

Reporting Latin America in Germany: indicators of ethnocentrism expressed in news values

*Reportando América Latina en Alemania:
indicadores de etnocentrismo expresados en
valores noticiosos*

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This paper combines a content analysis of 3 831 articles in the German press with eight qualitative interviews with correspondents in the region to assess aspects of ethnocentrism in the news. We considered events from 2000 to 2014 in the following publications: the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Tageszeitung*, and *Der Spiegel*. One-quarter of the analysed events shows a German self-reference, although this involvement is sectorial. Apolitical areas of coverage tend to show a higher level of ethnocentrism. Besides, news items signed by correspondents are less ethnocentric.

KEYWORDS: Foreign news reporting, ethnocentrism, news values, global communication, Latin America, Germany.

Este trabajo combina un análisis de contenido de 3 831 artículos de prensa alemanes con ocho entrevistas cualitativas para determinar el nivel de etnocentrismo de la cobertura. Los eventos del 2000 al 2014 fueron considerados en las siguientes publicaciones: el Süddeutsche Zeitung, el Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, el Tageszeitung y Der Spiegel. Una cuarta parte de los eventos analizados muestran una participación alemana en la agenda, aunque esta participación es sectorial. Las áreas de cobertura no políticas tienden a tener un mayor nivel de etnocentrismo. Además, los artículos firmados por corresponsales fueron menos etnocéntricos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cobertura internacional, etnocentrismo, valores noticiosos, comunicación global, América Latina, Alemania.¹

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INTRODUCTION

This empirical analysis aims at investigating how the multifaceted concept of ethnocentrism is manifested in news values based on the foreign reporting about Latin America in the German quality press throughout the first fifteen years of the 21st century. Not only our subject of study –Latin America– but also the structures of global news have experienced substantial transformations with the rise of the millennium. Thus, it seems reasonable to reassess the image of the continent and to inquire whether ethnocentrism still plays a decisive role as stated by early studies (Roemeling-Kruthaup, 1987; Schulz, 1976; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985). Hitherto, scholars have been arguing that “the West” as a collective cultural identity has detained the political and cultural prerogatives of (news) definition because of its political and economic dominance (Hall, 2011; Said, 2003). Despite the impact of technological developments on the global news production (Paterson & Sreberny, 2004, p. 8), the flow of international news between the Global South is still, to a great extent, moderated by the international news agencies of the Global North (Thussu, 2006, p. 141). Hence, the patterns of global news flow remain almost identical to the ones described by the Foreign News Reporting (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985). The press still gives the most attention to its regional neighbours, followed by the consistent newsmakers such as the United States, Western Europe and the “hot spots” or crisis areas (Tiele, 2010). In this context, Latin America persists as an invisible area on the media map. For all these reasons, one can assume that ethnocentrism may still play an essential role in foreign reporting on Latin America.

Apart from that, there is a lack of studies concerning Latin America within the field of international communication in Germany, as reported by the Ibero-American Institute (Göbel et al., 2009), which increases the importance of the presented article. Whilst one finds a substantial number of studies regarding a few Asian states and the Islamic world (Bieber, 2011; Hafez, 2002a; Nafroth, 2002; Richter & Gebauer, 2010), analyses on Latin America’s image are quite outdated (Roemeling-Kruthaup, 1987, 1991; Wöhlcke, 1973).

The article begins with a theoretical discussion about the term *ethnocentrism* among several disciplines and follows explaining how the concept can be manifested in different forms within the field of international journalism. Then we demonstrate the variety of ways in which the factor is operationalized in the news values research tradition. Additionally, we discuss the limitations of such an operationalization. The shortcomings of this quantitative approach were overcome through qualitative expert interviews to access the unquantifiable aspects of ethnocentrism, such as the domestication of foreign news. The theoretical section closes with an analysis of the foreign reporting on Latin America as the subject of the study. Here, one also gives some thoughts regarding the measurement of the factor ethnocentrism, explains the reasons for selecting the German media system and considers the deficient correspondent network in the region. Subsequently, within the methodology, our unity of analysis, sampling process and research design are presented. Finally, the results section, in its turn, is divided into two main parts. First, we present the results of the quantitative approach, i.e., the measurement of the German self-reference in the foreign reporting on Latin America, according to areas of coverage, countries, positive or negative contexts, sources and authorship. Afterwards, the interviews with correspondents should clarify the unquantifiable aspects of ethnocentrism. Finally, we summarise the findings and suggest further research to complement our results based on a more qualitative perspective.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Definition of ethnocentrism

The concept of ethnocentrism was introduced in social science at the beginning of the 20th century by William Graham Sumner in his book entitled “Folkways” (Bizumic, 2014). It refers to general provincialism or cultural limitations: “it means a tendency in the individual to be ethnically centered, to be rigid in his acceptance of the cultural alike and his rejections of the unlike” (Bizumic, 2014). The compound word –*éthnos* (nation) and *kéntro* (centre) from the ancient Greek–characterises “the act of placing one’s own nation, and the values

attached to it, at the epicentre of their critical understanding of the entire world” (Polychronákis, 2019, p. 842). However, this definition does not apply solely to national attributes and can also comprise regional or subcultural identities. Aspects such as language, class divisions, social behaviours, cultural tradition and religious beliefs are central to the construction of ethnocentric ideologies (Polychronákis, 2019). Ethnocentrism is experienced at several milieus –“local communities, states, nations, and international (or global) contexts” (Croll, 2012, p. 525)– as a conviction of the superiority of its own group, culture and values which leads to discriminatory attitudes. The notion of ethnocentrism is rooted within the field of social psychology based on the premises that people have a natural inclination to form groups. During this process, one tends to distinguish itself from the others, resulting in the establishment of group identities. “This is who we are, and this is who we are not” (Collins, 2017, p. 587). Amidst societies and their several groups’ identities, the above-mentioned perception of superiority can emerge among one or more groups sometimes (Collins, 2017).

It is worth mentioning that power is a crucial aspect to comprehend ethnocentrism: “By subordinating certain ethnic groups through prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation, other ethnic groups can become dominant and more powerful within that society” (Collins, 2017, p. 587). The concept of ethnocentrism was defined within several areas of research: global studies (Croll, 2012); war and conflict developments (Collins, 2017); criminal justice ethics (Leone, 2014), and music and cultural approaches (Polychronákis, 2019). Researchers have also demonstrated how media, in general, depict minorities in an ethnocentric manner, i.e., as “different, exotic, special, essentialised or even abnormal” (Fürsich, 2010, p. 116). In the next section, we are going to discuss how the concept can be understood in the field of foreign reporting.

Ethnocentrism manifested in international journalism

International news coverage is understood as a “system of the journalistic information mediation, in which course information and news cross the state-borders” (Hafez, 2002a, p. 24). What defines “foreign news” is its

distinction from “domestic news” based on the assumption that there are variations between citizens of different countries. The term “foreign” implicates that what is published or broadcasted is “alien, strange and unfamiliar” (Williams, 2011, p. 3). This differentiation is the result of the development of nation-states and media systems (Williams, 2011).

Several studies claimed that traditional journalism –despite globalization and increasing interconnectedness– is not up to the responsibility of reporting the complexities of global events (Fürsich, 2010). Due to excessive dependence on official sources, editorial constraints, requirements of the central newsroom for specific stories or stories’ patterns and the set of professional values that contours the journalistic perceptions, one can presume that the working routines of foreign correspondents are in consonance with “certain ways of seeing the world” (Williams, 2011). Hence, several authors agree that globalization does not necessarily result in more cosmopolitan world views and representation of Others (Fürsich, 2010; Hafez, 2005; Hannerz, 2004), and the so-called international media such as CNN continue to be “inherently ethnocentric, nationalistic, and even state-centred” (Leung, 2010, p. 252).

Although the media worldwide orient themselves on the same agenda, they frame events according to their own home perspective (Hafez, 2009). The increasing international flow of images and information is not automatically accompanied by a global understanding and sensibility towards others’ stories (Hafez, 2009). Hence, scholars have been paradoxically discussing the decline in the quality and quantity of foreign news in an era of media abundance (Hannerz, 2004; Thussu, 2004). Foreign news appears in different configurations –“home news abroad”, “foreign news at home” and “foreign new abroad”–.² While the first two formats of news focus on events that are clearly associated with the involvement of the domestic audience, the last one can be domesticated, i.e., adapted and tailored to local concerns. Even in the case of global events, the media tend to focus on their “hometown” (Rivenburgh, 2010). For instance, during international summits or Olympic Games, each national media system involved in the global

² See next section.

event prioritises its own diplomats or athletes ((Rivenburgh, 2010). A study analysing the coverage of UN-summits demonstrated that Western hosts obtained more excessively positive depiction than those from the developing nations (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000). The media disapproval, concerning logistic and accommodation in Cairo, Rio de Janeiro and Beijing, was founded on Western values of competence, welfare and business (Giffard & Rivenburgh, 2000).

These examples reveal that international reporting is mostly produced for a domestic audience (Hafez, 2005). Foreign news abroad can be domesticated by selecting remote events according to discursive frames that translate them more compellingly for the local audiences and by creating meanings of these occurrences in line with the dominant ideologies of the reporting media system (Williams, 2011). The intense vulnerability of journalism cultures worldwide to patriotic, ethnocentric and biased viewpoints is intrinsically associated to the “fragmented world-view” of their spectators, which are themselves, to a certain degree, the result of the global *mishmash* journalism of modern mainstream media (Hafez, 2009).

Apart from that, journalists can be considered trapped in their cultural mindset and their national media logic. One cannot evade one’s own range of experience, and this certainly has an impact on the work of correspondents. The requested journalistic objectivity expected from these professionals can only be evaluated against the background of their cultural settings (Beliveau et al., 2011). Despite the notions of objectivity and practices to avoid bias and subjectivity, journalism and foreign reporting work within a professional set of rules that is the result of a “life-long conditioning” (Williams, 2011). This worldview determines not only the news agenda but also the news values, the topic of our next section.

The operationalization of ethnocentrism within the news value research

Ethnocentrism in foreign-reporting is observed not only in the previously described process of applying a domestic lens for a local audience but also in the events’ selection based on a set of long-established Western news values. Amidst the news values research tradition, Galtung

and Ruge³ (1965, pp. 66-67) discussed the term associated with the dimension meaningfulness. The authors defined what is meaningful through two criteria. The first one concerns the cultural background of the audience and examines the role of ethnocentrism, i.e., whether there is cultural proximity between the reporting and reported countries. In other words, events that are familiar, cultural alike, will attract the press attention more easily. On the other hand, distant cultural occurrences tend to be unnoticed. The second criterium concerns meaningfulness in terms of relevance for the public. An occurrence might take place in a faraway nation; nevertheless, one still can understand it as significant, according to what it connotes for the audience.

Östgaard (1965) identified three main factors to explain what is news: *simplification*, *identification* and *sensationalism*. According to him, the more substantial the possibility of identification with the news, the more sizeable will be the flow of attention (Östgaard, 1965, p. 46). Identification comprises two variables, namely *personification* and *cultural proximity*. The last one can be understood in terms of ethnocentrism and is considered one of the most significant resources for a news story. Hence, the news media in any reporting nation will be inclined to depict the image of the distant countries as “seen through the ethnocentric eyes of the receiver of the news” (p. 46).

Although the work of Galtung and Ruge is pivotal for the development of the news values research tradition, their factors were based on psychological variables, which are difficult to operationalise (Lim & Barnett, 2010). The German author Schulz (1976) was the first one to test the news factors empirically and to prove their effect on journalistic choice by measuring the size and placement of news according to the frequency and intensity of those variables. According to him, news value represents an indication of the journalistic hypothesis of reality (Schulz, 1976, p. 30).

On top of that, he expanded and adapted Galtung and Ruge’s catalogue. For instance, he distinguished between geographical,

³ The catalogue of Galtung and Ruge comprises twelve news factors and is one of the most quoted works in the field and the basis for several other empirical analyses.

political and cultural proximity and coded these factors separately from ethnocentrism. Geographical proximity was operationalized through the distance between the editorial office and the event's location. Political proximity, in its turns, was measured by three parameters: general membership to the European Community, to NATO or the most important trading partners of the former Federal Republic of Germany. Lastly, cultural proximity was quantified based on three variables: German as a national language, at least 60 percent of the population belonging to Christian religions and the number of books translations of at least 100 titles per year (Schulz, 1976, pp. 131-133). The factor "ethnocentrism" was operationalized by the author based on the three formats of news: "Foreign News Abroad", "Home News Abroad" and "Foreign News at Home".⁴ This approach is adequate to quantify one dimension of ethnocentrism, i.e., the German involvement in an event. However, it cannot access other facets of the problem, such as the domestication of news or the several media frames employed by different media systems.

Latin America as the subject of analysis

The measurement of political and cultural proximity mentioned above seems plausible for studies based on a global, cross-regional basis, in which one notices the contrast between language and religion. Nevertheless, in the case of Latin America, such an approach is not possible considering that the majority of the states have Spanish as an official language (except Brazil and Haiti) and Catholicism strongly marks the region. We should also not forget that "Latin America" is primarily a political and cultural nomenclature to describe Latin language-speaking countries of South America, Central America and Mexico, in contrast to the Anglo-America. The English-speaking Caribbean or the Dutch-speaking states do not belong to this definition (Hoffmann & Nolte, 2008; Werz, 2010). Thus, since we are dealing solely with one region, we rely on the above operationalization proposed by Schulz (1976) to measure one of the aspects of ethnocentrism in foreign reporting. In any case, we should keep in mind, that among

⁴ See methodology.

the Latin American countries, the “Cono Sur” states (especially Brazil, Argentina and Chile) received the most substantial German immigrants during the 19th Century.

Throughout the sizeable immigration wave in that period, a relatively little amount of German nationals moved to Latin America. South America, mainly Brazil, Argentina and Chile, received a considerable share of immigrants, whilst this number in Mexico and Central America was peripheral (Barbian, 2014a, p. 49). Even though the majority of Germans immigrants went to North America, the significance of Latin America was noteworthy for the sustaining of “Germanism” among their cultural residents, and hence more relevant for the relation between the “foreign-Germans” (the *Auslandsdeutschen*) and the “foreign cultural politics” (Barbian, 2014b, p. 19). According to the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), there were in 1964 a population of 1.1 million German-speakers in Brazil, 250 000 in Argentina and 45 000 in Chile (Barbian, 2014b, pp. 92-194). In terms of economic proximity with Germany, states such as Brazil, Mexico and Argentina play an essential role (Cazzamatta, 2018). Only in Brazil, one finds 1 300 German-Brazilian multinationals responsible for the employments of 250 000 citizens (Auswärtiges Amt, 2017).

In addition to this partial cultural and economic proximity of a few Latin American states to Germany, we selected the German media system to analyse the factor ethnocentrism because it is one of the prospered in Europe (Vyslozil & Surm, 2019), still capable of keeping correspondents in the region. It is also situated within the democratic corporatist model, i.e., it possesses a considerable mass-circulation newspaper development (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Besides, its readership pays considerable attention to international news in comparison to other European countries –29% declared to “read international news very carefully”, when contrasted to other neighbour states, for example, the UK (19%), France and Spain (both with 16%) (Pew Research Center, 2019)–. That said, one should also consider that Latin America is still deemed by current, up-to-date studies of news flow as a “consistent area of invisibility” (Tiele, 2010, p. 261), even though relevant political and economic changes are reshaping the region in the last years (Lowenthal & Baron, 2015). Thus, we can

hypothesise that the level of ethnocentrism related to Latin America may still be sizeable.

Another variable to evaluate is the minimal presence of German correspondents in the region. According to Junghanns and Hanitzsch (2006, p. 421), only 5.7% of the German correspondents' network is based on the continent, behind Africa (6.3%) and Asia (11.4%). The majority of German correspondents are in Europe (44%) and the Middle East (considered a crisis region). On top of that, Africa, Latin America and Australia are the vast reporting areas where correspondents mostly cover the news from Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro or Melbourne. Another survey with 14 German correspondents in South America showed that these professionals were mostly based in Argentina or Brazil, and they were responsible for the coverage of almost the entire subcontinent (Wienand, 2008). Since these surveys mentioned above are from more than ten years ago, we got in touch with the German embassies in Latin America to update these numbers. Solely the diplomatic bodies in Buenos Aires retain a register of the German correspondence (print and broadcasting media) since 2009, however, mostly located in South America. The amount of German-based communicators fluctuated from 17 in 2009 to 23 in 2014, during the period of the World Cup (Auswärtiges Amt, 2016). The majority of them is located in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, although they are responsible for the coverage of several nations in the region. To give the magnitude of the limited network in Latin America, only Brussels, the seat of the European Union, boasts 118 German speaking journalists (Auswärtiges Amt, 2019).

Furthermore, during an interview with the author, a German correspondent confirmed that only the primary German titles such as *Der Spiegel*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the German international news agency DPA –besides the public broadcasters– can keep permanent correspondents in the region (I. Malcher, personal communication, December 2nd, 2018), what explains the sample's selection of the presented paper.⁵ Based on the previous theoretical background and the circumstances related to foreign

⁵ See the methodology section.

reporting on Latin American in Germany, we formulated the following research questions:

- RQ1: Is the German self-reference predominant in the coverage about Latin America in Germany?
- RQ2: Does the factor ethnocentrism affects all reporting areas in the same way?
- RQ3: Does the variable ethnocentrism play the same role among all Latin America countries?
- RQ4: Is German participation stronger among negative or positive occurrences? Which kind of events involves Germany?
- RQ5: Is there a predominance of Western sources in the foreign-reporting on Latin America?
- RQ6: Can the factor ethnocentrism vary according to articles' authorship?

METHODOLOGY

Considered Corpus

Our empirical analysis comprises at first the two national market-leading dailies in Germany, namely, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)* (liberal and politically wide) and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* (economically liberal but politically conservative). Besides, we took into account the most traditional political magazine in the country –*Der Spiegel*–. Lastly, we selected the alternative *Tageszeitung (taz)* from Berlin due to its role as an agenda-setter of counter issues. The alternative press has been replacing the informational gap left by the traditional publications since the mid-1970s. The denomination alludes to structures of media-established communication which started from the criticism related to the traditional well established commercial mass media, providing the development of a counter-public sphere (Bentele et al., 2013; Pürer & Raabe, 2007; Schrag, 2007).

Generally, our unit of analysis considers three pivotal variables: publication's reach, influence among other communicators and political scope. The selected publications boast the most considerable sales-volume and broader readership among the prestigious national

press (Allensbacher Markt- und Werbeträgeranalyse [AWA], 2019; Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern [IVW], 2019). Concerning the size of the sales, *taz* does not fit necessarily the criteria; however, we still incorporated it in the corpus to expand the political range of the analysis (Noelle-Neumann et al., 2002, p. 435; Pürer & Raabe, 2007, p. 14). Finally, these publications are “leading media”, i.e., they influence the reporting of other small outlets within Germany (Brosius et al., 2009, p. 164).

Sampling process and reliability

Firstly, we selected every single news items related to Latin America published in the printed edition of the media outlets mentioned above from January, 2000 until December, 2014. The search criterion was the mention of “Latin America” or its 20 states and capitals not only in the titles but also in the first text’s passage. It was also essential to observe the adjectives related to the nations and its German declinations to refine the search guidelines. The *SZ* and *FAZ* keep their own archive (accessible online), while the news items from the *taz* and *Der Spiegel* derived from the LexisNexis databank. We did not take into account articles published in the *SZ.de*, *FA.NET*, *taz.de* and *Spiegel Online*, considering that around 70% of the most relevant online news articles are in general very similar to their printed counterparts (Wurff, 2008, p. 70).

Initially, we listed the news items to classify them according to publication, date of issue and size, –measured in number of words–, and composed our population (21 929 items). To make sure that the distribution of the Latin American countries in the central unit of analysis and the sample would be the same, we drew a layered sample of 25% for each nation separately. Furthermore, we ignored the smalls publications (less than 150 words) since they do not bring many news factors to code. Afterwards, we picked up every n-4th articles of each country within each newspaper. The necessary condition for the stratified sample was achieved since we knew the population dispersal from our list. The ultimate sample comprises 3 831 articles. Finally, we conducted a reliability test according to Holsti’s coefficient with 5% of the articles. In this process, 227 texts were re-coded, and the results

showed a correspondence of 98.1% for the news perspective (format) and 90.6% for the described actors.

Analysed categories

To analyse the ethnocentrism in the foreign reporting on Latin America in the German press, we used two parameters, namely the German participation in the reported events and the nationalities of the described actors (Maier, 2010; Schulz, 1976, p. 139; Staab, 1990). At first, we used a nominal category (yes or no) to identify a German self-reference in the news items. Afterwards we employed the operationalization from Schulz (1976) to identify the foreign reporting's formats:

1. Events that happen outside Germany (e.g. Latin America) without German participation whatsoever (Foreign News Abroad).
2. Events that happen outside Germany with German involvement (Home News Abroad).
3. Events that happen in Germany with international, i.e. Latin American involvement (Foreign News at Home).

In a second step we also looked if the described actors –organized social groups (organizations, companies, universities, churches), States representatives (executive, legislative or judiciary), or ordinary people– were from Latin American or Western cultures such as Europe, the United States or Germany (Mükke, 2009, p. 130). Apart from the main operationalization of the factor ethnocentrism, we classified the news items according to ten main subject areas to investigate its impact on different topics. The coding options were the following: 1) Domestic Politics, 2) Foreign Affairs, 3) Environment, 4) Economy & Finance, 5) Social & Social Order, 6) Culture & Society, 7) Research & Technology, 8) Celebrity, Style & Gossips, 9) Crime & Delinquency, and 10) Disaster & Accidents. Furthermore, every news item was classified between positive, negative and neutral, according to the type of event. Our last category is related to the authorship of the item. The possibilities of classification included international news agencies, local correspondents, editorial office in Germany, travelling journalists and external experts.

Qualitative Expert Interviews

Through our above-designed content analysis, we can only access one dimension of ethnocentrism based on the German self-reference, i.e., its involvement in the event. However, other aspects, such as specific employed ethnocentric media frames or even the domestication of foreign news, are hardly quantifiable. Hence, we incorporated in our research design eight semi-structured qualitative expert interviews with German correspondents in Latin America to access the instrumentalization of the factor and discuss other strategies to convey domestic references to foreign news on Latin America. The purposive sampling includes at least one stable or one free-lancer journalist for each of the considered German publications. These conversations should clarify the conditions of foreign news-production and also highlight the perspective of the correspondents in opposition to their editorial office. Due to financial constraints, the dialogues were conducted by e-mail or Skype according to the preference of the interviewees. Relevant for this analysis is the question of how important is the factor “German involvement” and “economic proximity” in the selection process of events concerning Latin America. The conversations happened between February and March 2018. After authorization, we recorded Skype interviews, conducted in German, and transcribed them with the Program F5.⁶ These interviews aim at discussing the unquantifiable aspects of ethnocentrism.

FINDINGS

Looking at the entire foreign reporting about Latin America in the German press, we identified around 10% of “Foreign News Abroad” and 11% of “Foreign News at Home”, i.e., 21% of events which had a direct and clear German involvement (RQ1). The sum of the two news’ perspective does not vary considerably among the analyzed publications: *SZ* (22.3%), *FAZ* (19.9%), *taz* (21.6%) and *Der Spiegel* (18.9%). However, these news formats are mostly sectorial as we are going to discuss in the next section.

⁶ See extra supplementary material in Cazzamatta (2020b) for the originals.

German involvement and areas of coverage

Looking to the formats of reporting, the area “Culture & Society” (53.2%) provides the highest amount of German participation (WHome News Abroad” + “Foreign News at Home”), due to several Latin American cultural events that took place in Germany during the period of analysis. Other covered areas such as “Research & Technology” (37.0%), “Celebrity, Style & Gossips” (35.5%), “Social Order” (31.7%) and “Crime & Delinquency” (24.8%) also exhibit the most considerable amount of German self-reference. The subject area of “Research, Education & Technology” shows 37% of self-reference, particularly within the theme “Science & Research” which often reports about scientific findings released in specialized publications. In other words, it is about the involvement of German scientists in research conducted in Latin America. Within the subject area “Social Order”, the percentage of German involvement reaches 31.7%, especially amidst the main topic of “Social Programmes, Foreign Support & Assistance”, related to German social work undertaken in the region (RQ2).

In the case of “Foreign Policy & International Affairs”, the amount of German self-reference is 20.9%. Considering that the leading topic within this area deals with the relationship between Germany and Latin America, this amount of involvement seems justifiable and thus much higher when compared to “Domestic Politics” (4.1%). Amidst “Environment & Environmental Policy”, the amount of German self-reference reaches 19.5%. Among the related topics, we found Germany’s participation in climate-change conferences or the initial cooperation with Ecuador in order to avoid the exploitation of oil in the middle of the Amazon reserve (a topic also reported within foreign affairs). Further examples refer to a WestLB Bank project in Ecuador that does not meet ecological standards or the ecological impact of the Thyssenkrupp steel mill in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, within “Economy & Finance”, one identified a German self-reference of 15.4%, in which the central theme “Latin America as a sale market and production location for German companies and investors” plays an important role. Within this thematic framework, there were reports, for instance, about the Volkswagen investments in Brazil or the rapid growth of Roland Berger in South America. The area “Economy & Finance” was strongly

represented within the coverage of Brazil and Mexico due to the German economic participation and interests in the region (Cazzamatta, 2018).

German participation in events related to different Latin American countries

Since the Latin American countries are portrayed in the German press based on a different range of topics, it seems plausible that the amount of self-reference also varies within the nations. States that boast, in general, excellent “power status” and “economic proximity” to Germany (Cazzamatta, 2018) also show a high level of ethnocentrism from 19.90% (Argentina) to 28.20% (Mexico). As a whole, these countries –notably Brazil, Argentina and Mexico– possess a considerable coverage of economic and cultural topics which explains the more or less counterbalance between the perspectives “Home News Abroad” (the development of German companies in the region) and “Foreign News at Home” (cultural events related to Latin America in Germany).

In the case of Chile (23.70%), besides economic interests, there was a considerable amount of stories concerning the German cult settlement *Colonia Dignidade*, which is in the end effect a German theme. Regarding Paraguay, the German participation brings lots of “Home News Abroad” (21.60%) due to allegations of corruption in the foundation Kolping Rudolf-Geiselberger and the reclaiming of the misappropriated funds from Kolping Cologne. Cuba, on the other hand, has the most considerable amount of “Foreign News at Home” among all nations (20.30%) due to the cultural events promoted in Germany. We discussed somewhere else how cultural topics related to Cuba become trendy in Germany (Cazzamatta, 2020b) and are still perceptible in its thematic coverage. The German self-reference in foreign reporting on other small Central American states relates to the German involvement in social programs or environmental issues (RQ3).

Self-reference and positive context

It is remarkable that contributions with German participation tend to have a positive tone (63.1% of all articles with German self-reference). That means that German participation happens more often in connection with positive developments, successes, cultural exchanges or inventions

(RQ4). Exceptions are events related to environmental damage caused by German companies in Latin America. Articles with a German involvement show an average of damage of 0.35 and an average of success of 0.60 (measured from 0 to 3). On the other hand, within the events without German participation, these levels of intensity are 0.68 and 0.26, respectively (RQ4).

Western sources as another indicator of ethnocentrism

When examining the actors of the foreign reporting, we noticed that the most significant percentage of “Western actors” (38.33%) lies amidst the “organized social groups”, i.e., NGOs, companies and other Western institutions. Considering that we are dealing with the coverage on Latin America, that should supposedly portray the region, a percentage of almost 40% of Western sources within the described social groups is quite a considerable amount (RQ5). Among “prominent people”, the proportion of Western sources is 23.98%. This number reaches 15.64% within “official states representatives” and 14.54% in the case of “non-organized social groups”, i.e., ordinary people. Moreover, the press also prioritises international organizations such as UN, EU or NATO with 4.30% in opposition to the 1.10% of the Latin American regional organizations, such as Mercosur, UNASUR or CPLP.

Authorship and Ethnocentrism

Additionally, we can confirm that articles regarding Latin America written by correspondents are less influenced by German self-reference than the ones produced by their editorial offices (RQ6). While the share of German involvement in the contributions signed by correspondents is 9.30%, this percentage is much higher within the news items produced by the central newsrooms with 42.40%. Thus, we can say that the editorial offices in Germany practice more self-referential and ethnocentric journalism than their correspondents in Latin America.

Unquantifiable indicators of ethnocentric foreign reporting

Up to this section, we have discussed through a positivist approach just one aspect of ethnocentrism, based on the quantification of the German involvement in the depicted events. The formats “Home News Abroad”

and “Foreign News at Home” implicate direct and clear participation of the domestic audience in foreign news. However, it is hard to quantify the domestication of the so-called “Foreign news abroad”, which can be deemed as another subtler dimension of ethnocentrism. As previously discussed, international coverage frequently establishes a connection between “foreign” and “domestic” news, transferring domestic references and interests to “Foreign news abroad” (Williams, 2011). Thus, we examine this problem here with a more qualitative perspective underpinned by interviews with German correspondents.

Media systems construct events based on their own interests. For instance, in the case of Latin America’s depiction in the German press, countries with more power status or economic proximity to Germany tend to exhibit a much more substantial amount of coverage, i.e., press attention (Cazzamatta, 2020a). As pointed by one correspondent, the other states do not play an important role. “When we think about global capitalism, the [other] countries are not interesting to us. If they did not exist, you would still be able to buy anything” (T. Keppeler, personal communication, February 14th, 2018). Colombia may still attract some press attention due to its coffee production. In Switzerland, for instance, Nestlé buys 15% of the Colombian crop (T. Keppeler, personal communication, February 14th, 2018). According to the correspondent, the factor “economic proximity” becomes more relevant when there is, in fact, a connection to Germany, i.e., “in economic terms, what is interesting for us”?

For example, I have made stories about lithium, where the world’s largest reservoirs are in Bolivia, and so far have hardly been touched, and how Mercedes wanted to buy them... And then a story like that suddenly sells a lot easier when you say: “Mercedes is negotiating with the government”. Surprisingly, then, the economy also plays a role again on such, rather than historical human rights issues. For example, “how did Volkswagen in Brazil cooperate with the dictatorship and hand over workers’ leaders?” (T. Keppeler, personal communication, February 14th, 2018).

Wolf-Dieter Vogel also confirms the trend of German involvement in the case of countries with a certain economic proximity:

... Where one can refer to Germany, for example, if one writes about German companies investing in Mexico and this leads to human rights' violations, then one can easily write about it, it meets more interest in an editorial office than if the topics have no reference to Germany or Europe (W.-D. Vogel, personal communication, February 16th, 2018).

Another strategy is the transfer –as mentioned earlier– of domestic references to “foreign news abroad”. In this case, the direct German involvement in the event is not crucial, but rather the monitoring of topics that are currently regarded as relevant in Germany, e. g., environmental issues or the coping with its historical past. In general, it works when correspondents find topics in Latin America which are deemed relevant for the German audience. That shows how news is still primarily tailed within national frameworks. Toni Keppeler, for instance, illuminates the case with a story about indigenous people in Panama who live on a small sinking island in the Caribbean. If the island submerges, its entire population will have to resettle. “This is a story that occurred in Panama (an under-represented state in by the press), but it sells, not because it is Panama, but because climate change is an important issue” (T. Keppeler, personal communication, February 14th, 2018). This linkage between domestic themes and global reporting was also considered by Hafez (2002b) based on Rosenau's discussion about the combination of domestic problems with foreign and global affairs. Sometimes, one can regard domestic and foreign reporting as the same commodity, derived from similar selection and depiction criteria (based on news values), which can result in an exciting combination of domestic and foreign issues (Hafez, 202b).

The typical disagreement between the correspondents and their central newsrooms concerning the importance of the German self-reference is also demonstrated through the interviews.⁷ The majority of the correspondents stated that they did not consider the German involvement “mandatory” (I. Malcher, personal communication, December 2nd, 2018), but “it generally sells more easily” (T. Keppeler, personal communication, February 14th, 2018). “I do not think it is

⁷ See also “Authorship and Ethnocentrism” above.

important, but the editors do”, explains the former *SZ*’s correspondent Eva Karnofsky (personal communication, February 13th, 2018). For instance, correspondents consider issues such as the dangers to the peace process in Colombia or corruption scandals within a government as important. However, editors do not “because they do not see any connection” (personal communication, anonymized). From the perspective of the correspondents, these are events that the domestic audience, i.e., a German tourist or an entrepreneur, should be aware of. Besides, “it is also part of the world’s understanding to be informed” (personal communication, anonymized).

Peter Burghardt, the *SZ*’s correspondent until 2014, considers the German reference neither compelling nor wrong. “... In cases such as the “Colonia Dignidad” in Chile, the disaster of ThyssenKrupp in Rio de Janeiro or the saga of Eike Batista, the factor is unavoidable” (P. Burghardt, personal communication, November 3rd, 2018). The *FAZ*’s correspondent explains that he never compulsively searched for a German self-referral. However, if the reference emerged from the story, he naturally took it into account (J. Oehrlein, personal communication, February 22nd, 2018). Overall, the correspondents do not consider the “German reference” to be necessary. Nevertheless, they are aware that it can facilitate to get a specific topic approved by the editorial office, as the *Spiegel*’s correspondent puts it: “From time to time, I try to sell stories emphasizing the German reference because sometimes it is easier to make one. However, most of the topics I write about have no reference to Germany whatsoever” (J. Glüsing, personal communication, February 23rd, 2018).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Several analyses have demonstrated that increasing interconnectedness and technological development did not promote a more cosmopolitan “foreign reporting” automatically (Williams, 2011). Journalistic culture worldwide is still vulnerable to patriotism, ethnocentrism and partisanship (Hafez, 2011). The patterns of ethnocentrism demonstrated in this paper through quantitative content analysis, associated with the necessity to appeal to national audiences –discussed during the

interviews with correspondents— generally lead to the domestication of foreign news. One of the main problems is that foreign news exists –not only in Germany but also in the majority of media systems– insulated from international markets and it is founded on national logics, i.e., domestic audiences, local societies, politics and markets (Fürsich, 2010; Hafez, 2011; Williams, 2011).

Although scholars claim that journalism should work towards a more global outlook “characterized by more cosmopolitan, pluralistic, and universal values that transcend narrow national frameworks” (Reese, 2008, p. 243), the involvement of a reporting country in the event of a reported nation still increases its news values considerably. In this article, we used this self-reference as an indicator of ethnocentrism. Even though we understand foreign reporting as information and news across state borders (Hafez, 2002b), it is possible to discuss if “Home News Abroad” can be deemed as international news coverage, since the press is not dealing precisely with Latin America, but with German developments. In the case of invisible and unreported nations (e.g. Central America), which are depicted mostly in association with natural catastrophes, tourism, crime and delinquency, the German involvement might give these countries a few headlines. However –strictly speaking– they might not be the main focus of reporting.

Regarding the coverage about Latin America in the German press altogether, we identified German participation in almost one-quarter of the events (RQ1). A study on the Brazilian image in the German press from 2010 to 2012 came to similar results and showed a German involvement of 24.1% (Cazzamatta, 2014). This percentage is smaller if compared to the German self-reference in the German coverage about Africa, which varies from 30% to 36% depending on the media (Mükke, 2009, p. 131). Besides, looking at the sources of foreign reporting, another indicator of ethnocentric values, we can attest a higher number of Western sources (Germany, the United States or Europe) especially among the actors classified as “organized social groups”, which reinforce our findings (RQ5).

Nevertheless, the observed ethnocentrism is mostly sectorial (RQ2) and is to be found more often among non-political reporting or soft news areas of coverage such as “Culture & Society” (53.2%), “Celebrity,

Style & Gossips” (35.5%), “Social Order” (31.7%) or “Environment” (19.5%). Within the political areas, where the factor relevance is compelling, the German self-reference tends to be comparatively smaller –“Domestic Politics” (4.1%), “Foreign Policy” (20.9%) and “Economy & Finance” (15.4%)–. This result corresponds to Schulz’s (1976) findings related to the construction of news reality and indicates that the German self-reference might help topics with less political relevance to trespass the news’ threshold. Furthermore, German participation is ethnocentrically most related to positive developments, except for environmental damage caused by German companies (RQ4). The level of damage (from 0 to 3) in the events involving Germany reaches 0.35. On the other hand, this average increases to 0.68 without its participation.

Concerning the ethnocentrism in relation to specific countries, nations with considerable economic proximity and power status (e.g. Brazil, Argentina and Mexico) also show a high level of ethnocentrism. However, in opposition to small invisible states, they exhibit a higher amount of coverage and a more balanced relation between “Home news abroad” and “Foreign news at home” (RQ3). That shows how media systems select countries and global events according to their own preferences and (economic) interests. Lastly, as expected due to the distance to Latin America, the journalism produced by the editorial news office is much more self-referential and ethnocentric than by the German correspondents (RQ6). While the percentage of German participation in the events reported by correspondents is 9.30%, this share is much higher in the case of the central newsrooms in Germany (42.40%). Considering that this paper is dealing with leading German publications, the only ones still able to keep correspondents in the region, despite the structural crisis of the traditional media, we can suppose that the level of ethnocentrism might be even higher in other small media outlets among the country. An assumption that requires, however, further empirical research.

Lastly, this study accesses mostly one aspect of ethnocentrism based on the selection of news according to long-established news values. Since the quantification of the German involvement gives just a partial indication of ethnocentrism, we included a few qualitative interviews

with correspondents to tackle other dimensions of the concept. Although it is challenging to measure news' domestication, these dialogues shed some light on how events are selected based on German interests and which strategies are used by correspondents to transport domestic references to foreign-reporting. We observed that several linkages, which associate far-places such as Latin America to Germany, persist in supplying topics and frames for the journalistic work (Hannerz, 2004). The classic tension between the correspondents in the field and their newsrooms was also elucidated. Future case studies should consider a more qualitative approach, based on content and frame analyses to broaden and complement this discussion related to foreign news on Latin America.

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