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## GLOBALIZATION AND PLURALISM

### The Function of Public Television in the European Audiovisual Market

**Teresa La Porte, Mercedes Medina and Teresa Sádaba**

**Abstract** / European audiovisual legislation focuses exclusively on a concept of external pluralism. It therefore seems necessary to adopt other policies and develop new measures to guarantee diversity. In order to implement this reform, a new, richer concept of pluralism must be sought that reflects the reality of the market. This would enable us to devise instruments to measure the real presence of pluralism in the media, and perform effective regulation to defend this right at every level. The aim of this study is to examine the scope of this problem in the content of public and private broadcasting in different European countries, and then suggest a redefinition of pluralism and cultural diversity, together with new forms of evaluation that could guarantee that both values are present in sufficient measure.

**Keywords** / audiovisual production / cultural diversity / European audiovisual policy / European television / frames / globalization / image / pluralism / private television / public television / representation

Pluralism and cultural diversity are priorities for public communication. Their presence in the content of the media guarantees citizens' rights as basic as the freedoms of thought, speech and political and social participation. However, the actual process of globalization may pose the threat of homogenizing messages and audiences alike (Chan and McIntyre, 2002; Tomlinson, 1999; UNESCO, 2000).

The states and international political institutions of Europe have come to adopt diverse measures to stop this eventuality. Nevertheless, it has been observed that this legislation does not prove adequate (Miège and Tremblay, 2003; La Porte and Sádaba, 2002; UNESCO, 2001). Some of these regulations have been directed exclusively at avoiding the concentration of media ownership, and are thus confined to protecting a pluralism that is external in character and does not take into account the content (Doyle, 2002: 132). The evolution of the market has demonstrated that the increase in the number of voices does not ensure a range of plural and high quality content (Council of Europe, 2002: 8). As Renaud has commented, 'market forces are not necessarily synonymous with consumer interests' (Renaud, 1993: 154).

On the other hand, content legislation works exclusively on the concept of political pluralism, and is limited to regulating airtime of different figures in the public arena.

It is thus essential to adopt other policies and develop new measures to guarantee content diversity. In order to implement this reform, we must begin by coming to terms with a new concept of pluralism that reflects the reality of the market, and which encompasses all the aspects this value implies. This will allow a suitable instrument to be developed that will permit us to measure the real presence of pluralism in the media, and put in place effective regulation to defend this right at every level.

The aim of this study is, first, to examine the scope of this problem in the content of public and commercial television in different European countries, then to suggest a redefinition of pluralism and cultural diversity, and finally to propose new forms of evaluation that should guarantee the sufficient presence of both values.

In so doing, the study examines the providers of television programmes. First, it considers new criteria that permit the independent producers to be competitive in the markets. Second, it intends to devise a more complete evaluation of pluralism by taking into account not only the visibility of the different political and social actors, but the way they are handled in the media. This perspective most correctly reflects the specific contribution of the media to pluralism, which is not merely confined to guaranteeing the presence of different voices but also adds the different perspectives of those voices.

The comparison between public and commercial television facilitates a global view and provides a basis on which we can ground proposals that efficiently confront the problems posed by the current situation of globalization. The data used for the analysis seem sufficient to give an overview of tendencies in the European audiovisual sector as a whole.

The selected sample is from six European countries: the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. Channels were selected according to their overall 2000 and 2001 audiences. The sample period (chosen randomly) was the week 22–28 September 2003<sup>1</sup> and the content corresponds to prime time, in accordance with the definition that this time slot has in each of the sample countries.

The study considers the two main types of content broadcast on television, namely news and entertainment. Both seem especially appropriate for assessing the potential degree of diversity of ideas and cultures present on each channel. Each will be tackled according to a different focus and methodology.

Pluralism in the news is evaluated through the analysis of quantitative content, using three main indicators: the presence of the different social and political groups, the nature of their intervention and the characteristics of the image transmitted. In the following section, the theoretical framework for our research is described and the European legislation concerning this principle is reviewed.

## Theoretical Framework

### *Literature Review*

The widespread phenomenon of globalization offers new challenges, problems and possibilities for the media (Beck, 1997; Castels, 1998; Robertson, 1992; Sinclair, 2000).

On the one hand, the technological challenge that is presented generates new dimensions of time and space that require adaptation on the part of the media. At the same time, the latest technology has increased the possibilities offered, as well as the citizens' access to information. It seems that from this viewpoint, the possibilities for pluralism in the news are expanding. On the other hand, in order to be competitive, the media need resources offered only by large companies, resulting in concentration and the consequent threat to pluralism, which is the basis of freedom of communication. It is understood that globalization means risks and benefits for pluralism not only in market terms but in media content.

The discipline of media economics analyses the behaviour and structure of media markets. According to Picard, 'media economics is the study of how economic and financial pressures affect a variety of communications activities, systems, organisations and enterprises, including media and telecommunications' (Picard, 2003: 78). Albarran (2002) also includes consumers in his definition. According to Doyle, the discipline of media economics, which 'combines the study of economies with the study of media . . . is concerned with the changing economic forces that direct and constrain the choices of managers, practitioners and other decision-makers across the media' (Doyle, 2002: 2).

Since the 1980s, most studies have focused on the privatization of television companies and market liberalization, and their influence on content in the global context. Some authors understand media economics as a subdiscipline of communication sciences (Knoche 1999; Schenk and Hensel, 1987). Though we are not discussing the methodology and theories of this science, it seems that there is a relationship between media politics and media economics.

Three different approaches to this issue have emerged. First, the critical school, which advocates media protectionism to avoid excessive concentration and to guarantee pluralism, arguing that the communication sector is an industry of great social impact. Media products are also protected because of their cultural nature, and this is understood across international institutions (Burgelman and Pauwels, 1992; Machet, 1998; Shaughnessy, 1990; Wright, 1994). Some viewpoints consider the hegemonic position the media hold from the perspective of critical theory, which takes in some Marxist approaches from sociology, cultural studies and political economy. These authors seem to share certain misgivings towards the market, and so defend state intervention. Of particular relevance are studies by Bagdikian (2000), Compaine and Gomery (2000), Dyson and Humphreys (1990), Garnham (1990), Golding and Murdoch (1997), Mattelart (1979) and Mosco (1996), among others.

Second, the liberal school is committed to the free market of ideas that regulates itself and balances itself out. As opposed to the protectionism of the former approach, the market analysis of the media is based on free market advantages, as far as company management and media consumption are concerned. The market itself brings with it balance and pluralism in the news, and the most liberal authors in this school hold that there should be absolutely no intervention on the part of the state.

For authors in the moderate third school, protectionism is not possible in the global context of communication. Nonetheless, neither is absolute liberalism, unless

the freedom of the agents is founded on the responsibility of achieving the common good. Along these lines are found studies by Albarran (2002), Doyle (2002), Nieto and Iglesias (2000), Picard (2002) and Toussaint (1996). Some authors have studied the market with a more practical objective in mind, that is, with the aim of influencing regulation (Hendriks, 1995; Noam, 1985). With respect to international expansion and the creation of multinational media companies, the research of Gershon (2000) and Hollifield (2001) should be mentioned. Finally, some studies centre on a specific market, for example, Dunnett (1990), or that of one country, for example Collins et al. (1989).

As regards pluralism, in this moderate third trend, new variables are introduced. They explain that our attention should be drawn not only to cultural matters or market factors but also to other elements like the way the media function, the concept the media have of themselves, their editorial line and so on. The focus of this study accordingly moves to media ownership and content producers.

### *Pluralism: Concept and Legislative Actions*

Following the premises of the moderate school, the concept of pluralism should deal with the different levels of the communication industry such as market, production, genre and content. Pluralism can be internal, when a wide range of values, opinions, information and interests find a vehicle of expression within a single organization in the media sector; or external, when several such organizations each express a particular point of view.

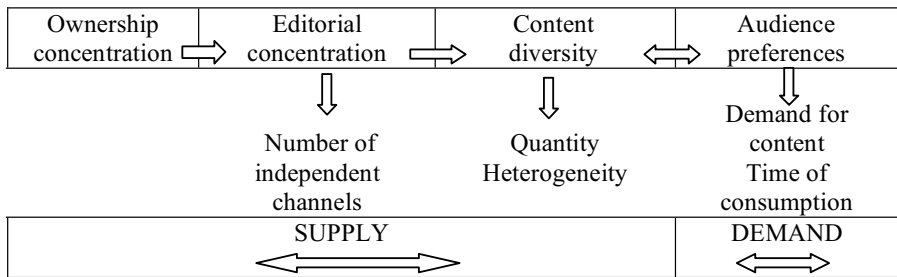
External pluralism is defined as a varied, non-monopolistic range of content. This understanding of pluralism favours the free market and open competition, while opposing monopolies, ownership or market concentration bottlenecks, and the initial barriers that impede the entry of competitors. A multiplicity of channels, operators and producers seems to be the guarantee of pluralism in the European market.

With internal pluralism, different types of social sensitivity should be addressed, to facilitate access to media content. It is a question of accommodating all the voices in the community in which the media operate. Definitions along these lines also exist in the scientific field. For Doyle (2002), the concept of pluralism must recognize the legitimacy of every cultural option, lifestyle, ideology, political party and value conducive to human freedom. Doyle defends pluralism with the following words: 'the need for pluralism is, ultimately, about sustaining representation within a given society for different political viewpoints and forms of cultural expression' (Doyle, 2002: 14). According to her, pluralism is the consequence of different variables, such as technology, public policy, competitive behaviour, propensity to innovate new products that influence the size and wealth of the market, diversity of suppliers, consolidation of resources and diversity of output.

Even if media ownership is concentrated, the market could allow diversity of supply in order to satisfy different audience preferences. Picard (2000) summarizes the possibilities as shown in Figure 1.

According to these approaches, pluralism in the media can be articulated in two ways: external pluralism is related to the concentration of the market, while

**FIGURE 1**  
**Diversity of Supply and Demand**



Source: Picard (2000).

internal pluralism is linked to the diversity of genres, ideas and opinions in the content. Nevertheless, a close relationship would seem to exist between the two. For example, the former affects the latter, insofar as a more concentrated market can limit the pluralism of its content beforehand. However, this hypothesis has been challenged by recent studies that show that concentration affects finance and production more than content (Sánchez-Tabernero and Carvajal, 2002).

Both levels of pluralism are likewise necessary to guarantee representation of all political and cultural groups and access to all audiences. Some countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and the US have created so-called *public access channels*, precisely in order to allow any citizen to produce and broadcast on television.

These two kinds of pluralism (both external and internal) are also usually present in the laws on pluralism in the news, understood as the means of expression of the different manifestations of society. Some countries elevate pluralism to the constitutional level, others make it an internal policy of the media; but in whichever case, pluralism in the news is embodied in either of its two forms (external and internal) even though it may be somewhat limited.

In order to guarantee pluralism, the existence of at least one public television channel is defended in most European countries. The legislation protects events of *general interest* that private channels will not cover because they are not profitable, and the public television channels act in a subsidiary manner. Public television in Europe is based on the concept of universal service and public service, that is to say, that every citizen should have access to quality audiovisual material at a reasonable price. This principle is sound when applied to news, but it does not seem as clear when television mainly offers entertainment.

Due to the origins of European television, pluralism is reflected in some countries as the need for every voice in the political spectrum to be represented in the programming of the public channels. This is the case in Spain, France and Italy, among other countries.

According to the Statute of Spanish Radio and Television, Law 4/1980, 'political, religious, social, cultural and linguistic pluralism will be respected'. Article 10 of the same urges 'definition of the hourly percentage of broadcasting devoted to

significant political and social groups, setting the criteria of distribution among these in compliance with Article 20 of the Constitution'. Nevertheless, only the political sphere has been the object of legislation that indeed develops adequate formulae to guarantee pluralism. Law 5/1985 dated 19 June of the General Electoral Regimen regulates the actions of public media in times of electoral campaigns (mainly, in the distribution of free time) and therefore only has one political effect. The emergence of private channels in 1988 did not entail a regulatory reform, and despite their licences being regulated addressing the criteria of pluralism as far as the range of what they broadcast is concerned, nothing is regulated about their content.

In France, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) has a major role in guaranteeing pluralism in the news. Both private and public broadcasters come under its remit. The first article of Law No. 86–1067 of 30 September 1986 on communication freedom (modified 1 August 2000) says this freedom can only be limited 'by the pluralistic character of the expression of currents of thought'. In Article 13, it states that this mainly happens in the political area, and the CSA gives a monthly report on pluralism in political issues. By Article 55 it is understood that the CSA may define what can be broadcast by political groups, unions, professional organizations, etc. It also guarantees religious broadcasting by the main religions in France. Until 2000, the CSA applied the 'Rule of Three Thirds' to control pluralism. This rule consists of granting representation divided as follows: one-third for the government, one-third for the parliamentary majority and one-third for the opposition. During 2000, the review of guidelines led to new ways of assessing pluralism, since everyone involved agreed that this 'Rule of Three Thirds' was excessively reductionist and rigid. The new principle established provides that editors should respect the balance between the time allotted to the government, the parliamentary majority and the opposition, assuring similar conditions of programming. They also have to monitor the airtime of parties that do not have parliamentary representation. During the electoral period, the council has a significant role and it can be said to be effective, since by its mere presence and coercive power it strictly enforces established times. The same law specifies respect for pluralism as a requirement when setting up television channels.<sup>2</sup>

At present, a new reform law is being applied to the television and radio system in Italy, called the Gradassi Law after the minister spearheading the move. Taking into consideration the fact that commitment to freedom and pluralism is the fundamental principle of the Italian television and radio system, the law of 2000 provides that each political party must have equal opportunity to television access. In news programmes access is allotted in view of political representation, but there is no time hierarchy in the rest of the political content (round table discussions, debates, pre-electoral information). In the case of the news, a distinction is made between news time (when the news reporter talks), word time (when political parties speak directly with their own voice) and air times (a sum of the previous two). For public channels, there exists a parliamentary organization (a bicameral watchdog commission) and for private channels there is the Communications Guarantee Authority.

The British model embodies a type of external pluralism. In the UK, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) basically loans the public television service out to a public company that enjoys two analogue television channels and seven in digital

format. Its broadcasting authorization is granted by a Royal Charter valid for 10 years, which was renewed in 1996. The British White Paper, *The Future of the BBC: Serving the Nation Competing Worldwide* (Department of National Heritage, 1994), enumerates 10 objectives that the government considers the BBC should pursue (Art. 2.6). These include promoting diversity, reflecting national identity, maintaining objectivity in the news and facilitating access to all sectors of society. In an attempt to bring the two levels of pluralism closer, the Communications Act of 2003 distinguishes pluralism, which is identified with the opportunity to choose from different providers, from diversity, which is applied to the different types of programmes. In Ofcom's *Review of Public Service Television Broadcasting* (Ofcom, 2004) it is pointed out that plurality is related to a wide range of producers. Different stations, whose aim is to guarantee pluralism, complete the panorama of the television market. The ITV (Independent Television), or Channel 3, covers regional interests. Channel 4 is directed at minorities, satisfying cultural needs and providing competition for independent producers, and Channel 5, the most recent one to be approved, has the typical features of a commercial channel (it started on 30 March 1997).

The German system also advocates external pluralism. Through the Decision of the Constitutional Court of 1961, the state delegates the responsibility for broadcasting to the federal states. The federal states authorize, organize the financing and establish content rules for the channels. The federation reserves for itself the competencies of telecommunications and their technical regulation, along with the issues that deal with intellectual property. To guarantee territorial and cultural pluralism, among the different channels of the states there is an agreement to subsidize the smaller ones so that they can have their own broadcasting stations (though nowadays, for economic reasons, this is highly questionable). From the internal point of view, in the case of the public channels there exists a Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting that monitors pluralism. This is made up of representatives of political parties, churches, unions, women's organizations, youth organizations, etc. The conditions under which private television operates are shaped by the fact that public television channels provide a basic universal service. At the same time, private television must facilitate pluralism (Levy, 2001: 27–8).

National pluralism legislation contains both of the key conceptual aspects. However, with respect to content, it tends to be limited to controlling the presence or visibility of the main players. Regarding what is actually shown, the role of the producers is barely taken into account.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, legislators tend to focus their efforts on public television, understood as a broadcaster with a special role to play in the defence of pluralism. From the academic point of view, there also seems to be a consensus as to the close relationship between public television and pluralism (Blumler, 1992; Wessberg, 2000). In some sectors it is even said that the defence of pluralism is the exclusive role of public broadcasters because business criteria are incompatible with the defence of pluralism (Burgelman and Pauwels, 1992; Dacyl and Westin, 2001).

Considering the legislation that has been drawn up so far, and following the ideas of the so-called moderate school, the present study suggests that a more rounded concept of pluralism should be devised. As has been mentioned earlier,

this new concept should integrate both external and internal aspects. It should take account of external pluralism in the form of ownership and production, but must also assess internal pluralism by considering the elements that influence the way the media function, rather than confining its scope to the presence or visibility of the major players.

## **A New Concept of Pluralism: A Conceptual and Methodological Proposal**

This new concept of pluralism requires a new methodology in order to arrive at a more accurate evaluation of pluralism in the media.

In a recent report written by the present research team, *Globalization of the Media Industry and Possible Threats to Cultural Diversity*, financed by the European Parliament, the subject of pluralism is approached from an exclusively cultural perspective. Substantial advances have been made in the measurement of cultural diversity, which are applicable to the study of pluralism (La Porte and Sádaba, 2000).

### ***New Approach to Pluralism***

To guarantee the effective presence of pluralism in television, it has to be defended in both its external and internal aspects.

From the external perspective, it is not merely a question of looking at what the channels broadcast, but also at the number of producers who make the programmes. This could be a way of guaranteeing pluralism, especially if these producers are independent from the channel broadcasting them in terms of control and ownership. Another way of ensuring such pluralism is to encourage free enterprise in the public institutions, in such a way that the different voices in society are represented in the media and have access to them. Pluralism in this case could be identified with a range of channels and programmes varied enough to meet all the citizens' needs, in terms of entertainment and news alike.

As for internal pluralism, it could be said that the European Council establishes representation of, or access to, the different social sensitivities. Our research resolves to go further and not simply dwell on the mere visibility of different social players (as the regulation does) but also consider the way the media handle them. This new concept accurately reflects the specific contribution of the media to pluralism, which is not limited to guaranteeing a presence or representation, but which adds a particular focus to that representation.

In accordance with this, it seems necessary to define some indicators quantitatively and qualitatively, which match with the proposed concept and are feasible from the economic point of view as well as that of the market.

### ***Proposal for a Model to Evaluate External Pluralism***

European legislation identifies market concentration with television audience share and ownership. Pluralism is supposed to be guaranteed when producers are

independent from television channels' owners and there is a significant proportion of their programmes on the television channels. Different companies produce television programming, not only those that actually own the media.

But according to Doyle (2002: 151), in order to understand television market concentration it is also necessary to look at other aspects, such as who produces television programmes and the audience share and rating of programmes produced by independent producers, producers owned by television companies or television channels themselves.

Accordingly, the research hypothesis may be stated as follows: in order to guarantee pluralism, it is also necessary to look at the influence of television producers.

At this point, it is useful to define what we mean by power. In this article, power is identified with prime time ratings and vertical integration between producers and television channels or companies. Audience ratings are a measure to prevent the development of dominant opinion-forming power, not only for news, but also for entertainment. It is supposed that if you are the author of the ideas and you get more people with your programmes, you have more opportunities to influence them. That is the reason why some firms buy television channels in order to influence society (Bagdikian, 2000; Gershon, 2000). There is also an economic reason. As Hendy (2000: 36) points out, 'ownership remains a central question to any discussion of diversity because [of] the desire to maximise audiences . . . in order to minimise costs'.

To better understand the television production market and the role of independent producers, it is necessary to consider the legal framework, public channels' presence and the development of the European market in the 1990s (EBU-UER, 2004).

In connection with the regulatory framework, the European Directive 89/552 *Television without Frontiers*, amended by the 97/36/EC Directive, requires that at least 10 percent of airtime or of programming budget available to television channels be reserved for independent productions. It considers that a producer is independent when no more than 50 percent of its ownership belongs to a television company.

Second, public television channels, such as the BBC, TVE, France 2, ARD, Netherlands, RAI, etc. have vast experience and know-how concerning the production of quality programmes for their respective countries. So, to achieve the goal of pluralism involving the independent production sector, it is necessary to look at the behaviour of the public and new private television channels.

Finally, during the 1990s the European production market expanded considerably. There are more independent producers, more television programmes produced by independent producers, and vertical integration has been taking place between some television companies and producers.

The present research on the production sector looks at the producers of television programmes in prime time broadcast during the fourth week of September 2003 and the audience ratings, and addresses the issue as to whether there is vertical integration between those producers with television channels. Prime time is considered the most important time of the day because a greater amount of national production and higher advertising fees are concentrated in those hours.

Moreover, it tends to be the programmes broadcast at that time that forge the identity of the channel. Furthermore, in most European countries, the fourth week of September is the first week of the programming year. In order to draw a valid comparison, we chose the top public television channel and the top private channel from each country.

### *Proposal for a Model for Evaluating Internal Pluralism*

In accordance with the assumed concept of pluralism, the proposed model for the evaluation of its presence in news programmes comprises three indicators: representation of social and political groups, the nature of their representation and the characteristics of the image broadcast.

The representation of social or political groups is assessed by frequency of appearance. Access to media implies presence or visibility in the public sphere and, therefore, media and audience access. However, it does not seem that mere presence is sufficient to evaluate the degree of pluralism. It is also necessary to consider the nature of their intervention, that is, whether the representative speaks with his or her own voice or whether a journalist, or another source, speaks in their place. It is understood that in the latter case there is a decrease in the prominence of the protagonist, with the subsequent deterioration in authority as a political or social player.

Along with the type of intervention, it is also interesting to appraise the positive or negative image that comes from the journalist's handling of the protagonist evaluated. Overexposure of a negative image jeopardizes the political position or cultural group represented, whereas a brief presence treated positively would be much more effective in terms of public impact.

The protagonists of the news, political and social figures who actively take part in the information, are the main analytical element. However, the aspect of the protagonist that is of interest is not his or her personal value but his or her function as a representative of an institution or social group.

In relation to the criteria for choosing the sample, and always in accordance with the concepts of pluralism and cultural diversity that this study assumes, the variables have been applied in accordance with three sectors: the political, the social and the cultural.

In the political sector, the code distinguishes national representatives from international ones and permits us to quantify the appearance of each one of them. There is a greater degree of pluralism when a proportional balance exists between the presence of international and national representatives. Differentiating international institutional presence from that of national institutions permits the measurement of the degree of localism or the national viewing of the information.

The international representatives in turn are divided reflecting the decision centres with the most impact on European foreign policy: the US and the EU. This influence or political relationship is examined through the frequency with which its spokespersons or representatives appear as news sources.

The code of analysis of international representatives intends to differentiate the institutions that play a lead role in political relations by evaluating the presence of

the military, governmental and civilian institutions. In their relations with the US, centred at the moment on the conflict in Iraq, each one of these groups has a different slant on the conflict: a balanced presence of all of them will guarantee pluralism while an imbalance in favour of one of the sectors would put it at risk.

A similar criterion has been applied when it comes to assessing the internal tensions at the heart of the EU, in this case symbolized by governments of member states, by the institutions of the Union and by European citizens themselves. The major impact of some of these sectors would also reveal a biased stand on the dynamics of power in European policy-making.

As for national representatives, what is examined is the variety of appearance of political leaders, classified according to three categories: the ruling party, the opposition or a third political force. What is interesting at this level is not only the quantification of presence, obligatory in greater part in the EU countries, but also the positive, negative or neutral appraisal of their treatment in the news.

Cultural and social minorities can be defined in various ways. This category might include every significant social group that forms part of the different societies studied in this project. According to previous research, access and representation of minorities in the media is always difficult to achieve (Mastro and Greenberg, 2000; Wolfsfeld et al., 2000). In this case, again, we are not only concerned with their presence in the media, but also with their image, because 'these groups are typically ignored by journalists or have distorted news media images, and are covered mostly in association with negative subjects' (Avraham, 2002: 69).

Regarding direct access by cultural and social minorities, it can be affirmed that a homogeneous model exists. Among the actors speaking about social and cultural minorities, journalists themselves figure as the main vehicles of their demands, and although minorities have a space on news programmes, they do not appear as direct sources of the news items of which they are the protagonists. In most cases, journalists are the people who speak about minorities. The Italian public channel is the only case in which the social minority is presented as a news source. As far as cultural questions are concerned, experts also have a voice, though to a very small degree.

Some researchers have recently devoted attention to the issue of what we have called the *nature of intervention*, arguing that it is important to go deeper into questions such as whether or how to enable minorities to speak, to enable them to be heard. The question is, who is speaking, and on whose behalf (Silverstone and Georgiou, 2005)?

In this research, it would therefore be interesting to know the nature of their intervention, if it is in their own voice or not, and yet again, the image conveyed by the news coverage. In this case, the present study uses the context of the news as a point of reference in order to evaluate the positive or negative treatment of the minority.

## Significant Conclusions at the Production Level

After studying how pluralism is achieved according to independent programme production, it is possible to summarize the most significant conclusions as follows.

Table 1 lists the owners of the companies producing prime time programmes broadcast on both the first public channel and the first private one. From the analysis of the companies who own the producers of the prime time programmes, we can see that the public channels are still the most important prime time producers except in the Netherlands. This is especially important in the UK, Germany and Italy.

To sum up, there is an insignificant presence of independent producers at prime time. On the other hand, the owners of the private television channels are, at the same time, the owners of the production companies, as we see in our following conclusions. The first focuses on the commercial channels and the second, on the public ones.

Table 2 lists the owners of some of the private television channels and some of the producers. Hence it shows the vertical integration between broadcasting and

TABLE 1

**Main European Television Production Owners for Prime Time Programmes (2002–3)**

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Germany	Public channel	ARD	Kirch	ARD	ARD	ARD
	Private channel	RTL	RTL	RTL	RTL	RTL
France	Public channel	France 2	–	Réservoir	France 2 EquipageTV 5RFO	France 2
	Private channel	GMT	Julien Courbet	Christopher Seiter	Tel France	Julien Courbet
Spain	Public channel	TVE	–	–	TVE	TVE
	Private channel	–	Videomedia	Vocento	Vocento Videomedia	–
Italy	Public channel	RAI	RAI	RAI	RAI	RAI
		RAI	RAI	RAI	RAI	
	Private channel	Mediaset	Mediaset Mediaset	Mediaset RTI	Mediaset RTI	Mediaset Mediaset
NL	Public channel	BBC	ZDF	–	–	Endemol
	Private channel	Endemol	Endemol	Endemol	Endemol	Endemol
UK	Public channel	BBC	BBC	BBC	BBC	BBC
		Endemol			BBC	
	Private channel	Granada	Granada	Granada	Granada RTL	Granada

Authors' own data.

TABLE 2

**Vertical Integration between Private Channels and Average Daily Audience Share of the Programmes They Produce**

TV channel	Producer	Owner	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
RTL	RTL Ufa Film and TV Production	<b>Bertelsman</b>	21.0%	15.7%	17.0%	21.6%	21.6%
TF1	No integration						
Tele 5	Globomedia Bocaboca Europroducciones Atlas	<b>Vocento</b>	–	–	22.1%	21.8%	–
Canale 5	Mediaset	<b>Berlusconi</b>	40.2%	30.4%	36.8%	35.8%	33.75%
ITV	Granada/Yorkshire	<b>Granada</b>	55.2%	47.2%	53.2%	47.9%	52.1%

Authors' own data.

production. Furthermore, the table shows what could be described as the power of these companies, power related to their cumulative audience share each weekday.

The table shows the association between production companies and the private channels' owners. Almost every day of the week the producer integrated with the channel is present to a significant degree. These producers accumulate a huge proportion of the audiences across all the programmes produced, especially in the cases of Granada in the UK and Mediaset in Italy. The presence of Vocento in Spain and RTL in Germany is also relevant. High percentages of the television viewing audience are concentrated with these media companies. According to the European Directive *Television Without Frontiers*, such producers cannot be considered truly independent. So, in fact, they do not leave a space for independent producers at prime time.

Moreover, there are very few producers who produce for the prime time television channels, and very few of the companies have the financial or organizational structure to become competitive companies either in their own countries or on the international market.

Table 3 lists the producers for the public television channels. Although most of the production comes from the public channels themselves, as in the UK (BBC), Germany (ARD) and Italy (RAI), in some countries, the presence of independent producers is becoming more significant, especially in France, where the public channels develop co-production projects with them, and in Italy where independent producers actually produce the programmes. However, the public channel in Italy (RAI) retains the copyright of the programmes, and is thus able to distribute them for secondary markets.

TABLE 3

**Production Companies Producing Prime Time Programmes on the Public Television Channels (2002–3)**

Channel	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
ARD	ARD	Ndf Gmbh Saxonia Media	ARD	ARD	ARD
France 2	Expandrama, Alia/Rtbf/ France 2	Spielberg Warner Bross	Réservoir Prod	France 2 Equipage TV5/RFO	France 2 Son et Lumière
TVE	TVE	*	*	Cartel/TVE	TVE
RAI	RAI Sacha Film	RAI	RAI	RAI	RAI Cleml Cinemat.
Nederland	BBC/BNN	CBS/ZDF	Paramount	Sky High	Ivo Niehe
BBC	BBC/Endemol	BBC	BBC	BBC	BBC Big Bear Films

\* Indicates sports programming, so not relevant in present study.  
Authors' own data.

## Significant Conclusions at the Content Level

Our analysis of prime time news in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK covers a total of 1529 news items, with a fairly equitable total distribution between private and public channels in every country analysed (see Table 4)

### *Representation of Social or Political Groups*

Patterns concerning figures on airtime are similar throughout European television. The presence of national figures is more than twice that of international ones in all cases (see Table 5). As a consequence, a marked localism of the news can be observed, which is especially pronounced in the case of Italy.

Among the international protagonists, and with reference to the US, there is an inequitable distribution in terms of government, military and civilian visibility (see Table 6). It can be seen that the UK and France that show a great interest in these figures.

TABLE 4

**Distribution of the News in Each Country According to Channel**

	Germany	France	Spain	Italy	Netherlands	UK
Public	50.5%	51.7%	51.1%	58.3%	44.3%	58.2%
Private	49.5%	4.3%	48.9%	41.7%	55.7%	41.8%

Authors' own data.

**TABLE 5**  
**National and International Presence**

		National	International
Germany	Public	68.1%	21.3%
	Private	50.0%	29.3%
France	Public	66.7%	19.7%
	Private	75.1%	16.2%
Spain	Public	76.3%	15.3%
	Private	65.9%	20.9%
Italy	Public	76.9%	15.6%
	Private	81.9%	12.4%
Netherlands	Public	56.8%	30.8%
	Private	60.8%	28.4%
UK	Public	61.8%	20.2%
	Private	67.2%	14.0%

Authors' own data.

Regarding EU figures, it can be said that more airtime is given to governments of member countries than to civilians or EU institutions. The case of France is significant because there the news from other European countries is double that which comes from the US and the presence of European citizens is underscored, unlike in any other country. EU citizens are the protagonists in almost half of all the news items, more strikingly in the public channels. Overall, EU citizens appear as the

**TABLE 6**  
**Prominence of International Figures: The US Case**

		US government	US army	US citizens
Germany	Public	5.0%	–	–
	Private	5.0%	10.0%	25%
France	Public	1.5%	15.4%	7.7%
	Private	0.3%	3.8%	3.0%
Spain	Public	3.2%	5.4%	–
	Private	8.7%	10.9%	–
Italy	Public	22.5%	–	–
	Private	6.4%	–	–
UK	Public	4.7%	38.0%	19.0%
	Private	4.7%	–	–

Authors' own data.

protagonists in the public channels almost twice as many times as on the private channels.

As for the visibility of national figures, it must be noted that in all cases, it is the respective governments that appear the most. The differences lie, in this case, in the behaviour of the public vs the commercial channels. For example in the UK, unlike the other countries, the British government appears more on the private than the public channel. By contrast, in Italy the public channel concedes almost double the airtime given by the private one.

It can also be affirmed that airtime for minorities is very scarce in all cases; we can particularly highlight their total absence as protagonists in Spanish news (Table 7). Although we find national differences, the behaviour of private and public channels in each country is quite similar.

With regard to the representation of political groups, following exclusively the criteria of visibility, it can be said that television respects pluralism among the national political actors. However, it does not maintain a balance between national and international topics and protagonists, and the localism of information is significant: the airtime given to national figures is much greater than that devoted to international ones. The priorities of national foreign policy are stressed over and above the goals of the international community, and national citizens and governments appear more often than international organizations or foreigners.

However, new categories different from *representation* allow us to define the precise causes of this localism or, in other words, to know the origin of this lack of pluralism.

**TABLE 7**

**Presence of Minorities**

		Minorities
Germany	Public	–
	Private	2.2%
	Total GM	2.2%
Spain	Public	–
	Private	–
	Total SP	–
Italy	Public	11.5%
	Private	10.6%
	Total IT	22.1%
UK	Public	4.4%
	Private	1.6%
	Total UK	6.0%

Authors' own data.

## *Nature of Intervention*

The pronounced localism in the news is manifested when we look at representation of direct voices, since here the presence of national testimonies exceeds international ones in every country (save for Germany) (Table 8). Surprisingly, the contrast is more accentuated in the public channels. The case of the Dutch private channels seems to be the only real exception.

If we focus on international figures, the category of the nature of intervention reflects the priorities and interests of external policy. That is to say, for example, that in Spain the US appears with its own voice on more occasions than members of EU institutions (even though the percentages are always insignificant: 3 percent from American sources, 1.6 percent from national governments of the EU and 0.9 percent from European institutions) (Table 9). At the opposite extreme are France and Germany. In Germany, among the international sources that are mentioned, there is a clear distinction between the governments of the countries that comprise the EU compared with the EU institutions, with the US government given greater voice than either. Once again, this tendency is more striking in the case of public channels. France is the country that gives the least airtime to politicians, military or civilians (barely even 1 percent of the sources.)

**TABLE 8**

### **Representation of National and International Direct Voices**

		National	International
Germany	Public	17.0%	16.1%
	Private	10.9%	14.3%
	Total	27.9%	30.4%
France	Public	11.6%	4.0%
	Private	8.6%	3.2%
	Total	20.2%	7.2%
Spain	Public	18.9%	3.7%
	Private	18.1%	9.9%
	Total	37.0%	13.6%
Italy	Public	30.6%	11.6%
	Private	28.6%	6.2%
	Total	59.2%	17.8%
Netherlands	Public	17.3%	11.4%
	Private	16.7%	18.8%
	Total	33.0%	30.2%
UK	Public	12.4%	5.5%
	Private	21.9%	1.6%
	Total	34.3%	7.1%

Authors' own data.

TABLE 9

**Representation of International Direct Voices**

	USA	EU institutions	EU countries
Germany	9.9%	4.4%	8.6%
France	0.5%	0.9%	1.3%
Spain	3.0%	1.6%	0.9%

Authors' own data.

Insofar as national figures are concerned, analysis of the nature of their appearance affords us insights into how pluralism is not respected, thereby complementing the results obtained taking into account visibility alone. From the quantitative point of view, there is a balanced presence of governmental voices and opposition, in the private as well as the public sectors. In the case of Spain, it is the country's own government that has a slightly higher presence than the opposition (9 percent compared to 7.1 percent). In Germany, the government's presence is also superior to that of the opposition, a fact that is corroborated in the public station. The opposition hardly ever figures directly. The French government enjoys preferential treatment with respect to other national protagonists. (Data for these findings not shown.)

Regarding direct access by cultural and social minorities, it can be affirmed that a homogeneous model exists. Among the actors that talk about social and cultural minorities the journalists themselves figure as the main vehicles of their demands, and although minorities have a space on the news programme they do not appear as direct sources of the news items wherein they are the protagonists. The Italian public channel is the sole case in which the social minority is presented as a news source, albeit in only 1.6 percent of cases. As far as cultural questions are concerned, the experts also have a voice, though in a very small proportion.

### *Characteristics of the Broadcast Image*

This category also adds new and interesting information. It confirms that governments enjoy a more positive image on the public channels than they do on the private ones. In the public channels, much of the news is neutral.

The public channels' dependence on governments is evident, with the consequent risk to the pluralism they claim to uphold. Table 10 illustrates the difficulty of measuring pluralism by the presence of protagonists alone, a fact that is especially clear in the case of the Spain, where we can see that even though its presence is limited, the image the government is given is more positive than in other countries.

Social and cultural minorities appear more frequently in relation to subjects such as 'disasters' and 'human interest stories', with the consequence that the image portrayed tends to be negative. In this aspect, our results confirm the tendency other researchers have shown (Entman, 1990; van Dijk, 1996). This feature is more notable in private than public television.

Once more, an analysis of pluralism that admits indicators apart from mere visibility allows us to obtain a result that is more precise about the degree of respect for cultural diversity, or the lack of it.

**TABLE 10**  
**Presentation of the Government's Image**

		Positive	Negative	Neutral
Germany	Public	1.1%	6.4%	9.6%
	Private	1.1%	4.3%	5.4%
France	Public	5.6%	3.0%	3.0%
	Private	2.2%	3.2%	3.2%
Spain	Public	8.4%	3.7%	6.8%
	Private	2.2%	9.3%	5.5%
Italy	Public	6.8%	4.8%	8.8%
	Private	4.8%	6.7%	7.6%
UK	Public	–	–	9.0%
	Private	1.6%	10.9%	9.4%

Author's own data.

## Final Proposals

Our analyses of both content and production demonstrate inadequacies in the system of evaluation and regulation of pluralism and cultural diversity in European television. We propose the adoption of a new concept of pluralism and the implementation of new criteria that guarantee the effective presence of these values in television content.

In relation to production, on the basis of our analysis of who produces programmes for the public and the private channels in these six countries, it is possible to conclude that though the number of producers has increased in most countries, pluralism is curtailed. This is because owners of private television companies also own the production companies that broadcast at prime time, at least in Italy, the UK, Spain and Germany, and also because the public channels still produce most of the prime time programmes, except in France.

Bearing in mind that one of the measures to promote pluralism from the point of view of programme source is to increase the programmes produced by independent producers, we would like to make three proposals.

First, to rethink the definition of independent producer. In fact, European producers need vertical integration to be competitive both in national and international markets. So independence can be related not only to ownership but also to copyright independence and distribution rights. If producers have the financial support of the television companies and can exploit the rights in the secondary markets, they can be more competitive and have a stronger position in the international market.

The co-production projects between producers and public television channels can be also a good way to promote pluralism through independent producers, as French television does. It would help to share know-how and experience in production of programmes of high quality.

On the other hand, maybe it is necessary to consider other ways to promote pluralism. Pluralism is not only a problem of increasing independent production. Maybe if more national channels were launched to broadcast different kinds of programmes addressed to niche audiences, the possibilities of producing programmes with smaller ratings that were still successful would increase for independent producers. In fact, the new digital terrestrial channels will allow this business model. The British Channel 4 is committed to a large part of its programmes coming from the independent production sector and the cultural channel Arte, in Germany and France, is also a good example to follow.

Certainly in smaller countries, the public broadcaster should be aware of a potential loss of its visible position as the new actors of the digital era (such as telecom operators in a powerful combination with independent producers) can supply their content directly to the audience. Hence, the broadcaster's position in the value chain comes under pressure.

With regard to news content, it can also be noted that the regulation of pluralism understood exclusively as the presence of different political actors is not enough. As a consequence, it can be affirmed that although television channels comply with what is established with respect to visibility of political protagonists, they leave much to be desired in terms of the treatment and defence of cultural diversity.

It is worth mentioning, for example, the absence of pluralism in relation to exterior voices (the US and other member states of the EU). An international vision is needed in all of the cases observed.

The reduced presence of minorities speaking with their own voice is also noted, a fact that reveals the deficiency of a concept of pluralism that acknowledges political diversity but not cultural diversity.

On the other hand, it is common that the visibility of the government, though limited in terms of time, is more influential than necessary because of the frequency of interventions with their own voice and the positive image that stems from the treatment it receives.

In any case, in the six countries analysed, very similar behaviours are found in public and private television. This last conclusion exposes the need to review the model and the function that public television has in Europe. It is also another argument demonstrating the insufficiency of the system that guarantees these principles – public television, being the one obliged to comply with the requirements of defending pluralism, exhibits behaviour that is not dissimilar to private television.

It is therefore necessary to consider a concept of pluralism that goes deeper into content, taking into account the presence of protagonists other than political ones, and the way they are handled by the media.

## Notes

1. The most outstanding events during the period were the following: a car bomb exploded in the UN headquarters in Baghdad; more arrests were made in connection with the assassination of a Swedish minister (which took place on 10 September); reinforcements were sent by the US to Iraq while the search for weapons of mass destruction continued; the investigation into the Kelly case in London persisted; Blair announced a possible referendum on the euro in his country;

- Italy suffered the biggest power cut in its history; Alexander King was arrested (suspected murderer of Rocio Wanninkoff and Sonia Caravantes); and regional elections were held in Germany.
2. As a measure to guarantee external pluralism, Article 40 of the law of 30 September 1986, modified recently, prohibits more than 20 percent of a broadcasting channel being owned by non-EU citizens.
  3. The defence of pluralism transcends the national level and manifests itself in the different EU texts referring to audiovisual policies. Among other documents it is worth citing the 1998 High Level Group Report for Audiovisual Policy, *The Digital Age: European Audiovisual Policy*, or the *Conclusions of the Council on the Role of Self-Regulation in View of the Development of New Media Services* (1999/C283/02). The Economic and Social Committee's report on *Pluralism and Concentration in the Media* (2000/C140/07) suggests various proposals to guarantee pluralism in the media: that the audience reached by the media belonging to one company is regulated, that the Commission coordinate the activity of national regulatory bodies, that the referred regulations apply to audiovisual media as well as digital radio transmission services, that the existence of *editorial statutes* is given priority to avoid the excessive influence of owners and stockholders, etc.

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