

The significance of cultural aspects in Latin America's media image: the representation of the continent in the German press

La trascendencia de los aspectos culturales en la imagen mediática de América Latina: la representación del continente en la prensa alemana

O significado dos aspectos culturais na imagem midiática da América Latina: a representação do continente na imprensa alemã

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Abstract: This paper focuses on Latin America's cultural coverage produced by the German press – *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* and *tageszeitung* – from January 2000 to December 2014. After analysing 3,831 articles, we found that 17% corresponded to cultural reports, that is, 662 items. While empirical results on foreign reports worldwide point to a weak representation of cultural themes and an intense concentration on politics, this does not apply fully in the case of Latin America. Brazil, Argentina, Mexico (with an intense power status and economic proximity) and Cuba (still a myth in the German perception) show a high amount of cultural coverage with a broader spectrum of themes, from music and literature to art, architecture, and exhibitions. On the contrary, the cultural coverage of small Central American nations concentrates on travel & tourism, an indicator of exoticism. South American states also have a good share of cultural reporting due to the presence of German cultural organisations such as the Goethe Institute. Eight qualitative interviews with German correspondents provide a more profound interpretation and contextualisation of these findings.

Keywords:

Latin America's foreign reporting, cultural coverage, international communication, Latin American image, news factors

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en la cobertura cultural de América Latina producida por la prensa alemana - *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* y *tageszeitung* - de enero de 2000 a diciembre de 2014. Después de analizar 3.831 artículos, encontramos que el 17% correspondía a informes culturales, es decir, 662 artículos. Si bien los resultados empíricos de los informes extranjeros en todo el mundo apuntan a una débil representación de los temas culturales y una intensa concentración en la política, esto no se aplica plenamente en el caso de América Latina. Brasil, Argentina, México (con un intenso estatus de poder y proximidad económica) y Cuba (todavía un mito en la percepción alemana) muestran una gran cantidad de cobertura cultural con un espectro más amplio de temas, desde la música y la literatura hasta el arte, la arquitectura y la cultura. exposiciones. Por el contrario, la cobertura cultural de las pequeñas naciones centroamericanas se concentra en viajes y turismo, un indicador de exotismo. Los estados sudamericanos también tienen una buena proporción de reportajes culturales debido a la presencia de organizaciones culturales alemanas como el Instituto Goethe. Ocho entrevistas cualitativas con corresponsales alemanes proporcionan una interpretación y contextualización más profunda de estos hallazgos.

Palabras claves:

Reportajes extranjeros de América Latina, cobertura cultural, comunicación internacional, imagen latinoamericana, factores noticiosos

Resumo: Este artigo enfoca a cobertura cultural da América Latina produzida pela imprensa alemã - *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* e *tageszeitung* - de janeiro de 2000 a dezembro de 2014. Após analisar 3.831 artigos, descobrimos que 17% corresponderam a reportagens culturais, ou seja, 662 itens. Embora os resultados empíricos sobre reportagens estrangeiras em todo o mundo apontem para uma fraca representação dos temas culturais e uma intensa concentração na política, isso não se aplica plenamente no caso da América Latina. Brasil, Argentina, México (com um status de poder intenso e proximidade econômica) e Cuba (ainda um mito na percepção alemã) apresentam uma grande cobertura cultural com um espectro mais amplo de temas, da música e literatura à arte, arquitetura e exposições. Pelo contrário, a cobertura cultural das pequenas nações centro-americanas concentra-se em viagens e turismo, um indicador de exotismo. Os estados sul-americanos

também têm uma boa parcela de reportagens culturais devido à presença de organizações culturais alemãs como o Instituto Goethe. Oito entrevistas qualitativas com correspondentes alemães fornecem uma interpretação mais profunda e contextualização dessas descobertas.

Palavras-chave:

Reportagem estrangeira da América Latina, cobertura cultural, comunicação internacional, imagem latino-americana, fatores de notícias

1. Introduction

The media image of a state has an impact on the decisions performed by several audiences such as global investors, trading partners, politicians, multilateral agencies among others (Anholt, 2009; Avraham & Ketter, 2016). Researchers have already demonstrated the strong agenda-setting effect of international news (Hafez, 2002a; Lim & Barnett, 2010; Wanta & Hu, 1993). Different from the national media coverage, the public usually does not have much knowledge, direct experience or alternative sources of information related to distant geographical countries. Despite the continuing global interdependence, progress in transport possibilities, the strengthening of trade relations or intensification of tourism, one still learns about world events mostly through the mass media and their foreign reporting (Wilke, 1989, p. 11). No one can build an understanding of all the existing countries in the world based solely on his judgment (ibid.). On account of this lack of own particular expertise, the media's potential to influence the images of societies abroad increase considerably (Hafez, 2002a; Wilke, 1989). Although the audience is not passive, it might be harder for the general public to challenge, refuse or even to question the meaning of a foreign reporting's article, i.e., to adopt an "oppositional position" (Hall, 2006).

In the 70s and 80s, studies on global news flow and the discussion of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) criticized the predominance of Western news agencies and the image of developing countries they constructed in the Western media (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1980). These analyses identified crucial traits of foreign reporting such as regionalism, conflict perspective (negativity), the dominance of political coverage, focus on elite and decontextualization (Hafez, 2005). Since wars, crises and conflicts continue to affect the global news coverage considerably, Haf ez and Grüne (2015) still deem the debate prompted

by the NWICO as pertinent. International coverage from distant nations focuses heavily on political systems and conflicts and ignore the cultural and daily life of their citizens (ibid.).

However, Latin America experienced considerably political, economic and social changes after the process of democratization in the 80s and 90s and its turn to the left at the dawn of the new millennium (Lowenthal & Baron, 2015). In particular, the influence of Latin America on the global art scene can be seen in all areas, from music and graffiti to photography and literature (Gutmann & Lesser, 2016) and has been observed accordingly by the press. The “El Boom” movement, which was established in the 1960s and linked to the aesthetics of “magical realism” – not without controversy though – favored a mood of cultural possibilities that made films, theatre, music and folklore from the region marketable worldwide (Stavans, 2016). When the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez received the Nobel Prize in 1982, this Latin American movement seemed to be at the center of international cultural affairs. When the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa also received the literary tribute in 2010, the impression arose that this generation of authors had brought Latin America into the cultural taste of the times (ibid.). Furthermore, researchers identified in the last years a media “contra-flow” such as the Brazilian telenovelas’ exportation to the rest of the world (Thussu, 2007). For these reasons, we hypothesize that the cultural facets of Latin America might play a role in its foreign reporting and image formation.

Under culture, one understands not only the totality of symbolizing forces within religion, science and art, the system of values and norms, the composition of cognitive and behavioral habits and the daily range of experiences but also the context of production-related to the cultural and artistic business and entertainment industry (Pias et al., 2008). In all cases, culture is inconceivable without media (ibid.). Media messages and texts also influence people’s understanding of cultures in an intensely globalizing world (Kaptan, 2019). Hence, this article analyses at first the thematic composition of Latin America’s foreign reporting in the German press along the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century to access the cultural aspects of its coverage. Subsequently, one examines the main topics reported amidst the subject area classified as culture & society. Finally, we observe if the press approach differs among the twenty Latin American countries.

2. The concept of media images

When discussing the global image of Latin America, we are dealing with complex and

process-oriented image structures. Images refer to a cognitive-psychological construct, “the forms of subjective representation of reality in human consciousness” (Wilke, 1989, p. 13). One regards Boulding as a pioneer of the research field. The author described the image not as a given factual reality, but as what appears to people to be a reality (Boulding, 1959, p. 120). This ‘reality’ is constructed by reducing the world complexity, i.e., they are the results of simplification processes. It is not only about a cognitive construct, but also “about entities that control behavior and practical action” (Wilke & Quandt, 1987, p. 9). Lippmann (1998) described how the mass media is the primary source of the images in our head and how people recognize, process, transform and transmit information based on these mental images.

The development of images is strongly connected with journalistic selection: “Mass media [offer] orientation and necessary information for the image building that the audience cannot experience directly; they assume a mediating function for the creation of public images.” (Breunlein, 2016, p. 32). Hafez (2002a) comprehends “foreign image” as a generic designation for several terms of text analysis such as stereotypes, images of nations, frames, themes and discourses. It is crucial to notice this conceptual distinction of image-definition from the socio-psychological research tradition of image of nations. For instance, in his study on “Latin America in the Press”, Manfred Wöhlcke (1973) investigated the image of Latin America in the quality German press. The author did not define images as clichés and stereotypes, but rather as “reproduced depiction of Latin America” or the different ideas of the continent. The medial image of Latin America was described as following: “what one imagines an object to be, how one thinks of it, how one understands it, also – how one feels it. ‘Latin American images’ are therefore reproduced figures of Latin America in the foreign-reporting of the press, which have a representational-descriptive and an affective-valuing aspect” (Wöhlcke, 1973, p. 7).

Specific themes and topics are more prevalent in the media than others, and the construction of an inevitable ‘reality’ through the depiction of these selected themes and topics largely shapes the ideas about other countries and regions (Richter & Gebauer, 2010). In other words, if the press report on crisis and politics, one might not have a complete understanding of the Latin American countries. Therefore, the selection of topics plays a prominent role in foreign reporting.

3. Determinants of global coverage

Factors such as crisis, negativity and dominance of politics – as discussed in the Foreign News Study – can be classified as an “event-oriented” approach of the determinants of foreign reporting, i.e., internal attributes intrinsic to global occurrences (Chang & Lee, 2010). They are related to the event’s newsworthiness. Since Rosengren (1970, 1974) requested a comparison between intra-media and extra-media data to comprehend the structure of foreign news better, one has been classifying the research filed in three categories – organizational, context-oriented or event-oriented (Chang & Lee, 2010; Golan, 2010). The organizational level refers to the news organizations and their processes of production inside and outside the newsroom. For instance, the size of the correspondents’ network and the influence of the international news agencies are essential variables of this meso level of analysis (Hafez, 2002a; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The context-oriented understanding considers the characteristics of countries at a macro level as determinants of foreign-reporting (Chang et al., 1987; Hagen et al., 1998). Within this approach, one understands that the international news coverage reveals the same structural traits of the world systems theories regarding volume, direction and determined content (Chang & Lee, 2010). Wu (2000), for example, pointed out that trade volume and the presence of global news agencies are the main determinants of global news among nine analyzed variables. For a substantial review of the literature concerning these contextual variables, see Golan (2010).

Landmark studies of international news flow operationalized variables that are either context or event-oriented. One of the essential starting points of the newsworthiness’ research was the 12¹ variables catalogue of Galtung and Ruge (1965), the most cited work and a basis for several other empirical analysis since the 60s. Despite its importance, the study was criticized due to its difficulty of operationalization, considering that several variables were based on psychological perception (Chang & Lee, 2010). Another turning point in the field was the study from Schulz (1976), which for the first time, operationalized the news factor empirically and measured their precise impact on the editorial decisions in the German media. Schulz extended and adapted the Galtung and Ruge’s catalogue and differentiated, for instance, between geographical, political and cultural proximity.

Within this theoretical background, the interest of this analysis lays on the amount, nature

¹ Frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite-nation, to elite people, personalisation and negative (the last four are culture-bounded).

and type of Latin America's cultural coverage in the German press. We did not test the above-discussed variables as predictors of foreign reporting but using them to describe and explain possible different patterns of coverage within the nations. Based on this theoretical background, the following research questions were formulated:

1. RQ1: How is the main thematic composition of Latin America's news coverage? How much is the share of the subject area culture & society?
2. RQ2: Which are the main thematic topics covered amidst culture & society?
3. RQ3: Which news factors and structural traits are more salient within the cultural coverage?
4. RQ4: Is the pattern of cultural coverage similar to all the twenty analyzed countries?

4. Methodology

4.1 Unit of analysis

Our corpus considered three crucial variables: the extent of readership, the impact on the opinion of other communicators and political horizon. Firstly, one selected the two market-leading German dailies, which present the most comprehensive number of correspondents living in Latin America, namely the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (liberal and politically broad) and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (economically liberal and politically conservative). Besides, the most important weekly magazine in Germany (*Der Spiegel*) was also incorporated. In addition to these three traditional publications, one also regarded the alternative *tageszeitung (taz)* given its importance in setting the agenda for alternative topics in Germany. Amidst the quality press, these chosen periodicals show the principal sales-volume and more extensive readership (AWA, 2019; IVW, 2019). Regarding the volume of sales, *taz* is a deviation, but it was still essential to complement the political spectrum of the corpus (Noelle-Neumann et al., 2002, p. 435; Pürer & Raabe, 2007, p. 15). Finally, one classifies these newspapers as "leading media", following the "hypothesis of coordination," i.e., they have an impact on the reporting of other small outlets (Brosius et al., 2009, p. 164).

4.2 Sample

In a first step, we listed every single article published from January 2000 until December 2014 related to the twenty Latin American countries to construct the central unit of analysis

(21.929 texts). Reports from SZ.de, FAZ.NET, taz.de, and Der Spiegel Online were not considered. This decision was taken based on a study comparing newspapers and their online counterparts within 18 European states. According to this comparison, 70% of the most important online news reporting was very much alike to their printed versions (Wurff, 2008, p. 70). Besides, small reports were excluded (less than 150 words) because they show almost no news factors. Afterwards, we drew a sampling of 25% of published texts within each nation to guarantee that each state would have the same chances of being appointed for our empirical investigation. Each n-4th printed articles (25 % of the total) of a county was then picked up on the rotation principle within every newspaper. The preconditions for a layered sample were hence fulfilled since one was previously aware of the population distribution. The final sample comprises than 3.831 articles. Lastly, we conducted a Holsti coefficient reliability's test base on a small sample of 5%, and the accordance between the two coders reached a range from 93.8% to 99.6% depending on the analysed variables.

4.3 Definitions of categories

To investigate the thematic composition of Latin America's foreign reporting, we classified every text according to country and the subject areas of coverage². Also, we added a category named "multinational" for cultural articles concerning more than one country at the same time. Subsequently, one coded the articles published amidst the area of Culture & Society concerning the main cultural topics³, described actors⁴ and evaluation of events (positive, negative, or neutral). Moreover, one also considered the news perspectives – Foreign News Abroad, Home News Abroad and Foreign News at Home.

Furthermore, we investigated the appearance of news factor not only according to their frequency but also to their intensity from null to three (not observed; small, medium or intense presence), oriented on the operationalisation advanced by previous analyses⁵ (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017; Schulz, 1976; Staab, 1990). Overall, in this paper, we investigated:

² Domestic Politics; Culture & Society; Economy & Finance; Foreign Policy; Catastrophe & Accidents; Crime & Delinquency; Social & Social Order; Environment; Celebrities, Style & Gossips and finally Research & Technology.

³ Literature; Music; Theater & Dancing; Media; Art, Architecture & Exhibitions; Travel & Tourism; Cultural Heritage & History; Carnival & other street fests; Latin American Holidays, Traditions & Customs and Religion.

⁴ Official states representatives organised social groups, non-organised social groups, and personalities from Latin America, Europe, the USA, or other nations.

⁵ A detailed codebook can be sent upon on request.

- **Relevance/Magnitude:** the dimension of impacted people (no person affected; individual perspective; social subgroups or the entire nation's participation).
- **Personification:** how somebody is depicted (no allusion to people; named but without relevance for the central occurrence; the activity of somebody can represent the episode; people are in the core of the affair).
- **Prominence:** Level of actors' awareness (regional, national, or global reputation).
- **Crisis and Conflicts:** Crisis' analysis as specified by the Heidelberg Conflict Research: no crisis detected, non-violent crises, violent crises and limited wars (HIIK, 2013)
- **Negativity:** Judgment of an event. It was considered apart from the category above because crises might also be portrayed positively (e.g., peace negotiations).
- **Damage and Success:** the level of injury or positive occurrences.
- **German involvement:** participation of Germany in the outcome.

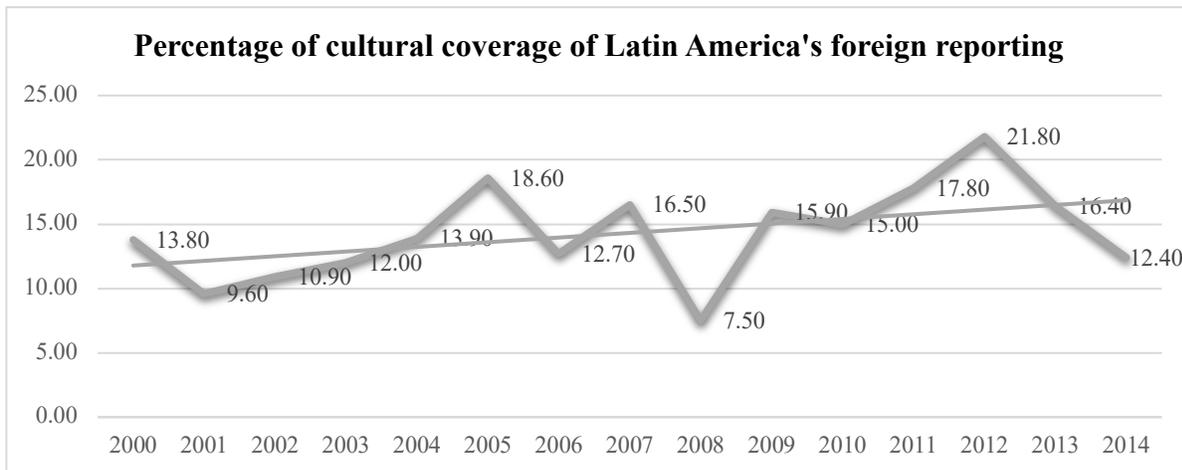
4.4 Qualitative interviews with correspondents

Based solely on the quantitative content analysis, we can access the media message, e.g. the thematic selection, and make a few inferences on the producers. However, to better explain the results, we conducted eight semi-structured qualitative expert interviews with correspondents in the region. These dialogues should shed light in the routine practices and help us to explain and contextualise the press attention to cultural themes. During the quantitative content analysis, we listed all the correspondents who wrote more frequently for the considered publications. We selected at least one official or freelancer correspondent of the four analysed outlets. Due to the budget's restrictions, the interviews occurred online either by Skype or email, in conformity to the contributor's predilection. To ensure a similar approach to the data interpretation, we drafted an interview guideline. Relevant for this paper is the discussion regarded the comparatively strong attention of cultural topics among specific countries. The dialogues happened between February and March 2018. The Skype interviews comprise between 40 and 80 minutes, and the written responses have between three and six pages. With the interviewees' consent, we recorded the dialogues and transcribed them using the F5 computer program. Although all the professionals communicate well either in Spanish or Portuguese, we conducted the talks in their mother tongue (German). The interpretation of the findings was based on the three steps techniques suggest by Mayring (2010): paraphrase, generalisation, and reduction.

4.5 Findings

Contrary to the general tendencies of international news coverage, culture & society is the second most frequently covered area, accounting for 17.3% of entire Latin America's foreign reporting (RQ1). The diversity of the continent, its syncretistic impulse, its cultural originality and strength, its extraordinary ability to perceive different influences, and to transform them into an influential culture of its own (Lehmann, 2009, p. 244) seems to be appealing for the press. Only in the very first phase of analysed Latin America's coverage (from 2000 to 2004), the cultural reporting stays in the third place since the economic reporting attracted more press attention during the Argentine financial crisis at the beginning of the century (Figure 1). Looking at the distribution of the main covered areas within the analysed newspapers, culture & society remains in the second place in the case of taz (21.37 % of its coverage), SZ (19.1 %) and Der Spiegel (17.6%). An exception is the financial-oriented FAZ, where the subject area is in fourth place with 12.3% of its news coverage.

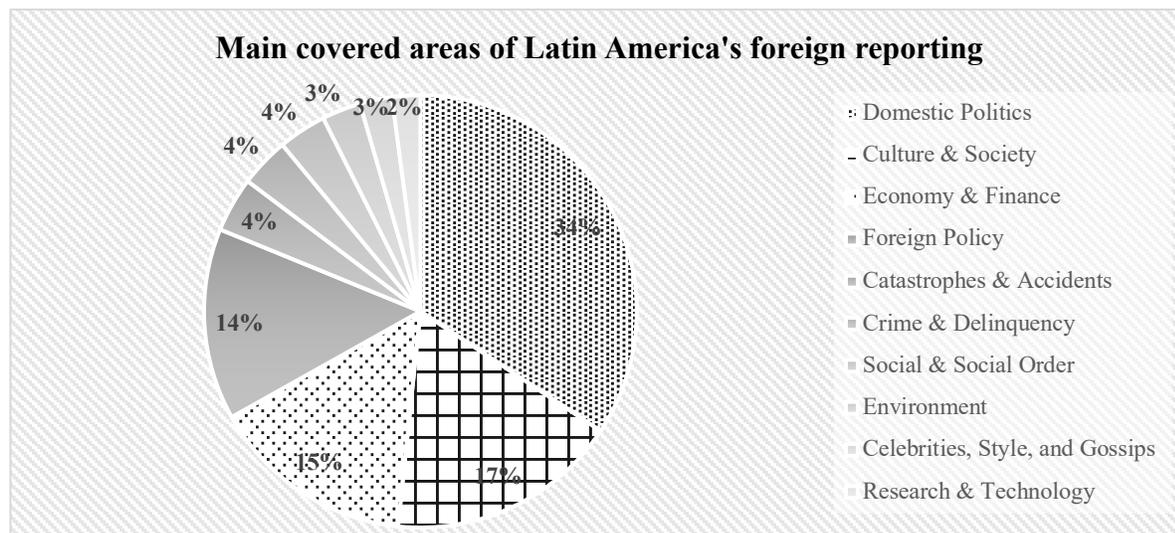
Figure 1: Per cent of amount of Latin America's cultural reporting from 2000 to 2014 in the German press



The present result indicates a proper distribution of the Latin American covered areas, which portrays different facets of the countries and not only their political aspects and conflicts (Figure 1). That may be the case, at least for countries which comprise considerable press attention (Cazzamatta, 2018). For instance, Cuba has the largest share of culture & society among all nations, with 32% of its coverage, an outstanding cultural reporting. Within the main subject area, for instance, 20% of the contributions regarded Cuban literature, 19.10% music, 20.90% cinema & films and 12.20% travel & tourism. One observes the same relatively good

distribution of cultural topics within countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. However, small Central American nations show a completely different picture, despite their satisfactory amount of cultural coverage (RQ4) – Costa Rica (21.6 %), the Dominican Republic (20 %), Nicaragua (18 %) and El Salvador (14.3 %). Different from the other countries with more power status and press attention (Cazzamatta,2018), the theme travel & tourism dominates the cultural reporting of the Central American states, an indicator of exoticism and unusual aspects of these states. Amidst the cultural coverage, the share of travel & tourism is 66.70% for the Dominican Republic, 62.50% for Costa Rica, 50% for El Salvador and 42.9 % for Guatemala (RQ2 and RQ4).

Figure 1: Distribution of the main subject areas of Latin America’s news coverage along fifteen years



If one considers the main covered area of culture & society without the topics related to travel & tourism, the following countries have the most significant cultural coverage: Cuba (29.30%), Mexico (20.20%), Argentina (16.50%), Chile (16.20%), Brazil (15%), Uruguay (11.50%), Paraguay (11.40%) and Peru (11.40%), to answer RQ4 (Table 1). Without the topic travel & tourism, the small Central American countries remain uninteresting for the press. One may explain the astonishingly adequate cultural attention paid by the media to the South American countries through the foreign cultural policy of the German government. “South America is one of the most dynamical and important regions of the Goethe Institute’s network worldwide (Lehmann, 2009, p. 243). “In the past, the Goethe-Institute’s structure within Latin

America had a high density, especially in the southern part of the subcontinent”⁶ (Maihold et al., 2001, p. 66).

Table 1: Percentage of cultural coverage and its main related topics according to countries (2000-2014)

Percentage of cultural coverage within the countries	Without travel & tourism	With travel & tourism	Three main topics within culture & society (in per cent)
Argentina	16.50%	18.5%	literature (24.60%); cinema & films (16.7%) and theatre & dancing (15.10%)
Bolivia	6.30%	11.3%	travel & tourism (47.10%); literature (17.60%); cinema & films/art & exhibitions (11.80%)
Brazil	15.00%	16.8%	music (20%), art & exhibitions (17.60%) and literature (15.20%)
Chile	16.20%	17.6%	literature (30.20%), cinema & films (20.90%) and theatre & dancing (11.60%)
Colombia	9.80%	11.0%	literature (26.30%), music (18.40%), cinema & films/travel & tourism (15.80%)
Costa Rica	9.40%	21.6%	travel & tourism (62.50%), theatre & dancing/cinema & films/religion (12.50%)
Cuba	29.30%	32.0%	cinema & films (20.90%), literature (20.00%) and music (19.10%)
Dom. Republic	7.70%	20.0%	travel & tourism (66.70%), literature/media (16.70%)
Ecuador	0.00%	2.7%	travel & tourism (100%)
El Salvador	7.70%	14.3%	travel & tourism (50.00%), religion (33.30%) and media (16.70%)
Guatemala	6.50%	10.8%	travel & tourism (42.90%), literature/ cinema & films (28.60%)
Haiti	4.50%	5.1%	literature (37.50%), art & exhibitions/travel & tourism/religion (12.50%)
Honduras	1.50%	7.0%	travel & tourism (80%), religion (20%)
Latin America	13.60%	14.0%	cinema & films (36%), music (16%), literature/cultural heritage & history (12%)
Mexico	20.20%	22.9%	literature (18.10%), art & exhibition/travel & tourism (16.20%), music (13.30%)
Nicaragua	9.10%	18.0%	travel & tourism (54.50%), literature/art & exhibition/media/cinema & films (9.10%)
Panama	3.10%	11.4%	travel & tourism (75%) and cinema & films (25%)

⁶ In 2016 South America had a total of thirteen Goethe-Institute: Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, two in Argentina (Buenos Aires and Cordoba) and most recently five in Brazil (Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Salvador). Mexico also has an institute. In other countries, there are sometimes only “Goethe Centres”; i.e., “foreign German cultural societies”; which have concluded a cooperation agreement with the Goethe-Institute (Goethe-Institute, 2016).

Paraguay	11.40%	16.2%	travel & tourism (33.30%), literature/cinema & films/art & exhibition/religion (16.70%)
Peru	11.20%	15.7%	travel & tourism (32.30%), art & exhibitions (22.60%), literature (19.40%)
Uruguay	11.50%	14.8%	music (37.50%), cinema & films/travel & tourism (25%) and literature (12.50%)
Venezuela	3.90%	5.6%	travel & tourism (31.60%), art & exhibition/music (21.10%) and literature (10.50%)

On the one hand, it is not surprising that the most extensive and most covered countries have a more balanced reporting with cultural facets, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico due to their substantial power status and economic proximity to Germany (Cazzamatta, 2020). Moreover, most of the correspondents are in their respective capitals. On the other hand, other Southern American countries, namely Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, have a substantial or even a tiny share of the world economy, the largest share of crisis and political reporting (ibid.), which displace the cultural sector. What is surprising is the large share of cultural coverage of countries such as Paraguay and Uruguay, regarded as the “white spots” with 0.8% and 1.2% of total Latin America’s reporting (Cazzamatta, 2018).

Paraguay does not have a Goethe-Institute, but a German-Paraguayan Cultural Institute in Asunción (Auswärtiges Amt, 2016a). Besides, the German Federal Foreign Office considers the country as an “emigration destination for Germans”. In the first half of the last century, there were not only German descendants Mennonites⁷ who fled to Paraguay from the Stalinism of the former Soviet Union but also Germans who had to leave the Federal Republic of Germany because of the economic misery resulting from the First and Second World Wars. Nowadays, it is mostly about pensioners who are establishing themselves in Paraguay due to the favourable living and climatic conditions (ibid.). In Uruguay, in its turn, there are about 10,000 Germans with dual citizenship and 40,000 ethnic Germans. It is a large proportion, especially considering the total population of the small country (Auswärtiges Amt, 2016c). At the beginning of the 19th century, the state also offered asylum to German-speaking Jews from 1935 onwards, and Mennonites of German origin also emigrated to Uruguay after the Second World War. The dominant class of Uruguayan society can communicate in German (ibid.). The Goethe-Institute has been in existence in Montevideo for 50 years and “thanks to its high-profile programme of events, it is an established and recognised part of the capital’s cultural scene” (Auswärtiges Amt,

⁷ Evangelical free church

2016c). In general, one deems the cultural exchange between Germany and South America as a success of the bilateral relationship within the scope of cultural policy, which is also observed and perceived by the German press.

The priorities of the Goethe-Institute naturally take into account the cultural policy framework of the Federal Foreign Office (Maihold et al., 2001, p. 66), which can explain the adequate cultural coverage of the South American countries. In other words, the press follows the cultural agenda of the federal government if there are no further, more potent news factors and typical structural features of reporting such as crisis, negativity and focus on politics, as in the case of Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia. This monitoring of the German government's cultural agenda relates to the macro level of the influences on global reporting. However, the cultural sector also has other specific characteristics.

Regarding different news factors and structural traits of reporting (RQ3), the area culture & society shows very little timeliness (only 35.4% of the articles report on events that happened up to one week). Among the subject areas, culture & society also has the most significant number of German involvements in the occurrences (53.6%), and the news perspective “foreign news at home” (46.4%), as various Latin American cultural events took place in Germany. In general, the sector also shows many positive contributions (83.3%), as one deems such cultural exchanges as favourable. Hence the tiny presence of the factor “damage”; (0.1) and the high presence of the element “success” (0.70). There is also a high degree of personalisation (1.71) since the contributions are usually focused on artists, photographers, architects, or writers (

Table 2). For this reason, it is not surprising that most of the depicted actors were prominent personalities (1.2).

Table 2: The main structural traits and news factors within the areas of culture & society

Intensity's average of news factors (0-3) amidst culture & society	
Damage	0.1
Success	0.7
Relevance	1.3
Personification*	1.7
Prominence	1.2
Intensity of crises*	0.1
Structural traits in percentage	
Timeliness (events up to a week)	35.4%

German involvement	53.6%
Foreign news abroad	46.8%
Home news abroad	6.8%
Foreign news at home	46.4%
Positive articles	83.3%
Negativity	5.6%
Focus on crises	7.2%
* Concerning person as actors	
** Take into account the intensity of violence	

Interviewed German correspondents in the region gave different explanations for the press considerable attention to cultural aspects of Latin America. First, the Christian influence in the continent, which makes it more “digestible” for cultural identification when compared to other parts of the world, such as Asia or Africa. Second, the small significance of the Latin American countries (except Brazil and Mexico) in the global market economy. Third, a general difficulty in reporting domestic politics (except in the case of coups, elections, and political crises). Fourth, the presence of tourism which nurtures a further interest in Latin American culture, and lastly the excellent reputation of Latin American cultural production in Germany. In the words of the SZ correspondent: (. . .) “Latin America [has] culture of every kind to offer. Art, archaeology, film, literature, sport, gastronomy etc. The list of world stars from the region ranges from Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez or Mario Vargas Llosa to Gael García Bernal or Juanes.” (P. Burghardt, personal communication, 11 March 2018).

Within the field culture & society, literature (19.58%) and travel & tourism (19.13%) are the most popular topics (RQ2), followed by cinema & films (15.66%), art, architecture & exhibitions (13.40%) and music (12.50%). Other topics, e.g., cultural heritage & history (2.11%), carnival & other street festivals (1.05%) and Latin American holidays, tradition & customs (0.75%), were considered just marginally by the press (RQ2). Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico have the most contributions amidst the topic of cinema & films, music, and theatre & dancing. If one observes the topics literature, music, cinema & films and art & exhibitions, the number of “foreign news at home” varied from 61% to 64.4%. This result can be explained by Latin American events that took place in Germany: the publication of books, films at the Berlinale festival or the Latin American film days that have taken place over the years.

The fact that the topic of literature received the most considerable attention within the cultural field can be explained by the small success of Latin American literature in Germany. For years, the new Latin American literature had been in the centre of international interest. Authors are usually invited on reading tours to many bookshops when new works are translated. However, one usually argues that there is no “literary boom” anymore since the 1990s. The golden age for the reception of Latin American literature was over. Moreover, there are still gaps in the Latin American literary knowledge, and lyric poetry remains unpopular, the short story receives no attention, the essays are absent, and a few classic titles urgently need to be published (Strausfeld, 2007, p. 167). Nevertheless, new publications continue to create critical or sales successes that are important for further interest in the region’s literature (ibid.).

Amidst the topic literature (19.58 % of the area culture & society), for instance, one finds several profiles of writers and authors, publications of new literary works, translations of Latin American authors into German or the reporting of specific literary awards. Of course, a few events, such as Argentina or Brazil as guests of honour at the Frankfurt book fair, received much attention. An analysis of the different phases of reporting on culture shows an increase of 13.3 % in the subject of literature between the first (2000-2004) and the last (2010-2014) periods. While in previous years, the literature topic was responsible for 14.3% of the cultural reporting, the percentage in the last five years was 27.6%. A possible explanation could be the presence of Argentina in 2010 and Brazil in 2013 as the guest of honour at the Frankfurt book fair and the subsequent financial programmes for translating authors and corresponding public relations work. The participation of a country in major cultural events often has a catalytic effect in its reporting. When analysing the case of Argentina, one notices that the cultural reporting in the first period (2000-2004) was displaced by the crisis-oriented economic reporting and thus only accounted for 12.4%. During the next five years, one observed an increase to 18.8%. However, just after Argentina's participation as the guest of honour at the Frankfurt book fair 2010, the number of cultural reports has risen to 31.9% from 2010 to 2014. In general, contributions on literature mostly refer to Argentina (22.5%), Cuba (16.7%), Brazil and Mexico (both 13.8%), Chile (9.4%) and Colombia (7.2%).

Huge cultural events naturally have an enormous influence on the press attention, such as the Cuban project *Buena Vista Social Club*. In the case of Argentina, the country had the most substantial cultural coverage in 2010 as the guest of honour at the Frankfurt book fair (16.5%

only in 2010). The same happened with Brazil if one observes the cultural reporting over the years. The significant upswing in Brazil's cultural reporting in 2013, with 16%, was also due to the Frankfurt book fair. A second highlight for the country was the year 2006 when Brazil used the World Cup in Germany like no other nation to present itself culturally (Preuss, 2010, p. 202). The former Minister of Culture and singer Gilberto Gil and the football myth Pele (ibid.) opened the cultural program *Copa das Culturas* in the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin. Events in the fields of music, dance, art, literature, and cinema were organised in Germany as part of the project (ibid.). A similar phenomenon happened in the case of Mexico. The highest amount of Mexican cultural coverage was noticed in 2002 (14.2 %), when the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin organised the festival “*Mexartes-Berlin.de*” and presented contemporary art and productions from the country to the German public (Huffs Schmid, 2014, pp. 30–31). Another highlight for Mexico was the following year (2003 with 10.4 %) when the exhibitions organised by the Royal Academy of Arts in London were curated in Bonn and then in the *Gropiusbau* in Berlin (ibid.).

Besides, as mentioned above, travel & tourism (19.3%) is the second topic within this area. It is noticeable that the German press is very little interested in classic cultural aspects of the small countries (RQ4). In these cases, the exotic and extraordinary were most often represented by the travelogues. The worst example is Ecuador - 100% of its coverage of culture & society is about tourism. The cultural coverage of other small nations also focuses mostly on tourism & travel reports - Honduras (80%), Panama (75%), Dominican Republic (66.70%), Costa Rica (62.50%), Nicaragua (54%), El Salvador (50%), Bolivia (47. 10%) and Guatemala (42. 90%). That means that the adequate cultural diversification of topics usually applies to larger countries with higher power status (Cazzamatta, 2018).

4.6 The role of Cuban cultural reporting

If one analyses the distribution of the subject areas among all the twenty countries, the comparatively most extensive cultural reporting of Cuba (29.3%) is surprising, mainly because there is not yet a Goethe-Institute in the country (Auswärtiges Amt, 2016b) that promotes a systematic cultural policy by supporting cultural exchange and partnership. The island does not show power status or economic proximity to Germany that could justify the enormous cultural recognition. The Cuban Revolution had attracted the attention of the international public at that

time, the revolutionary transformations of the entire society were initially presented in a friendly way, but later also very critically. However, Cuba remained an issue – until today (Strausfeld, 2007, p. 158). The Cuban Revolution persisted as a myth (Werz, 2010, p. 33)). One also argues that the cultural revolution in Cuba during the 1960s, through literacy programs and high creativity in literature, cinema or music, exerted a strong attraction on the commercially oriented capitalist cultural sector (Franzbach, 2003, p. 40).

In Havana, one founded the famous *Casa de las Américas*, a meeting place for Latin American writers. Besides, Cuba experienced a new interest in 1999 given the film *Buena Vista Social Club* by Wim Wenders, the international success of well-known musicians such as Company Segundo or Omara Portuondo (the only woman of the Buena Vista Social Club) and the increasing tourism. One cannot ignore the multiplier effect of this Cuban wave. Since the CD Buena Vista Social Club from 1996 was a huge success, and the needs of a saturated European audience for easily consumable exoticism was fulfilled (Weyde, 1999, p. 18), various follow-up projects with solo artists of the group were recorded, and the film produced (ibid.). The marketing strategy was successful: More than one million CDs were sold, and the album was at the top of the German charts for weeks. Two and a half years later, the film served “the longing for tropical social romanticism” (Weyde, 1999, p. 19). At that time, Cuba was a “magic word” with which “everything could be sold” (ibid.). Other authors confirmed the phenomenon: (. . .) “The enormously increased interest in Cuban music in Germany and France, at least since the success of Wim Wenders (. . .), points in this direction, in which Europeans refresh themselves after the ‘original’ music of Cuban gentlemen eighty years old and aged with dignity” (Lange, 2002, p. 32). Besides, a new generation of young Cuban writers, known as the “Children of the Revolution” has emerged, even though they sharply reject the characterization. Their stories were presented together in 2001 in the collection “Cubanísimo” and represent a view of the life difficulties on the island (SZ, 06. 07. 2011).

After the Cuban wave (Bremme, 2007, p. 259), films and music from Cuba have “boomed in the capitalist cultural sector” (Franzbach, 2003, p. 42). As a result, several Cubans artists in Germany live from Salsa courses (ibid.). There is always a talk of a “boom” in Cuban culture in the literature reception: “Cuban literature experienced a boom together with the general Cuban boom provoked within the arts, for example, by movies like Buena Vista Social Club, but the significance of every single work remains questionable (Stehlik, 2006, p. 283).

Finally, it must be taken into account that a significant part of Cuban culture has also been developing for decades in the “Cuban diaspora” in Europe or the USA (Franzbach, 2003, p. 42).

This catalytic effect at the end of the 1990s is remarkable over the next following years – the most significant amount of cultural coverage in Cuba was identified between 2000 and 2004 (36.4% of its coverage). After that, the share has slowly decreased, 32.6% between 2005 and 2009 and 26.8% between 2010 and 2014, a reduction of almost 10% when comparing the first and last periods. Besides, the increase of German tourists on the island can also further explain the interest of the German press in Cuban culture. According to the Federal Foreign Office, Germany is in the third country where the majority of Cuban tourists after Canada and the USA come from, including Cubans in exile (Auswärtiges Amt, 2016b). Another vital variable of cultural exchange is the estimated 30,000 Cubans who studied or worked in Germany, especially in the former GDR, German Democratic Republic (ibid.).

5. Conclusion and discussion

Despite the tiny quantity (Cazzamatta, 2018), Latin America’s international news coverage is more diverse than in other parts of the world, such as in Africa (Mükke, 2009) or the Middle East (Hafez, 2002b). Global reporting is usually predominantly political and neglects other economic, cultural and ecological developments (Hafez, 2005; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985; Ulrich, 2016). One could not confirm this general trend for Latin America, especially in the case of states which exhibit considerable press attention since the thematic spectrum is indeed very diverse (Cazzamatta, 2018). While in the seventies, Wöhlecke (1973) showed a Latin America’s foreign reporting vigorously concentrated on political topics (between 60% and 80% according to the analysed publications), without a representative depiction of cultural themes, this seems to have changed in the new millennium. The subject area culture & society stays in second place with 17.3% of entire Latin America’s coverage. Within the *SZ*, *FAZ* and *Der Spiegel*, culture remains in the second place of covered areas, while in the case of the financial oriented *FAZ*, cultural reporting plays a smaller role and remains in the fourth position (RQ1).

The distribution of cultural topics is much more balanced within larger countries with more power status and economic proximity (Cazzamatta, 2018), especially in the case of Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba (an exception). These four nations alone are responsible for 54.2%

of entire Latin America's foreign reporting. Cuba has the most significant cultural contributions among all nations (29%), and this fact required some thoughts. After the Cuban revolution, the island became a myth, and it remains so until nowadays (Strausfeld, 2007, p. 158). That is also reflected in the cultural reporting, which through literature, theatre, cinema, and music, depicts and criticises the everyday and challenging life of the country. One should also consider other factors such as the cultural boom and its catalytic effect at the end of the 1990s through projects such as Buena Vista Social Club and the film produced by the German director Wim Wenders. Besides, the Cuban diaspora in Europe and the USA are also responsible for a considerable share of the Cuban cultural productions. Additionally, the increase of German tourists on the island (in the third place just after Canada and the USA) and their further interest in reading about the cultural life of Cubans could play a role. Finally, the 30,000 Cubans who studied and worked in the former GDR are a variable that might equally prompt a cultural exchange and interest.

Different from Cuba, in the case of other Central American states, the contributions focus very much on travel reports, which can contribute to an exotic media image (RQ2 and RQ4). In general, literature (19.58%) and travel & tourism (19.13%) are the most popular topics amidst the area of culture & society, followed by cinema & films (15.66 %), art, architecture & exhibitions (13.40 %) and music (12.50 %). The press only marginally mentioned other topics, such as cultural heritage & history (2.11%), carnival & other street festivals (1.05%) and Latin American holidays, tradition & customs (0.75%), to address RQ2.

While the small countries of Central America (except Cuba) were almost irrelevant within the area of culture & society (except for their travel reports), South America received significant attention, which is very likely to be a result of German cultural policies. Nevertheless, crisis and focus on politics are still essential factors for the German press, especially regarding Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. The most important countries in South America (Brazil, Chile, and Argentina) and the smaller nations that show some cultural proximity to Germany, e.g., Uruguay and Paraguay, exhibit significant cultural coverage (RQ4). That shows that the press still reproduces specific power structures within the continent despite its thematic diversity. Mass media do not represent a political and social reality as such but construct realities by accentuating specific "news factors", which they usually apply unconsciously to select events and determine the "newsworthiness" of different occurrences.

The cultural reporting showed a significant number of German involvement (53.6%) and “Foreign News at Home” (46.4%), as it mostly deals with various Latin American cultural events in Germany. Therefore, 83.3 % of the contributions are also classified as positive. Another essential news factor is personalisation (1.71) because the articles usually focus on the artists or their production (RQ3). Besides, major cultural (bilateral) events have mostly a catalytic effect, which one observes in the press through the increase in cultural coverage over the years – the Cuba boom with *Buena Vista Social Club* at the end of the 1990s, the participation of Argentina (2010) and Brazil (2013) as guests of honour at the Frankfurt book fair; the cultural programme of Brazil in 2006 in Germany as part of the *Copa das Culturas* or the German-Mexican music festival *Technogeist*.

In conclusion, the interviewed correspondents explained the widespread attention to Latin American cultural topics through several variables. First, the Christian tradition which makes the content more understandable and less strange for cultural associations when compared to other global areas, for instance, Asia or Africa. Second, the little importance of Latin America (except Brazil and Mexico) in the global financial market. Third, a tendency towards de-politicisation in the global news (except in the case of substantial political events such as putsch, elections, and conflicts). Fourth, the touristic appeal which incentivises further curiosity in Latin American culture and lastly the rewarded reputation of the Latin American cultural products in Germany.

6. References

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