italy : New Zealand	1 : 1	ITV 1	ARD
18	21.06.	Group Stage	Portugal : Korea DPR	7 : 0	BBC 1	ZDF
19	21.06.	Group Stage	Chile : Switzerland	1 : 0	BBC 1	ZDF
20	21.06.	Group Stage	Spain : Honduras	2 : 0	ITV 1	RTL
21	22.06.	Group Stage	France : South Africa	1 : 2	ITV 1	ZDF
22	22.06.	Group Stage	Greece: Argentina	0 : 2	BBC 1	ZDF
23	23.06.	Group Stage	Ghana : Germany	0 : 1	ITV 1	---
24	23.06.	Group Stage	Australia : Serbia	2 : 1	ITV 4	Sky
25	24.06.	Group Stage	Denmark : Japan	1 : 3	BBC 3	ZDF
26	24.06.	Group Stage	Cameroon : Netherlands	1 : 2	BBC 1	RTL
27	25.06.	Group Stage	Portugal : Brazil	0 : 0	BBC 1	ARD
28	25.06.	Group Stage	Chile : Spain	1 : 2	ITV 1	ZDF
29	25.06.	Group Stage	Switzerland : Honduras	0 : 0	ITV 4	RTL
30	02.07	Quarter-finals	Netherlands : Brazil	2 : 1	ITV 1	ARD
31	03.07	Quarter-finals	Argentina : Germany	0 : 4	BBC 1	---
32	03.07	Quarter-finals	Paraguay : Spain	0 : 1	BBC 1	ZDF
33	06.07	Semi-finals	Uruguay : Netherlands	2 : 3	ITV 1	ARD
34	10.07.	Match for 3 rd place	Uruguay : Germany	2 : 3	ITV 1	---