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TTIP and CETA in Irish newspapers: Expertise and plurality of editorial bias

Barry Finnegan

Abstract

This paper analyses Irish newspaper coverage of two international free-trade and investment-protection agreements, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (herein, TTIP) between the EU and the USA whose negotiations are currently in suspension, and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (herein, CETA) currently provisionally applied in law between the EU and Canada. The paper demonstrates that they constitute two good examples of substantive matters of public importance with which to analyse the editorial balance of Irish newspapers. Using agenda-setting and framing theory, the research sets out the importance of the role of media in democratic life, and contextualises newspapers' editorial bias in Habermas's concept of a transformed public sphere. Categorising them as editorially Pro-, Neutral or Anti-, the paper takes in all 199 articles and 39 letters on TTIP and CETA published in three national, Irish, daily, broadsheets, the Irish Times, the Irish Independent and the Irish Examiner since the start of their respective negotiations, and up to July 2017. Informed experts of different types are used in these articles to explain TTIP and CETA. 620 separate instances of the usage of experts are identified and these are categorised as being Pro, Anti or Cautious on TTIP and CETA. The research findings are that: (1) there is significant variation in editorial bias on TTIP and CETA among the three papers, and, (2) in four of the six cases, governmental and corporate experts' voice is given privileged status to the detriment of all other actors' voice including civil society organisations, academics and opposition

politicians at a ratio of 2 to 1, up to 2.8 to 1. The differentiated readership of each paper is used to explain editorial differences; and the tentative suggestion is made, that the absence of a uniformly Pro-TTIP/CETA bias suggests a possible deconstructing of a dominant neoliberalist bias in Irish newspapers identified in previous literature. However, the dominance of governmental and corporate experts used to define the TTIP/CETA story somewhat tempers this suggestion.

Introduction

Swinnen and McCluskey state that, ‘Public opinion on trade and globalisation has a strong effect on government trade policies and international negotiations’, and that, ‘an important factor in influencing public opinion is information provided by mass media’ (2006:611). Swinnen and Francken highlight that, ‘often there is an implicit assumption in this literature [on the political economy of information on trade and globalisation] that information provision is neutral. This assumption,’ they say, ‘is not realistic’ (2006: 637). Referring then to the need for public debate on trade deals, Dolle & Simoes tell us that, ‘the CETA is the most far reaching trade agreement that the EU has ever concluded with another major economy and public debate is necessary in such under takings’ (2016: 622). Then on the substantive importance of the need for the public to be informed about TTIP, Crouch claims that, ‘This proposed deal between the EU and the USA would remove many if not most of the institutions put in place by either European countries or the USA to regulate capitalism’ (2016:73).

Civil society organisations (CSOs) have raised substantive, well-researched concerns against TTIP/CETA (for example: ATTAC (Ireland), 2016; CEO, 2016; Comhlámh, 2017; Environmental Pillar, 2017; Finnegan, 2016; Finnegan and Gold, 2016; Goyens, 2015; ICTU, 2016; Mark, 2016; Oxfam, 2014; PowerShift et al., 2016), and Petersmann, addressing these same concerns says that they, ‘justify popular fears that intergovernmental trade agreements – even among constitutional democracies – risk curtailing constitutional rights of citizens through non-transparent ‘executive governance’ and interest group politics’ (2017: 39).

In light of the shared concerns of CSOs and academics, this paper asserts that the only manner in which media can achieve a ‘neutral’, editorially balanced coverage of TTIP/CETA, is to give reasonably equal coverage to governmental and corporate views, alongside civil society and oppositional political views.

As a means to assess whether Irish media delivers this neutrality, this paper analyses all newspaper articles on CETA and TTIP from the beginning of their negotiation up to mid-2017 in the three Irish national daily 'broadsheets', the Irish Times, the Irish Independent and the Irish Examiner; it categorises the editorial bias of articles in each paper, and also categorises the usage of experts who are quoted and paraphrased and who thereby give meaning to the public about these trade deals.

How use of experts can construct the frame

That the issues the media choose to focus on become the issues of primary concern to citizens was first categorically set out by McCombs & Shaw in their seminal study, 'The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media' (1972). Since then, this branch of mass communications research has further developed and can now demonstrate, 'that a dominant perspective in the news coverage of a topic is likely to become particularly salient among the public' (McCombs, 2005). It is therefore reasonable to say, that if the majority of experts used by journalists to explain an issue of public importance are of one point of view, for example, are in favour of TTIP, then the coverage will have a 'dominant perspective' of Pro-TTIP and this view will become 'salient among the public'. What level of balance the media choose to have as to the numbers of, and space given to, the views of experts used to explain TTIP and CETA then, is therefore of major importance.

Each expert will give their perspectives on the issue being discussed; we refer to this as attaching 'attributes' to the 'object'. The attributes help define what is called, the frame, of the story and it is through understanding frames that media consumers attach meaning to the object. In this context, Entman says that, 'To frame is to select *some* aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described' (1993: 52, emphasis in original).

Kim et al., meanwhile, claim that their research concluded that 'the concept of framing implies that the way a given piece of information is described creates different outcomes among audiences' (2002:21).

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the use of experts and the overall editorial stance of newspaper articles on TTIP/CETA will contribute to the construction of the meaning of these trade deals in the minds of readers.

A transformed public sphere: 'privileged private interests'

One turns now to the idea of media functioning as a public sphere in democratic society. In his seminal text on the subject, Habermas tells us that, 'Within this public sphere, people collectively determine through the processes of rational argument the way in which they want to see society develop. ... The media facilitates this process by providing an arena of public debate, and by reconstituting private citizens as a public body in the form of public opinion' (Habermas, (2009 [1962])).

While Habermas himself says that he presents a somewhat 'stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere' (2009:xix) of the 18th century referred to above, it is its 19th century structural transformation which interests us here. Kellner (2014: 24) tells us that, 'Habermas's account of the structural transformation of the public sphere, despite its limitations, points to the increasingly important role of the media in politics and everyday life and the ways that corporate interests have colonised this sphere, using the media and culture to promote their own interests'.

Writing about the newspapers of the early 1800s, and quoting a German text by Bucher from 1917, Habermas points out that, 'from mere institutions for the publication of news, the papers also became carriers and leaders of public opinion, and instruments in the arsenal of party politics'; then looking at the newspaper industry as it develops further in the 19th century, he says that, 'the way was paved for this sort of transition from a press that took ideological sides to one that was primarily a business', and moves on to highlight 'the subordination of entrepreneurial [newspaper] policy to the demands of business efficiency' and that the transformation of the public sphere meant newspapers, 'became enmeshed in a web of interests extraneous to business that sought to exercise influence upon it', and thus, the newspaper became 'the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere' (Habermas, 2009 [1962]: 182-185).

The findings below suggest that one can best understand Irish broadsheets as a 21st century continuation of Habermas's transformed 19th century public sphere, in their 'subordination [to both] business efficiency' and 'private interests'.

Civil society's TTIP/CETA concerns

Highlighting the 3.5 million signatures against TTIP/CETA collected by Stop-TTIP, a pan-European coalition of civil society groups, including 14 Irish organisations (Stop-TTIP, 2015), 'as the most successful European Citizens Initiative' to date, Riekmann says that as a result of it, EU free trade agreements such as CETA and TTIP, 'have reached a degree of salience' which 'renders procedures more difficult, but it can also be interpreted as a victory for democracy' (2017: 293-294).

On the parallel legal system Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) proposed for TTIP, and renamed the Investor Court System (ICS) in CETA, United Nations researchers (UNCTD, 2015) and academics (cf: Van Harten, 2016 & 2017) have highlighted its incompatibility with democracy. Indeed, 120 legal scholars from faculties of law at universities across 17 countries claimed that the European Commission has failed to provide evidence as to why they are, 'including investor-state arbitration in the TTIP at all', adding that the ISDS 'profoundly challenges' member states' 'judicial, legal and regulatory systems' (University of Kent, 2014). In a similar vein, The German Magistrates Association said that it, 'sees neither a legal basis nor a need for such a court' (DRB, 2016).

Additionally, fears for a post-CETA drop in regulatory standards among civil society are shared by academics: 'Compared to the cost-benefit approach favoured elsewhere in the world,' the EU regulates the environment, food, agriculture and human health using the 'precautionary principle – which is an important element of European primary law' Davies (2016: 454-455) tells us. However, it appears nowhere in the text of CETA (Couvreur, 2015: 271).

Birnbaum claims that with contemporary trade agreements, 'it is not difficult to find examples that deter public health from achieving important health protection regulation' (2016: 47); and Henson tells us that 'the TTIP trade negotiation's ... economic pursuits' of increased 'wealth and jobs ... could result in environmental degradation' (Henson, 2015: 728). While echoing civil society's concerns that CETA contains no provision for imposing workers' rights and

environmental protection, Bartels tells us that, 'The crucial point, however, concerns the consequences of a finding of a violation. This, following recent EU treaty practice, is decidedly weak. ... In other words, there is no real enforcement at all (Bartels, 2017: 208).

Established neoliberal bias in Irish media

That EU external trade policy, and the mega-regional trade deals TTIP and CETA, constitute examples of neoliberal ideology is reasonably well established (*cf.* Nichols, 2016: 4; Strange, 2015: 11). The following section highlights some of the literature which identifies Irish newspapers as being dominated by a neoliberalist ideology, and later, the research findings are contextualised in this literature.

Phelan, in a chapter entitled, 'Irish neoliberalism, media and the politics of discourse', talks about, 'a process of ideological recentring, which has seen the Irish journalistic field become increasingly embedded in assumptions that naturalise and legitimise the 'truth' of neoliberal discourses' (Phelan, 2014: 78). Separately, in his analysis of Irish newspaper coverage of the privatisation of the state phone company Eircom, he summarises: 'This article has, however, shown how embedded the discourse of Irish media elites is in the assumption of neoliberal ideology' (Phelan, 2007: 24).

Similarly, Meade finds that the Irish Independent's coverage of May 2004 protests, 'sanctioned dominant ideologies in relation to neoliberalism' (2008: 330). Mercille, in his analysis of media coverage of the Irish property sector, concludes that, 'news stories reflected the views and interests of the Irish corporate and governmental sectors, which had adopted neoliberal policies during the "Celtic Tiger" years'; he also observes that Irish newspapers, 'rely heavily on 'experts' from elite institutions in reporting events' (2014: 282).

In Cawley's analysis he concludes that, 'the [newspaper] sample tended to amplify frames that favoured a broadly neo-liberal response to the economic crisis' (2012: 631). Titley's media research identifies 'the thick weave of neoliberal rationality that defined public discourse in Ireland' (2012: 298). Fox and Rau identify 'the media's preference for neoliberal discourse' (2016: 20); and in their analysis of Irish news media's coverage of anti-water charges protesters, Power, et al. describe 'the overarching discourse of neoliberalism which dominates Irish political and economic life' (2015:21).

Methodology

This section outlines the search terms and time frames used in the Lexis Nexis newspaper database search to find articles, as well as to how articles were classified as being excluded, or being Pro-, Neutral-, or Anti-; or -Cautious.

The search terms and date range: ‘Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership’, and ‘Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership’, and ‘TTIP’ were used to search for TTIP articles in the date range from 01-01-13 (just before the opening of formal TTIP negotiations) up to 01-07-17.¹ The search terms: ‘Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement’, and ‘Comprehensive Economic & Trade Agreement’, and ‘CETA’ and ‘Ceta’ were used to search for articles in the date range from 01-06-09 (just before the opening of formal CETA negotiations) to 01-07-17.²

Pro: articles were categorised as being editorially Pro-TTIP/CETA if, (a) all the experts quoted and/or paraphrased were pro-TTIP/CETA, (b) if less than one quarter of the text quoted and/or paraphrased anti-TTIP/CETA experts, or (c) if it was an opinion piece that was Pro-TTIP or CETA.

¹*Notes on the background for chosen TTIP Time Frame & Search Terms:* On November 29th, 2011, an EU-US governmental summit tasked their joint Transatlantic Economic Council, a body made up of EU and US official staff from ‘external trade, regulatory, commercial and scientific agencies’, to establish a new ‘High-Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth’ in order to ‘identify options to further enhance EU-US economic relations’ and to ‘boost economic partnership’ (<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=757>). Following this, an ‘Interim Report to Leaders from the Co-Chairs of the EU-U.S. High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth’ was produced on June 19th, 2012 (http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2012/june/tradoc_149557.pdf); and following on from this, on February 13th 2013, United States President Barack Obama, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, issued a ‘Joint Statement’ declaring that trade negotiations would begin on they called, the Transatlantic trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP) (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-94_en.htm). Familiarity with the content revealed that the lower case ttip, or Ttip, was never used.

²*Notes on the background for chosen CETA Time Frame & Search Terms:* A 2007 EU-Canada governmental summit, led to the co-production in October 2008 between the European Commission and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, of the research paper, ‘Assessing the Costs and Benefits of a Closer EU-Canada Economic Partnership’ (http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2008/october/tradoc_141032.pdf). Based on this then, in March 2009, the governments released their ‘Joint Report on the EU-Canada Scoping Exercise’ (http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/march/tradoc_142470.pdf); and this led then to in June 10th, 2009, to the formal announcement of the beginning of an EU-Canada negotiation for an ‘economic and trade agreement’ called the Comprehensive Economic & trade Agreement’ (http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2009/june/tradoc_143427.pdf)

Neutral: articles were categorised as being editorially 'TTIP/CETA-Neutral' if, (a) (roughly) equal numbers of experts quoted and/or paraphrased were both Pro- and Anti-TTIP/CETA, (b) if Pro & Anti- TTIP/CETA experts were given reasonably equal prominence in the article, or (c) if the article was strictly editorially balanced, or more or less gave equal prominence / space to arguments for and against.

Anti: articles were categorised as being editorially Anti-TTIP/CETA if, (a) all the experts quoted and/or paraphrased were Anti-TTIP/CETA, (b) if less than one quarter of the text quoted and/or paraphrased Pro-TTIP/CETA experts, (c) if it was an opinion piece that was Anti-TTIP/CETA.

TTIP/CETA-Cautious: Experts quoted and paraphrased were not deemed Pro- or Anti-, if their contribution was strictly impartial (such as contributions from the EU Ombudsman).

Excluded: TTIP and CETA items were excluded from the research (N/A) where less than one third of the article referred to TTIP/CETA, or they were just mentioned briefly, or in the context of a different topic, such as Brexit or the US presidential election.

Number of TTIP/CETA Articles: In the Irish Times: of the 159 items that mentioned TTIP, 86 were found to be about TTIP, 73 were categorised as N/A; of the 41 items returned for CETA, 29 were found to be about CETA, and 12 were categorised as N/A.

In the Irish Independent, of the 84 items which mentioned TTIP, 49 were found to be about TTIP, 3 were duplicates, and 32 were categorised as N/A; of the 17 CETA items returned, 15 were found to be about CETA, and 2 were categorised as N/A.

In the Irish Examiner, of the 68 items returned on TTIP, 17 were found to be N/A, leaving 51 TTIP items; of the 9 items returned on CETA, 8 were substantially about CETA, with one N/A.

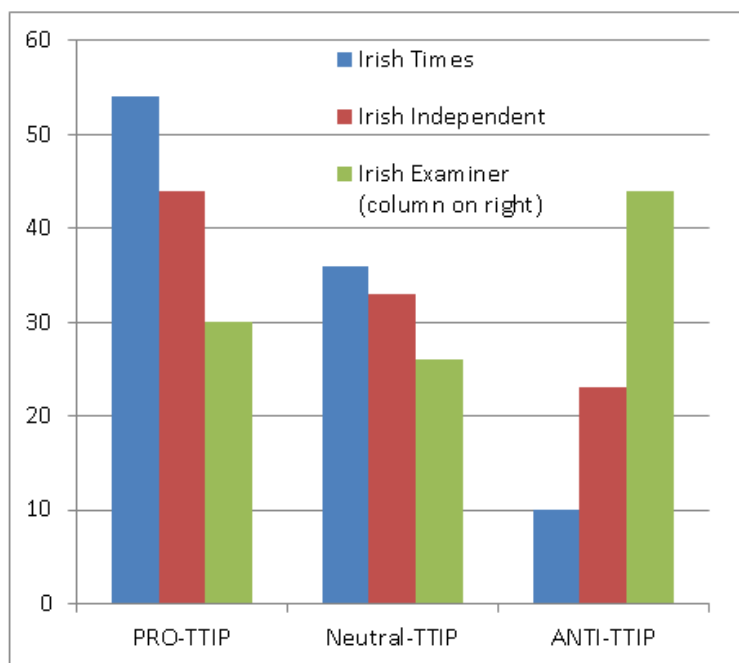
Letters: while categorised, these were excluded in the calculations of editorial bias and usage of experts as one cannot expect readers to place as much emphasis or credibility on the views of the general letter-writing public, as they would on experts chosen by journalists to define the meaning of items deemed worthy of journalistic attention.

Analysis of findings

While one would ideally like to have found the public interest taking precedence with the majority of all papers' coverage being Neutral, this was not the case here. Only 36% of the Times' 59 TTIP articles were editorially Neutral, only 33% of the Independent's 49 articles were editorially Neutral, and only 26% of the Examiner's. (See tables 1, 3 and 5.)

In the Pro-TTIP editorial bias category one found that the Examiner was lowest at 30% of its articles, the Independent next at 44%, and the Times had 54% of its articles editorially Pro-TTIP.

An even bigger spread of 34% of difference was found in the percentage of each papers' Anti-TTIP biased articles: in reverse to the Pro stance, the Times had 10%, the Independent had 23%, and the Examiner had 44% of their TTIP articles taking an Anti slant.



BAR-CHART 1: TTIP: Representation of each newspaper's 'Editorial Balance' expressed as a percentage of their total TTIP articles from Jan. 1st 2013 to July 1st 2017.

Earlier in this paper, research was summarised that found Irish newspapers to be overwhelmingly neoliberal in their editorial bias; the research presented here however, demonstrates a more nuanced approach to this conformity. The following section suggests that one can attempt to explain the wide variance of

editorial approach (e.g.: Times 54% Pro and 10% Anti; Examiner 30% Pro and 44% Anti) by examining where TTIP articles were published in different sections of each paper, and, readership survey data.

The Irish Times' chose to place 31% of all its TTIP coverage in its Letters section (27 letters). This compares to only 2% of the Independent's and Examiners' total coverage (1 letter each). 74% of the Times' letters were Anti-TTIP. Did the editors of the Irish Times view the Letters section of the newspaper as the place to attempt to construct editorial balance in the presentation of TTIP, and contrast that with their 64% Pro-TTIP articles in the Finance section, and their 54% Pro among all articles (excluding letters)? This study suggests not; and as outlined in the Methodology section, has excluded letters from its analysis.

For the Independent, this was mostly a Farming story with 39% of all its TTIP items published in that section of the paper; compared with 39% published in a combination of the News, Features and Opinion sections, and only 20% appearing in the Business section. This is in contract to the Times, for whom it was mostly a Finance section story with 45% of their TTIP items appearing there; almost double that of a combined Ireland, Opinion, World and Weekend sections which took just 23% of coverage. Taking 57% of their total TTIP items published, for the Examiner too it was mostly a Business section story, with the combined Features/Weekend, Opinion, World and Ireland News sections taking just 33%, and their Farming section taking 8% of items published.

Keeping this in mind, one now examines readership data.

NewsBrands Ireland provided the author of this paper with data from the 'Joint National Readership Survey 2014/2015' collected by *Millward Brown* in a nationwide survey of 7,000 adults (see Appendix 7, Table 15). Among the data collected, it demonstrates how many people read, among others, the three newspapers focused on in this study, whether they are urban or rural dwelling, and which social class they are in.

We find that 75% of the Time's readers are urban, with 58% of them in Greater Dublin, 79% of them in the AB or C1 upper social classes, and a mere 1% self-identifying as farmers. This is in marked contrast to the Examiner, which has a reasonable balance between their 54% urban and 46% rural readership, with a mere 8% in the Greater Dublin area and a massive 90% in the more rural Ulster,

Munster and Connacht regions; while the paper has an exact balance of 47% of their readers being AB or C1, and C2 or DE, social classes, with 6% of their readership identifying as farmers. The Independent then, on some of the data is quite similar to the Examiner, but quite different to the Times: it has a 55% urban and a 45% rural readership; a 38% Greater Dublin and a 40% Ulster, Munster, Connacht (rural regions) readership; while it has a 56% AB or C1, and a 33% C2 or DE social class, and of the three papers, has the highest percentage of its readers being farmers at 11%.

The more rural readership and farming-community readership of the Independent and Examiner is additionally spelled out, in that both papers have a Farming section supplement, where the Times does not.

The Irish government's independently commissioned research report on the likely economic impact of TTIP by Copenhagen Economics (2015), identified aspects of Irish farming that would be negatively impacted by TTIP, particularly the beef sector.

Additionally, there is evidence to demonstrate that support for free trade agreements is higher among socio-economically better-off, and more well-educated people (*cf.* Jones, 2017; Mansfield & Mutz, 2009: 452).

With all this in mind, what is suggested here, is that if one views the three papers as being part of a contemporary Habermasian *transformed* public sphere where the *business* imperative of the newspaper *industry* predominates, then one can attempt to explain the Times' editorial bias by way of its writing *for* its more urban, richer, well-educated readership; one can attempt to explain the Independent's efforts at balance (being the best of the three) as its writing *for* its cross-class (not as well-off as the Times), and more balanced both urban and rural readership; and can attempt to explain the Examiner's 44% Anti-TTIP coverage by its writing *for* its financially less well-off, and overwhelmingly rural readership. These newspapers are businesses who produce content *tailored editorially* for their customers' sectoral interests and bias.

One focuses now in the next section, on the high degree of similarity found among the papers' choices of who did and did not define the story. In contrast to the plurality of editorial approach, the uniformity of news media's dominant

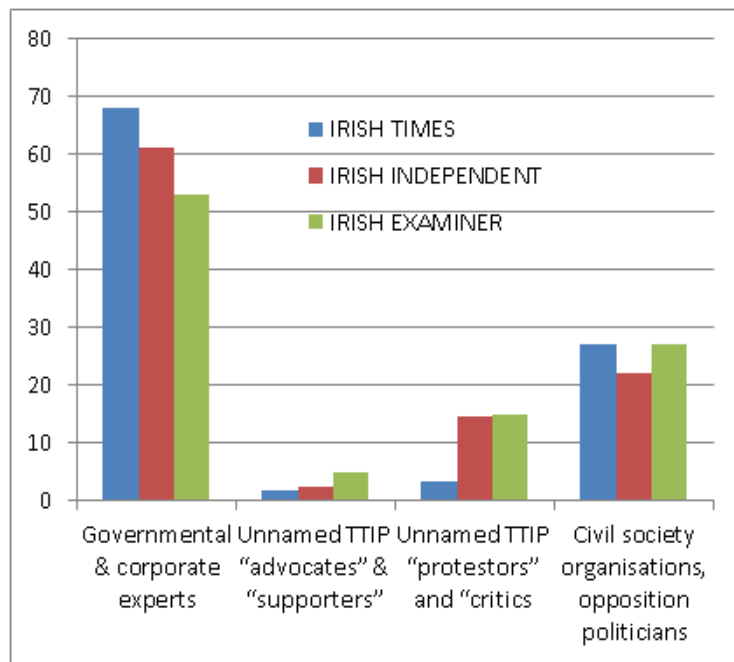
neoliberal discourse found elsewhere, is replicated here. *(See Appendix 4, Tables 7, 8 and 9 for detailed breakdown by paper and expert type on TTIP.)*

Of all the experts quoted/paraphrased who took a Pro-TTIP stance in the articles, the Times used them for 59% of the 164 instances of experts used, the Independent as 54% of their 127 experts, and Examiner as 56% of all their 159 experts used. This is in contrast to the usage of Anti-TTIP experts:: Times 26%, Independent 34% and Examiner 36%.

All papers used unnamed ‘advocates’ and ‘critics’ to explain TTIP: 5% of those used to explain it by the Times fell into this category with twice as many of them being Anti-TTIP as being Pro-TTIP; while it was a higher 17% for the Independent, and higher again at 20% for the Examiner, with both of the latter papers having six times more Anti-TTIP to Pro-TTIP ‘experts’ falling into this category of those with no name.

For example, in the Times we see ‘advocates of a transatlantic trade deal’ (Irish Times , 2013), and, ‘thousands of protestors assembled’ (Lynch, 2016) with no names of people or organisations attributed to the information which follows. While similarity in the Independent one sees unnamed ‘supporters’ (Irish Independent, 2016a), and ‘Anti-TTIP demonstrators’ (Irish Independent, 2016b); and in the same vein in the Examiner one has ‘proponents’ (Irish Examiner, 2014) and ‘protesters ... [and] naysayers’ (Irish Examiner, 2015) used as unnamed ‘experts’ to explain and define the meaning and implications of TTIP.

While in categorising each article’s editorial bias, the unnamed status of ‘advocates’ and ‘critics’ was ignored while the space given to those arguments was focused on for categorisation purposes; here, where one is examining who the ‘experts’ were, one must suggest that readers cannot be expected to give the same weight of serious consideration to the views of those who are unnamed, in comparison to those who are named. With this in mind, what this research seeks to achieve now, is to, (a) strip out the numbers of unnamed ‘experts’ and (b) to combine the numbers of governmental and corporate spokespersons (from all sides of the debate) in order to establish what level of privileged status to define TTIP was given to these people in comparison to all others.



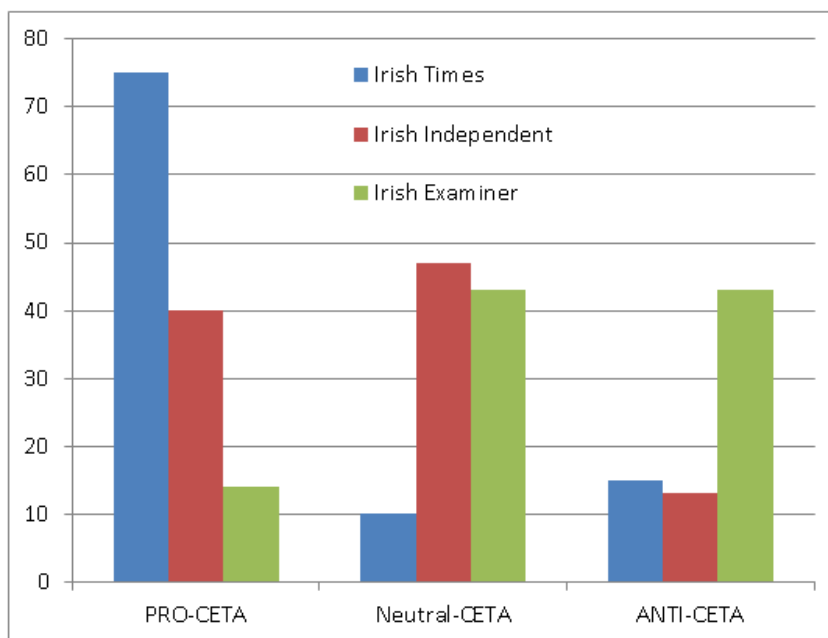
BAR-CHART 4: TTIP articles: separating governmental & corporate voice, from, civil society, unnamed 'advocates' & 'protesters' voice.

Summarising this data (presented in Appendix 6, Table 13), one sees that all three papers' gave governmental and corporate experts the majority status as named definers of the story: 68% (Times), 61% (Independent) and 53% (Examiner). So that while at 23%, the Independent had more than double the percentage of Anti-TTIP articles to the Times, and the Examiner had an even higher 44% of its articles being Anti-TTIP, by those two papers using unnamed persons to summarise the Anti-TTIP position, all three were very similar in the percentages of status that they gave to named others which includes all academics, trade unions, civil society groups, opposition politicians, etc, being: Times 27% , Independent 22% and Examiner 27%.

When one correlates the actual numbers rather than percentages, this means that for every *one* named civil society organisation and NGO spokesperson, trade unionist, farmers' representative, opposition politician, left-leaning think tank and sceptical academic who was quoted and paraphrased in TTIP articles there were 2.5 in the Times, 2.8 in the Independent, and 2 in the Examiner named experts representing governments and corporations.

CETA: plurality of editorial bias

Where the three newspapers had between 48 and 59 articles on TTIP over the four and a half years from the beginning of negotiations up to mid-2017, they only had between seven and 20 articles on CETA over the eight and a half years from the beginning of negotiations up to mid-2017. These large differences in volumes of coverage between TTIP and CETA, coupled with the quite small sample of CETA articles, especially for the Examiner, makes comparisons difficult, and any conclusions drawn less robust than one can achieve with a larger sample. Having said that, the miniscule CETA coverage could be interpreted as being a manifestation of the papers' dominant neoliberal discourse. In other words, despite the dire warnings from legal scholars and practitioners, millions of EU citizens, hundreds of CSOs and a raft of concerned academics, Irish broadsheets appear to have mostly ignored this story. (See Times detailed CETA sectional and editorial coverage categorised in Table 2, Independent in Table 4, and Examiner in 6).

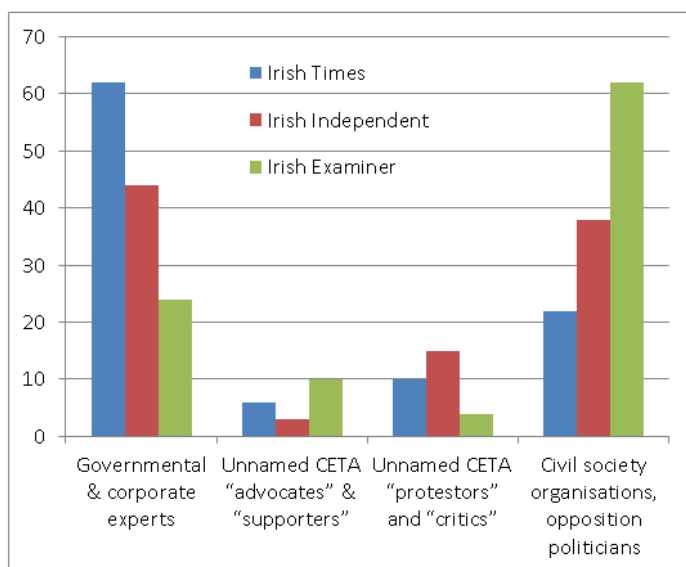


BAR-CHART 2: CETA: Representation of each newspaper's 'Editorial Balance' expressed as a percentage of their total CETA articles from June 1st 2009 to July 1st 2017.

The Times had an extreme 75% of their 20 articles editorially Pro-CETA, with the remainder spread between Anti- and Neutral. This corresponded to them using governmental and corporate experts for 62% of their experts, and unnamed at 16%. (See Appendix 5, Tables 10, 11 & 12, for detailed breakdown by paper and expert type on CETA.)

At the same percentage but in the opposite direction, the Examiner's usage of civil society, etc, experts accounted for 62% of their experts; and this translated into its coverage being 43% Anti- and 43% Neutral. The unnamed accounted for 18% of their 'experts'.

The Independent's usage of experts was the only one of the six cases studied which had any semblance of balance in usage of experts – being government/corporate in 44% of instances, and CSO, etc, 38% of the time. This translated into a 40% Pro-CETA and a 47% CETA-Neutral bias in its coverage; with 18% of 'experts' unnamed.



BAR-CHART 4: CETA articles: separating governmental & corporate voice, from, civil society, unnamed 'advocates' & 'protesters' voice. For a detailed breakdown, see Appendix 6, Table 14.

As with the TTIP coverage, one is suggesting, that the imperfect, yet better balance seen here in the Independent in comparison to the Times, reflects the fact that it's the farming and rural community who stand to lose most from CETA's implementation with the increased importation of Canadian factory-farmed meat products. 40% of the Independent's coverage was in their Farming

section. Similarly with the Examiner here, as with TTIP above, it's overwhelmingly rural readership and its Farming section (3 out of 7 articles), coupled with its lower average socioeconomic readership, explains its bias. One suggests that, for the Times, as above, its higher socio-economic average, and more urban, readership, explains its bias.

When one removes the unnamed 'experts', the Times' CETA coverage fell into line with all TTIP coverage, having a ratio of 2.8:1 in favour of governmental and corporate experts. However, in the Independent's coverage (only 15 articles) it was a much more balanced 1.2:1 in favour of governmental voice. While the Examiner swung in the other direction (in its seven articles) with a 2.6:1 ratio of experts favouring the CSO and oppositional politician experts.

Conclusion

Phelan's claim that, 'one needs to avoid a reductive analysis of the media, which glosses over the possibility of some plurality of perspectives within mainstream media' (2014: 73) is somewhat validated in the demonstration here of a variety of editorial bias in this content analysis.

The literature to date on Irish newspapers demonstrates a pro-neoliberal editorial stance and so one may have expected to find a Pro- TTIP/CETA uniformity in editorial bias. Instead, at one extreme one found the Times with its 54% Pro- (and 36% Neutral) TTIP and 75% Pro-CETA bias; while at the other extreme, one found the Examiner with its 44% Anti- (and 26% Neutral) TTIP and 43% Anti-CETA bias. Differently again, the Independent achieved the most balanced coverage with its 44% Pro- (and 33% Neutral) TTIP bias, and 40% Pro and 47% Neutral CETA bias. This paper suggests that the variety of editorial difference can be best explained by identifying each paper's differentiated rural/urban and class readership, and that as such, each paper, it is suggested, is aware of its readers' sectoral interests and bias and constructs its editorial stance accordingly. One therefore understands these newspapers' behaviours in the context of Habermas's transformed public sphere where the 'demands of business efficiency' drives the editorial approach of newspapers.

It is tentatively suggested here also, that the absence of a uniformly dominant pro-neoliberal editorial approach to TTIP/CETA, coupled with the fact that two of the three newspapers gave a majority, and in some cases, the overwhelming

majority, of their coverage to a combination of a Neutral- and Anti- editorial bias, is possibly evidence for the partial deconstructing of the erstwhile previously dominant ideology of neoliberalism found in Irish media. It may reflect a wider breakdown of support, perhaps especially among less well-off and more rural / farming sectors of society, for neoliberal views among the papers' readers, and indeed voters, who the papers need the support of in order to financially survive.

Finally, despite editorial variance, one cannot overlook the uniform privileging of governmental and corporate experts' voice above that of the combined voice of CSOs, trade unions, academics, and the occasional opposition politician when framing the TTIP/CETA story. In five of the six cases studied this occurred: for the Times it was 2.5:1 for TTIP and 2.8:1 for CETA; for the Independent it was 2.8:1 for TTIP, (and just) 1.2:1 for CETA; and for the Examiner on TTIP it was 2:1. In these five instances also, the papers were much more likely to use unnamed 'critics' and 'protestors' to set out the Anti- argument, than they were to use unnamed 'advocates' and 'supporters' to set out the Pro- frame. (In the much smaller sample of seven Examiner articles privilege was reversed with CSOs etc getting 2.6 to every one government/corporate expert.) Again, looking at the five instances, understanding these newspapers' behaviours is facilitated through the construct of Habermas' transformed public sphere where newspapers are, 'the gate through which privileged private interests' dominate the public sphere. This latter conclusion, somewhat tempers the earlier tentative conclusion, that there was evidence of a partial deconstructing of the dominance of the neoliberal ideology in Irish newspapers' editorial position.

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APPENDIX 1: THE IRISH TIMES EDITORIAL BALANCE

Irish Times Newspaper Section	Pro-TTIP	Neutral	Anti-TTIP	Number of articles in section (%total coverage)
Finance	25	12	2	39 (45%)
Letters	5	2	20	27 (32%)
Ireland	3	3	1	7 (8%)
Opinion	2	2	3	7 (8%)
World	2	3	0	5 (6%)
Weekend	0	1	0	1 (1%)
Total articles + letters:86 (% of ed. bal.)	37 (43% of 86)	23 (27% of 86)	26 (30% of 86)	
Minus the 27 letters	-5	-2	-20	
Total articles: 59 (% of ed. bal.)	32 (54% of 59)	21 (36% of 59)	6 (10% of 59)	

TABLE 1: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 86 TTIP Items (59 articles & 27 letters) in the Irish Times.

Irish Times Newspaper Section	Pro-CETA	Neutral	Anti-CETA	Number of articles in section (% of total items in that section)
Finance	10	2	0	12 (42%)
Letters	2	0	7	9 (31%)
World	3	0	0	3 (10%)
Opinion	1	0	2	4 (11%)
Ireland	0	0	1	1 (3%)
Weekend	1	0	0	1 (3%)
Total articles + letters: 29(% of ed. bal.)	17 (58% of 29)	2(7% of 29)	10 (35% of 29)	
Minus the 9 letters	-2	-0	-7	
Total articles: 20 (% of ed. bal.)	15 (75% of 20)	2 (10% of 20)	3 (15% of 20)	

TABLE 2: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 29 CETA Items (20 articles & 9 letters) in the Irish Times.

APPENDIX 2: IRISH INDEPENDENT EDITORIAL BALANCE

Irish Independent Newspaper Section	Pro-TTIP	Neutral	Anti-TTIP	Number of articles in section (% total coverage)
Farming	2	11	6	19 (39%)
News	8	2	2	12 (25%)
Business	8	2	0	10 (20%)
Features	2	1	1	4 (8%)
Opinion	1	0	2	3 (6%)
Letters	1	0	0	1 (2%)
Total articles + letters: 49 (% of ed. bal.)	22 (45% of 49)	16 (33% of 49)	11 (22% of 49)	
Minus the 1 letter	1	0	0	
Total articles: 48 (% of ed. bal.)	21 (44% of 48)	16 (33% of 48)	11 (23% of 48)	

TABLE 3: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 49 TTIP Items (48 articles & 1 letter) in the Irish Independent.

Irish Independent Newspaper Section	Pro-CETA	Neutral	Anti-CETA	Number of articles in section (% total coverage)
News	4	4	0	8 (53%)
Farming	1	3	2	6 (40%)
Business	1	0	0	1 (7)
Total articles: 15 (% of ed. bal.)	6 (40% of 15)	7 (47% of 15)	2 (13% of 15)	

TABLE 4: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 15 CETA Items (15 articles) in the Irish Independent.

APPENDIX 3: IRISH EXAMINER EDITORIAL BALANCE

Irish Examiner Newspaper Section	Pro- TTIP	Neutral-TTIP	Anti-TTIP	Number of articles in section (% total coverage)
Business	10	8	11	29 (57%)
Features/Weekend	3	4	2	9 (17%)
Farming	1	0	3	4 (8%)
Opinion	0	0	4	4 (8%)
World	1	1	1	3 (6%)
Ireland News	0	0	1	1 (2%)
Letters	0	0	1	1 (2%)
Total articles + letters: 51(% of ed. bal.)	15 (29% of 51)	13(26% of 51)	23 (45% of 51)	
Minus the 1 letter	0	0	1	
Totals articles: 50 (% of ed. bal.)	15 (30% of 50)	13(26% of 50)	22 (44% of 50)	

TABLE 5: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 51 TTIP Items (50 articles & 1 letter) in the Irish Examiner.

Irish Examiner Newspaper Section	Pro-CETA	Neutral	Anti- CETA	Number of articles in section (% total coverage)
Farming	0	2	1	3 (38%)
Opinion	0	0	2	2 (25%)
Business	1	1	0	2 (25%)
Letters	0	0	1	1 (12%)
Total articles + letters: 8 (% of ed. bal.)	1 (12% of 8)	3 (38% of 8)	4 (50% of 8)	
Minus the 1 letter	0	0	1	
Total articles: 7 (% of ed. bal.)	1(14% of 7)	3 (43% of 7)	3 (43% of 7)	

TABLE 6: Summary of Editorial Balance in all 8 CETA Items (7 articles & 1 letter) in the Irish Examiner.

APPENDIX 4: TTIP EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES

PRO-TTIP EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLE	<i>EU Official</i>	<i>German & French Govt Officials</i>	<i>US Govt Officials</i>	<i>Irish Govt Officials</i>	<i>Member State Govt.</i>	<i>Corporate Lobby Group</i>	<i>Unnamed advocates</i>	<i>Irish Farming Org.</i>
Irish Times (97 experts 59 articles)	36	7	14	22	3	11	3	1
Irish Independent (69 experts 48 articles)	26	4	9	13	2	11	3	1
Irish Examiner (89 experts 50 articles)	34	5	10	15	3	14	8	0
Three paper total: 255 experts in 157 articles	96	16	33	50	8	36	14	2

TABLE 7: Numbers Of Pro-TTIP Experts Quoted And Paraphrased in All Articles in All Papers.**** Details: Table 7 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories**

EU Official, includes: named and spokespersons for: European Commission, Council of Ministers, President EU Parliament.

German & French Govt. Officials, includes: Chancellor, President, Ministers.

US Govt. Officials, includes: Sec. of Trade, President Obama, former US officials. *Irish Govt.*

Officials, includes: Ministers, Taoiseach, Dept. Rep.'s.

Member State Govt., includes: official spokespersons named and unnamed, Ministers. *Corporate Lobby Group*, includes: industry lobby groups, think tanks, CEOs of US & EU Corporations, ex-WTO officials.

Unnamed advocates, includes: free-trade 'supporters', and unattributed 'advocates'. *Irish*

Farming Org., includes them here when they present with Pro-views

ANTI- TTIP EXPERT QUOTED AND PARA- PHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES	<i>Ger. & French Govt Offi- cials</i>	<i>NGOs, Trade Union</i>	<i>Irish Farm -ing Org.</i>	<i>Unnam ed protest ers and critics</i>	<i>Irish Oppo- sition politi- cians</i>	<i>Member State opposition politicians</i>	<i>Aca- de- mics</i>	<i>Othe-rs</i>
Irish Times (43 experts 59 articles)	7	10	2	6	10	1	3	4
Irish Independent (43 experts 48 articles)	1	9	4	18	8	1	0	2
Irish Examiner (58 experts 50 articles)	0	17	5	23	5	2	1	5
Three paper total: 144 experts in 157 articles	8	36	11	46	23	4	4	11

Table 8: Numbers Of Anti-TTIP Experts Quoted And Paraphrased in All Articles in All Papers.*

*** Details: Table 8 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories**

Ger. & French Govt Officials, includes: German and French government officials, Ministers.

NGOs, Trade Union, includes: non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, Left-leaning think tanks, quality food advocates/chefs'spokespersons.

Irish Farming Org., includes: farming NGOs and lobby groups

Unnamed protesters and critics, includes terms such as: protestors, anti-trade activists, opposition groups, certain politicians, opponents, some farmers, trade unionists.

Irish Opposition politicians, includes:TDs and MEPs

Member State opposition politicians, includes: MPs and MEPs.

Academics, includes just academics.

Others, includes US presidential candidates and opposition US senator, United Nations officials, media pundits, celebrities.

ALL TTIP- CAUTIONS EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES	German & Fren- ch Govt. Offic- ials	Irish Farm-ing Org.'s	Acade-mics & EU Ombudsman includes	Left Lean- ing Think Tanks	Memb er State opposit ion politici ans	Member State govt. officials	Irish govt. officials,
Irish Times (24 experts in 59 articles)	11	3	7	2	1	0	0
Irish Independent 15 experts in	10	3	0	0	0	1	1

48 articles) Irish Examiner (12 experts in 50 articles) Three paper total: 51 experts in 157 articles	2	5	2	1	0	0	2
	23	11	9	3	1	1	3

Table 9: Numbers Of TTIP-Cautious Experts Quoted And Paraphrased in All Articles in All Papers.*

*** Details: Table 9 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories**

German & French Govt. Officials includes: Ministers. *Irish Farming Org.'s* includes: farming NGOs. *Academics & EU Ombudsman also includes*: Legal practitioners. *Left Leaning Think Tanks* also includes US Teamsters union. *Member State opposition politicians* includes: MEPs: and MPs. *Member State govt. officials* includes: ministers. *Irish govt. officials*, includes MEPs and politicians.

Emily O'Reilly, the EU Ombudsman, was quoted and referred to in many articles; she is neither Pro- or Anti-. Her primary concern was that EU officials should adhere to the spirit as well as to the letter of EU law as it related to transparency. French and German ministers and officials who expressed sceptical views of the trade deals, and spoke ill of sections of them, are included in this table as well because while they had cautious views, they also represented a government whose official position was that the talks were progressing, and that the TTIP was good for Europe.

APPENDIX 5: CETA EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES

PRO-CETA EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES	EU Official s	Germa n & French Govt. Official s	Canadia n Govt. Officials	Irish Govt. Official s	Membe r State Govt.'s	Corporat e Lobby Groups	Unname d advocat es	Irish Farmin g Org's
Irish Times (63 experts 20 articles)	20	4	9	10	9	4	5	2
Irish Independen t (28 experts 15 articles)	9	1	4	4	3	4	2	1
Irish Examiner (7 experts in 8 articles)	3	0	0	1	0	1	2	0
Three paper total: 98 experts in 43 articles	32	5	13	15	12	9	9	3

Table 10: Numbers Of Pro-CETA Experts Quoted And Paraphrased in All Articles in All Papers.*

*** Details: Table 10 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories**

Table 10 on Pro-CETA Experts follows the same category descriptions of experts used in Table 7 (on Pro-TTIP Experts) above except: US Govt. Officials, is replaced with, Canadian Govt. Officials, and includes: their trade minister and prime minister.

ANTI- CETA EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES	<i>German & French Govt. Officials</i>	<i>NGOs, trade Union s</i>	<i>Irish Farming Org.'s</i>	<i>Un- named protesters</i>	<i>Irish Opposition politicians</i>	<i>Member State opposition politicians</i>	<i>Academics</i>	<i>Think Tanks, Other, Non- European Commentators</i>
Irish Times (27 experts in 20 articles)	0	4	0	9	6	6	2	0
Irish Independent (27 experts in 15 articles)	0	4	1	9	10	3	0	0
Irish Examiner (13 experts in 8 articles)	0	10	1	1	0	1	0	0
Three paper total: 67 experts in 43 articles	0	18	2	19	16	10	2	0

Table 11: Numbers Anti-Ceta Experts Quoted And Paraphrased In All Articles IN All Papers.*

*Details: Table 11 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories

Table 11 on Anti-CETA Experts follows the same category descriptions of experts used in Table 8 (on Anti-TTIP Experts) above.

ALL CETA- CAUTIONS EXPERTS QUOTED AND PARAPHRASED IN ALL ARTICLES	<i>German & French Govt. Officials</i>	<i>Irish Farming Org.'s</i>	<i>Academics & EU Ombudsman</i>	<i>Left Leaning Think Tanks</i>	<i>Member State opposition politicians</i>	<i>Member State govt. officials</i>	<i>Irish govt. officials,</i>
Irish Times (0 experts in 20 articles)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Independent (4 experts in 15 articles)	0	3	0	0	0	1	0

Irish Examiner (1 experts in 8 articles)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Three paper total: 5 experts in 43 articles	0	3	0	0	0	1	0

Table 12: Numbers CETA-Cautious Experts Quoted, Paraphrased In All Articles In All Papers.*

*Details: Table 12 – Further Descriptions of Expert Categories

Table 12 on CETA-Cautious Experts follows the same category descriptions of experts used in Table 9 (on TTIP-Cautious Experts) above.

APPENDIX 6: SEPARATING GOVERNMENTAL & CORPORATE VOICE, FROM, CIVIL SOCIETY, UNNAMED ‘ADVOCATES’ & ‘PROTESTERS’ VOICE.

IRISH TIMES	PRO-TTIP	TTIP-CAUTIOUS	ANTI-TTIP	TOTAL: number (as % of paper’s experts’ used to explain TTIP)
Governmental & corporate experts	93	11	7	111 (68%)
Unnamed TTIP ‘advocates’ & ‘supporters’	3	0	0	3 (1.7%)
Unnamed TTIP ‘protestors’ and ‘critics	0	0	6	6 (3.3%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians, etc.	1	13	30	44 (27%)
Total Time’s ‘experts’				164
IRISH INDEPENDENT				
Governmental & corporate experts	65	12	1	78 (61%)
Unnamed TTIP ‘advocates’ & ‘supporters’	3	0	0	3 (2.4%)
Unnamed TTIP ‘protestors’ and ‘critics	0	0	18	18 (14.6%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians, etc	1	3	24	28 (22%)

Total Ind. 'experts'				127
IRISH EXAMINER				
Governmental & corporate experts	81	4	0	85 (53%)
Unnamed TTIP 'advocates' & 'supporters'	8	0	0	8 (5%)
Unnamed TTIP 'protestors' and 'critics'	0	0	23	23 (15%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians, etc.	0	8	35	43 (27%)
Total Ex. 'experts'				159

Table 13: TTIP: Total numbers of experts quoted and paraphrased in newspapers' TTIP articles:

IRISH TIMES	PRO-CETA	CETA - CAUTIOUS	ANTI-CETA	TOTAL: number (as % of paper's experts' used to explain CETA)
Governmental & corporate experts	56	0	0	56 (62%)
Unnamed CETA 'advocates' & 'supporters'	5	0	0	5 (6%)
Unnamed CETA 'protestors' and 'critics'	0	0	9	9 (10%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians, etc.	2	0	18	20 (22%)
Total Ex. 'experts'				90
IRISH INDEPENDENT				
Governmental & corporate experts	25	1	0	26 (44%)
Unnamed CETA 'advocates' & 'supporters'	2	0	0	2 (3%)

Unnamed CETA 'protestors' and 'critics'	0	0	9	9 (15%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians	1	3	18	22 (38%)
Total Ind. 'experts'				59
IRISH EXAMINER				
Governmental & corporate experts	5	0	0	5 (24%)
Unnamed CETA 'advocates' & 'supporters'	2	0	0	2 (10%)
Unnamed CETA 'protestors' and 'critics'	0	0	1	1 (4%)
Civil society organisations, opposition politicians	0	1	12	13 (62%)
Total Ex. 'experts'				21

Table 14: CETA: Total numbers of experts quoted and paraphrased in newspapers' CETA articles:

APPENDIX 7: NEWSBRANDS IRELAND DATA ON RURAL, URBAN AND CLASS BACKGROUND OF IRISH BROADSHEET NEWSPAPERS' READERS

'Readership (Average Issue): Daily Newspapers'	Irish Times	Irish Independent	Irish Examiner
Daily numbers of readers of each newspaper	427,000	688,000	236,000
% of whole URBAN pop. who read this paper	15%	18%	6%
% of whole RURAL pop. who read this paper	7.3%	21%	8%
% of this paper's readers who are URBAN	75%	55%	54%
% of this paper's readers who are RURAL	25%	45%	46%
% of this paper's readers who are based in ULSTER,	29%	40%	90%

MUNSTER, CONNACHT			
% of this paper's readers who are based in GREATER DUBLIN	58%	38%	8%
% of this paper's readers who are in the AB or C1 SOCIAL CLASS	79%	56%	47%
% of this paper's readers who are in the C2 or DE SOCIAL CLASS	20%	33%	47%
% of this paper's readers who are in the FARMERS SOCIAL CLASS	1%	11%	6%

Table 15: *Demonstrating the urban / rural divide, and the socio-economic group differences, of Irish broadsheet newspaper readers.*

*SOURCE: Data collected by *Millward Brown*, in a nationwide survey of 7,000 adults (aged 15 and over), for the '*Joint National Readership Survey 2014/2015*'. Data provided to researcher by NewsBrands Ireland for this research paper.