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MEASURING AND EXPLAINING THE DIVERSITY OF VOICES AND VIEWPOINTS IN THE NEWS

A comparative study on the determinants of content diversity of immigration news

Andrea Masini, Peter Van Aelst, Thomas Zerback, Carsten Reinemann, Paolo Mancini, Marco Mazzoni, Marco Damiani, and Sharon Coen

News media can be considered to fulfil their democratic role as a “marketplace of ideas” only if they present a diverse content that gives space to a wider range of ideas and viewpoints. But how can content diversity be assessed? And what determines actor and viewpoint diversity in the first place? By employing measurements of actor and viewpoint diversity at the article and newspaper level, this study provides a complete overview on the content diversity of immigration news, and it investigates factors that have an impact on content diversity of immigration newspaper articles in Belgium, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (2013–2014). The results of a multilevel analysis indicate that both the articles’ size and the elite character of a newspaper play a key role in enhancing news’ multiperspectivalness. Also, the findings show that these two measurements of content diversity are different yet related to each other.

KEYWORDS comparative research; content analysis; content diversity; journalism; multilevel; news

Introduction

Political communication scholars generally agree that the ideal of a “multiperspectival” press—that is, a press that guarantees access to diverse sectors of society, allowing the presentation of diverse perspectives on a certain issue (Gans 1979, 2011)—is achieved only if news media foster the diversity of their content (Napoli 1999; Baker 2002). As stated by Choi (2009), content diversity is ultimately an indicator of the quality of news reporting. For this reason, both the assessment of diversity and the identification of its determinants are crucial. In which ways can content diversity be exhaustively measured? Under which circumstances can one expect to find higher or lower levels of content diversity? A number of studies in the field have attempted to conceptualise and measure news content diversity (Voakes et al. 1996; Benson 2009; Choi 2009; Carpenter 2010; Humprecht and Büchel 2013). Yet, this research has proven elusive in defining and employing different measurements of content diversity and, with a few exceptions (see Benson 2009; Humprecht and Büchel 2013), it has neglected to investigate the factors that make the content more or less multiperspectival.

Drawing upon a comparative cross-country content analysis of the news coverage of immigration in four European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom), this study aims to examine systematically the impact of different factors on news content diversity. According to Benson (2009, 403), the issue of immigration is suitable for the analysis of variation in the diversity of news content, as it is a “multifaceted and complex” topic that is typically disputed by a broad range of social actors aiming to put forward their viewpoints in the news in order to influence public opinion.

The paper proceeds as follows. After having provided an exhaustive conceptualisation of content diversity, we present a model to identify the factors that might shape news content diversity, and we present hypotheses on the direction of these influences. Then, we explain the methodological choices that have been made to measure content diversity and gauge the impact of the factors affecting the level of multiperspectival reporting. Finally, we present our findings and discuss them in light of the democratic role of the media.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Conceptualisation of Content Diversity

As noted by Van Cuilenburg (1999, 188), content diversity corresponds to the “heterogeneity of media content in terms of one or more specified characteristics”. For example, media content can vary according to the issues or the news stories that are presented (Carpenter 2010; Humprecht and Büchel 2013), news genres, geographic locations (Choi 2009), etc. This study investigates the variety of two of the most important elements of news content, namely social actors and viewpoints. As noted by Benson and Wood (2015), the analysis of voices in the news is a central concern for journalism studies, in that actors’ ability to speak in the news is key to shaping the debate on a certain issue. However, as the authors argue, their ability to express viewpoints on the issue under discussion is what really allows them to contribute to the framing of a topic. In the words of Griswold (1998), it is the diversity of viewpoints that can provide readers with a wide range of perspectives on a given issue. This conceptualisation, originally proposed by McQuail and Van Cuilenburg (1983), is similar to the one used by Baden and Springer (2015) and by Benson (2009, 406), who defines content diversity in terms of “institutional” and “ideological multiperspectivalness”. Similarly, Voakes et al. (1996) examine content diversity as the variety of news sources and the dispersion of viewpoints in the news.

Moreover, the conceptualisation of content diversity differs according to the level of analysis. Diversity can be measured at the level of the single unit of information—like a television news item or a newspaper article—as the variety of different social actors and viewpoints that are represented therein. Alternatively, it can be gauged at a broader level as the evenness of the distribution of these two dimensions within a news outlet—like a television news broadcast or a newspaper—throughout a specific period of time. The difference between both levels is more than a technical measurement distinction and suggests a different way that a news consumer learns about an issue. If we focus our measurement on the article level, diversity implies that each story should give space to several types of actor and/or to multiple viewpoints. Only in this way, when reading a single news item, can a reader get a broader understanding of the issue. However, a news outlet can also guarantee content diversity by portraying different actors and viewpoints in different

news items. Benson (2009, 2013) notes that this is a typical characteristic of the French “debate ensemble” form of news: for French journalists it is not the single article that matters, but the entire “page”, which includes, for example, an interview with the minister of immigration alongside an article telling the personal story of an immigrant family entering the country. In this case, both stories together provide the reader with multiple perspectives, while on the article level the diversity of actors and opinions is limited.

Since these measurements of content diversity yield different values, extant studies that focus exclusively on one level convey a rather incomplete picture of the diversity of news content. This study seeks to overcome this inadequacy by mapping and comparing how newspapers perform in actor and viewpoint diversity both at the article and at the newspaper level. Also, we shed light on the relationship between measurements at both levels through the analysis of the determinants of content diversity, which is central to this paper. Do different factors have the same impact on content diversity measured at the article and at the newspaper level? To this purpose, in the next section, we introduce a conceptual model including the main factors that might influence actor and viewpoint diversity in the news.

Defining a Multilevel Model of Influence on Content Diversity

Although there is a long tradition of research on the diversity of news (e.g. Voakes et al. 1996; Benson 2009; Choi 2009; Carpenter 2010; Humprecht and Büchel 2013), two recent journalism studies explicitly focus on the determinants of news’ content diversity. Drawing upon Bourdieu’s field theory (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), Benson (2009) argues that content diversity of immigration-related news in France and the United States is shaped by the interaction of the journalistic field with the political and economic fields, as well as by features of the journalistic field itself. Within the political field, the characteristics of the party system, along with governmental policies on press regulation and subsidies, might have an impact on content diversity. Concerning the economic field, advertising support is considered to play a key role in shaping actor and viewpoint diversity. Finally, moving to the journalistic field, the author observes that content diversity might be shaped through the formats in which news is presented, as well as by the cultural capital of newspapers and their audiences. In a more recent study on the online reporting of the “Occupy” movement, Humprecht and Büchel (2013) draw on Shoemaker and Reese’s (1996) “Hierarchy-of-Influences Model” and define a pattern to identify factors at the national and organisational level that might explain variations in content diversity. At the national macro-level, they examine the influence of the relevance of the topic, as well as that of macroeconomic variables, on content diversity. At the organisational meso-level, the authors analyse the role played by the resources of the news organisation and its orientation towards quality journalism.

Building on the multilevel approach of these contributions, we aim to define a model that pinpoints the levels in which forces that shape content diversity are located. The idea, drawn from the hierarchical approach proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), is that news content—the final outcome of the journalistic process (Carpenter 2010)—is embedded in multiple spheres of influence corresponding to the different levels that shape news production (Figure 1).

At the micro-level, the article format—i.e. its length and type—might affect content diversity, while at the meso-level the characteristics of the news organisation, namely its

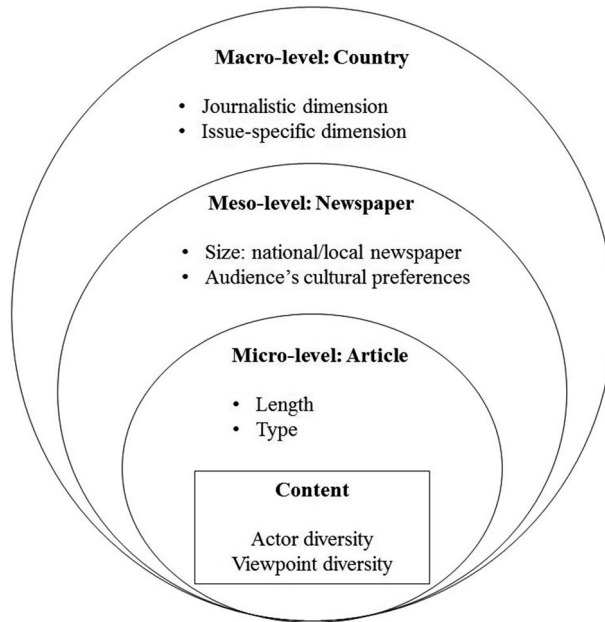


FIGURE 1
Multilevel model of influence on content diversity

size and the preferences of its target audience, can influence actor and viewpoint diversity. Finally, at the macro-level, countries' characteristics belonging to the journalistic and issue-specific dimensions are potential driving forces behind the diversity of immigration news. In the following sections, we formulate hypotheses on the influence of these factors on content diversity of immigration news.

Influence of Article's Characteristics: Length and Type

The theoretical foundations that formal characteristics of communication might have an influence on the content go back to ancient philosophy. Plato observed that the forms of human conversation (which we can conceive in the broader sense of mediated communication) can determine the content that is expressed. As our study encompasses just one medium, namely newspapers, we do not think of "form" as medium type. Instead, we examine the way in which information is organised and presented to the newspaper's readers (Altheide 1985; Barnhurst and Nerone 2001). Previous research on the deliberative quality of televised messages (Postman 1985; Bourdieu 1996; Sartori 1997) concludes that television's time constraints jeopardise the articulate rational character of media discourse. Likewise, space constraints in the print press might affect content diversity: in the presence of shorter articles, the space for the expression of different social actors and arguments is reduced. This question has been explored by Humprecht and Büchel (2013), who find that the length of online news articles about the Occupy movement is a key element in allowing for higher levels of diversity. Hence, we posit the following hypotheses:

H1: The length of articles about immigration has a positive effect on the levels of actor diversity (H1a) and viewpoint diversity (H1b).

Furthermore, we argue that the type of article might also play a key role in shaping content diversity of news about immigration. Based on a deductive analysis, we distinguish between six main article types: news reports, special reports, editorials, opinion articles, interviews and letters from readers. We argue that differences in the “primary purpose” of these news types might have an impact on content diversity. On the one hand, editorials, opinion pieces, interviews and letters from readers are more *opinionated* article types that have the primary aim of conveying a particular point of view (of the journalist or another agent) about the issue under discussion. On the other hand, news reports and special reports are more *informative* types that mainly provide the reader with an account of facts. When writing articles of this kind, journalists are more likely to follow the principle of objectivity, which is the “defining norm of modern journalism” (Patterson 1998, 28), by promoting the representation of diverse actor and viewpoint categories. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that special reports have the specific goal of providing an in-depth account of a topic, usually by covering opposing voices and different ideas, which makes them the most suitable article type to promote content diversity. Hence, we hypothesise that:

H2: Special reports about immigration enhance the levels of actor diversity (H2a) and viewpoint diversity (H2b), as compared to news reports. On the contrary, more opinionated news types about immigration decrease the levels of actor diversity (H2c) and viewpoint diversity (H2d), as compared to news reports.

Influence of Newspaper’s Characteristics: Size and Audience’s Cultural Capital

In order to study influences at the meso-level, we start from Reese’s (2001) assumption that the news is the product of an organisation that is driven by specific goals, and has a certain structure to enforce them. Simply put, at this level we consider the *capability* and the *will* of a newspaper organisation to foster content diversity. Previous studies have noted a positive relationship between the newspaper’s size and its capability of providing multi-perspectival reporting. Humprecht and Büchel (2013) find that the dimensions of a news organisation in terms of its human resources—i.e. the number of journalists working for it—matters in enhancing content diversity. We argue that the size of a newspaper is the combination between the scope of the outlet and the dimensions of its staff, with the former often (but not always) determining the latter. Local newspapers are considered “small” because of a more limited geographical scope, which typically results in a smaller staff covering a narrower range of events at the local level. By contrast, national newspapers are “big” as they have to deal with a wider array of events and actors at the national and international level. Although there are examples of local newspapers having larger newsrooms than national ones, we expect that in general the latter will employ more journalists to cover a greater geographical scope. This is even more likely if we consider that the crisis of the media sector has hurt local news organisations the most, forcing them to impose significant staff cutbacks (Franklin and Murphy 1998). Consequently, we expect that “big” national newspapers provide a more diverse coverage of the issue of immigration than “small” local newspapers. For example, we expect that national news outlets will rely more on foreign correspondents to enhance geographic proximity when covering key events related to immigration, or to gain direct access to the voice of international

politicians (e.g. in Brussels or in Washington), thereby increasing the chances of providing more content diversity compared to local papers. Also, due to their bigger weight in the national media landscape, national outlets are usually granted a preferential channel to reach various key actors in society (experts, politicians, members of international organisations, etc.) and include more diverse opinions in the news. A formal test of the relationship between a newspaper's size—in terms of its circulation—and the diversity of its content is done by Voakes et al. (1996), but they find that smaller newspapers do not display lower levels of content diversity. Nonetheless, because these results might be biased by the local scope of their study, we still expect the following:

H3: Immigration news in national newspapers will have higher levels of actor diversity (H3a) and viewpoint diversity (H3b), as compared to local newspapers.

Furthermore, we argue that the will of a newspaper to foster content diversity depends on its editorial orientation in order to match the “cultural capital” of its target audience (Benson 2009, 405). Literature on economic explanations of news construction demonstrates that newspapers are able to attract readers based on the audience's cultural preferences (Callaghan and Schnell 2001; Hamilton 2004; Baron 2006; Gentzkow and Shapiro 2006). According to Peterson and Kern (1996), the “omnivorousness” of cultural tastes—i.e. a cultural appetite for a diverse range of cultural production—is a key characteristic of *highbrow* audiences, as opposed to the more limited range of preferences typical of *middlebrow* and *lowbrow* audiences (see the definition of Levine 1988; DiMaggio 1991). In line with this, Benson (2009) suggests that *elite newspapers* targeting a highbrow audience are likely to promote diversity of their content in order to match the more “omnivorous” predisposition of their readers, whereas *popular newspapers* targeting more middlebrow and lowbrow readers deliver a less complex, less diverse content. Consistent with this, Roggeband and Vliegenthart (2007) notice that when covering immigration and integration, Dutch newspapers targeting an elite audience make use of more diverse frames compared to outlets with a more popular readership. Thus, we hypothesise the following:

H4: Immigration news in elite newspapers will feature higher levels of actor diversity (H4a) and viewpoint diversity (H4b), as compared to popular newspapers.

Influence of Country-related Characteristics: Journalistic Dimension and Lampedusa

Finally, this study explores inter-country variation in the levels of content diversity. Cross-national differences in news content diversity have been investigated by Esser and Umbricht (2013) within a broader longitudinal study on the objectivity paradigm within Western press systems. Their findings show that the inclusion of opposing viewpoints in political news—which is an indicator of content diversity—was the lowest in Italy, while the results for the British press are aligned with those of countries belonging to the Democratic-Corporatist model (Hallin and Mancini 2004), namely Germany and Switzerland. Furthermore, as observed by Martin (1988) and Choi (2009), geographic proximity to the key locations where an issue is unfolding enhances the media's potential to provide a diverse coverage of the topic. During the period under study, according to the European Union agency Frontex, over 200,000 migrants have entered Europe by sea through the Italian island of Lampedusa. As observed by Cuttitta (2014, 196), the island has become the

symbol of migration into Europe, as well as the “theatre of the ‘border play’”, a figurative stage in which a large array of social actors debate on migration control (De Swert, Schacht, and Masini 2015). Contrary to the negative effect on content diversity stemming from its journalistic characteristics, geographic proximity to this relevant place for immigration—both in its real and symbolic dimensions—might correspond to a more diverse coverage of immigration in Italian newspapers. We will thus investigate the interplay between these two opposing forces.

Data and Methods

This study analyses news about immigration in a sample of newspapers in Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, between 1 January 2013 and 30 April 2014. The newspaper sample includes 22 titles with a large variation in terms of national/local scope and audiences’ cultural preferences (see Appendix A). For Belgium, we selected six news outlets from Flanders, the Dutch-speaking community: *De Morgen*, *de Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*. The German sample includes five titles: *Die Welt*, *Berliner Morgenpost*, *Der Tagesspiegel*, *Süd-deutsche Zeitung* and *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*. In Italy, we selected five outlets: *La Repubblica*, *Gazzetta di Modena*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Messaggero* and *Il Mattino*. Finally, for the United Kingdom, we chose *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Manchester Evening News* and *London Evening Standard*.

Through a Boolean string, translated in every language of interest, we searched in online databases for articles about immigration, this being defined as the entrance and the presence of people in a country other than their country of birth with the purpose of settling down (drawn from the United Nations’ definition of immigration). This all-encompassing search criterion allows us to grasp the different aspects of the multifaceted and evolving phenomenon of immigration, therefore ensuring comparability among countries and across time. The outcome of the first search for the whole period was further filtered, and ultimately resulted in a final sample consisting of 2490 news articles (642 for Belgium, 484 for Germany, 822 for Italy, 542 for the United Kingdom). The items were coded quantitatively by coders based in each country of the study. Extensive training was provided by a master coder in every country in which the coders’ teams were based. Intercoder reliability was tested for each country on a 10 per cent subsample. For the variable indicating the article type, Krippendorff’s alpha scores range from 0.93 to 1 in the four countries. The scores concerning the actor variables range from 0.62 to 1, with an average of 0.78, and coefficients of the variables indicating viewpoints range from 0.60 to 0.66. Because alpha is sensitive to skewed variables (as is the case for actors and viewpoints, which present a large amount of missing values), we also calculated the percentage of intercoder agreement with Holsti’s formula (Holsti 1969). For actors, Holsti’s scores range from 0.70 to 1, with an average of 0.87, while they range from 0.88 to 0.96 for the viewpoint variables (average 0.92). On top of this, we calculated intercoder reliability across countries on a smaller subsample of articles in English, with overall satisfying results.

A maximum of 10 quoted or paraphrased actors were coded in every article. Actors were identified by codes corresponding to different actor groups in society (see Figure 2). As we are mainly interested in the diversity of social groups that enter the news, all national political actors were considered as one group. In contrast with studies on political balance, we do not focus on the presence of different types of politicians, but rather on the attention

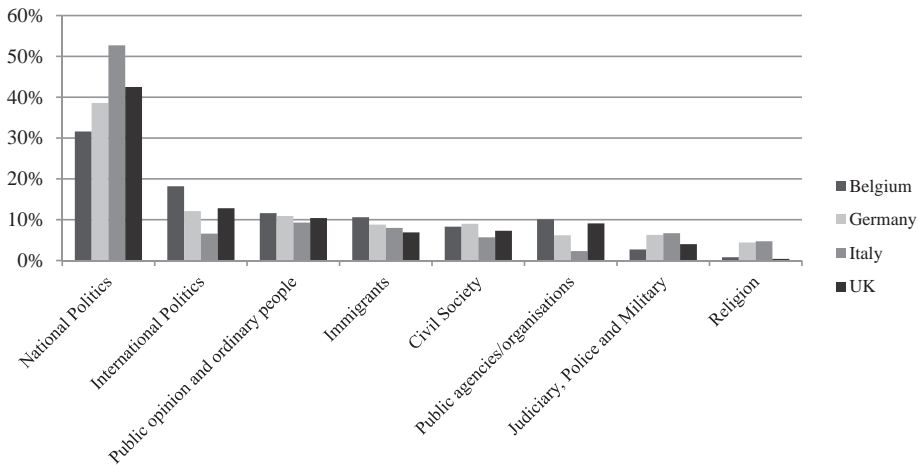


FIGURE 2

Distribution of actor categories across countries, $N = 6863$ (Belgium $N = 1679$; Germany $N = 1625$, Italy $N = 1932$, United Kingdom $N = 1627$). The figure does not include the following categories, which were under-represented in the sample: business/corporate/finance, journalists and media celebrities, traffickers/smugglers

for politicians versus all other type of actors that are involved in the immigration debate. Besides, coders indicated the presence of “Viewpoints about immigration and immigrants” in every news item. Based on existing literature on viewpoint and frames regarding immigration (e.g. Van Gorp 2005; Benson 2009, 2013), we distinguished between four types of distinct viewpoints, that were operationalised as dummies¹:

- *Negative*: Negative characterisation of immigrants/immigration (e.g. immigration is bad for the economy, immigrants carry diseases, they commit crimes, etc.)
- *Administrative burden*: Immigrants (or immigration) are seen as creating administrative problems (e.g. concerns about the management of the arrivals, food supply, hygiene, etc.)
- *Victimisation*: Immigrants are portrayed as victims (e.g. immigrants are victims of unjust government policies, traffickers, they have to deal with racism/xenophobia, etc.)
- *Positive*: Positive characterisation of immigrants/immigration (e.g. immigration empowers workforce, enhances “positive multiculturalism”, immigrants work hard, etc.).

Starting from these variables, we measure content diversity both at the article and at the newspaper level. At the article level, actor diversity is a count variable—ranging from 1 to 10—corresponding to the total number of social categories that are represented in an article. Viewpoint diversity, also a count variable, corresponds to the total number of different viewpoints that are expressed in the article, and it ranges from 1 to 4. It is important to note that articles that do not feature any actor or viewpoint are excluded from the analysis. Instead of representing the lowest level of diversity, we argue that articles of this kind are neutral because all voices and views on immigration are absent. Only if an article provides at least one actor or viewpoint is it worth analysing how diverse the range of actors and viewpoints is. At the newspaper level, actor diversity is measured as the evenness of the

distribution of the total number of actors in the corresponding categories. The same is done for viewpoint diversity. This is calculated by means of Simpson's standardised diversity index (D_z), a standardised calculation of Simpson's diversity index (D). Although Simpson's measure of content diversity is sensitive to the number of categories that are included in the calculation, we keep this sensitivity to a minimum by using its standardised version, which is more suitable to compare diversity values across distributions comprising different numbers of categories (McDonald and Dimmick 2003). The formula for Simpson's D_z is:

$$D_z = \frac{1 - \sum_i p_i^2}{1 - (1/k)}$$

where p_i is the proportion in the i th category, categories = i through k is the number of categories in the distribution. Simpson's D_z ranges from 0 to 1. In the case that the entire population belongs to one category (i.e. lowest level of diversity), the score would be 0. The greater the extent to which the population is evenly distributed among the categories, the closer the score will be to 1.

Moving on to the determinants of content diversity, the length of an article is an ordinal variable including the values 1 = very short (less than or equal to 200 words); 2 = short (between 201 and 400 words); 3 = medium (between 401 and 600 words); 4 = long (more than or equal to 601 words). These cut-off points were established following an inductive analysis of the length of articles in each country under study. The variable "article type" encompasses three categories: news report, special report and "opinionated news type". The last category includes editorials, opinion pieces, interviews and letters of readers. Moreover, newspapers' orientation towards a highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow audience was defined based on the extant literature, as well as on national experts' judgements. We grouped lowbrow and middlebrow newspapers together, and created a dummy variable with one category indicating elite newspapers and the other one for popular outlets. Likewise, the national/local character of a newspaper was operationalised as a dummy variable.

In the following section, we present the results of the study. Measurements of actor and viewpoint diversity at the article and newspaper level are presented and compared. Moreover, we test the influence of the different factors on content diversity. For diversity measured at the newspaper level, we test the influences of articles' and newspapers' characteristics separately, by means of a set of linear regressions, and we explore a pattern of intercountry differences by comparing the scores. For this test, the determinants at the article level—length and article type—are operationalised as dummy variables. The first dummy measures whether a newspaper has a majority of long or short articles. It is constructed by subtracting the sum of very short and short articles from the sum of medium and long articles. Positive values show that there are more medium and long articles in the newspaper (category "newspaper with a majority of longer articles"). By contrast, negative values indicate that there are more short and very short articles in a newspaper (category "newspaper with a majority of shorter articles"). Similarly, the second dummy shows whether a newspaper employs more special reports than opinionated news articles such as editorials, opinions, interviews and letters to the editor. We define special reports as articles that aim to give insights into a specific topic, characterised by an in-depth angle on the issue, and that are generally longer than news reports. We subtracted the average of the proportions of opinionated news types from the proportion of

special reports, holding the proportion of news reports constant. Positive scores indicate that this is a “newspaper with a higher proportion of special reports”, whereas negative scores show that this is a “newspaper with a higher proportion of opinionated news types”. In order to test the impact of the determinants of the article-based measurements of diversity, we have to use either a Poisson or a negative binomial regression model, because of the count nature of the dependent variables. We tested the assumption of equi-dispersion, which does hold, and therefore selected the Poisson regression model. Finally, to account for the clustering of the articles in countries, we add country dummies to the model.

Results

Before we test for the factors that influence content diversity, we present descriptive results of the actors and viewpoints in the news in the four countries under study. [Figure 2](#) shows that the distribution of social actor categories is very similar across countries. Not surprisingly, national politicians are the most quoted or paraphrased social group in every country of the sample (ranging from 53 per cent of total actors in Italy to 32 per cent in Belgium). After national and international political actors, space is given in all countries to ordinary people and public opinion voices, followed by immigrants and civil society actors. The relative low presence of immigrant voices, the real protagonists of immigration news, is similar across countries, ranging from 11 per cent of total actors in Belgium to 7 per cent in the United Kingdom. We also note that actors from the business, corporate and finance sectors were all but invisible in the news.

If we exclude those news items that do not feature any actor (not presented), each article features on average less than two social categories ($N = 2138$). Almost half of the articles include just one actor category (49 per cent), while 29 per cent feature two actor categories, 15 per cent present three and 6 per cent present four different social categories. When articles give voice to just one type of actor ($N = 1047$), this is the “national politicians” category in 51 per cent of the cases, and in 14 per cent that of “international politicians”, whereas in just 6 per cent of the cases are immigrants the one and only voice in an article. When the range of actors talking in an article opens up, national politicians are very likely to be included. Most of the articles that give voice to two social groups ($N = 609$), combine national political actors with public agencies (13 per cent), or with civil society actors (11 per cent), or with international political actors (also 11 per cent). Finally, national politicians talk in combination with immigrants in 4 per cent of the cases. Even when an article includes three different social categories ($N = 317$), the most recurring combinations feature national politicians: either with immigrants and ordinary people (9 per cent), or with public agencies and ordinary people (7 per cent), or with public agencies and civil society actors (7 per cent).

Similarly, 65 per cent of the articles that express viewpoints on immigration ($N = 1809$) present just one type of viewpoint, while 29 per cent feature two distinct viewpoints. Only 3 per cent of the total articles give space to three or four different viewpoints. Single-viewpoint articles ($N = 1204$) mostly give space to the representation of immigrants as victims (43 per cent). In 28 per cent of the cases, the article is fully negatively slanted, and in 15 per cent of the cases it just deals with the administrative problems arising from immigration. Finally, just 14 per cent of the articles are exclusively positively slanted. The victimisation category prevails also when the article includes more than one

viewpoint. When two viewpoints are presented ($N = 539$), we mostly find a combination of victimisation with positive viewpoints (30 per cent), while fewer articles combine victimisation viewpoints with the view of immigration as an administrative burden (21 per cent), or with negative viewpoints (18 per cent). Truly balanced stories on immigration presenting both negative and positive viewpoints are rather exceptional (11 per cent).

Measurements of Content Diversity

We now move to a closer analysis of the measurements of content diversity at both the article and the newspaper level. Our results show that newspapers include on average less than two different actor categories per article, excluding those that have no actors (mean = 1.82, SD = 0.24), which gives the idea of a rather low actor diversity. On the contrary, actor diversity scores calculated with Simpson's D_z are on average close to 1 (mean = 0.82, SD = 0.07), which corresponds to a well-balanced distribution of social actor categories in each outlet. This seems to be at odds with the aggregate actor distribution displayed in [Figure 2](#), pointing to an over-representation of national politicians in the news sample. However, the result is mostly driven by the evenness of the distribution of the other actor categories. If we run a robustness check by excluding national politicians from the analysis, the average Simpson's D_z score is even closer to 1 (mean = 0.92, SD = 0.03). Moving the attention to the viewpoints, newspapers present a rather limited average of 1.36 categories per article, if we exclude those with no viewpoints (SD = 0.11). Nonetheless, as observed for actor diversity, D_z viewpoint diversity scores are close to 1, which means that the distribution of the four types of viewpoints is well balanced for each newspaper over the period (mean = 0.89, SD = 0.08). To sum up, these findings support the first broad assumption of this paper: measurements of content diversity at different levels yield different results, and provide a different evaluation of content diversity. Nevertheless, we also find a significant positive correlation between the scores of actor diversity at the article level and D_z scores for actor diversity at the outlet level ($r = 0.592$, $N = 22$, $p = 0.004$), and a weaker correlation between the two levels of viewpoint diversity scores ($r = 0.473$, $N = 22$, $p = 0.026$), which suggest a moderate positive relationship between measurements of content diversity at the article and at the newspaper level. Put differently, newspapers that cover immigration in a more diverse manner within their articles also tend to score higher in their coverage as a whole.

Another suggestion that diversity measurements at the article and newspaper level might be related to each other is given by [Table 1](#), which displays the variation of actor and viewpoint diversity according to different factors. In most of the cases, although differences are minimal, we detect similar effects for outlet- and article-based scores. At the micro-level, ANOVA tests show that longer articles give significantly more space to different actors and viewpoints ($F(3, 2131) = 92.574$, $p = 0.000$ and $F(3, 1801) = 12.743$, $p = 0.000$, respectively). Likewise, newspapers with a majority of longer articles present higher D_z scores for actor diversity and viewpoint diversity, as compared to those with a majority of shorter articles, but independent t -tests show that this difference is significant just for actor diversity ($t(20) = 3.357$, $p = 0.003$). Concerning the influence of the type of article, special reports present a significantly broader range of actors and viewpoints than news reports, and the latter score is significantly higher than opinionated news types ($F(5, 2113) = 38.005$, $p = 0.000$ and $F(5, 1788) = 5.116$, $p = 0.000$, ANOVA tests, respectively). Similarly, newspapers in which special reports are predominant present a more balanced distribution of actor and viewpoints

TABLE 1

Mean of actor and viewpoint diversity (calculated at the article and newspaper level) per newspapers' and articles' characteristics, including cross-country variance

		Actor diversity		Viewpoint diversity	
		Average actor categories per article	Average D_z actors	Average viewpoint categories per article	Average D_z viewpoints
Articles' characteristics					
Length	Very short ($N = 590$)	1.38	0.77	1.28	0.86
	Short ($N = 840$)	1.68		1.33	
	Medium ($N = 496$)	1.87	0.86	1.36	0.91
	Long ($N = 564$)	2.37		1.51	
Type	News reports ($N = 1698$)	1.80		1.33	
	Opinionated news types ($N = 523$)	1.52	0.80	1.42	0.87
	Special reports ($N = 245$)	2.57	0.83	1.51	0.89
Newspapers' characteristics					
Circulation share	Local ($N = 731$)	1.82	0.78	1.39	0.93
	National ($N = 1759$)	1.84	0.83	1.36	0.86
Audience's cultural preferences	Popular ($N = 721$)	1.63	0.78	1.34	0.88
	Elite ($N = 1769$)	1.90	0.85	1.38	0.90
Countries	Belgium ($N = 642$)	1.81	0.87	1.31	0.89
	Germany ($N = 484$)	2.06	0.85	1.40	0.89
	Italy ($N = 822$)	1.68	0.75	1.39	0.83
	United Kingdom ($N = 542$)	1.87	0.82	1.40	0.93

Note: Total articles $N = 2490$.

categories than those with more opinionated article types. By contrast, we notice that opinionated articles feature more viewpoint categories than news reports. However, for D_z scores, neither of these differences are statistically significant ($p > 0.10$).

Focusing on the determinants at the meso-level, Table 1 shows similar effects for both measurements of content diversity. National newspapers score slightly higher than local outlets in actor diversity. The results of independent t -tests indicate that this difference is significant for D_z values of actor diversity ($t(20) = 2.113$, $p = 0.047$), but not for measurements at the article level ($p > 0.10$). Local newspapers perform better than national ones in viewpoint diversity, but the differences are not significant for either type of measurement ($p > 0.10$). On top of it, the difference between elite and popular newspapers is statistically significant for actor diversity (for article-level measurements, $t(1428) = -5.422$, $p = 0.000$, for D_z scores, $t(20) = -2.541$, $p = 0.019$), and it is larger than the difference in viewpoint diversity, which is nonetheless not significant ($p > 0.10$). Finally, regarding the macro-level, Table 1 shows that, for both measurements, Italian newspapers display the lowest levels of actor diversity, while UK outlets present the highest extent of viewpoint diversity. As demonstrated by ANOVA tests, inter-country differences are statistically significant for actor diversity (both for values calculated at the article level, $F(3, 1805) = 2.494$, $p = 0.000$, and for D_z scores, $F(3, 18) = 4.265$, $p = 0.019$), but not for viewpoint diversity (article level, $p > 0.05$, D_z values, $p > 0.10$).

The Determinants of Content Diversity

We now move to a multivariate test of the determinants of actor and viewpoint diversity measured at the article level to identify the original influence of single factors while controlling for others. Model 1a (Table 2) shows that the article's length is significantly, positively related to actor diversity ($p < 0.01$). The influence of articles' type on actor diversity is

TABLE 2
Results of the multilevel regression model on actor diversity

	Actor diversity, b (SE)		Viewpoint diversity, b (SE)	
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b
National newspaper	-0.006 (0.04)	0.045 (0.04)	-0.032 (0.05)	-0.022 (0.05)
Elite newspaper	-0.004 (0.04)	0.197 (0.04)*	-0.011 (0.05)	0.035 (0.05)
Length of article (Ref. = Very short)				
Short	0.195 (0.05)**		0.058 (0.06)	
Medium	0.358 (0.06)**		0.0142 (0.07)*	
Long	0.625 (0.06)**		0.253 (0.08)**	
Article type (Ref. = News report)				
Special report	0.140 (0.05)**		0.051 (0.07)	
Opinionated article	-0.301 (0.05)**		0.033 (0.05)	
Country (Ref. = Belgium)				
Germany	0.087 (0.06)	0.123 (0.06)*	0.050 (0.07)	0.039 (0.07)
Italy	0.165 (0.05)**	-0.059 (0.05)	0.182 (0.07)**	0.052 (0.05)
United Kingdom	0.074 (0.05)	0.051 (0.05)	0.091 (0.06)	0.069 (0.06)
Constant	0.248 (0.06)	0.479 (0.05)	0.122 (0.08)	0.266 (0.06)

Note: Total articles $N = 2490$.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

in line with our expectations, in that special reports have a significantly higher level of actor diversity compared to news reports ($p < 0.01$), whereas opinionated article types score significantly lower than news reports in actor diversity ($p < 0.01$). Model 1b shows that the elite character of a newspaper has a significant positive impact on actor diversity ($p < 0.05$) when not controlling for articles' characteristics. Moving the focus on the determinants of viewpoint diversity, Model 2a shows that long articles, and to a lesser extent, medium articles correspond to a significantly broader range of viewpoints expressed in the article ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$, respectively), while short articles do not present significantly higher viewpoint diversity levels than very short articles ($p > 0.10$).

Moving to a test of the determinants of content diversity calculated with Simpson's D_z , the results of a linear regression show that the articles' length has a significant positive effect on actor diversity ($\beta = 0.66$, $p = 0.005$), while the effect of articles' type is not significant ($p = 0.550$). However, neither articles' length, nor the type have a significant effect on viewpoint diversity ($p = 0.240$ and $p = 0.908$, respectively). Besides this, we find signs that newspapers' characteristics matter in shaping actor diversity. Elite newspapers present significantly higher actor diversity than popular outlets ($\beta = 0.44$, $p = 0.026$), and the effect stemming from the size of a newspaper on actor diversity is close to the significance level ($\beta = 0.36$, $p = 0.061$). Nevertheless, there is no significant difference between national and local newspapers in viewpoint diversity ($p = 0.105$), nor is there a significant effect related to the audience's cultural preferences ($p = 0.434$).

To sum up, at the micro-level, length matters in shaping actor diversity (both calculated at the article and newspaper level), therefore giving full support to H1a. However, length significantly enhances viewpoint diversity (article-based measurement) just in the case of large articles, and it is not significant for the newspaper-based viewpoint diversity measurement. Hence, we must reject H1b. The type of article matters in determining actor diversity measured at the article level, but it appears not to be influential in shaping actor diversity at the newspaper level. Also, the article's type does not have any impact on viewpoint diversity, which leads us to reject H2. Moving to the influences at the meso-level, the results show that the size of a newspaper, gauged by looking at its national/local geographical scope, matters in enhancing actor diversity measured at the newspaper level, but it is not significant for article-based scores. We therefore reject H3. Still, in line with H4a, we show that the orientation of newspapers towards a more highbrow audience matters in enhancing actor diversity, both for its article- and newspaper-based measurement. The elite/popular distinction, nonetheless, does not predict variation in viewpoint diversity, thus H4b must be rejected. In general, viewpoint diversity seems harder to explain than actor diversity.

Finally, moving to the analysis of inter-country differences, it is worth noting that immigration news in each country in the sample is mostly domestic (more than 60 per cent of total news items in Belgium and Italy deal with domestic immigration issues, more than 80 per cent of the articles in Germany and the United Kingdom). Hence, different aspects of the broader theme of immigration are covered in each country of the sample. In Belgium and Germany, immigration news mainly presents stories related to asylum seekers, most of them coming from Afghanistan, whereas Italian newspapers focus on the entrance of African migrants by sea through Lampedusa, as well as on their stay in detention centres. By contrast, British outlets mainly cover stories of immigrant workers from Eastern Europe, and they give more space to frauds involving immigrants (e.g. sham marriages). Nonetheless, we observe that accidents involving migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea can

garner international media attention. In particular, the shipwreck of a migrant boat in Lampedusa in October 2013, causing the death of more than 300 immigrants, was widely covered by newspapers in all four countries under study.

Moreover, our results give some interesting insights into inter-country differences in terms of content diversity. When comparing articles of the same size, Table 2 shows that Italian newspapers present significantly higher levels of actor diversity ($p < 0.01$) and viewpoint diversity ($p < 0.01$), whereas there are no significant differences among the other countries. A closer look to the Italian sample provides an indication that articles about Lampedusa are the most diverse. In line with the idea of Cuttitta (2014), Lampedusa is a “busy figurative stage” populated by the main actors with a stake in the immigration debate: immigrants arriving in Lampedusa after a perilous sea cross, national and EU politicians, who propose solutions to prevent the death of immigrants at sea, local politicians (like the mayor of Lampedusa, a key figure in the news), military actors from the *guardia costiera* (coastguard) in charge of saving the migrants, often assisted by non-governmental organisations (e.g. the Red Cross). Very often, religious actors—including the Pope, who visited Lampedusa in July 2013—participate in the Italian mediated debate on Lampedusa, adding up to actor diversity and increasing, together with the other actors, the reporting of diverse viewpoints on immigration. Yet, the results show this “potential” of Italian newspapers to provide more content diversity remains somehow untapped: when length is not held constant, Italian newspapers present the least diverse coverage of the issue, whereas German outlets provide a significantly higher level of actor diversity ($p < 0.05$). Besides supporting the idea that the Italian style of reporting is less inclined to provide a diverse content (Esser and Umbricht 2013), this result suggests that length might be a crucial element through which journalists in Democratic-Corporatist countries can guarantee at least the diversity of actors talking in the news—as is the case with German articles in our study.

Conclusions and Discussion

By measuring actor and viewpoint diversity both at the article and at the newspaper level, this study explores and tries to explain content diversity in immigration news in four European countries (2013–2014). On the one hand, we have shown that the range of actors and viewpoints represented in an article is very limited, with about half of the articles giving voice to one type of actor and two-thirds presenting only one type of viewpoint. On the other hand, the measurements of content diversity at the newspaper level yield a picture of high actor and viewpoint diversity for the period under study, meaning that over a longer period of time all social actors and viewpoints get at least some attention. Hence, content diversity measurements at the article and the newspaper level yield different results. Yet, as the findings show, these measurements are weakly positively correlated. Newspapers that have on average more diverse articles also score higher on content diversity at the outlet level. But the correlation is far from perfect. This has probably to do with the diverging strategies of newspapers. While some try to provide content diversity in a single article, others provide this by spreading actors and viewpoints over multiple articles over a longer period of time.

We also find that both measurements vary according to the impact of different factors in a similar—yet not identical—way. In this sense, this paper sheds light on the conditions under which the ideal of a “marketplace of ideas” in the news can be fostered. First

of all, the size of articles is a crucial factor in shaping content diversity, and particularly actor diversity: longer articles provide more space to represent a broader range of actors and viewpoints in the news, and they facilitate a more even distribution of social actor categories within the newspaper. Similarly, special reports, that provide a more in-depth account of immigration, provide more space for the representation of different actors, while the less objective nature of opinionated article types makes them less suitable to enlarge the range of actors in the articles. These article features are clearly connected to the different types of newspaper. Elite newspapers seem to cater to the “omnivorous” tastes of their target audiences with the representation of more social actors in the news, while popular outlets let a fewer categories talk. By contrast, the size of a newspaper, based on its national or local geographical scope, seems to enhance levels of actor diversity in the long term—while it has no effect on the diversity of a single article—going against the argument of Voakes et al. (1996) that smaller news organisations present more actor diversity because they make extensive use of wire services, which are used to contact multiple sources.

These findings seem to hold across countries—even when testing separately for each country—and suggest a more general pattern of how journalists report on immigration in Western democracies. The differences in content diversity between the four countries are minimal at best. This means that how journalists work and cover an issue such as immigration in these Western European democracies is highly comparable and driven by similar news values and news routines. There is some proof that geographic proximity to the key locations where an issue is mainly unfolding (as in the case of Italy and Lampedusa) might enhance content diversity. However, these results are sensitive to one of the main limitations of this study, namely the sample size. Further research on news content diversity should extend both the newspaper sample, in order to increase the statistical power of the test on content diversity measurements at the newspaper level, and the country sample, so that it can further investigate cross-country differences in the levels of content diversity. Moreover, the analysis should ideally also include a broader range of media types, such as television and online news, as they are for a large part of the public important sources of information about immigration. A more fundamental challenge for further research is the need for an empirical benchmark to evaluate the diversity of news content. The normative ideal of diversity is not enough to judge when a medium presents sufficient voices or viewpoints. Probably a more in-depth study of news coverage of different media outlets can provide the necessary input.

To sum up, we conclude that at the level of a newspaper, across countries, there is an overall good performance in terms of diversity of type of actors and viewpoints. However, we have to think that they represent the distribution of actors and viewpoints in a newspaper over a period of time. In this sense, there can be cumulative benefits for a loyal newspaper reader. But on a regular day, when on average one article on immigration is published, the reader will just be confronted with a limited number of voices and viewpoints. A closer look at the different voices that enter the news yield a somehow more negative picture of the performance of media when covering immigration. Immigrants, the main characters of immigration news, are mostly relegated to a secondary role as “silent victims”. When reading an article, the odds that the reader will hear their voice is low. Also, when viewpoints are expressed, they will mostly portray them as victims. This means that immigrants face a double challenge: they have a hard time to enter the

news arena; and when they enter, they have to try to emancipate from their depiction as “helpless victims”.

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1. Negative and positive viewpoints derive from more fine-grained categories that were originally coded, namely “Immigration/immigrants as a general threat”, “Immigration/immigrants as an economic threat”, “Immigration/immigrants as a cultural/moral/ethnic demographic threat”—which were collapsed in the negative viewpoints category; and “Immigration/immigrants as a general opportunity”, “Immigration/immigrants as an economic opportunity”, “Immigration/immigrants as a cultural/moral/ethnic demographic opportunity”—which were collapsed in the positive viewpoints category.

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Appendix A

Newspaper Sample's Characteristics

Newspaper	Country	Audience's cultural orientation	Geographical scope
<i>De Morgen</i>	Belgium	Elite (highbrow)	National ^a
<i>de Standaard</i>	Belgium	Elite (highbrow)	National ^a
<i>De Tijd</i>	Belgium	Elite (highbrow)	National ^a
<i>Gazet van Antwerpen</i>	Belgium	Popular (middlebrow)	Local
<i>Het Nieuwsblad</i>	Belgium	Popular (middlebrow)	National ^a
<i>Het Laatste Nieuws</i>	Belgium	Popular (middlebrow)	National ^a
<i>Die Welt</i>	Germany	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>Berliner Morgenpost</i>	Germany	Elite (highbrow)	Local
<i>Der Tagesspiegel</i>	Germany	Elite (highbrow)	Local
<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	Germany	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>Stuttgarter Nachrichten</i>	Germany	Elite (highbrow)	Local
<i>La Repubblica</i>	Italy	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>Gazzetta di Modena</i>	Italy	Popular (middlebrow)	Local
<i>Il Giornale</i>	Italy	Popular (middlebrow)	National
<i>Il Messaggero</i>	Italy	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>Il Mattino</i>	Italy	Elite (highbrow)	Local
<i>The Times</i>	United Kingdom	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>The Independent</i>	United Kingdom	Elite (highbrow)	National
<i>The Sun</i>	United Kingdom	Popular (lowbrow)	National
<i>Daily Mirror</i>	United Kingdom	Popular (lowbrow)	National
<i>Manchester Evening News</i>	United Kingdom	Popular (middlebrow)	Local
<i>London Evening Standard</i>	United Kingdom	Popular (middlebrow)	Local

^aSince Belgium has no national papers that cover the whole bilingual country, we label outlets that cover the whole Flemish media landscape as national. These newspapers have higher interest for federal issues, and they clearly have a broader scope compared to more local newspapers—like *Gazet van Antwerpen*—which are usually the newspapers of a region (province).