

Europe as an ‘un-imaginable community’? The failure of the French news-magazine *L’Européen* (March-July 1998)

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The weekly magazine *L’Européen* was launched in March 1998. The aim of its founders was to create a new kind of news coverage, emphasising an approach based on European construction, giving considerable editorial space to the ‘foreign’ countries of the E.U. and thus distancing itself from the traditional agenda of newsmagazines, which are usually very consensual and Franco-centred. Asserting its commitment to European construction, *L’Européen* had made the choice to compare countries, highlighting how Europeans were facing the challenges to and changes in their societies in their different countries. This choice was highly visible in the importance given to thematic ‘features’ comparing the management of a particular social problem (unemployment, environmental protection) in the European area, more than to a vision of the news agenda defined as a carbon copy of the headlines of the daily newspapers. Despite the support of *Le Monde* – which owned 35% of the company’s shares and mobilised its European foreign correspondents and some of its Paris staff to assist the enterprise – the new magazine disappeared as early as July 1998, after just 19 issues and little more than four months of existence.

Forecasting the past is always easy. Many explanations can make sense of this failure. The global sales of French weekly newsmagazines have never really taken off beyond one and half million copies a week. In this very competitive market segment, *L’Européen* was a very risky bet. Its sociological target group overlapped with the readership of existing French newsmagazines. International newspapers (*Financial Times*, *International Herald Tribune*) already offered business and elite readers a framework of information which broke with the Franco-centric tropism of the French press. Facing a difficult challenge, *L’Européen* also suffered from under-staffing. During an interview, one

journalist emphasised the work pressure triggered by the situation of a news desk made up of seven rank-and-file journalists and an equal number of ‘chiefs’. ‘We had so much work... it was really like a sweat-shop. In the months I worked there, I had no rest, we worked hard, hard, hard...’¹ The smallness of the team is underscored by the fact that *L’Européen* had no permanent correspondent in Brussels!² One should add that the launching of the title was probably hasty, in the hope of promoting the new magazine before the summer, thus preventing any in-depth collective reflection on both editorial line and layout.

It is worth using the very short life of *L’Européen* as an analytical prism for questioning the notions of the ‘European’ media, ‘European’ news and European Identity. Philip Schlesinger has highlighted the challenges facing Europeans in the attempt to build a space for debate on the issues emerging from the process of European integration which transcends national borders.³ The first part of this paper will deal with the contents and discourse of *L’Européen*. What did it talk about? How did it try to transform the EU – so often criticised as an opaque bureaucracy – into the stuff of journalism targeting a large readership? Which values and meanings did try to link to Europe? The answers to these questions will, in the second part, help both to develop a new understanding of the final wreck, and to highlight a contradiction, visible in other quarters of the Euro-committed community, between the claim of supporting the European ideal and the remarkably blurred definition of this European-ness.

Writing Europe, Writing for Europe

The magazine’s structure

Defined since the very first issue, the structure of *L’Européen* did not substantially change during the three months of its existence. A short column written by the editor Christine Ockrent focuses on the main themes of the issue and offers a comment on current European events. The organisation of each issue was to be based on eight news sections. ‘Démocraties’ covered the political issues. A short section was dedicated to ‘debates’ on European issues (the election of the President of the Commission, Franco-German relationships). ‘La Une’ (‘The Headlines’) analysed a thematic file (environmental protection, job opportunities for women). ‘Sociétés’ (‘Society’) was to cover daily life in the European area. ‘Business’ dealt with economic news. ‘Chantiers de l’Union’ was designed to inform readers of the hot issues and policies linked to European integration. Finally came ‘Cultures’ and ‘373 million consumers’. The splitting

¹ Interview, October 2001, young rank and file journalist.

² Many reports from Brussels are produced by a stringer who also works for ‘Libération’ and ‘Les dernières nouvelles d’Alsace’.

³ Philip Schlesinger, ‘Changing Spaces of Political Communication: the Case of the European Union’, *Political Communication*, Vol 16, 1999, pp. 263-279.

up, or fractioning of each news section, was another basic ingredient of the layout. For instance 'Society' was always made up of a sports article, a short story reporting a crime, a page dedicated to the specific 'rituals' of a European culture (such as national feasts or food-related quirks). 'Cultures' developed the portrait of a 'Euro Star' actor of European culture, with reports on an exhibition and a portrait of a European city.

Three more features mark out the style and content of the magazine. The first was the presence, in most of the news sections, of columns (*chroniques*) where the members of the news desk, but also partner journalists from *Le Monde* or the foreign press, develop their point of view on the news. One should emphasize secondly the importance of an 'educational' objective, visible in the layout, and the importance of computer graphics. Each week a double page entitled 'Euroscope' digested complex data into clear graphics and illustrations (showing for instance the weight of European companies in the publishing industries of North America). But the use of graphs, tables and illustrations to sum up data was visible in most of the news sections. The importance given to these technical tools and the many small reports from different EU countries highlights a third central feature: the will to compare European countries, and the experiences of their citizens.

A pragmatic European commitment

How can we make sense of the 'line' of *L'Européen*? The commitments of the magazine were firstly visible in the column written by Christine Ockrent, editor-in-chief, but also in those written by other prominent journalists (G Malaurie, S Gherardi, M-A Burnier). Ockrent presented herself as a vigilant tester of the European commitment displayed by French political leaders. Her first editorial column laid the ground. The new magazine '*comes to tell you the metamorphosis of a continent. It speaks to all those who want to make Europe theirs, who share its alarms and its enthusiasms, who taste its cultures and lifestyles, who want to understand its community mechanics in order to use and control them better. Today nothing that concerns us is purely Franco-French*'. [... the magazine] '*escapes from ideologies and sectarianisms*' [...] '*Europe is the epic of the coming years. It cannot develop in the whisper of bureaucracies and the secrets of experts. To give the taste, the pride, the will for Europe, to explore its weaknesses and strengths, its differences and coherences, this is our goal and ambition*'. But the European commitment of the magazine was also highlighted by the very nature of the institutions and groups that it accuses of slowing down the process of European integration.

The suspicion of journalists is directed firstly at politicians, especially French politicians. When facing Europe they vacillate between two positions. The first gives priority to a petty and nationalist vision of problems, illustrated by the 'hopeless' debate, the '*politicking quarrel*' in the French parliament during the vote on the Euro. Such behaviour was also visible in the '*parochial cock-a doodle-do*' of French politicians supporting Trichet over Duisenberg as chair of the European Bank. Another position, attributed to Chirac, is mere cynicism.

The trick here is simply to assign to Europe the responsibility for unpopular policies, which one supports however secretly. This critical look at politicians is not limited to domestic politics. The behaviour of the British presidency during the opening ceremonies at the final countdown of the launching of the Euro manifested nothing but '*pettiness*' (C Ockrent, no 7, May 6, p.5). The long report dedicated to Karel Van Miert shows that he chose to make a career as a member of the European Commission, because he was fed up with the meanness and parochialism of Belgian politics (no 7, May 6, p.16). Conversely, the editorial line cannot be identified with a systematic criticism of politicians. Journalists praise the leaders who are able to think beyond nationalism and show the loftiness of ideas needed by the communitarian project.⁴ Yet the coverage of politics reveals a structural invariant from *L'Européen's* discourse. On the one hand, there is Europe, linked to the values of modernity, openness, transparency and loftiness of ideas. On the other hand, the national universes of politics are often seen as closed, opaque and narrow-minded. '*Europe bothers our politicians. Don't you understand? It prevents them more and more from pursuing business as usual, between them, with their small arrangements and their subtle compromises, their half-truths or their half lies*' (C Ockrent, no 15, 1 July).

The jingoist, racist and radical kinds of nationalism are constantly criticized more vehemently. *L'Européen* expresses a clear commitment against Jean-Marie Le Pen and his party, the *Front National*. Initially, football's World Cup in France also provided the opportunity to express anxieties over nationalism: '*Excited crowds, unleashing patriotism, rehabilitating hymns and flags as many identity signs: football obsesses minds. The values it celebrates are those of struggle. The other is the enemy. Soaked with beer, English-style, violence is the standard-bearer*' (C Ockrent, no13, June 17, p.7).

The European construction must also challenge a '*political mapping ...which dates back to the seventies*', very strong among the French '68-generation. Basically, the assertion refers to the lack of openness, the conformism of many among the baby-boom generations. Many of the *soixante-huitards* have rallied behind the 'system' and have accessed positions of power and responsibility. They are unfortunately trapped '*in a very "sixties" vision of the world, where the only interesting jobs could only be full-time ones, where the nation-state, tutor and providence were the supreme reference-points, and enterprise was exclusively identified with some huge industrial groups*' (G Malaurie, no 1, 25 March, p.18). Old radicals symbolise another backward-looking stance, inherited from Marxism, out of touch with reality. Impaired by the '*Don Quixote syndrome*', such intellectuals may behave with '*generosity*' but are '*inefficient*'. They support illegal immigrants, but completely ignore the strains of the unemployed or young company-founders (G Malaurie, no 4, 15 April). They are hooked on the old creeds of those whose leg can't be pulled, over whose eyes the wool cannot be drawn, they confuse globalisation and

⁴ The quality of the debate on the Euro at the German Bundestag is praised.

Americanisation. They are unable to understand that globalisation allows social progress and European success, like the appearance of a German trade unionist in the executive board of Chrysler after the merger with Daimler shows us (S Gherardi, no 11, June 3). In brief, radicals or old yuppies, too many people from the '68-generation are living in an out-of-date vision of their society, are blind to the experiments of their European neighbours.

Europe in progress also faces the forces of the past, represented by the huge number of lobbyists and pressure groups accustomed to securing income and privilege, long established in routines or arrangements negotiated in the shadow of ministerial lobbies, contesting any change. Such is the case of French hunters, touchy on the subject of local hunting traditions, blind to the imperatives of a scientific management of wildlife, unable to understand that the reference zone for migratory birds cannot be limited to their small region, not even their country (no 15, July 1).

The identification and description of the forces and institutions slowing down the process of Europeanisation reveal a structured set of interpretative schemes. The following table sums up these schemes and makes visible a binary system of classification.

European Values

Resistance to Europe

Supranational	Local, Nationalist
Openness	Closed-doors
Mobile, Flexible	Blocked , over-occupied by status
Transparent	Opaque
Pragmatism	Ideologies
Modernism	Archaism
Dynamism of civil society	State control
Competitive	Corporatist

These pairings of oppositions work like a matrix, a tool for the interpretation of social realities used in all news sections. The deciphering of French politics is based on this binary structure. French parties hang on to pointless ideologies, sterile power games, and parochial oppositions. Europe appears as the only opportunity to bring back something which looks like a mobilising utopia to those disenchanted with politics, without carrying the threat of ideology. Linked to the values of the 'open' and the 'modern', only Europe can break the ice of the cleavages inherited from the past: *'...the real fracture, which today concerns all the political families, is called Europe. The arrival of the Euro will very quickly confront them with their contradictions* (C Ockrent, no 3, April 8). The long study published on the situation of the French public company 'Air France' (no 13, June 17) compared to its competitors Lufthansa and British Airways is based on the same scheme. British Airways has become a leader among European airlines companies by fighting the trade unions, by

'modernising' and being freed from state control, by using *'the flexibility of the job market'* and developing foreign partnerships. Privatisation has freed the British company from its image as a *'state-controlled mammoth'*, a *'moribund, de-motivated (company), with over-abundant staff'*. Even the disappearance of the Union Jack on the tail section of the planes, replaced by *'colours of the world: aboriginal, Polish and other paintings'*, expresses this commitment to the values of openness. Conversely, the problems of Air France are linked to its public status, to the excessive influence of trade unions, its lack of foreign partners, its absence of 'flexibility'.

An area of comparisons

One of the typical features of *L'Européen* was to promote what could be labelled as comparatist journalism. Most of the magazine's contents target a double goal: to highlight the diversity and richness of Europe, and to use this diversity as a space for comparisons, making sense of the different ways in which European people think and act when facing issues and challenges which go beyond national borders.

The very nature of many news sections, the layout for example, mirrored these choices. The intensive use of computer graphic design allowed production editors to transform statistical data into attractive illustrated graphics and figures. They can compare the consumption of alcohol or tobacco (no 14, no 5) between citizens of EU states, or the number of each country's citizens viewing the matches of their national team during the football World Cup (no 15). This attention to differences was also visible in a small new section called 'Covers', offering each week the front page of four European weeklies and a brief summary of their main subjects. Other news sections such as those dedicated each week to an art exhibition abroad, or to a major European city, also contributed to this *panoptikon* of European differences, as does, for instance, a report explaining who are the figures are on the banknotes in EU countries (no 6, pp 54-57).

The central thematic reports which structured each issue were one of the basic tools of this comparative logic. The 'file' opens with an article offering an overview of the theme, which is then illustrated by a collection of small papers based on reports made in different European countries. The third issue of the magazine dedicated its cover to the problem of professions facing difficulties in recruiting new workers, with case studies on the Netherlands, Ireland and even Silicon Valley. The file on the 'return of traditions' in European schools (no 5) combined reports on Sweden, Greece, Italy and the U.K. Beyond the production of information on European diversity, the goal was also quite clearly to select the experiences considered as the most likely to challenge the routines of the past. The magazine's ombudsman, Burnier, wrote to the readers: *'Here is our request: tell us what you find remarkable in France and among our neighbours, what we should imitate or ban, how to unify Europe through what it has best, in laws, reforms, freedoms, companies, the struggle for employment, leisure or happiness...'* (no 3, April 8 p.27).

The reading of a complete collection of *L'Européen* suggests real effort and achievement in inventing a style of journalism breaking the national tropism of news-reporting, creating a layout and magazine structure able to boost a comparative view of Europe. This reading also triggers questions about these techniques. The first comes from the challenge of valuing national peculiarities and experiences without subscribing to national stereotypes. The risk was strong enough to push the magazine into dedicating a whole issue to '*a European tour of prejudices*' (no 16, July 8). Clichés are, however, highly visible in some 'rituels' news sections or in the reports on European cities. Dublin pubs immediately evoke images of James Joyce. Amsterdam suggests whores in shop windows and cannabis cafés. Several letters to the editor from foreign readers criticized this overloading with prejudices and clichés (nos 7, 8, 16). Clichés need also to be analysed as a cheap and ambiguous way of valuing European differences. If one considers both the simplicity of this style of writing for journalists and its appropriateness to the common sense of readers, it is much easier to signify Englishness through the ritual of tea or the Francophobe outburst of the tabloïds than by an investigation, costly in time and staff of the functioning of the National Health Service. Another question comes from the comparatist approach itself. How to make serious comparisons in the short formats of journalists' reports, their lack of time for investigation, but also with the rise of a 'sedentary journalism',⁵ trapped inside the newsroom. This style of journalism dominated at *L'Européen*: '*We had no money to do fieldwork. Personally, the biggest reproach that I have to express is probably that we were unable to behave like reporters. To launch something called 'L'Européen', which aimed to give a voice to others...and then you speak to them by fax and phone. As far as I remember, except in a few cases, we were never on location. I would even say, when it was possible to meet people in Paris, we didn't even have time as there were so few of us to write so many stories*'⁶.

A Perilous enterprise.

The efforts of the journalists from to invent a supra-national style of news coverage, open both to the diversity and shared values of Europe, had to face two major difficulties.

The first one can be labelled as ideological, if one does not give a derogatory sense to this word. European-ness, which is at the core of the magazine's commitment, appears a rather soft notion. Its paradox is to find a way of defining and celebrating an "us" without suggesting the existence of a "them", foreign to the EU. This very uncertainty suggests an important question: does the notion of Europe refer to a set of values, a pattern of society whose specificity is rooted in history, or rather in a physical and political space? Or should

⁵ Concerning *Euronews* see Olivier Baisnée et Dominique Marchetti, 'L'information à la chaîne en continu', *Réseaux*, n° 114, 2002.

⁶ Interview.

European-ness be taken to refer to the values and vision of the world of specific groups of European citizens ?

This leads us to a second and related problem that may be termed 'editorial'. The explicit and implicit targeting of the readership works as a journalistic double bind. If the contents of the magazine fit at least partially with its editorial line, "*L'Européen*" is attempting to invent a magazine that constantly runs the risk of being out of step with its potential readership.

Elusive European-ness?

Nico Wilterdink had highlighted some of the ambiguities of notions of European identity⁷. Questioning normative presuppositions, visible even in academic research, he posed some pertinent questions. What is the meaning of the growing support given by EU citizens in Eurobarometer opinion polls to the idea of their having a "European identity", when the same polling agency also reveals the primacy of national identity, and indeed sometimes shows that those who claim a European identity do not believe this would be much altered if their country withdrew from the E.U? Wilterdink also questions the invention of a "European history" which, as he humorously puts it, habitually wears the "*Sunday clothes*" of moments of cultural convergence, or deploys integrative symbols such as Emperor Charlemagne or the founding fathers of the Treaty of Rome? Is it not such a narrative condemned to building a retrospective coherence ? And how, asks Wilterdink, is it possible to crystallize an imagined community when even those who proclaim its coming struggle to define its spatial limits and its specific values? Of course, the journalists would not claim to have been developing a theory of European-ness. Nonetheless, in creating *L'Européen*, they faced all the contradictions identified by Wilterdink.

The vision of a 'History of Europe', a teleological narrative leading to an inescapable destiny of unity, which Wilterdink describes as one of the basic principles of the Euro-ideologues, has never been a central element of the discourse of *L'Européen*. The existence of a sub-section entitled "mémoires" suggests recognition of the importance of history. But these "memory" pages never seek to disguise the horrors of past conflicts between European nations, nor their contemporary effects. Writing on the commemoration of Bismark, the symbol of German unification, a German academic notes how "*in Europe, it is no longer possible to rejoice in national unity*" (no 18, July 22, p 67). The last issue dedicated to "European Histories" is the one most directly based on an historical approach. It emphasizes the existence of ancient networks (Cathedral builders, Philosophers of the Enlightenment) going beyond national borders, the existence of visionaries of unity such as the Emperors Charlemagne or Charles-Quint of Spain. Conversely, a significant importance is given to wars and

⁷ 'The European ideal: an examination of European and National Identity', *Archives Européennes de sociologie*, vol 34, 1993, pp. 119-136. See also Cris Shore, '*Building Europe: the cultural politics of European integration*', Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 225-227.

conflicts, to the “European civil wars” of the 19th century or to the Nazi “Europe of horror”. European unity appears more as the result of a proactive process of construction conducted by EU founding fathers and leaders (no 19/21, 29 July, pp 110-114) than as the inevitable result of a centuries-old blueprint going from Pericles to Monnet. But, precisely by being cautious with these enchanted and teleological visions of History, *L'Européen* thereby dispensed with one of the most powerful tools in the construction of imagined communities.⁸

Geography is another challenge. The magazine never offers a spatial definition of Europe. The contents suggest a kind of gradation. The highest degree of European-ness belongs to the fifteen states of the EU. The magazine makes visible efforts to cover each of them in each issue. Conversely, the western European countries outside the EU (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland) receive minimal coverage. This difference does not imply a denial of European-ness. It has a more practical explanation. Many papers and computer graphics are based on data and information produced by EU institutions that, of course, are limited to the member states. The status of Central and Eastern Europe is even more ambiguous. The magazine clearly supports the process of EU expansion. The efforts of applicant countries to train their future “eurocrats” are depicted with sympathy (no 4, April 15th, p 55). Budapest, Prague and Tallin appear in the news section ‘Cities’ as major landmarks of European heritage. But at the same time the evocation of Eastern Europe is strongly linked to the notion of threat. The after-effects of the Bosnian war and the Kosovo crisis provide the first theme for coverage of Eastern Europe (eight articles). Other dangers (the mafia, smuggling, dangerous nuclear power plants) are reported in several articles. If reports suggest that European integration can offer the solution to these problems, their effect is also to give prominence to the theme of “risk”. Eastern Europe appears clearly as a set of spaces requiring missionary action from the EU, as ‘Europeanising’ countries (just as one speaks of “developing” countries). Finally, the European status of Russia and Turkey remains a complete puzzle as they are almost totally absent from the magazine.⁹

By calling its opening news section “Democracies”, “*L'Européen*” reminds the reader that Europe is also a political ideal. The importance given to the events in ex-Yugoslavia is always associated with the description of the EU as a guarantee of peace in Europe. The analysis of the process of European construction highlights the ability of Europe to offer more wealth to its citizens. Democracy, peace, economic growth and protection of the environment thus appear as values and promises of the European project. These basic values certainly offer an attractive alternative identity to nations –especially Eastern ones – whose history has been trapped in a very different logic since 1945. But

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983 and Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales. Europe XVIII^e-XX^e*, Seuil, Paris, 1999.

⁹ Istanbul appears in the news section ‘Cities’. The special issue on “detective novels” has some pages on this literature in Russia.

their ability to suggest a specific European identity may seem simultaneously dubious for the citizens of most of the fifteen member states. Such values have, sometimes for a very long time, been part of the symbolic resources of most EU nations. They also exist in the practical experience of many western European states for whom peace since 1945, the rule of law and (though with increasing differentiation) the welfare state have been institutionalised. In the collective memory of Europeans they are linked to moments of popular mobilization and reform in their own national histories rather than to specifically “European” institutions or policies.

Should we then search for European Identity among the positive values identified by our analysis of the magazine’s content? But even there, we find ambiguity. When we look more closely at specific events in order to make sense of its virtues and meanings, Europe often appears as a shorthand to describe an economic space where the rules of the liberal free market are stronger than corporatism, however reluctant economic actors may be to accept the fact. When the pilots of Air France started a strike during the football World Cup in France, Ockrent wrote: *‘Remember the time when their trade unions – and the Minister of Transport as well – thought that the paralysis of our national airline would spread to the whole of French airspace and prevent the World Cup from starting. They were completely wrong: strike or no strike, air traffic reached peak levels and gaily-coloured supporters invaded Paris. French short-sightedness? The minister and the pilots had forgotten to include Europe in their calculations. Today European airspace has been deregulated with rules of free competition [...] Whatever the result of the conflict, the pilots are beaten. Thanks to Europe, passengers can no longer held to ransom in this way. This had not been understood. The proof of the pudding is in the eating: the French sky is no longer a private hunting ground’* (no 12, June 10, p 7). A previous column had already suggested this relationship between Europe and the free market: *“The more the market gains ground, the more its laws and regulations set other wheels in motion which, albeit surreptitiously, make the Union run more smoothly”*. Many of the factors that our content analysis has linked to the European ideal (internationalisation, modernism, competition, flexibility, openness) actually belong to the lexicon valued by the heralds of globalisation or by neo-liberal discourse¹⁰. Without wishing to debate the matter here, if these keywords do indeed fit with the reality of European policies, I would want to focus on their symbolic cost, on how they “mortgage” the expression of a European identity. By placing the logic of the market at the heart of European-ness, this vision undermines the capacity of a definable European identity to challenge some of the most powerful contemporary grand narratives: Globalisation, Neo-Liberalism, the American Dream. This vision, in fact, makes it almost impossible to develop a specific European identity which could be

¹⁰ See P Bourdieu et L Wacquant, « La nouvelle vulgate planétaire » (p 448 especially) in P Bourdieu, « *Interventions* », Agone, Marseille, 2002.

offered as an alternative 'other' to the countries of the developed world. On this basis, Europe can have competitors (the USA or Japan as business rivals), but it does not confront enemies and propose a counter-model.¹¹

Such ambiguities were perceived among the staff of *L'Européen*. Several journalists express the idea of a specific "social model". In a paper sounding like a manifesto, Malaurie emphasises 'At the end of the twentieth century, the American democratic and ultra-liberal model which has spread to Asia, is not necessarily the 'end of History'. The European social model retains its undoubted and deserved appeal" (no 1, March 25, p 19). However, the vagueness of this European model limits its capacity to become a genuine mark of identity. . Beyond odd references to "popular capitalism", there are very few articles attempting to unravel the meaning of this European social model. The clearest¹² exception comes from Malaurie (no 14, June 24, pp 50-52) who tries to delineate the key features of this social Europe. One of them should be the attempt to combine the near-obligatory job "flexibility" with guarantees concerning "job security, as the key to creativity and initiative". Such security may come from new social rights giving access to education and professional training, allowing the retraining of workers whose careers will no longer be "linear". This social blueprint should also value the participation of the entire workforce, unionised or not, and include negotiated or state regulations protecting workers against the excessive control of employers over the "free use of non-professional time". Rarely described with such precision, the social "European model" also appears more as an objective than as a functioning reality. "It is true that the existing Europe remains too monetary. It is not social enough, let alone political enough" admits the deputy editor Jean Pierre Langellier (n°3, p 10).

Spatial and cultural identities or social identities?

If the quest for a European ideal rooted in the History and cultures of a territory offers a blurred image, another reading of European identity is nevertheless possible. It suggests making sense of European-ness as the expression of the values and lifestyles of specific groups of European citizens.

The reading of "*L'Européen*" suggests that the target of the magazine is a readership among groups with strong economic and/or cultural capital. The news section "Economies" offers, for instance, a weekly page analysing the impact of Europeanisation on a specific profession. The magazine successively studied the situation of solicitors, architects, physicians, auctioneers, chartered accountants, headhunters, dentists and property managers... It was until issue number 13 that something appeared about a more "working class" job, with a

¹¹ This contradiction can make sense of the success of the Huntingtonian discourse on the "Clash of civilisations". Even if theoretically pathetic, it provides enemies.

¹² This paper sums up and quotes the report made for the E.U. authorities by the French lawyer Alain Supiot. It cannot thus be considered as expressing an analysis elaborated by the journalist.

piece on truck drivers. The contents of the “Consumer” section is also significant: for example the goods it promotes (Cuban cigars in no 7, Linen clothes in no 14), the prominence given to a sub-section on how to manage one’s stocks and shares portfolio, the weekly page on foreign travel all suggest a wealthy readership. The magazine’s choice of subject matter and special features also give the impression that Europeanisation is an issue above all for the upper crust of society. The front cover of the second issue uses a comic strip depiction of a couple, with the woman asking ‘*Darling, we are paying too many taxes*’, whilst the man wonders ‘*Should I stay or should I go?*’. The impression is that leaving the country to escape excessive fiscal pressure is a real option for many “Europeans”. Even if the lead article describes “*The risky journey of the fiscal refugee*”, and advises readers that such expatriation strategies often have disappointing results, the mere choice of such a front cover is telling nonetheless¹³. In the fourth issue, the special feature report invites students to “*Move*”, to study in foreign universities, but is forced to admit that only one per cent of French students avail themselves of this option. In another issue a report on France’s taxation of “stock options” criticizes it as penalising success and the willingness to take risks. The “Europeans” valued and targeted by *L’Européen* belong to the world of decision-makers, or at least of those whose living, working and leisure environment extends beyond national frontiers.

Anne-Catherine Wagner’s study of the “elites of internationalisation”¹⁴ shows how the values identified in the first part of this paper are quite close to those structuring what she calls the “*international ethos*”¹⁵ of this elite of golden expatriates. Tomorrow’s values are named here as “*curiosity*, “*openness*” and “*tolerance*”. The vision of a boundless relationship to space finds its structural opposition in the pettiness of the “closed” and “rigid”, in the backwardness of lives conducted within national confines. Cris Shore invites such comparisons when he describes how the socialisation of the EU senior civil servants is designed to produce a “*supranational*” habitus. European socialisation lets them feel like a ‘*vanguard of history*’ (p 179), which transcends the smallness of the national and the corporatism of the local. The EU elite of civil servants are invited to consider themselves as knights bearing a new European identity, whose progress among ordinary EU citizens involves nothing less than a struggle against dark prejudices, a process of enlightenment led by “*a frontier-free ‘chosen people’*”

It may be possible now to develop an interpretation, which itself suggests two questions. The interpretation involves defining the vision of European-ness visible in the magazine as typical of the social elites directly linked to the processes of Europeanisation. These elites are made up of actors close to the

¹³ One of the reports shows that fiscal expatriation into the U.K. is only profitable for French taxpayers earning more 200 000 Euros per year.

¹⁴ *Les nouvelles élites de la mondialisation. Une immigration dorée en France*, PUF, Paris, 1998.

¹⁵ *Ibid* p. 140-142. See also pp. 190-4, p 203s.

Brussels political and administrative machine, and of those who, in their respective social worlds (business, academia, culture), are invested in activities and interactions developing at the supra-national level. Such an interpretation triggers two questions, at least.

The first one would be to understand how such representations are specifically European, how do they differ (or not) from those expressed by the extra-European elites of globalisation? The 'international ethos' identified by Wagner in her fieldwork among the golden elite of foreigners living in Paris seems closely to replicate the European values of *L'Européen*. This "international ethos" is shared by European expatriates, but also by Japanese and American businessmen. The study of any sample of texts produced by the heralds of globalisation would reveal such convergences.

A second question would be to understand how and why journalists develop their reading of European-ness, using the same interpretative toolkit as the elites of globalisation. How can we make sense, without using the *asylum ignorantiae* that too often represents the notion of "organic intellectual", of such closeness in approach? Let's first suggest that, due to their individual history, commitments and social background, some journalists of *L'Européen* do belong, in the journalistic world, to such an elite of the Europeanisation and Globalisation process. The Editor-in-Chief, Christine Ockrent, has the typical profile of a journalist with strong international experience and European commitment. She studied in Cambridge and worked for Channel Four, CBS and NBC. She lived in the States and in Brussels. She is also administrator of "Euronews". One would also identify among the editors of "*L'Européen*" a former foreign correspondent of "Le Monde", trustee of the "European Centre for Journalism" in Maastricht, the former editor of a "newsletter" of information on Europe, but also one of the founders of the "*Courrier International*"¹⁶ who worked at Radio-France International and had responsibilities both in "Reporters sans Frontières" and in the "Club de la presse européenne". One must admit, however, that the recruitment policy does not allow us to depict the whole news desk as belonging to any sort of elite of Europeanisation. A rank and file journalist recalls: *'What Ockrent wanted was a team of young journalists, because the young tend to be more open to Europe. It was more our generation. They were looking for people aged 25, the profile of someone young, open, speaking a foreign language. I think there were eight of us young journalists at the end, between 24 and 29 years old'*. Many among this young team simply wished to take part in an adventure, to invent something new in a French press world where "you look at your navel, you talk about people who resemble you". They hoped to express "an opening of the mind ... I like to know how others live, how differently they behave". Whilst the attitude of this young element should not be equated with that of the more senior journalists, with their sense of belonging to an elite of gurus of modernity, nonetheless the very positioning of the magazine within the Parisian journalistic spectrum must have

¹⁶ A French weekly based on translations of papers from dailies and magazines all over the world.

produced a powerful incentive for coherence. The whole team was involved both in a struggle for (economic) survival and the challenge of inventing a new style of news coverage. They thus came to share the feeling of seeking to go beyond the parochial boundaries of the national, to regard their competitors as trapped in a Franco-centric vision of the news: hence the parallels with the ethos of the elites of Europeanisation.

Another population is, however, strongly visible, both in the reports and in the letters published by the ombudsman: those European citizens who, by expatriation, filiation or conjugal choice are experiencing a plurality of European identities. The problems faced by couples from different nationalities are mentioned in several issues (nos 3,18). The selection of letters to the editor gives significant attention to communications from expatriates or bi-nationals. Two issues have given a high number of column inches to reports concerning the lives and experiences of European citizens living in France (no 17, July 15) or to the case of the Portuguese immigrant community in France (no 8, May 13). The Editor's column in this latter emphasizes how these immigrants, "*bi-cultural for the most part, perpetuating their culture and their differences, foreshadow tomorrow's Europeans*". French people with Portuguese roots, but also Germans living in Alsace and Brits in Perigord, suggest another dimension of European-ness in *status nascendi*. European-ness may also mean the ability to switch culture¹⁷. European citizenship may then be defined both by a native culture and roots and by an ability to embody other cultures from Europe. Ockrent explains the secret of the triumph of European football teams after the Bosman ruling which "*creates an intermixing of talents and differences which, much more than could be achieved by regulations, is building a Europe of hearts*". It promotes '*a very European talent: comparing, mixing and absorbing differences*' (n°16 p 7, n°17 p 5).

But beyond the 'philopastry' of their identities, what is the common denominator between a Frenchman born in a Portuguese family, a native from Nice living in Brussels and a Briton retired in Tuscany? A shared ability to de-centre their identities? A greater empathy when facing other national identities? A stronger conscience of social interdependencies beyond national borders? These elements probably belong to a pluri-national *habitus*. Developing a theory of Europeanisation, Neil Fligstein suggests that "*European identity hinges on extensive interactions with people from other European societies*" (18). The enormous interest of such an approach could be to free the debate on the imagined European community from the shackles of analytical frameworks created from and for "national nationalisms", and to give less importance to the anxious quest for all the elements of the nation: *lieux de mémoire*, shared culture and symbols. As Wilterdink suggests, a nationalist reduction of European

¹⁷ The research of Kevin Robins on the use of satellite broadcast Turkish programs and local TV programs by Turkish immigrants in the U.K. can feed the reflection on such combinations of cultural references ('Au delà de la communauté imaginée', *Réseaux*, n° 107, 2001, pp. 19-39)

¹⁸ 'The process of Europeanization', *Politique Européenne*, n°1, 2000, pp 25-42.

identity adds a twin 'identity deficit' to the famous 'democratic deficit' of the Union.

The alternative vision of European-ness suggested by the portrait of the first-generation Franco-Portuguese triggers, however, as many questions as it solves. What about the European citizens – probably the majority of them- who do not have real experience of mobility in the European space, nor the habit of interacting directly with citizens from other states of the Union? If those Europeans are less Europeanised than others, one must then emphasise the fact that European identity grows thanks to immersion in certain kinds of social relationships and professional universes, more than from an imaginary communion in a shared Pantheon of values. And if European means something specific, it cannot be only shorthand for "citizen of the world". It is not just EU citizens who experiment in identity hybrids. The senior manager of a Canadian company can spend most of his/her time in Brussels or London. An Indian IT specialist employed for five years in Dortmund is embedded in a European society. Do they consider themselves, and are they socially perceived, as Europeans? Do they own the elements – and, if so, which ones ¹⁹ ? – of "European-ness" ?

From one ambiguity to another: Back to the editorial strategy.

The analysis of the aporias of European identity can also highlight the final failure of the magazine. In fact, it is also the identity and positioning of the magazine on the news market, which were highly ambiguous.

The very logic of the editorial project basically produced a powerful discrepancy between the contents of the magazine and the usual French definition of a news magazine. To speak of Europe, the new magazine combined "pruning", comparing and "cooling-down". The strength and techniques of comparative reports should by now be familiar. "Pruning" refers to the exclusion from the contents of several traditional news sections, either because they were purely national (politics, cultural events), or because they proposed coverage beyond the European space (International). The notion of 'cooling down' finally suggests a distance from the 'hard' and 'hot' news based on breaking events. If the magazine paid attention to some hot news (the football World Cup, European Summits), the basis of its contents was made up of a comparative exploration of policies, and thematic files. If certainly not timeless, most of those issues belonged to a slower and longer temporality than

¹⁹ The fallacy of the 'Euro-ideologues' does not come from their search of values shared by Europeans, but more from their "legitimism" which brings them to limit their investigations to the realm of heritage, highbrow culture. Colin Crouch suggests another approach when he tries to search for common features in social morphology data or in systems of regulation of social life. Europe may then find among its common denominators – especially if compared to the States – a greater limitation of social inequalities, more legal and ideological opportunities of mobilization for popular classes, specific organisations of the urban space. ('Esiste una societa europea ?' *Stato e Mercato*, n°53, 1998).

the usual one of the “hard news”, of press-agency dispatches. Most of the contents of the magazine could have been published two weeks sooner or later without any significant change in the relationship to the agenda of ‘hot’ news. Such a choice was logically compatible with the search for a new definition of news, centred on the daily experience of Europeans. It clashed with the habits of readers, which had no choice but to read other magazines to get reports on domestic politics, extra-European foreign affairs. The editorial strategy produced the paradox of news lacking the ‘newness’ usually associated with the contents of the information press. *‘There was a problem with the editorial line. They have never been able to say clearly “we are called L’Européen, we cover European topics, we don’t cover the traditional news, we are not a news magazine”’. They should have made a choice, they should have known if they wanted to deal with hard news or not. A monthly based on hard news, it’s impossible. But a ‘cold’ magazine could have been pretty good’*²⁰

The possible impacts of the “targeting” of the readership also require more attention. *L’Européen* seemed to speak firstly to social groups who were the most directly concerned by and who invested most in the process of Europeanisation: decision-makers, students and professionals working in a supranational space. Such a strategy was in many respects rational. One of its consequences was the challenge to conquer readership slots, which were already exposed to a structured supply of European news by various media and press titles. A 1997 MORI poll of European MPs gives a brief survey of their reading habits. 36% are readers of the ‘*European Voice*’²¹ and the ‘*Financial Times*’. 30% read ‘*The Economist*’. Then come ‘*Der Spiegel*’, ‘*L’Express*’, ‘*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*’ and the ‘*International Herald Tribune*’, each being read by a little more than 15% of the MPs. Such figures are not representative of the reading habits of the whole potential readership of *L’Européen*. They show however that readers interested in European news nevertheless have a significant supply of media. The absence of a true team of permanent correspondents in Brussels appears then as an amazing weakness. Lacking in such support, *L’Européen* was not able to develop strong and original newsgathering among the Brussels administrations. This fact gave an enormous comparative advantage to the English-speaking press positioned in the “European” news niche.

This weakness finally invites us to question the limits of the magazine’s consistency. The real slot occupied by *L’Européen* was more about preaching the gospel of Europe-ness, based on reports comparing how Europeans in different countries face the major challenges of modernity. The discrepancies between what *L’Européen* wished to be or could have been and what it actually was, are also the explanation of most of its contradictions. The first one is the

²⁰ Interview.

²¹ Produced in Brussels by the ‘The Economist’ group and dedicated to political and business news, this magazine has 18 000 readers, belonging mostly to the elites of Business, Finance, Politics and Administration.

discrepancy between news sections suggesting an elitist readership, already well-informed about behind-the-scenes Brussels, and the editorial space given to news that one could coin as “E.U. for beginners”, to reports unable to say anything new to those more *au fait* with Europe. Conversely, one could also detect other discrepancies between the means and the objectives of teaching the European enterprise. This educational project targeted a more mixed readership. Were the “Eurostars”, the lifestyles of Europeans buying Gucci handbags or flying for a weekend in Talin, the best symbols around which to crystallise support for the European idea.? The focus on Europe was also a source of anxiety for many non-elite readers, with their perception of the E.U. as a threat to their identity, employment and social rights. The magazine has not ignored these debates, but its editorial line was probably too clearly targeting Euro-supporters rather than a potential readership which included those questioning or fearing Europe.

One final discrepancy is visible in the nature of the contributors the magazine attracted. French magazines often open their pages to experts and intellectuals. They could thus have used such in-depth analysis and commentary to relieve the pressure on an understaffed news-desk. 85 interviews, columns and articles were provided by external contributors (25 from academics, 23 from politicians and senior civil servants, 10 from artists, 10 from “civil society” actors). But half (38) of these contributions are located in the debate section and a little over a third (30) were linked to the special feature topics. Compared to the other newsmagazines such figures suggest a weak mobilisation of intellectuals. This may reflect the desire to offer a ‘voice’ to those who are “building” Europe. But it also reveals the weakness of the magazine’s links with academic-intellectual networks and it reduced the appeal of the title for the intellectual pole of the readership. For such readers *‘Le Monde Diplomatique’* or *‘Courier International’* offer real worldwide coverage of the news, and prestigious intellectual contributors.

“European” media can be classified into three categories. The first is made up of titles offering the same contents to supranational audiences. This strategy can be based on the use of English (*‘The European’*, *‘European Voice’* and the *‘Financial Times’*, which has, however, a German edition) or on the translation of the same contents into several European languages (a solution used by the late cultural quarterly *“Liber”* produced by Bourdieu). A second category, symbolised by *“Euronews”*²², combines the targeting of an international readership with differences in the contents and comments on the news. A third family encompasses press and media with a purely national market. The balance sheet of these experiences, and often failures, suggests that their success is linked to two conditions. They can succeed if they rely on a ‘Europeanised’ readership, having a direct experience of steady supranational interactions, for professional or private reasons. But the peculiarities of this readership suppose

²² See the studies of ‘Euronews’ and ‘Eurosports’ in Dominique Marchetti (Ed), *Signifier l’Europe*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, Forthcoming 2003.

some sort of news specialisation (business, culture...). The European media can also survive if they can root themselves in social universes for which Europe is already institutionalised as a space of interactions and co-operation, which can be transformed into 'news'. The European soccer competitions are a perfect illustration of such a situation for TV sports channels.

A national magazine dedicated to the spectrum of news about Europe fits with neither of these two categories, and therefore maximises its reception problems. The ambiguities of "*L'Européen*" made these difficulties even worse ²³.

²³I'm indebted to the suggestions and criticisms of Olivier Baisnée and Andy Smith on this paper which was presented at the first conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Canterbury, September 2001.

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