

The Cultural Television Channel Arte and the (Non-)existence of a Cross-border Franco-German Public Sphere

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Résumé :

English (or French) Title : « La chaîne culturelle Arte et la (non) existence d'un espace public franco-allemand »

Abstract :

Mots clefs : programmes – télévision

Keywords: programs – television –

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To quote - Pour citer : Nora Berning, 2011, « The Cultural Television Channel Arte and the (Non-)existence of a Cross-border Franco-German Public Sphere », *Web Journal of French Media Studies*, Vol.8, <http://wjfms.ncl.ac.uk/enframes.htm>

I. Introduction: *Arte* and the transnationalization of the public sphere

L'Europe sera culturelle ou ne sera plus!

Jack Lang¹

What had started as a realist-utopian (tele)vision (Bourdon, 2007) bound to the names François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl and Lothar Späth, the founding fathers of *Arte*² evolved, after years of negotiation, into what Emanuel (1993) has given the symbolic labeling “télé-Maastricht”. *Arte* was created in the spirit of a single audiovisual space³ with the aim of epitomizing an ambitious European project that would bring French and German citizens closer together on a cultural level and promote integration throughout Europe. Thus, the European public service cultural channel was conceptualized as a truly transnational broadcasting venture.⁴ It was meant to transcend national boundaries and to establish a so-called *imaginaire collectif* (Wenger, 1993) based on the common cultural heritage of France and Germany.

Since its broadcasting debut on 30 May 1992, *Arte* has entered into partnerships with several European public broadcasters.⁵ Consequently, Chalaby (2002, 2003) defines the channel in terms of its reach as an example of multi-territory television that is pan-European in scope. In contrast to Chalaby (2002), Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009) account for *Arte* historical development and the channel's initial bilateral cooperation in their typology of transnational media. Thus, the authors classify *Arte* as an “inter-national” media format, whilst at the same time acknowledging its move in the direction of pan-European media. Today, the “forced marriage” (Emanuel, 1994) between the French and German partners demonstrates a relatively advanced degree of transnationalization (Kaitatzi-Whitlock, 2007) that reveals a particular kind of Europeanisation. Pan-European media such as *Arte* and Euronews contribute to the transnationalization of the public sphere (Robins, 2003; Morley, 2000) and the emergence of larger communities of sentiment (Sørensen, 2004) at the expense of nation-bound imagined communities. (Anderson, 1991) Delinked from national territory and characterized by multinational audiences, *Arte* is an interesting case of this kind of deterritorialized television that is based on a minimalist understanding of the European public sphere.⁶

Against this background, my essay will tackle the following research question: In how far has the cultural television channel *Arte* fostered the emergence of a cross-border Franco-German public

¹ Quoted in Hahn (1997: 15)

² The acronym *Arte* stands for *Association Relative à la Télévision Européenne*.

³ The normative basis for a Single European Market in the field of television was laid down in the 1989 Directive « Television Without Frontiers ». For a more detailed analysis of the directive, cf. *inter alia* Wheeler (2004), Coppens *et al.* (2001), Machet (1999), Castille (2001), Biltreyst and Pauwels (2007), and Harcourt (2005).

⁴ In this context, Emanuel (1993: 133) notes that *Arte* started as a project that was mainly negatively defined, i.e. “less in respect of national traditions, and more in opposition to what is perceived as the American broadcasting model.”

⁵ RTBF (*Radio Télévision Belge de la Communauté française*) in 1993, SRG SSR *idée suisse* in 1995, the Finnish YLE (*Yleisradio Oy*) in 1999, BBC, Poland's TVP (*Telewizja Polska*) and the ORF (*Österreichischer Rundfunk*) in 2001, SVT (*Sveriges Television*) in 2002, as well as the Greek public broadcaster ERT in 2009.

⁶ The minimalist concept of the European public sphere is based on the assumption that horizontal Europeanization is taking place that is modeled along fragmented and pluralized national public spheres. (Gripsrud, 2007) Hence, the European public sphere is understood as “a pluralistic ensemble of issue-oriented publics that exists once the same issues are discussed simultaneously and within a shared frame of relevance.” (Lingenberg, 2006: 123; Eder and Kantner, 2000)

sphere? Following a brief overview of the historical development and the organizational structure of the bicultural channel *Arte* (chapter 2), I will analyze *Arte* role as an agent of a Franco-German public sphere (chapter 3). In chapter 4, I will examine the main challenges to the proliferation of a cross-border public sphere: divergent conceptualizations of culture, language barriers, and issues related to the television content. An examination of the daily news show *Arte Info* will further illustrate in how far *Arte* manages to create a Franco-German public sphere (chapter 5). In my conclusion, I will critically evaluate *Arte* achievements in light of the (non-)existence of a cross-border public sphere (chapter 6).

II. Historical development and the organizational structure of *Arte*

In the late 1980s, both France and Germany saw a systematic deregulation of their respective audiovisual industries, alongside a gradual transnationalization of broadcasting policies. Although these processes facilitated the development of the cultural television channel *Arte*, the bringing together of two fundamentally different media systems⁷ posed a serious challenge inasmuch as loopholes in European media policy had to be overcome.⁸ (Hahn, 1997) Moreover, the broadcasting environment was profoundly different in the two nations: Whereas in Germany, *Arte* entered a multi-channel environment and had to compete with the so-called “third channels” that focus first and foremost on culture, in France *Arte* was primarily perceived as an alternative to a weakening public service television sector.⁹ (Utard, 2001)

The interstate agreement that was signed on 2 October 1990 between Jack Lang, the then Socialist Minister of Culture and Communication (1981-1992), and the minister-presidents of the eleven old West German states, constituted the legal framework of *Arte*. However, questions related to the program structure and content were left open.¹⁰ On 30 April 1991, the German and French partners agreed on the legal form of *Arte* as a European Economic Interest Grouping composed of two equal members: *Arte Deutschland TV GmbH* located in Baden-Baden and *Arte France* with its offices in Paris.¹¹ Thus, while *Arte* was originally conceptualized as a European channel, it was predominantly realized as a bilateral channel with the two members having an equal share in the television company.¹² (GRÄBLE, 1995)

· Whereas the French media system is known for its centralized structure, the German media system is organized according to a federal framework. (Hardy, 2008)

· “Das (medien-) politische und juristische ARTE-Strukturkonstrukt war im Wesentlichen von der Klärung (medien-) politischer und juristischer Probleme bestimmt, die eigentlich hatte (sic!) lediglich Mittel zum Zweck und nicht Inhalt der Realisierung des Europäischen Fernseh-Kulturkanals sein sollen.” (Hahn, 1997: 256)

· Walter (2004), however, disagrees with Utard (2001) and argues that it was not so much the low quality of public television in France and more the fact that *Arte* was received via terrestrial broadcast that explains why *Arte* market share was much bigger in France than in Germany. For an overview of *Arte* market share in Germany and France, cf. the statistical yearbook of the European Audiovisual Observatory, 2002-2008.

· Viel mehr aber garantiert er [der völkerrechtliche, zwischenstaatliche Vertrag; N.B.] den Europäischen Fernseh-Kulturkanal als ein vom nationalen Medienrecht befreites trans- bzw. supranationales kulturorientiertes TV-Programm.” (Hahn, 1997: 245)

· Both *Arte* Germany and *Arte* France currently produce 40% of the programmes broadcast. The other 20% comes from the headquarters in Strasbourg and broadcasters cooperating with *Arte*. (For a more detailed overview, cf. the organisational diagram in the annexe.)

· According to Utard (2001), however, *Arte* France has, despite the fact that *Arte* Germany and *Arte* France are equally represented in terms of program contributions become the more powerful branch.

Considering the relatively low autonomy of the head office and the wide-ranging responsibilities of the national poles, Hahn (1997) argues that what was envisioned in article 2 of the interstate contract¹³, namely *Arte* mission to create something that is greater than the sum of its parts, was hampered by the internal structure and the complexity of the legal framework. Already before the channel went on air, the project of cultural television was vehemently critiqued by French and German academics and journalists alike. Among them were the neo-liberal sociologist Wolton who bashed *Arte* together with Llobera (2003: 171) for being « unashamedly highbrow ». Wolton (1990: 127 *et seq.*) stated that instead of degenerating into a cultural enclave, television should serve what Morin (1962) called *le grand public*, i.e. television's vocation should be generalist. What sounds like a reification of the critique of the Habermasian (1991) concept of a bourgeois public sphere soon became *Arte* biggest challenge: its struggle for legitimacy which in the words of Geertz (1973) was not based on a thick common cultural identity, but on a rather thin form of it.¹⁴ The question that arises from these observations is whether *Arte* minimalist conceptualization of television in fact contributed to the proliferation of a cross-border dialogue.

III. *Arte*'s role as an agent of a Franco-German public sphere

Behind *Arte* vision lies a twofold reasoning: Firstly, the makers believe that television's integrative function is strong enough to successfully carry out what Bourdon (2007) has described as "European soul engineering"¹⁵. Apart from this technological determinism, the project is rooted in a cultural determinism with television functioning as its vehicle. (Utard, 2001) Through the lens of these premises, the Franco-German public sphere can only be narrowly defined.¹⁶ For the purpose of this essay, it is to be understood as a mediated, cross-border cultural space "where society [...] develops new frameworks for expressing and evaluating social reality" (Hauser, 1998: 86) through televised images. This definition put forward by Hauser (1999) entails five norms: permeable boundaries, activity, contextualized language, believable appearance, and tolerance.

In the specific case of *Arte*, these norms play out in various ways. Based on the assumption that media are inherently cultural texts (Batz, 1992), it can be inferred that all of the norms relate to cultural practices in the broader sense. Moreover, cultural texts are arenas of struggle (Bourdieu, 1991) that are ideally characterized by openness and a high degree of activity on the part of the cultural communicators. These cultural communicators, operating as cross-border commuters between the German and the French cultural sphere and acting on an "in-between stage" (Prosser, 1976, 422), then produce a kaleidoscope of aesthetic modes of representation which in turn open up the possibility for a myriad of cultural readings. Despite the heterogeneity displayed in these collective modes of representation which always also allow for oppositional readings, the communicators"

- The article states that *Arte* purpose "is to conceive and produce television programmes which, in a broad sense, are cultural and international in character and conducive to promoting understanding and rapprochement among Europe nations." <http://www.arte.tv/de/ARTE--The-Channel-5Bengl-5D/2197448.html> (last accessed: 17 May, 2010)

- Due to the fact that the public sphere is expanding beyond national boundaries, Barber (2004) notes that it would be more adequate to speak of a growing weak public sphere that is supplemented by a shrinking strong public sphere.

- Or as François Mitterrand (quoted in Bourdon, 1994: 299) put it: "C'est par l'audiovisuel que l'on peut aujourd'hui aborder le problème d'identité culturelle de l'Europe."

- Another factor that has to be taken into account when assessing the transnational character of the public sphere that *Arte* aims to establish is that the "deutsch-französische Fernsehprogramm-Monogamie à la ARTE bislang noch nicht überwunden ist, weil keine wirklich paritätischen Partnerschaften mit weiteren europäischen Rundfunkorganisationen existieren". (Hahn, 1997: 275) Hence, the discursive space includes only France and Germany.

freedom is restrained by a particular form of contextualized language (predetermined by the medium's particularities). Furthermore, the language that is used draws upon believable appearance and tolerance with ethno-centrism as its main predator. Clearly, Hauser's (1999) norms are of great importance to *Arte* inasmuch as they describe how communicators actively perform culture and thus help construct new forms of "bricolage" (Levi-Strauss, 1966) that allow for a multiplicity of cultural readings.

Following this line of argument, the Franco-German public sphere that *Arte* tries to create is based on the operative principle of mobility and an understanding of transnational television as something that "might permit us to become more aware of other kinds of spaces, spaces in which cultural experience and thinking might be freed up." (Robins, 2003: 203) On this note, Gerlach (2004: 238) remarks: „Im Bewusstsein der grenzüberschreitenden Relevanz von Themen und Debatten ist ARTE bestrebt, über den nationalen Tellerrand hinauszublicken.¹⁷ Although the cultural space that *Arte* nurtures is not necessarily Europe-wide in scope, it can be conceived of as a "parapublic process" (Krotz, 2007) that has, similar to the Habermasian (1991) public sphere, a social purpose and is normatively charged. According to Krotz (2007: 389), in their entirety parapublic interactions "constitute a structural component of the European polity" that has yet to evolve.

The question that remains, however, is how *Arte* engages in Franco-German parapublic processes which "make Europeans more European" without making them less national. (*ibid.*: 386) Before I will tackle this question by means of an investigation of *Arte Info*, I will elaborate on the main challenges concerning the emergence of a Franco-German public sphere.

IV. The main obstacles to the emergence of a cross-border public sphere

According to Tracey (1987: 78), "[t]he structural weaknesses of pan-European television is the logical assumption it makes about there being a pan-European audience, rather than audiences." In the case of *Arte*, the pan-European audience is moreover limited to a niche market made up of Europe's intelligentsia. (Llobera, 2003) Theoretically speaking, the channel could be received by 90% of the population in France and Germany respectively in 2002. (Plöger, 2003) However, in the same year only 12.7 million people tuned in for at least 15 consecutive minutes (9.1 millions in France and 3.6 millions in Germany). In France, *Arte* thus obtained an audience share of 3.8% and in Germany a share of merely 0.6%. (*ibid.*) Moreover, Hahn (1997) notices that certain programmes whose contents are shaped by forms of national deixis and nation-bound cultural patterns, only find a strong resonance either in France or Germany.¹⁸

Besides these structural factors that impede the emergence of a cross-border public sphere, three other obstacles are significant in this context: Firstly, the different conceptualizations of culture in France and Germany. Secondly, the language barrier and thirdly the impact of the first two factors on the television content.

IV.1 Divergent conceptualizations of culture

What is oftentimes perceived as problematic concerning the construction of a Franco-German public sphere are the divergent conceptualizations of culture that the French and German partners

- Hilf (1990a: 125) adds: "Der Zuschauer wird Vertrautes neu sehen und damit sich selbst anders sehen; er erkennt im bisher Fremdartigen das Gemeinsame, im vermeintlich Gemeinsamen das Unterschiedliche." Furthermore: "Im Unterschied zu anderen Fernsehanstalten will dieses Projekt Kultur nicht nur abbilden oder befördern, sondern die Dialogfähigkeit der Kulturen selbst im Medium Fernsehen fördern." (Hilf, 1990b: 201)

- Cf. also Plöger (2003: 75): "En 2001, Arte a enregistré un record d'audience avec *Lola rennt*, mais uniquement en Allemagne. En France, ce film mythique n'est pas du tout passé." In the author's eyes, the genre that is most likely watched by both French and German viewers is fiction.

embrace. In France, a narrow notion of culture that is primarily based on an equation of culture with *culture patrimoniale*, i.e. “high culture”, dominates. (Hahn, 1997: 304) In Germany, on the contrary, a wide notion of culture is paramount; it includes forms of popular culture and thus appeals to the masses.¹⁹ (Gräßle, 1995)

Following these diametrically opposed approaches, the role of television is also a different one in the two nations. According to Emanuel (1993), French television culture is characterized by a canonical conception of culture, whereas in Germany quality should be guaranteed both by means of external and internal pluralism and is stretched across the programme spectrum. One of the reasons why the remit of television is different across the Rhine has to do with the historical evolution of the media in the two countries. Whereas in Germany, radio was the immediate predecessor of television and thus had a great impact on television culture, in France television is more closely linked to the cinema. As such, it became a sort of *8^{me} art* and a platform of aestheticism.

Interestingly, however, in the course of the development of the cultural channel *Arte*, the opinions on what the task of cultural television should be were reversed. Nowadays, it is the French who are in favour of a wider notion of culture and endorse the sociological conception of *Kultur* which is grounded in the full programme portfolio. (Emanuel, 1994) In Germany, on the other hand, programme makers meanwhile advocate a narrow understanding of culture and argue that the cultural channel should put more emphasis on quality and niche programming and highlight its distinctiveness *vis-à-vis* other broadcasters. (Hahn, 1997)

IV.2 Language barriers

In France and Germany, only a minority of people is bilingual and the numbers of those learning French or German as a second language have significantly decreased over the last decades. Whereas in 1970, 50% of French students and 30% of all German students learned the language of their neighbouring country, only 27% of French students and 24% of German students did so in 2002. (Plöger, 2003) With the help of these numbers the language barriers, that apparently also exist at the institutional level²⁰, become tangible inasmuch as they characterize everyday interaction between French and German employees at *Arte*.

These prevalent language barriers impact heavily on the construction of a cross-border public sphere since they determine who is “in” and who is “out”. For instance, Thompson (2003) and Montgomery (1995) *inter alia* argue that language is central to societal identification and thus a prerequisite for the existence of a public sphere.²¹ With reference to the case of *Arte*, fundamental questions about the repercussions of communication in different languages on the public sphere emerge. Here, the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis provides further insight. According to Whorf (1963), people with different languages perceive the world differently. Hence, the difficulty in creating a Franco-German public sphere is twofold: Firstly, people from diverse cultural backgrounds decode the television content in manifold ways due to their different mother tongues, and secondly they project different understandings of culture onto the media texts.

Despite these handicaps, Kaitatzi-Whitlock (2007) is optimistic that problems dealing with linguistic variation and fragmentation can be overcome for pan-European channels. According to the author, it is important to highlight issues of common interest that are equally relevant to viewers on the left and

- Cf. also Bourdon (2007: 273): “In German, *Kultur* is not necessarily high culture, and could be translated as civilization.” Along the same lines, Plöger (2003: 69) reckons: “En France la culture est synonyme de culture universelle susceptible d’être diffusée dans le monde entier. Elle contient la notion d’excellence.”

- “Les journalistes allemands s’expriment dans la langue de Voltaire même au risque d’une mauvaise compréhension. Les journalistes français sont très majoritairement non germanophones et préfèrent se reposer sur un interprète professionnel ou sur la compréhension de leur confrère.” (*ibid.*: 72 et seq.)

- “Systematic knowledge about language and practical awareness of how it works is fundamental to the process of building mature communities.” (Montgomery, 1995: 251)

right hand side of the Rhine. In other words, instead of focusing on what Sinclair *et al.* (1996) have called “geolinguistic regions”, *Arte* success is dependent on “geocultural markets”, i.e. cultural rather than linguistic connections between places and people. (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) Whereas Hahn (1997) is likewise positive about *Arte* potential as a promoter of a cross-border public sphere, Beierwaltes (1998) is more pessimistic concerning the transnationalization of the public sphere via “geocultural markets”. „Die Europäische Union ist eine sprachlich zutiefst heterogene Gemeinschaft. Diese Heterogenität kann auch durch die Massenmedien nicht in einem einheitlichen Kommunikationsraum aufgelöst werden.“ (*ibid.*: 25)

IV.3 Content issues

Due to the divergent conceptualizations of culture and the extant language barriers between French and German communicators, *Arte* programme structure and the content of its broadcast is inevitably a Franco-German compromise. Nonetheless, *Arte* is constantly in search of new aesthetic forms of expression and aims to stimulate a so-called Franco-German *regard croisé* (i.e. a mutual view of each other’s culture) among its viewers.²² (Hahn, 1997) However, the *regard croisé* which has become a leitmotif for all of *Arte* programmes oftentimes clashes with well-established viewing habits. Thus, it remains a desideratum as long as some sort of intercultural media illiteracy prevails among the French and German audience.

In order to promote intercultural media literacy, the content shown on *Arte* is selected on grounds of its potential to dismantle binary oppositions and to create a kind of “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) within which the viewers can negotiate their cultural identities. Although this guiding principle conditions what Glissant (1990) circumscribed as a *droit à l’opacité*, i.e. the principle of opacity, it would be false to assume that *Arte* tacitly subscribes to what became known as “Euro-Pudding”. In a personal interview (20 December 2006), Andreas Schreitmüller, Head of the department *Fiction*, elaborates on this:

Ce n’est pas comme chez Airbus, où on produit les turbines en France, l’équipement intérieur en Allemagne et le reste en Angleterre. C’est délicat parce que c’est une tâche difficile à remplir. Le succès d’un film se limite avant tout au niveau national, car on peut seulement créer une image authentique des identités si on les connaît vraiment.²³

So the crux of the matter is that while *Arte* has to make use of the poetic principle of opacity to get their viewers thinking about Europe in the first place, its ultimate aim is to create transparent media texts that seem familiar to both German and French viewers and which they recognize as part of their own cultures even though they may have been crafted elsewhere. (Olson, 1999) In other words, transparent media texts allow audiences of different cultures to bring in their own values, myths, and meanings.

This transparency in terms of the content is one of *Arte* biggest challenges, because it means that not only a cultural and linguistic compromise has to be found, but that thematic affinities have to be overcome.²⁴ Only then can a cross-border public sphere come into being, in which, according to Lingenberg (2006) and Eder and Kantner (2000), issues that are of the same relevance to both the German and the French audience can be tackled. In this context, Bourdon (2007: 274) notes that

- Die gemeinsame Fernsehsprache ist ein interkulturelles und multilinguales Desideratum. Sie umfasst die kreative Suche nach neuen quasi artistischen Ausdrucksformen (mit und ohne Verbalsprachen) in allen Programmggenres.“ (*ibid.*: 362)

- Similarly, when asked about the prospects for a 'European film' in a personal interview, Pierre-Louis Cereja, the editor in chief of the cinema section in the regional French newspaper *L’Alsace*, dismissed the idea immediately: “En fait, je crois que c’est sûrement une erreur de vouloir définir un film européen.”

- However, as the above mentioned viewing figures have shown, thematic preferences continue to persist. Thus, a documentary about the Algerian War is more likely to attract French viewers, while a historical series about the German reunification and the eastern enlargement is more likely to interest German viewers.

“[m]ultilingual enunciation [Ö] fails because it does not satisfy crucial requirements of transparency and immediacy” and thus does not bring about a shared debate.

Plöger (2003) explains that this is precisely the reason why there are so few talk shows on *Arte*. In case a *débat* is broadcast, there are major differences in terms of how the content is presented when comparing French and German presenters. Whereas the French tend to personalize a story, the Germans rather focus on broader societal implications of a certain topic. This division is also mirrored in the choice of the guests. French guests are more likely to talk about their individual experience, whereas German guests are often invited on grounds of their expert knowledge. (*ibid.*) Moreover, Plöger (2003) argues that French journalists are less critical toward their own government. The different role conceptions of German and French journalists become visible in the debates with the former acting more like a watchdog and the latter being less harsh on their interviewees.

Besides the problems associated with fiction and talk-based formats, *Arte* newscast is of particular interest in terms of its contribution to a Franco-German public sphere. Therefore, the next chapter investigates whether a critic of *The Guardian* (21 January 1993) rightly predicted that *Arte* is doomed to failure because it “talks about Europeanism, but the only way to deal with it is by avoiding it.”

V. *Arte Info* , a successful example of a Franco-German public sphere?

Advertised as a European news magazine on the channel’s homepage²⁵, *Arte Info* is the channel’s backbone and one of its most cost-intensive endeavors. Prior to *Arte* broadcasting debut, the French and German partners were at odds with each other over the then yet unborn child. Whereas the French wanted to turn the newscast down for financial reasons, the Germans attached great importance to it. (Gräßle, 1995) When the news magazine was still in its infancy, it was called *8^{1/2}* and essentially adjusted to the viewing habits of the French audience. It was broadcast on a daily basis at 8.30 p.m. before the main evening programme starts on French television. Back in the old days, the newscast was made up of short clips only and no presenters were involved in the programme.

Having been scolded for being a programme without a face, the programme makers endeavored to make the newscast more lively and vivid. These days, it broadcasts live from Strasbourg twice a day (at 12.45 p.m. and 7.45 p.m.). Behind the slogan *des informations européennes pour des Européens*, lurks the channel’s purpose to develop its own *écriture européenne*, i.e. a successful combination of different journalistic practices and styles. However, in his investigation of the newscast, Utard (1997) found considerable differences between the French and German newsreaders that present the news in turn. Plöger (1993) makes similar observations when looking at the ways in which the information is presented. Whereas the German journalists adhere primarily to Anglo-American news values, the strict division between fact and opinion is less popular among French journalists.²⁶ Furthermore, this has a direct effect on the hierarchization of news stories.

Against the background of these arguments, it is highly unlikely that *Arte Info* will succeed in creating a transnational space and a truly Franco-German public sphere in the near future. Hauser’s (1999) norms of such a discursive space have not been met by the programme makers. *Arte Info* seems to be caught in a dilemma, because on the one hand, it strives to offer supplementary information to the national newscasts, but on the other hand it does not want to become the mouthpiece of the journalists in Brussels. Moreover, it keeps information on the European Union at a minimum, because

- <http://www.arte.tv/de/woche/244,broadcastingNum=1043089,day=5,week=49,year=2009.html> (last accessed 17 May, 2010)

- Cf. also Hahn (1997: 372): „[D]ie journalistischen (Nachrichten-) Faktoren können sich bei gemeinsamen fernsehjournalistischen Inhalten von einem (nationalen) sozio-kulturellen Kontext der jeweiligen Rezipienten zu einem anderen stark voneinander unterscheiden.“

the topics are mostly not telegenic. Thus, Bourdon (2007: 273) concludes that *Arte* “schedule is not so much European as alternately French and German.”

But if the multiperspectival character of the so-called *regard croisé* cannot be put into practice effectively and the national news filter continues to persist in Europe’s media (Hafez, 2007), the permeability of the boundaries of the Franco-German public sphere as well as its openness and inclusiveness have to be called into question. Although *Arte Info* has resorted to a more active mode of presentation, activity in the public sphere, as Hauser (1999) defined it, however not only refers to the cultural communicators but also to the audience and their possibilities to engage in a dialogue. Here, *Arte* homepage might be a first starting point to get an intercultural dialogue going and to foster (inter-)activity among the viewers. (Gerlach, 2004)

The premise of a contextualized language is probably the most exigent task for the programme makers, because it demands a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, *Arte* is charged with fostering a community of sentiment (Sørensen, 2004) between two distinct cultural communities, but on the other hand, the channel should not shy away from cultivating certain differences because otherwise it would lose its unique character. Also, as Andreas Schreitmüller, Head of the department *Fiction*, pointed out in a personal interview (20 December 2006), “the channel can only preserve its believable appearance and authenticity if it remains culturally, linguistically, and thematically proximate to its target audience.” Finally, tolerance is likely to be the guiding principle for all programmes aired on *Arte* in the foreseeable future since the rapprochement between two peoples is its fundamental aim.²⁷

VI. *Arte* and the (non-)existence of a cross-border public sphere

Given the fact that nowadays a plethora of parapublic practices (Krotz, 2003) play into the construction of cultural identities, Bourdon (2007) rightly notes that if one assumes that television is an all-powerful medium, this would automatically lead to a dead-end. Thus, instead of adopting an overtly media-centric approach, it is important to come to the understanding that media are only one factor that contributes to the emergence of a cross-border public sphere. (Wiesner, 1990) In this context, Gräßle (1995: 229) adds: „Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen selbst erfahren durch ARTE nur eine indirekte, keine systematische Förderung.“ Other parapublic practices such as youth and educational exchanges, “twinning” between French and German towns, and the creation of intercultural institutes and associations are, according to Krotz (2003), equally important in terms of the proliferation of a Franco-German public sphere.

Arte itself participates in stimulating parapublic interactions by extending its remit to the cultural sphere outside of the television sector. The channel supports various educational initiatives and engages in exchanges between media departments of French and German universities. (Plöger, 2003) Although this is already an important stepping stone for further “mental” integration between French and Germans, I think the channel would be well advised to intensify the hitherto existing cooperation with other European partners. However, this would mean that the channel has to become more flexible in order to be able to satisfy an even broader array of audience wishes. (Gerlach, 2004) Another option to further the transnationalization of the public sphere would be to insert European

²⁷ Thus, all programmes broadcast on *Arte* are selected according to a high set of standards. The programmes have to demonstrate sensitivity to the respective issue. Moreover, Andreas Schreitmüller explains in an interview (20 December 2006): “Quant à nos critères, le film ne doit en aucun cas montrer des clichés et il ne doit pas non plus montrer des sentiments qui ne sont pas authentiques ou même spéculatifs. L’authenticité est une des critères les plus importantes chez *Arte*.”

programme windows into the daily schedule which would be broadcast simultaneously on several public service channels across Europe.²⁸

Thus, if *Arte* wants to gain recognition for its pioneer work, the channel has to develop creative and innovative televisual spaces that transcend national boundaries. "Modellcharakter könnte der Europäische Kulturkanal wohl nur dann bekommen, wenn die Ausgangüberlegung umgesetzt würde, mit seiner Hilfe neue, grenzüberschreitende Formen der Bildersprache zu entwerfen und zur Europäisierung gemeinsamer Inhalte beizutragen." (Gräßle, 1995: 219 *et seq.*) Although most of the extant literature on the cultural television channel stems from the time of *Arte* broadcasting debut, not much has changed since then. Yet a public sphere does not emerge overnight and even if it did happen we would most likely not even realize that it has come to exist.²⁹ Thus, Bourdon (2007: 277) concludes that instead of "artificially putting together a "European programme", not to mention a European channel" journalists these days should rather start "reporting Europe more, and in a more open and democratic way."

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- Der zweite Weg der europäischen Öffnung ist der Weg der europäischen Autoren, der Regisseure aus allen europäischen Ländern sowie ihre direkte Integration ins Programm, die Schaffung eines Ausdrucksforums mit der Möglichkeit sich über ihre Themen, ihre Sprachen, ihre Fragestellungen am europäischen Dialog zu beteiligen." (Wenger, 1993: 262)

- "Parapublic cultivation is gardening, not engineering. The harvest is not assured and never fully predictable." (Krotz, 2007: 402) "Like other social structures, they are human-made. And they need to be re-made in order to endure. Unless reproduced, the meaning and social purpose that Franco-German parapublic practices institutionalize is bound to dissipate." (*ibid.*: 404)

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Annexe

Organisationsschema von ARTE

