

**Identity in the News of Europe:
looking for traces of identification processes
in British, French, German and Swedish Television News**

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If political communities imagine themselves in collective terms—if they assume national or transnational identities—then in the media age, an obvious site for such imagining is the public space provided by television.

There is evidence that policymakers suppose this. In a directive entitled *Television without Frontiers*, the European Community has stipulated that broadcasters must reserve a majority of transmission time for European works. The aim of the *European Convention on Transfrontier Television*, published by the Council of Europe in 1990, is to ensure that member states do not create national broadcasting restrictions against other member states. The European Parliament also supported the launching of the *Euronews* channel in 1993. Broadcasting in five languages, it is thought to be an attempt to produce a 'European' perspective in the global struggle to dominate the international news agenda,¹ i.e. versions of the political world in the context of which identities are defined. At the same time, national broadcasters have been instructed to recognise their special relationship to a sense of national identity and community. *The Public Service Idea for British Broadcasting*, for example, states that public broadcasting has to recognise the value of the national view; that it "must work within some notion of the political community it is addressing, i.e. its remit must be coterminous with the political realm within which a consensus as to the common good is to be arrived at." This, concludes the document, means the nation state, and until it is internationalised in relationship to the development of international political regimes such as the European Community, "public service broadcasting must remain closely linked to the notion of nationhood and national culture".²

Assuming that the mass media do serve as a site of collective imagining, then it is worth investigating whether national and European identities reflected in television news are inevitably in conflict, or whether they may co-exist. In what follows, it will be argued that expressions of such identities can be discerned in television news texts, and that analyses of such texts can contribute to an understanding of the developing relationship between these identities. It will be suggested, moreover, that the nature of the relationship may vary between television media in different countries. The implications of this for European politics is that media consumers in various European countries may be thinking about Europe in various ways, making a European union of hearts and minds as well as economies more problematic in some polities than others.



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The reasons for suggesting this stem from an analysis of television news produced by public service broadcasters in four European countries—Britain, France, Germany and Sweden—in March 1996. The research reported here has addressed the following broad questions:

- How does the world look through the lens of the four newsrooms? Is it a world in which the reporting country takes up a lot of space, is it a world in which Europe figures largely, or is it a world extending to more distant continents? What sort of actors matter in that world?
- Are there any traces of identification processes in these texts? Is it possible to get a sense of national identity—a sense that 'we' differ from 'them'—from viewing these news reports? Are there reports in which an attempt is made to make sense of what it means to be European? What sort of images of other Europeans are portrayed?
- If expressions of national and European identities can be discerned, do they seem to be in conflict or to co-exist? If so, in what ways and in which media?

In all of the countries which this study concerns, public broadcast systems exist in competition with commercial networks. Three of the countries—Britain, France and Germany—have been chosen because they represent the most dominant members of the European family. Both their stances towards the European project and the nature of their media systems vary in ways significant enough to warrant a comparative analysis. The fourth country in the study—Sweden—offers a fresh perspective, because it is a new EU member state, and because research on Swedish media is relatively unfamiliar in international contexts. For each country, a main news programme broadcast by a public service company at approximately the same time each evening throughout the month of March 1996 has been selected for analysis (more on this below).

The empirical study reported here is part of a wider inquiry into the role of the news media in the cultivation of collective identities in contemporary Europe. The notion being explored is that there is an inherent tension in this process. On the one hand, the communications 'revolution' is supposed to be fostering international integration, and political and economic union is thought to be forging new European affinities. On the other hand, there is much to suggest that the news media continue to reinforce the shared norms, traditions and frameworks of meaning that set national communities apart from their external environments.

The actors in focus are media actors (journalists, editors, news organisations), and the products of their actions (media texts) are the objects of scrutiny. These media texts are examined for traces of identification activity, to see how the stories they tell can cultivate collective identities. 'Cultivation' is used here for want of a better word. We have sought to avoid words like 'creation' or 'formation' because some of the identities being explored can be thought to have existed for a long time. Also, because it is not our intention to demonstrate their existence, we avoid suggesting that this or that identity has in fact been formed. Rather, it is the *activity* that may lead to such fruits—the digging in the garden patch that can be done before seeds are planted or after they have begun to grow, or in around perennials—which is the object of analysis here. Or rather, the evidence of such activity.

The assumption, then, is that the news media do in fact play a role in collective identity processes, that it is a contradictory role, and that different news media probably make different contributions. Before presenting the results of the empirical study, it may be useful to consider what the theoretical literature has to say about the relationship between the mass media and collective identity.

Theoretical perspectives on collective identity and the media

When the architects of the French Revolution—and thus, it could be argued, the modern Europe of nation states—declared that the principle of sovereignty resided essentially in the nation, only a few of those living in what is now France thought of themselves as being French. As Billig puts it, the nation had not yet become a concrete entity, but was still "a project to be attained".³ The question is whether the European Union will turn out to be a similar project, whether future generations will come to think of themselves as "European" first and foremost and only secondarily as Swedes or *Italiänningar* (as a former Swedish prime minister of layered identity, Carl Bildt, once put it), and what role the news media could play in such an evolution.

In a recent book, Billig argues that established nations are reproduced as such by a collection of 'ideological habits'. Because these habits are usually unnamed and unnoticed, he uses the term 'banal nationalism' to refer to them.⁴ Billig's concern is not with the militant nationalism of Serbs or the hysterical flag-waving of nationalist zealots. It is with the ideological bulwark of the established nations (the US is his most common example, but Britain is also often referred to), in which there is a continual reminding of nationhood, which provides a background for "political discourses, for cultural products, and even for the structuring of newspapers". Billig finds national identity in such embodied habits of social life as thinking and using language; he finds it in ways of talking about nationhood.⁵

There is much that is flawed in Billig's *Banal Nationalism*, not least the chapter ostensibly devoted to a press analysis, or 'examination' as he calls it.⁶ Nevertheless, Billig's notion of banality, and the sense of dynamic it contains, can be thought relevant when attempting to make sense of the media's role in identity-making.

Although it may seem something of a contradiction, we would also like to co-opt Anderson's notion that nations are 'imagined communities'. The contradiction, if indeed there is one, exists in the fact that Billig describes as unconscious that which Anderson characterises as a presumably conscious intellectual activity—namely, the act of imagining. Anderson argues that the nation is an "imagined" political community because its members will never encounter most of their fellow-members, yet are confident they exist, their confidence stemming from an image of their communion in the mind of each.⁷ Although primarily concerned with nationalisms predating the communications revolution of recent decades, Anderson acknowledges the importance of the news media to the activity of community-imagining. The consumption of news had already acquired a ritual aspect in Hegel's time which simultaneously echoed

information from other republics, Simic writes of a media war between republican elites. Reversing previous practice, editorials and articles focusing on cultural differences among Yugoslavia's ethnic groups were increasingly featured in the late 1980s, while the historical role of certain nations and their unfavourable position in Yugoslavia were emphasised. "Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic skilfully exploited the media's extensive reports on the suffering of Serbs in Kosovo and their references to Serbian medieval history, particularly the so-called myth of Kosovo, to articulate his national political strategy and marginalize the liberal opposition in Serbia."

The picture Simic paints is one of a media acting as a centripetal, nationalising force. While the republican political elites may have been the architects of the sort of (re)new(ed) identity referred to in the abstract by Therborn, local journalists allowed themselves to be manipulated, and as a consequence helped "to build a consensus among the public that life in Yugoslavia was impossible and that a geopolitical rearrangement of the Balkans was inevitable in order to meet nationalist aspirations and create "ethnically clean" national states".¹⁵

Schlesinger refers to the cultural "signs" at work in the identity process: Smith writes, in a similar vein, of the images and cultural traditions at work. He has identified three components of the shared experiences on which collective identities are based: a sense of continuity between the experiences of succeeding generations; shared memories of specific events and personages; and a sense of common destiny on the part of the collectivity sharing those experiences. These were strikingly activated in the former Yugoslavia, suggesting the aptness of the argument in a national setting. Dayan and Katz have some interesting thoughts about how the media recall the continuity of social identity by purveying such shared experiences as Holocaust Day in Israel, the British Royal Wedding and the bicentennial of the French Revolution.¹⁶ Smith, however, is pessimistic about the enterprise of constructing supranational identities as history and tradition are central to the process and, unlike national cultures, global cultures are essentially "memoryless".¹⁷ And indeed, it is difficult to think of European equivalents to the wedding of Charles and Diana or the funeral of John F. Kennedy. The felling of the Berlin Wall is one, perhaps, but it was not "scripted" (as Dayan and Katz put it) or anticipated for weeks in advance in the way that royal and national celebrations are.

Hannerz writes of "a willingness to engage with the Other" which he calls cosmopolitanism and which, like Anderson's imagining, is a question of mental activity rather than physical commuting across borders; it has to do with being open to divergent cultural experiences and with searching for contrasts rather than uniformity. It Hannerz's description of the cosmopolitan environment in the holders of 'sophisticated' images of the international is reminiscent of Kenneth Boulding's seminal work. According to Boulding, the process of image sophistication occurs in every person to a greater or lesser degree as they grow into adult awareness of themselves as part of a larger system: "the unsophisticated image sees the world from many imagined viewpoints, as a system in which the viewer is only a part" while the adult horizon "extends to other times, places, and cultures than his own". Boulding was convinced that the national image was the last great stronghold of unsophistication: "the ordinary citizen and the powerful statesman alike have naive, self-centred, and unsophisticated images of the world in which their nation moves".¹⁹ The question is

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and reinforced the paradox of communing with unknown people. Going so far as to synonymise news consumption and imagining, Anderson notes that while each 'communicant' performs the ritual of reading his morning paper in privacy, he does so in the confidence that millions of others are doing the same thing at the same time, and that the world he imagines is rooted in reality. It is no coincidence that the institution of 'print-capitalism' emerged in the same era as the modern nation-state: the press "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways".⁸

It can thus be argued that the news media have played an historical role in the formation of national identities. The intriguing question is whether Anderson's idea can be extended beyond national boundaries and applied to larger political communities as well.

Therborn writes of a similar background to political interaction, but instead of nationalism talks of 'culture', which he uses to refer to "what is learnt and shared by some people, to their universe of meanings and symbols, to what provides an internal guide to their acting in society".⁹ Like Billig's embodied habits, Therborn's notion of culture has to do with identity, by which he means "a notion of an 'I' and a 'we', which implies a boundary to the Other(s) [...] a register of emotions expressing a specific mode of reactions to events in the world". Cultures, according to Therborn, operate through symbolic systems, or what Bordieu refers to as common codes or common sets of assimilated master patterns, by means of processes of communication.¹⁰ It thus comes as no surprise to read, later on, that the orientation of television, radio, cinema and music can be expected to affect their audiences' view of the world.¹¹ He does not, however, explain how they might do so.

In addressing that black hole, the research of which present study is an initial probe might be able to use the structure in Therborn's suggestion that the first stage in the process of identity formation is composed of differentiation, which is a social construction, of a boundary. And "like other constructions, collective identities have their architects, their entrepreneurs and their builders".¹² The question is, which of those roles do which media play?

Media researchers like Schlesinger and Elliott have been interested in the sort of symbolic systems or common codes referred to by Therborn, and how they help to maintain the boundaries of a given society. Like Anderson, Billig and Therborn, Schlesinger sees collective identities as constructions rather than eternal essences. Through active strategies of inclusion and exclusion, employing the 'signs' provided by their cultures, communities identify themselves. As Schlesinger conceives of it, the process is not only one of auto-identification, however, but also of hetero-identification: "Both how we define the Other, and how the Other simultaneously defines us, is part of the unavoidable game of identity politics. We are defined in part at least by being different from how they are. And their difference from us depends upon our being what we think we are".¹³ One cultural category he has explored is communism, which he and Elliott have argued "served liberal capitalist societies as a polar opposite in terms of which to define themselves".¹⁴

Ethnic conflict in the Balkans provides a virulent example of this hetero-identification, and of the key role the media can play. Tracing the breakdown of federal broadcasting in the former Yugoslavia and its replacement with republican networks, which by the mid-1980s had drastically reduced the flow of

whether what may have been true in the mid-twentieth century still applies at the end.

The reasons for suggesting that the situation may have changed are several. Hanmerz has identified a number of transnational cultures, for example, of outward-looking, other-engaging intellectuals, bureaucrats, politicians, business people and journalists who can mediate between cultures, and incorporate the experiences of people from other countries, with different linguistic backgrounds, in their own personal perspectives.²⁰ Just as, for Anderson, it was no coincidence that the emergence of print-capitalism coincided with the consolidation of the modern nation-state, for Schlesinger, the consolidation of a press aimed at an international audience signifies the emergence of a new transnational domain of individuals more geared to the global than to the national.²¹

An emerging hypothesis, which may or may not be open to empirical confirmation at a later stage in this research, is that a distinction may be made between more cosmopolitan collectivities of journalists, whose task it is to address an international or transnational sphere (like the journalists at CNN, BBC World, and Euronews), and others, whose horizons tend to be bounded by the national sphere which they serve with news.²² Is it possible that a new (or perhaps renewed) transnational, European identity is emerging in such a domain? That viewers are increasingly likely to be sophisticated in the sense that they engage different identities—that of the Hallänning and Swede, or Geordie and Englishman, as well as European—in different contexts, or juggle several at once? Just as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* announced the sovereignty of the nation before most people living in France thought of themselves as French, perhaps the sort of European policy document mentioned at the outset of this paper is intended to defend a European identity from national and American enemies of one, before one even exists?

Whether the national prevails, or is likely to be superseded by an emerging European identity, or whether they and other identities coexist and overlap, the importance of communication, shared codes, and the media is generally implied in the literature on the subject. If these things are to be recognised in the empirical material, it is necessary to consider the nature of the shared cultures from which they emerge.

Four Newsrooms and a Cultural Metaphor

A useful analytical distinction can be drawn between situated culture and mediated culture. It rests on the notion that we all inhabit particular situations, defined in geographical, social or cultural terms. The situations that matter to explaining the behaviour of a given actor could be his country of birth, his family, or his workplace. As opposed to situated cultures, which are directly experienced, mediated cultures are experienced second-hand, through the press, film and broadcasting.

What makes media analysis particularly challenging is the fact that journalists inhabit certain situated cultures while purveying mediated ones. They are not just the authors of the products we see on tv: they are also people socialised

in a given country, or national culture, and in a given workplace, or professional culture. They can be thought to frame the news in a way that makes sense to their compatriots, both consciously, as purveyors of mediated culture, and unconsciously, as inhabitants of the same situated culture. As mentioned, the intriguing possibility is that, with increasing numbers of professionals studying and working abroad, increasing European integration, and the rise of media aimed at international audiences, the situated cultures that journalists share with their colleagues and viewers may not always be national ones—that a European culture, for example, may be replacing national values and points of reference with other ones.

Even if it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to keep them entirely analytically distinct, it is nevertheless important to be aware that any differences we find in the media texts produced by the four news teams can be related to two different sorts of cultures. These texts are the products of journalists from different national cultures, but also from different professional cultures. In other words, the situations that can matter here are not just Britain, France, Germany and Sweden but also the professional cultures of the BBC, *Le Journal*, *Tagesschau* and *Aktuell* newsrooms. The nature of these four programmes clearly vary, in ways that can be relevant to interpretations of the individual texts they produce. An attempt has been made in this study to conceptualise these four newsroom cultures in such a way that traits specific to the BBC *News at Nine*, for example, or Swedish Television's *Aktuell* can be kept distinct from more general "British" or "Swedish" traits. To this end, the concept and method of the "cultural metaphor" have been borrowed from an anthropological study by Martin J. Gannon.

Gannon conceives of culture as operating subtly, even unconsciously; in his view, it can begin operating automatically when activated by a few stimuli. This notion is useful when trying to capture the "standard operating procedure" imperatives of the newsroom in conceptual terms. The cultural metaphor is a method devised by Gannon for understanding "cultural mindsets" or "basic ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that occur simply because of the fact that people are members of a particular society" and for comparing that mindset with those of other nations.²³ The characteristics of the metaphor become the basis for describing the essential features of the society.

The cultural metaphor Gannon arrives at for the UK is "the traditional British house". The floor plan does not vary and is unchanging over time. The walls have their own firm, fixed foundations so that the floor plan of the house is visible before the internal walls go up. This traditional structure, like the people who live in such constructions, holds no surprises. Britons know what to expect from one another: there is only one right way to do things and no one has to be told what it is.²⁴ The antique pageantry and ceremony of the nation's political structure is built right into the walls of the house, and this enduring display of pomp simultaneously manifests and strengthens the people's unity.²⁵ Although considered the moral leaders of Europe long after the Empire was dissolved, Britons have always stood aloof from attempts to unify Europe: "truly, they feel if God had wanted to tie Britain with the rest of Europe, he would evidently not have dug the English Channel."²⁶ The British grow hedges around their gardens to separate their space from neighbours, and good neighbours are those who are friendly at a distance, and who do not intrude. In sum, Gannon exemplifies the British character in the traditional rigid, long-lasting brick houses,

foremost characteristic of the Swede.³¹ He also claims that Swedes are so zealous and efficient at attacking perceived problems in their society that they will often "import not only ideas to solve problems but also problems themselves".³² As for the *stuga* of the metaphor, Gannon notes that there are neither fences nor "No Trespassing" signs to be found defining the borders between the 600 thousand cottages scattered throughout the country. The love of untrammelled nature and tradition, individualism through self-development, and equality characterised by the *stuga* clearly reflect Swedish culture, in Gannon's view. Most Swedes are a generation away from the farm, "peasants at heart who could easily return to the ways of their ancestors". Gannon echoes Hofstede in noting that Swedes emphasise a small power distance between individuals and groups in society, "a pattern typically found in a village setting", and that "they do not feel threatened by ambiguous situations". He observes that on the masculinity-femininity scale Hofstede applied to 40 nations, Sweden is extremely feminine, when femininity is defined as "the extent to which the dominant values in society emphasise relationships among people, concern for others, and the overall quality of life".³³

There is much that is problematic with Gannon's study: having read the lengthy tome, one cannot help but conclude that he and Salman Rushdie would make ideal flatmates. Apart from his stereotyping being liable to make ethnic hackles rise, the scholarship in *Understanding Global Cultures* is occasionally questionable, and the approach somewhat populist. Nevertheless, Gannon's method has helped us construct metaphors for the newsroom cultures we have perceived through the artefacts those cultures have produced—metaphors which can serve as independent variables when explaining differences in those artefacts. It should also be borne in mind that what is under scrutiny here is mass communication and that, as such, it warrants impressionistic as well as analytical readings.

News at Nine: the traditional British broadcast

Like the traditional British house, the BBC newscast is a solid, unchanging structure with a clearly recognisable, even predictable, floor plan. While tending more towards decorous discretion than displays of pomp, the traditional BBC newscast is nevertheless apparently imbued with a sense of royalty. There is a polite interest in European neighbours, but evidently no desire to come too close, or to see the inside of their houses. In these respects, there is a degree of correspondence between Gannon's metaphor and the programme culture one gets a sense of after viewing hundreds of editions of *The News at Nine*. Like the house, the typical broadcast is very well constructed. The professionalism of the editing at times runs to an exaggerated interweaving of words and pictures. It is as if the images are not to be allowed to speak for themselves: the reporter is always in charge of the way the story is going. For such reasons, a BBC broadcast rarely contains any surprises.

Le Journal: French time in news battles

A number of features in Gannon's cultural metaphor of France are immediately recognisable in *Le Journal*. First and foremost his claim that *tout le monde* means all of France—that France is the centre of the universe—finds corroboration in these texts. Second, the respect for nomenclature and hierarchy is reflected in

dwellings set apart from other people's houses. He suggests that "the strong sense of history is the foundation on which society rests today. Some of the traditions and shared beliefs represent the mortar that binds people in a national identity".²⁷

The point of departure for Gannon's French cultural metaphor is that wine and France are inextricably bound together. "Like a flawless bottle of vintage wine, it is as if God had decreed that there be perfection in the land and people of France". Symmetry, balance and harmony coalesced in one great land because the French willed it. According to Gannon, the French thus tend to give the impression that France is the centre of the universe around which the rest of the world rotates.²⁸ Noting that France produces 5,000 varieties of wine precisely classified, he sees this incessant urge for nomenclature reflected in society at large, too, where each person knows his place. There is an expectation that foreigners do so as well. The French interpret the phrase *tout le monde* to mean all who are French, and outsiders are countenanced but not openly welcomed. Rules, regulations and procedures give certainty and order to French life. This *savoir vivre*—a certain way of doing something no matter what the situation—that can lead to a preoccupation of form over substance. Like the vinticulturist, the French generally have a need to control and refine life and to order the universe. René Descartes is, to Gannon, the epitomic Frenchman because he elected to discover the meaning of the universe without leaving his study.²⁹ The political, social and business world is highly autocratic and centralised, traits which serve to maintain unity. The French tend to do many things at once and the pace is rapid, and in this sense the French are polychronic. In other ways, they are monochronic, doing one activity at a time once they have defined a goal they wish to attain. And while autocratic, France is nevertheless a 'feminine' society, in which aggressiveness, assertiveness, and the desire for material possessions are of much less importance than the quality and pace of life. According to Gannon, "the French accept centralization and bureaucracy, but only insofar as it allows them to be individualistic and buffers them from life's uncertainty so that a high quality of life can be maintained."

The "German Symphony" is another of Gannon's cultural metaphors. Like an orchestra, he claims that German society is made of individuals with their own likes and dislikes who, for the greater good, subdue their preferences to the wants of the conductor and the needs of the symphony. "So it is that in German society, each worker, each housewife, each street cleaner and each solo violinist is expected to contribute to the success of the whole."³⁰ Gannon also sees a clear parallel between the German passion for order the predictability and regularity of the symphony: in society, too, there is a demand for regular beat and predictable form. Germans are less comfortable with strange situations and newcomers than many other peoples, preferring to be surrounded by friends or colleagues they have known for a long time (and hence presumably preferring Beethoven to Schnittke).

Finally, Gannon employs the metaphor of the little red cottage in the countryside—the *stuga*—to describe Swedish culture. To understand this metaphor, he argues, it is essential to understand a number of key Swedish values and ideals. First are the values of social democracy: equality, freedom, democracy, solidarity, security and efficiency. Second is the concept of *lagom*, which stands for moderation, reasonableness, and an attitude that ensures there will be enough for everyone on the team or *lag*. Unemotional practicality, he suggests, is the

the sort of actors who move in the public space provided by *Le Journal* and in the treatment accorded them. In the body language of interviewees, there is clear deference to elite political actors, who speak at length and without interruption on subjects apparently of their own choosing. Programme structure is polychronic, and unlike the traditional BBC broadcast difficult to code, given its rapid pace, format, and barrage of telegrams. On the other hand, it is monochronic in its thematic nature: once a theme is identified, report after report will be devoted to it. Finally, the desire to be buffered from life's uncertainty is recognisable in the composition and tone of the typical newscast, which is imbued with a "feel-good factor" and gives a feeling of hope and security. News items on *Le Journal* tend to be devoid of confrontations, and while the world may contain problems, they are either being taken care of or are soon to be solved.

Tagesschau: the German ledger

Cannon's cultural metaphor of the German symphony is a bad match for *Tagesschau*, as it is the least musical of the four programmes analysed here, as well as entirely devoid of drama. There are no headlines, and, unlike Beethoven's multiple codas, the programme disappears into the weather forecast without the anchor officially signing off. A symphony has a clearly recognisable structure, with a statement, inversion, and recapitulation of themes. In *Tagesschau*, on the other hand, one news item is presented after another, without any attempt to link them thematically. Several times in each broadcast, there is even a hop from one item to a completely different one without the anchor introducing the new subject, the result being that the viewer is unaware that a new topic is being reported on until that report is almost finished. While there is a reasonable amount of foreign news, it is almost entirely comprised of press conferences, views of parliament buildings, and heads of state going into and coming out of official buildings. (Indeed, the same can be said of domestic news.) *Tagesschau* consists entirely of conductors, concert masters, solo oboists and first trumpets: there are no second violins, french horns or bassoons. "Ordinary people" seldom feature in *Tagesschau*, in other words. The world it depicts is largely populated by, and certainly viewed at the level of, decision-makers, and contains few women and no children. There are no studio interviews, and decisionmakers are rarely questioned, let alone pressed, by reporters. The world of *Tagesschau* has nothing to do with music—and everything to do with money, with economics the *leitmotif*.

Aktuell: the global village

The themes Cannon rehearses in his chapter on Sweden are familiar to regular viewers of *Aktuell*. According to official programme policy, the main evening broadcast is to provide not only such an account of the newscast that viewers would consider themselves well-informed, but also deeper coverage of the most important events of the day, so that viewers could better understand what they entail.³¹ That they are not simply to be informed, but also to *understand* fits with the notion of self-development. The spirit of equality and small power distance are reflected in journalistic attitudes to those in power. Government ministers—never referred to as "Mr." or "Mrs." but by their first and last names—are treated with no more respect than others interviewees, and are often interrupted or pressed for an answer. Nor are political elites by any means the only

people to be seen and heard on the programme: vox pops flourish, and "ordinary Svenssons" are given the opportunity to speak at length. There are notably more women in the world of *Aktuell* than in the other programme cultures, on both sides of the camera. Although the village mentality, as defined by Cannon, fits with the spirit of the *Aktuell* newscast, the emphasis in his *stuga* metaphor on isolation in a quiet wilderness does not. More applicable is the lack of fences, the tendency he mentions to zealously import problems, and the apparent lack of threat experienced in ambiguous situations. It is considerably more difficult to distinguish domestic from foreign news items when analysing *Aktuell* broadcasts, as compared with those of the other three newscasts: there is a clear and apparently deliberate tendency to make other people's problems the concern of Swedish viewers. Not infrequently this is done in such a way as to leave the viewer undecided about the meaning of the event. For these reasons, we have substituted the *stuga* metaphor with the McLuhanesque one of the global village.

These impressionistic portraits can be seen as summaries of the independent variables in the empirical study. What follows is a brief presentation of the methods employed in that study, and then of the results.

Background to the empirical study

The empirical pilot study has been conducted on three levels. To put it another way, it is constituted by three analyses: at one extreme, an analysis in black-and-white (a basic, quantitative overview of news output), and at the other extreme, a study in colour (a closer look at some items where an identity problem can be discerned at work). In between the two extremes is an intermediary level of analysis, where the aim has been to organise reports about Europe thematically. Apart from the broader aim outlined in the introduction, the purpose here has been to learn to recognise "identity items" (as they will be nicknamed in what follows) when they are encountered in the material, establish a meaningful way of analysing them, and explain to others how they can be thought to 'work'. The reason for the more quantitative approach at the first level of analysis is to make sense of identity items in the context in which they appeared—to avoid taking them out of the setting in which they are to be viewed. The intention has been to probe the methods which might be appropriate in the analysis of the sort of media texts of interest here; to refine them as research on this subject progresses, rather than beginning with a rigid notion of how such texts are to be dealt with.

The 'quantitative' overview consists of a classification of the contents of the programmes broadcast in the period under analysis, to get an indication of the distribution of topics and the importance assigned to them. Although not included in this report, the analysis has taken into account the importance assigned to a given topic as assessed in terms of its prominence in the broadcast and its journalistic treatment (i.e. whether it has merited coverage by a reporter or just a telegram read by the presenter). A cataloguing form rather than a 'proper' codesheet was used for this preliminary classification, accompanied by

a 'coding key' rather than detailed instructions. At this stage, it has been more a matter of systematisation and description than of analysis.

The intermediary level of analysis involved going through all the items relating to Europe a second time, and organising them in terms of themes and actors. The aim of this intermediary analysis has been to gain a sense of what Europe is "about" in these four news programmes, and it what contexts it appears.

In the more interpretative level of analysis—the 'colour' part of the study—of which an excerpt is reported below, some of the items in which we have been able to discern traces of identification activity have been subjected to a closer reading. The sort of item analysed at this level has in some way juxtaposed an "us" with a "them" or asked a question along the lines of "what does it mean to be Swedish or European these days?". It takes its cue from the notion discussed above that inhabitants of a given culture share certain common codes. In mass communication research, these codes or 'grammars' are assumed to operate by means of conventions, which can be described as "the ways in which certain meanings can be shared and understood. They are often not written down but are hidden or unspoken rules that we learn to accept, apply and recognise. They are part of our culture and are therefore culturally specific".³⁵

Just as linguists explicate the grammar of a text, the media researcher (and, in a similar way, the viewer or reader) 'decodes' the media text (be it printed or broadcast), unpacking the codes or meanings 'encoded' in them. The encoding may or may not be conscious. 'Closed texts' are the product of more conscious encoding: they are meant to be read in a certain way and to lead the viewer or reader to draw certain conclusions. In such cases, the text is given a 'preferred reading'. Other texts can be more 'open' or polysemic, and the way they are read depends on the salience of the topic to the reader, and what intellectual, social and emotional experiences affect his or her personal reading.

In looking more closely at items in which 'identification activity' can be discerned, we have had these concepts in mind. The aim here has been to move beyond the calculation of airtime devoted to a given theme and the number of headlines (by choosing to focus on television texts, a step has already been taken away from the counting of column inches and headline font sizes) and to devote energy instead to documenting, thinking about, and offering interpretations of signifiers and symbols. What is in focus in this 'colour supplement', in other words, are the cultural references, historical allusions, symbolism, metaphors—quite simply, the imagery evident—in news accounts of European events that may give us information about the role played by television in collective identity processes. The 'code sheet' here has consisted of two simple questions to be posed the texts: what story is being told, and how is the collective depicted?

Windows on the World the first level of analysis

As mentioned above, the four news programmes analysed here are all prime-time broadcasts by public service companies. Nevertheless, their length and

formats vary considerably. The German programme, *Tagesschau*, is 16 minutes long on average and contains many relatively short items. The French and Swedish programmes, on the other hand, tend to be 35-40 minutes long (except on weekends), with a mixture of short telegrams and longer, more in-depth items. The BBC's *News at Nine* falls somewhere in between these extremes, with an average length of 27 minutes on weekdays and 12-20 minutes on weekends, and a mixed telegram/feature format. It is thus essential that a report of differences between the output of these programmes begins with a basic account of their content.

Table 1. Number and length of newscasts and number of items contained in BBC *News at Nine*, FR2, *Tagesschau* and *Aktuell*, 1-31 March 1996.

	length of newscast	number of items
News at Nine	11 hrs 49 min	362
Le Journal	17 hrs 54 min	638
Aktuell	13 hrs 1 min	383
Tagesschau	7 hrs 57 min	393

A number of problems become immediately apparent. First, there has been a vast amount of material—a total of 1776 news items—to go through in this study. Second, there are considerable variations between the four programmes when it comes to the number of items in them and the amount of material analysed for each (as measured in airtime minutes).

However, these problems can also prove advantageous to the study. First, the fact that we have included the entire population of March 1996 broadcasts in our analysis has minimised the need for guesswork and the vulnerability of our findings to coincidence. Second, the variation in output has given us the opportunity to pursue our hunches about the importance of form as well as content, and indeed the interplay between these two things.

Regarding those variations, a number of specific features should be noted. There is in some cases a lack of correspondence between the number of airtime minutes and the number of items analysed. This is because in this report (but not the analysis behind it) we have not distinguished between telegrams and longer reports and features, which means that the German programme is over-represented in the quantitative analysis. It should also be noted that the peculiar structure of *Le Journal* explains why it contains so many more news items than the other three programmes.

As for the question posed at the outset of this paper, what are the contours of the world reproduced by the four newsrooms in March 1996? Table 2 below shows a rough distribution of the topics contained in the broadcasts according to the geographical area they concern:

**Monster Bulls, Mad Cows and Englishmen
Europe in the television news**

At the intermediary level of analysis, items relating to Europe were sorted into themes in order to obtain a sense of what Europe is "about" in these four news programmes. A number of items were excluded from further analysis at this point (such as train crashes that just happened to have taken place somewhere in Europe, or the death of a French author or Greek poet); others were classified as having to do with Europe but not the EU (reports on Bosnia and the Spanish election fell into this category, for example). Reports relating to the EU have been further broken down into those with a national aspect to an EU issue (such as changes at 'home' resulting from a Brussels ruling), those in which European actors are linked to non-European actors (such as the Euro-Asian and anti-terrorist Egyptian summit or discussions pertaining to Nato's eastward expansion), reports about the union itself (such as those on the inter-governmental conference in Turin), and the 'Mad Cow' furore (which has warranted a classification of its own). The results are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Items relating to Europe in *Le Journal*, the BBC News at Nine, *Tagesschau* and *Aktuell*, March 1-31 1996, organised according to perspective.

	Le Journal		News at Nine		Tagesschau		Aktuell	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
EUROPE	60.5	(98)	39.8	(35)	47.6	(40)	43.6	(34)
EU	11.7	(19)	34.1	(30)	25.0	(21)	23.1	(18)
EUROPE & OTHER	24.7	(40)	20.4	(18)	13.1	(11)	9.0	(7)
TO BE EXCLUDED	3.1	(5)	5.7	(5)	14.3	(12)	24.3	(19)
OTHER								
TOTAL	100.0	(162)	100.0	(88)	100.0	(84)	100.0	(78)

Table 3 indicates that the EU accounted for a relatively small portion of all news about Europe. And compared with the total number of all items, EU reports account for only 3 percent of the French, 5 percent of the German and Swedish and 8 percent of the British reports. While Table 3 shows that the French EU sample is very small, it does not show that the EU takes up very little space in the German broadcasts too, as no distinction has been made between telegrams and longer items (of which *Tagesschau* has almost none) in these calculations.

Tagesschau's European reports are dominated by news pertaining to the former Yugoslavia (above all war crimes and the plundering of Sarajevo) and the Mad Cow controversy. Next in importance are items about Nato's eastward expansion. There is just as much interest in Sweden's new prime minister taking over power as in the Dunblane tragedy. Other European news is about elections, coalitions, the inter-governmental summit in Turin and the bankruptcy of the Dutch Fokker company.

The cows dominate European reports in Sweden as well (20 items), followed by news pertaining to Yugoslavia (16 items). Unlike the German coverage, ex-Yugoslavia reports in *Aktuell* are more concerned with the challenges of

Table 2. Distribution of topics of reports in *Le Journal*, the BBC News at Nine, FR2, *Tagesschau* and *Aktuell*, 1-31 March 1996, according to geographical classification.

	Le Journal		News at Nine		Tagesschau		Aktuell	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
USA	5.8	(38)	5.3	(22)	6.8	(30)	3.8	(16)
RUSSIA	1.7	(11)	2.1	(9)	5.9	(26)	5.2	(22)
AFRICA	4.3	(28)	2.6	(11)			3.1	(13)
EUROPE	18.5	(120)	13.1	(55)	21.5	(94)	24.1	(102)
HOME COUNTRY	48.8	(317)	63.0	(263)	45.4	(199)	48.0	(204)
MIDDLE EAST	12.3	(80)	3.8	(16)	7.5	(33)	6.6	(28)
OTHER	8.6	(56)	10.0	(42)	12.8	(56)	9.2	(39)
TOTAL	100.0	(650)	100.0	(418)	100.0	(439)	100.0	(424)

As can be seen from the table, domestic news dominates in all four programmes. The proportion of domestic to international news is roughly the same in all of them, except for the British programme, whose larger ratio can be explained by the outbreak of the "Mad Cow" controversy mid-way through the period, and by the Dunblane massacre. The same stories account for the disparity in the proportion of items pertaining to Europe, as compared to the total number of items, in each of the four media. Between 18 and 24 percent of all items broadcast by the French, German and Swedish programmes in March 1996 had to do with Europe, while only 13 percent of the British items did. Swedish *Aktuell*, with 24 percent, had the highest proportion of European items.

Africa does not exist on the map of the world drawn in German minds (as Walter Lippman would have put it), and if it does on the other three maps, it is largely thanks to the Mandelstam divorce. Were it not for a plane crash in Peru, Latin America would not exist either. While there is an equal distribution, and modest number, of items about the US (predominantly about the presidential primaries), the two countries close to Russia have more items related to that actor. The overwhelming majority have to do with the conflict in Chechnya. The larger number of scores in the "other" category can be attributed to the conflict between China and Taiwan and the Euro-Asian summit.

It is interesting to note how many more items about the Middle East *Le Journal* carried than the other three media. What Table 2 does not show is that they are also accorded high priority in the newscasts by being placed at the top of the programmes (24 items about the Middle East are placed in the top three positions throughout the period). A considerable amount of attention is also paid by the French to the anti-terrorism summit in Egypt.

Taken together, news about the reporting country and news about Europe account for 67 percent of the French and German broadcasts, 76 percent of the British and 72 percent of the Swedish ones. Given that it covers such a substantial area on all four programme maps, it is worth looking at the different perspectives from which "Europe" is viewed in the reports.

implementing the Dayton peace accords than with war crimes. This could, of course, be explained by the fact that the EU's High Representative in Bosnia, Carl Bildt, is a Swede and former prime minister. However, in most reports, Bildt appears as the former (i.e. EU representative) rather than the latter (our former prime minister and the current leader of the opposition). There is one notable exception. On March 18th, an 8-minute feature is devoted to Bildt, to following him—indeed, to walking beside him—through the streets of Sarajevo, to looking at the countryside through his eyes, and to talking with him about his feelings of frustration at the difficult peace, of missing his children. It is not so much that Bosnia is brought into Swedish living rooms by this item, as that Swedes are taken down to Bosnia, through the agency of Bildt. The same technique is used in a Mad Cow report, which follows the new Swedish Agriculture Minister to a Luxembourg meeting, talks to her about her concerns and feelings before she goes in, follows her down EU corridors, and waits for her outside the meeting room, to talk about how her first speech went when she comes out. The effect is that the viewer is taken to the European Parliament with the Swedish minister.

After the Mad Cows and former Yugoslavia, *Aktuellit* European reports are dominated by "national" EU items, i.e. Swedish problems or issues that are caused by or related to the European Union. This category is in turn dominated by another bovine controversy, not mad British cows in this case, but "monster" Belgian bulls. A series of reports is sparked off by the decision of a farmer in the south of Sweden to inseminate his cows with Belgian Blue sperm, which is banned in Sweden but not in Europe. The *Aktuellit* cameras are present as Swedish cattle are impregnated with European seed, and the effects of these actions illustrated with pictures of cows bearing long red incisions who have had to calf by Caesarean section. In several of these items, the same interview sequence is used in which the offending farmer explains that he might be breaking Swedish law, but he is not breaking European law, and former is subordinate to the latter.

The other topic that is heavily covered in this period is the Dunblane tragedy (8 items). Not only are these lengthy, and given prominence in the broadcast, they are given clear Swedish angles. While *Tagesschau* and *Le Journal* report the shootings as something having happened "over there", and concerning the British alone, Dunblane reports in *Aktuellit* are linked to similar bloodbaths in Sweden. The anchor asks studio guests how we are to explain the Dunblane shootings to our children and reporters repeatedly pose questions like: what are we doing to ensure it does not happen here? What would we do if it did? On several occasions, the focus is on how the small Scottish community afflicted by the massacre is dealing with its shock and grief. In these reports, the victims are the actors as much as the murderer.

Dunblane (one of the top three stories in 11 *Le Journal* broadcasts) and the Mad Cows (one of the top three items in 12 newscasts, and 49 items all told) are also the most prominent news in the French reports, after reporting on the Middle East. There is no extensive coverage of events in the former Yugoslavia, and Carl Bildt is nowhere to be seen. A number of domestic stories have a European connection. Typically, these have to do with a party congress or a conference debating France's European policy. The perspective tends to be what President Chirac wants for France, what issues he is going to raise at the inter-governmental conference, and so on.

Not all European items in French reporting are 'serious' political news. The European category also includes stories about an Italian aristocrat posing nude on huge posters to raise money for animal rights, about a small Italian village declaring its independence, and about pigeons being stolen from Trafalgar Square and sold to British restaurants.

Many of the BBC European items have "law-and-order" perspectives. The point of departure for these are European court rulings relating to British bans on homosexuals in the army or Spanish-British fishing quotas, arrests of illegal guest workers, or Bosnian war criminals. Through these reports, the European Court of Justice comes to symbolise British tribulations at the hands of a supranational body.

Not surprisingly, the Mad Cow feuilleton dominates British reporting, as it does the European reports in the other three media. The episode throws the various perspectives from which Europe can be viewed into sharp relief, as can be seen from Table 4.

Table 4. Perspectives on "Mad Cow" reports in the BBC News at Nine, FR2, *Tagesschau* and *Aktuellit*, 1-31 March 1996, organised according to theme. "Total" refers to the total number of items relating to the CJD controversy in the sample.

	Le Journal		News at Nine		Tagesschau		Aktuellit	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
UK	29.8	(14)	59.4	(19)	17.6	(3)	35.0	(7)
EU	17.0	(8)	40.6	(13)	23.6	(4)	30.0	(6)
EURO COUNTRIES	4.2	(2)			23.6	(4)	10.0	(2)
OWN COUNTRY	46.8	(22)			29.4	(5)	25.0	(5)
OTHERS	2.1	(1)			5.9	(1)	5.0	(1)
TOTAL (mad cows items)	100.0	(47)	100.0	(32)	100.0	(17)	100.0	(20)

One-fifth, or 20 percent, of all European items on *Tagesschau* were about the Mad Cows, and a quarter (25.6 percent) of Swedish and 29 percent of French items about Europe. For Britain the figure is 36 percent.

Le Journal treats the issue as a British problem which has consequences for France and Europe and which thus necessitates European intervention. Although many of the French items focus on the alarm caused by the furor, with people afraid to eat beef and farmers worried about the economic effects of the crisis, French viewers are given reassurances. They are informed that the country has been sealed against British beef imports, and expert after expert confirms that there is nothing wrong with French beef. This is a British problem that British authorities have been aware of for years.

These themes are also evident in German and Swedish reports. In *Tagesschau*, however, the crisis is depicted as not only a British, but also a Swiss problem (there is no mention of the Swiss in either the French or Swedish reports). Like the French, it is pointed out to Swedish viewers on several occasions that the British authorities have been aware of the problem for some time. The impression of British nonchalance is underlined by repeated views of Englishmen eating meat, and of British farmers saying more people were killed by a mad-

man in one day than by Jacob Creutzfeldt's Disease (CJD) over the course of years, and that gun laws rather than EU beef bans were in order.

Unlike the French and Swedish reports, no people suffering from CJD are shown in British reports, or their family members interviewed. The problem depicted in British reports, or their coverage is less one of health and consumer safety (as in *Le Journal* and *Aktuell*) or science (as in *Tagesschau*) as one of economics and politics. The story being told here is one of ruined farmers, a depressed beef industry, lack of confidence in the government, and of how hard the EU is making life for Britons. The Mad Cow crisis is a shining example of "us" versus "them", regardless of the vantage point.

This hetero-identification tendency, and other techniques that can be used to distance viewers from foreign actors, or bring them close to distant situations, have been mentioned in passing on several occasions in the report of this intermediary stage of the analysis. In the final stage, such tendencies and techniques have been more closely attended to.

Us, Them and Videotaped Broadcasts closer readings of texts with traces of identity processes

In this section, a closer look will be taken at a number of items which can be thought to contain traces of identity processes. The exercise has addressed two different dimensions—one methodological, the other more result-oriented. On the methodological dimension, the point has been to assess whether a close reading is the best way to grasp, and make sense of, identity processes that can be discerned in media texts, and what they yield. On the other dimension, the point has been to explore the meaning of differences between texts produced by media in different countries. Such an analysis can go so far as to reveal patterns and provide material for hypotheses, but not so far as to prove conclusive results. As the adage would have it, they tell the truth, but not the whole truth.

We would argue that they contain traces of auto-identification (as though the invisible, inaudible subtitles said 'this is an example or a part of what makes us British/Swedish') and/or hetero-identification (as if the subtext were 'look at those people and what they are doing; we are/are not like that and would/ would not do things like that'). But there are also examples here of what can be thought of, for lack of a better term, as 'unfinished' identification processes. In such texts, it is as though the journalist were thinking out loud 'I wonder what it means to be British/Swedish at this point in the history of the European Union? A semiotic analysis is required here, with the television texts broken down or deconstructed, but only to a degree that is meaningful for what remains essentially a social science study. What is in focus are the visual codes. What is the denotative content of the images in the 'identity items', i.e. what is actually depicted? What, on the other hand, are their connotative meanings—i.e. the signals in the texts that could bring viewers in a given culture to 'read' the item in a way that builds on certain shared understandings they may have of their culture?

British and Spanish fishermen and the EU Court of Justice ruling

On 5 March 1996, the *News at Nine* was topped by a story on a European Court of Justice ruling which upheld the right of Spanish fishermen whose vessels were registered in Britain to use UK fishing quotas or, as the presenter put it, to take fish allotted to 'this country'.

The report began with a shot of a fishing trawler, with a voiceover saying there was little trust between hard-pressed west coast fishermen and their Spanish counterparts, and that this latest ruling had caused a furious response. A fisherman says

Well, it's 30 million pounds worth of British taxpayers money going out of this country for no real reason. They tried it on and perhaps they won in the Court of the Hague, but the Court of the Hague really isn't a British court.

In the background, his broad-shouldered colleague can be seen at work with the rigging, with nets and boat behind him. He too says his piece:

I think it's disgusting. I think it's about time somebody stuck up for the British fishing industry for a change.

This is followed by archive film from the 1980s, the period in which, the voiceover tells us, "problems emerged when Spain entered the community". There is an explanation of the legality of what has happened, and British government attempts to stop the quota-hoppers. That government is given both a voice and a face, namely that of Fisheries Minister Tony Baldry:

I cannot believe that there can be any politician anywhere in Europe who could conceivably defend a situation where foreign nationals, foreign skippers, foreign crews, foreign-owned vessels can catch UK fish as against our UK quotas.

There is another shot of the English fishermen at work in the rigging while the reporter says that opposition parties want changes in the Treaty of Rome to make it harder for 'foreign' fishermen to buy UK licenses. There follows a 13 second clip (out of an item 2 minutes and 45 seconds in length) of a Spanish Socialist MP saying that Britain must respect Community law like everybody else—just as Spain has accepted British businessmen and workers. The report ends with a shot of Spanish fishermen leaving a boat, seen but not heard. It is the voice of the reporter who concludes by saying "The owners of these Spanish trawlers will be reluctant to give up their rights".

This is a closed text. The point of view in this report is clearly that of the British fishermen. Only at the end are the Spanish glimpsed, and although there is a brief explanation by the Spanish MP, we are not given an account of the behaviour of the Spanish fishermen, in their own words or otherwise. What is striking in this report is the number of times the word 'foreign' occurs, and is emphasised. Neither the EU institutions nor the Spanish are colleagues, allies, or common arena: they are, we would argue, 'them'. As the first fisherman put it, the Court of the Hague isn't a British court. The images denote unhappy trawler crews getting on with their jobs, but one can't help wondering whether, faced with a continental enemy (be it Spain or the EU) to whom a battle has been lost, but from whom further encroachment will be resisted, the resolute men with the backdrop of small vessels do not in fact connote the battle in the

activity which can be discerned here is distancing rather than *rapprochement*: the familiar, homey atmosphere of the pub is contrasted with the cold, foreign environment, rather than the plight of British guest-workers abroad being compared with that of foreign guest-workers in Britain.

It is also worth noting that Britain and Germany are never referred to as members of the same labour market. Indeed, the European Union is entirely absent in this feature, although national images are prominent.

Swedish gold

If the aforementioned BBC report emphasised the differences between Britons and Germans, an *Aktuellit* feature broadcast on March 19 explicitly stressed a common European cultural heritage. Introducing the report of an exhibition on Bronze Age art, the presenter explained that it was

an exhibition on common symbols and common figures. Much of what we think of as typically Scandinavian or typically Swedish turns out to have a far broader background...

The reporter tells us that artefacts from Copenhagen, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest, as well as Sweden, are being displayed together for the first time so that "we can now see our common history". With the spread of trade in Europe three thousand years ago, symbols also spread. As an historian explains to the reporter:

Everyone wanted to have this new material and with the metal came ideas, symbols, world views...It is fascinating that there was such contact in Europe such a long time ago.

In other words, part of the Swedish cultural heritage isn't so Swedish after all. Swedish history is economic, cultural and currency exchange with other Europeans.

It can be (and indeed has been) argued that this is not, perhaps, an example of the media (re)defining the Swedish identity: the *Aktuellit* reporter was merely relaying the findings and arguments of the historians behind the exhibition. The reason this report is of interest, however, is that the theme is clearly recognisable from other Swedish media texts we have encountered in the period since the EU referendum.³⁷ Obviously, impressions alone will not suffice here: it will be necessary to document them. This serves as a reminder of the need to base analyses of such 'identity items' on quantitative surveys, for otherwise it cannot be claimed that they are, indeed, part of an identity process.

Two other reports explicitly address the question of what Europe means for the French and Swedes, respectively.

Second World War, when a Nazi invasion of Britain was staved off by hundreds of Englishmen taking to the beaches in their modest fishing vessels?³⁶

Germany blames foreigners for high unemployment

One of the four longer reports featuring Germany on the BBC *News at Nine* in this study was broadcast on March 6th. Like the other three, it attributed Germany the role of leading EU proponent, with a strong desire to transfer national decision-making to the European level, and thus the embodiment of a threat to Britain and British national sovereignty. (One of these reports was even introduced by a newsreader with a still photo of German Chancellor Kohl and the caption "WARNING" over his shoulder.)

The point of departure for the March 6th story was the rise in the number of unemployed in Germany, especially in the construction industry. British viewers were informed that many Germans blamed foreigners, coming to the country prepared to work for lower wages, and that the German government was planning a new law stipulating a statutory minimum wage. It was suggested that this concerned Britain, as many UK citizens work in Germany.

The feature began with a shot of a Briton who had been working illegally being handcuffed by German officials. The reporter informed viewers that he was one of many British construction workers no longer welcome in Germany. There are then pictures of construction workers having their papers checked by German police at their workplace in Berlin, before a cut to a pub scene, said to be typical of the kind of place homesick Britons visit in Germany after work. The soft-lit pub with its friendly social atmosphere stands in stark contrast to the cold and unfriendly German workplace, full of steel frames and—interestingly, given the EU context—pillars. A British worker tells the reporter

These Germans are beginning to realise they are not capable of producing the work to the speed and the quality of the English workers. They realise that they probably need two English guys for the work of each German.

German workers are seen demonstrating outside on the streets, or "fighting back" as the reporter puts it. A representative of the German Builders Union says

You cannot close up Germany. It is not possible and we don't want that. What we want are the same conditions of work for everybody.

The reporter, standing in front of a construction site, concluded that the Germans were adamant, and that because of the recession, tough measures could not be avoided. But the British workers had no intention of abiding by the new regulations, as they claimed to have no alternatives.

The story explicitly juxtaposes "we" British with "those" Germans. At no time is it pointed out that British and German workers share the same problem, i.e. a slump in the building industry. The problem identified in the story is not the depressed European construction industry, but the new German legislation. It is more a law-and-order issue than a social or political one. The journalistic

French socialists divided over European politics

On March 30th, *Le Journal* broadcast a feature on the Mid-Pyrénéen socialists on the eve of the *Parti Socialiste* conference in Paris. The point of departure for covering the regional organisation is that as many as 40 percent of its members opposed the Maastricht treaty.

The report begins with footage of a bus arriving outside the Paris airport arrival hall. We are told that a group of socialist party members are on their way to take part in the party's European policy debate. The Federation's national secretary explains that the large number of Eurosceptics in the region has to be seen in the context of structural changes there:

This is a region which has endured pretty severe restructuring processes. Textile industries and other sectors of the economy have been relocated outside the region. And as a consequence, they need a more protectionist Europe.

Viewers are given a glimpse of an informal meeting in Toulouse and informed that the local party organisation has debated the single currency as well as convergence criteria. A man at the meeting says

A socialist Europe is a Europe first and foremost for the sake of man and not for the sake of money.

Once again the delegation is seen sitting on the Paris-bound bus. A young man says

There must be a counter-movement to liberal forces, to the financial system, so that politics regains all its might in order to regulate the economy to a greater extent and raise social issues.

The report ends at the national conference in Paris, where the aforementioned man is seen entering with a sheaf of papers. Socialist leader Lionel Jospin is seen talking, and the Mid-Pyrénéen delegates can no longer be discerned. We are told that Jospin has to take the different attitudes into consideration, but that the party will have to speak with one voice.

What is interesting about this report is its focus on an unfamiliar group of actors in the *Le Journal* programme context: namely, local politicians. It considers a regional political identity in contrast to a national one, both in the context of Europe. It is debatable whether this is an open or closed text. On the one hand, it highlights the views of a different-thinking group confronted with different problems from those of the Paris high-flyers. We are not given any guidance as to what we should make of this city/country contradiction, however. At the same time, the theme of "*l'Europe social*" recurs throughout the report, just as it does through *Le Journal* broadcasts, in a variety of contexts. Not only is it President Chirac's *leitmotif*, it is the conceptualisation of the French role in Europe. The unavoidable impression given is that France will ensure that Europe becomes a socially responsible body which cares about people, and not just money.

A similar juxtaposition of regional and national identity in the context of the EU can be found in the following Swedish item.

The EU study circle

On March 19, prior to the EU Turin conference, *Aktuell* featured a long, at times ironic, reportage on a community in northern Sweden that had received a quarter of a million *kronor* to organise a study circle on the conference. It begins with a wintry scene, with the snow blowing across a sparsely populated little town, a shot of the familiar co-op supermarket, a woman on the sort of sled typical to northern Sweden and the voice of a local inhabitant saying

Brussels? Well, that's pretty far away.

The train from the south arrives and the reporter steps off it, buttoning up her anorak against the cold, while a second local voice, asked whether he cares about the EU, sighs and says

Not much... We haven't liked the EU. [The owner of the voice comes into view at this point. He is an older man with a silly hat, standing in a familiar post office setting.] We think we've got by without the EU but maybe we'll have to change our minds.

[Reporter:] Are you familiar with the inter-governmental conference beginning now?

Can't say I am...

The same question is posed to a bearded man behind a counter, who shakes his head. A weary study circle organiser sighs that the EU is not popular. In the background, Pavarotti bursts into song as we see a jelly roll being sliced. The focus is now on a group of older women making and eating sandwiches, leafing through brochures on which the EU circle of stars is emblazoned, admitting they don't understand much. As we watch them wheel in the coffee and knit their brows over difficult texts, we hear two voices in the background: the golden one of Pavarotti again, followed by the flatter local cadences of another bearded man—the one behind the counter—who talks about the waste of money

The local study organisation has been given half a million *kronor* to organise study circles on the Turin conference, we are told, but no one cares. This time of the year, sighs the organiser, it's only nature, hunting and snowmobiles that count. The only circle that managed to attract participants was that in the tiny community centre, where we saw the ladies having coffee.

The camera cuts to Stockholm, to a grand and bustling room in the parliament building, and the chairman of the governmental EU-96 committee, who in stark contrast to the slow-spoken, pessimistic tones of the study organiser in the far north, speaks quickly and enthusiastically about the Swedish public and the EU:

I think... we have one of the best, most deeply rooted discussions and level of knowledge on the EU in all of the EU, because of our democratic traditions in Sweden...

As if the contrast needed to be underlined, the voice of the reporter notes (as we peep through a crack in the door at the ladies bending over their texts) that the parliament attracts a full house when there is talk of the EU; in Murek there is money, but few who listen. An opinion analyst also contradicts the commit-

tee chairman, telling the reporter there is a "very very low level of knowledge on the EU". As the camera zooms in on the title of a paper which reads "Your Land and Your Life", we are told that only 40 percent have heard of the conference. There is a view of the village, and of the train door closing. A carefully dressed and made-up old lady says

It is very hard, but we're part of the EU now, so we have to know what's happening and what to expect.

As she speaks, we look on a very Swedish setting—coffee being poured, candles lit, sandwiches, a simple wooden table set with coffee cups. Then the train pulls out of the little town, to the strains of the soundtrack from *Local Hero*.

This, we would argue, is a particularly compelling, and particularly difficult, polysemic text. There are at least three levels on which an identity can be located: the small, local level, far away from the places where decisions are made, inhabited by 'ordinary Swedes'; the national capital, far to the south, inhabited by decision-makers and others who are enthusiastic about the EU; and, far away, the Europe of the EU, whose existence pervades the report but which figures only as a voice in the background. A possible fourth locus is that of the reporter, who arrives from the south and moves between the world of the study circle and the high-ceilinged world of the parliament in Stockholm, eavesdropping on both but belonging to neither.

It is clear that fun is being made of someone in this report. It is less clear who is the object of the wry smile. At first it seems we are meant to laugh at the ignorant locals—the man with the woolly hat sitting crooked on his head, the study organiser who is unable to assemble a course despite the unheard-of resources he has been granted, and the ladies whom we suspect are meeting more out of a thirst for coffee than a thirst for knowledge. But as the report progresses, it seems that the joke may be on the experts in Stockholm, who have apparently little idea what people really know and think. The text of the reportage opens even wider at the end when, as a counterpoint to the voice of the man at the beginning who admits he knows nothing, the elderly lady leading the study circle says they'll just have to learn. We are left with two contradictory images: that of the train pulling out, so significant from the recent EU referendum campaign in Sweden, in which it symbolised the chance Sweden would miss if membership was voted against, conflicting with the soundtrack from *Local Hero*.³⁸

The report is also replete with iconography. The camera settles consciously on snow, sled, co-op, coffee table and study circle. Swedes can recognise themselves in the post office setting, identical from the frozen north to the south coast. Pavarotti, the voice of culture in the background, symbolises Europe.

Apart from its polysemic, this piece is difficult because it is what we would call an 'active' or 'unfinished' item. By this we mean it involves a search for the definition of identity: it asks rather than tells. Do 'we' belong in the sparse, frozen north, or does 'our' Swedishness (democratic ideals, self-development, rule-following and the honouring of outcomes) mean we must inevitably become part of Europe?

However it is to be decoded, it certainly corresponds to the *stuga* portrait painted by Gannon. The Murek depicted in this *Aktuell* feature is in many respects a European village, if not a global one.

Summary of the empirical analysis

The close readings reported above all address items related to Europe, or to the reporting country in the context of the new Europe. Like many of the news items presented in the intermediary stage of the analysis, they can be thought to contain traces of identification processes either because they juxtapose an "us" with a "them" (like the British and the Europeans of the Mad Cow feuilleton); because they bring aspects of Europe close (like the Swedish camera filming Bosnia through the eyes of Bildt, or the impregnation of Swedish cows with monstrous European sperm) or keep it at arm's length (like the French camera watching through the pub window while Englishmen eat beef); or they ask a question about what it means to be living in a certain country in the new European era (like the Swedes in the far northern study circle). It should be pointed out that these are not the only "identity items" we have been able to document in the 124 editions of the four news programmes analysed here. There is also identification taking place on a purely national level, in all four programmes. What is most notable, however, is that there are different sorts, indeed different degrees, of identification processes evident in the texts produced by the four programmes. At one extreme is *Tagesschau*, which yields little in this respect. At the other is *Aktuell*, which is replete with identity items, both in content and form, with striking images of "us" and "them", and with linkages taking Swedes to the world of the Others, or bringing Others into the Swedish *stuga*.

Conclusion

How, then, does the world look when viewed through the lens of the four newsrooms? It is indeed a world in which the reporting country takes up a lot of space, and one in which Europe figures largely. The Middle East is very much there, as well as the US (thanks to the presidential primaries) and Russia, or rather Chechnya. Africa can be found in a small corner of the French, British and Swedish maps, and China and Taiwan. Beyond the confines of the reporting country, the world is populated by heads of state and government. Given its more popular emphasis, the Swedish programme deviates somewhat in this respect.

Europe (including the reporting country) takes up three-quarters of the maps of the world drawn by the four programmes. The world depicted in *Tagesschau* is one large economy, dominated not only by the unemployment, pension and wages themes familiar from the other three media, but also by bankruptcies, mergers and other business news. The world of the BBC is one in which 'law-and-order' is a defining feature. It is full of court rulings, murder appeals and legal actors. The world of *Le Journal* is a secure and well-ordered place; a continent characterised by culture and harmony rather than political confrontation. *Aktuell's* world is populated not only by the political leaders who flourish in the other three programmes, but also by "ordinary" people, factory workers, the sick, the elderly, women and children. The world is a place of political and social, as well as economic, problems. Law-and-order is an issue

here too, but largely thanks to the internecine warfare raging between motorcycle gangs in the Nordic region in March 1996.

As to the second question posed at the outset of this paper, our hypothesis that television texts contain evidence of identification processes has, we would argue, been confirmed by the March 1996 survey. They can be detected on several different levels: in the content of some news items; in the form of some items; in a combination of form and content of some news items; and in the form of some newscasts. Some news items explicitly question the moulding of identities in the new Europe; others do so implicitly.

Much work remains, however, if these are to be analysed systematically. If such processes are to be grasped, it is important to be aware of the contexts of the reports and to determine whether these can be meaningfully categorised. Detailed analyses of each component of a given newscast must be accompanied by assessments of the newscasts as a whole.

Of the four programmes in the study, the French *Journal* is the most obvious example of the importance of monitoring broadcasts on a regular basis, of studying entire newscasts rather than certain items in isolation, so that sense can be made of the long-running themes that inevitably occur. The survey reported here confirms Cannon's observation about the French preoccupation with form over substance.

The identity-laden news item can only be comprehended contextually. Both routine quantification and more 'qualitative' semiotic explorations are required if these are to be extracted, documented, analysed and explained. The vast empirical effort this requires, in combination with an understanding of the newsroom and wider journalistic culture of which it is a product, indicates that this will be a considerable challenge. To put it differently, this preliminary study suggests that television texts may prove to be treasures buried at the bottom of the sea. Our video recorders are the chests preserving them, but a good deal of swimming will be needed if the treasure is to be discovered and brought to the surface.

As for the third question posed at the outset, about whether national and European identities in the texts appear to be in conflict or to co-exist, the answer varies from media to media. In the case of Britain, there would seem to be a conflict, both when viewed through the lens of the BBC and those of the other media. If the *News at Nine* represents one extreme, presenting the EU and Europe as the "Other", the neighbours on the other side of the hedgerows, *Aktuell* is the other extreme, with the viewer's relationship to Europe kept an open question. There is sometimes a conflict (as with the monster bulls), and sometimes not (as with the shared cultural heritage from the Bronze Age onwards, and as with Bosnia and Dublaine, which both have to do with us), and sometimes an open question (as with the EU study circle). This fits well with Cannon's observation that Swedes do not feel threatened by ambiguous situations.

It is far more difficult to interpret the French and German results, in which the EU is conspicuous by its absence. In the French case, we have been able to document this at all three levels of analysis. In the German case, programme form has given a misleading impression of content at the first level of analysis. The EU recedes quickly at the second level and disappears with barely a trace at the third, as EU reporting in *Tagesschau* consists largely of matter-of-fact telegrams and voiceovers showing officials going in and about of buildings. In *Le*

Journal and *Tagesschau* Europe and the EU are rarely mentioned as "parties" at all. Perhaps this is because they are taken for granted, as political and conceptual bodies which are there, but whose existence is not a question for debate. Does its invisibility in these texts mean that Europe is self-evident—like the reporting country, a subject rather than object? That it is taken for granted as a natural part of these two nations' lives? That the search for the boundaries of Europe and questions about the nation's role within it are unwarranted? Or is it the case that the nation is, as Cannon would put it, *tout le monde*? Perhaps Smith's notion of the importance of a perceived common destiny has something to do with this. In any event, the finding warrants further consideration.³⁹

In conclusion, we suggest that there is an emerging inter-relationship between national and European identities when we look for their reflection in the television news. It would seem to be the case that the nature of the relationship and degree of conflict and coexistence is different in British, French, German and Swedish television news. The implications of this for European politics is that television news consumers in some European countries may be thinking about Europe in different ways, making the cultivation of a European identity as well as, or instead of, a national one more problematic in some polities than others.

To borrow Therborn's metaphor, some media actors can be the architects of a news event, transmitting images of their own consciously or unconsciously; they can be entrepreneurs marketing the ideas of other elites; or they can be the builders constructing, through routine coverage of European affairs, a common European house.

Does it make a difference whether the media serve as actors or arena in this process? Yes, because an awareness of identities in the making and the questioning of what it means to be a national citizen as opposed to, or as well as, a European citizen can be taken as evidence that newsmakers are participating in the identity process. Does the dearth of EU reports in the French and German media analysed here mean that those nations have an unproblematic role within Europe, that they feel comfortable with their place within the Union? If so, then the uncertainty reflected in the British *News at Nine* and Swedish *Aktuell* texts could be explained by their more hesitant and undetermined roles in the European Union—a hesitation that could, in turn, be exacerbated by media reporting.

A feature of some of the more striking "identity" texts documented here is their tendency to suggest that "we" are like "them". We are treated to Bosnians you could invite to dinner (cosmopolitans who look and dress like others) and not just the very foreign-looking peasants with their belongings on a cart fleeing from the burning shell of their farm, and urged to share the tragedy of Dublaine with our Scottish neighbours because, after all, it could have happened at home. Or we are taken out of our living rooms and into Sarajevo, the streets of which we walk with Swedish Bildt, or we follow our Agriculture Minister into mad cow meetings in Luxembourg. As these examples suggest, *Aktuell* is the newsroom in which this tendency is most pronounced, particularly in the longer, in-depth features it produces. Here is the cosmopolitanism Flannerz refers to—the willingness to engage with the Other—that marks the global village newsroom.

It seems to us that news reports displaying this tendency indicate not only that old identities are being reaffirmed, but also that some media are the site on

which new identities are emerging. By studying such texts we can learn more about such processes.

The purpose of this study has been more to arrive at appropriate methods for future research than to present conclusive results of completed analyses. Like a weekend holiday, the purpose of this quick dash through the worlds of four European newsrooms in March 1996 was not to be able to say "been there, done that", but to establish the lay of the land. We haven't so much been looking for Buckingham Palace, the Louvre, the *Deutsch Oper* or the Drottningholm theatre (we can find out about them in any number of guidebooks or descriptions written by other visitors), but for that little sidestreet with such interesting architecture that merits another visit, or the more banal view of the Thames or Seine or Rhine or Lake Mälaren from the other side of the bridge, that others, transfixed by the flashier symbols of Britishness (or Frenchness or Germanness or Swedishness), may have overlooked. Above all (given our plans to return for a longer visit) the purpose of this investigative jaunt has been to prevent unnecessary trudging, in the future, down dead-end streets—trudging that is more likely to yield intellectual blisters than insights. Which research avenues can be abandoned here and now; to which sites should we return and pay more attention? Should we be touring British houses and Swedish villages, or enjoying French wine?

- 1 P. Schlesinger (1994) "Europeanisation, the Media and Collective Identity". Position paper for the ARENA Programme Board Meeting, 20-21 June (verox), p.26.
- 2 Broadcasting Research Unit (1988) *The Public Service Idea for British Broadcasting* London, pp. 7-8.
- 3 Michael Billig (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage, p.25.
- 4 Billig 1995: 6.
- 5 Billig 1995: 8.
- 6 The chapter focuses on reporting in the British daily newspapers on one randomly selected day.
- 7 Anderson, B. (1993), *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, p.6.
- 8 *Ibid*: 35-6.
- 9 Compare with Bordieu's definition of culture as "a common set of previously assimilated master patterns from which, by an 'art on invention' similar to that involved in the writing of music, an infinite number of individual patterns directly applicable to specific situations are generated" (P. Bordieu, 1971, "Systems of Education and Systems of Thought", in M.F.D. Young, ed., *Knowledge and Control*, London: Collier Macmillan, p. 192, cited in P. Schlesinger (1991) *Media, State and Nation*. London: Sage, p. 92.
- 10 Therborn, G. (1995) *European Modernity and Beyond. The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*. London, Sage: 10.
- 11 *Ibid*: 224.
- 12 *Ibid*: 229.
- 13 Schlesinger (1996). "Europeanisation and the Media: National Identity and the Public Sphere", in T. Slaatta, ed. *Media and the Transition of Collective Identities*. University of Oslo: Department of Media and Communication IMK Report No. 18, p. 165.
- 14 Schlesinger 1991: 92.
- 15 Simic, P. (1994) "The Former Yugoslavia: The Media and Violence", *RTE/RL Research Report* Vol. 3, No. 5, 4 Feb, pp. 40-47.
- 16 Dayan, D. and E. Katz (1995) "Political Ceremony and Instant History" in A. Smith, ed. *Television: An International History*. Oxford: OUP.
- 17 Smith, A. D. (1990). *National Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 179.
- 18 Hanerz, U. (1990) "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture" in M. Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London: Sage, p. 236.
- 19 Boulding, K. (1959) "National images and international systems", *Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 130-131.
- 20 Hanerz op.cit: 244.
- 21 Schlesinger 1994: 24.
- 22 A pilot study comparing the *BBC Main News* (which Britons view at home) with the *BBC World News* (produced for an audience outside Britain) suggests that this possibility is worth exploring.
- 23 Gannon 1994: 5.
- 24 *Ibid*: 19-20.
- 25 *Ibid*: 23.
- 26 *Ibid*: 25 quotes L. Barzini (1983), *The Europeans*. New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 59.
- 27 *Ibid*: 25.
- 28 *Ibid*: 85-7.
- 29 *Ibid*: 90-91.
- 30 *Ibid*: 70.
- 31 *Ibid*: 109.
- 32 *Ibid*: 110.

33 Ibid: 118-119.

34 Akureli-Retaktionien, "Malkokunnit", *Sveriges Television*, 1996 (xerox).35 T. O'Sullivan, B. Dutton and P. Kayner (1994) *Studying the Media*. London: Edward Arnold, p.90.

36 The same item appeared in the *BBC World* news the same day, although in a less prominent place in the broadcast. On other Europe-related matters, however, the two BBC programmes—one produced for domestic consumption, the other for an international audience—diverge, at times, in interesting ways. One example is coverage, on March 3, of an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights by ex-servicemen and women dismissed from the British armed forces because of their homosexuality.

In the *News at Nine*, the subject is dealt with in a 20-second telegram. The Defence Secretary Michael Portillo, we are told, has confirmed that a government review will recommend keeping the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces: "He said he believed the vast majority of people in the armed forces believed relaxing the rules would harm discipline and morale. He admits the ban may eventually be overturned by the European Court of Human Rights." As the telegram is read by the presenter, we see in the background, first, a still of soldiers marching in formation (interestingly, viewed from behind) and, then, moving pictures of a relaxed and peculiar Portillo reviewing troops dressed in familiar blue greatcoats and tall fuzzy hats.

The *BBC World* report begins with a picture of individuals conspicuous by their absence from the *News at Nine*: a group of men and women who were dismissed from the services because of their homosexuality, and who are fighting their dismissal in the European Court of Human Rights. The camera quickly veers away from the overweight women in jeans and zooms in on the pleasant-looking young men in suits and ties who look slyly but earnestly into the many cameras confronting them. The information that, in the Netherlands, gay officers serve beside heterosexuals, is accompanied by pictures of distinctly macho-looking individuals in combat gear, leaning against army vehicles and smoking. In a relaxed pose, this sequence is followed by an excerpt of an interview with the Defence Secretary from a breakfast television show: "People are living in situations of absolute trust", says Portillo, explaining why the ban must be upheld. "They're living almost literally on top of each other" (he smiles). "They need to know they can trust one another," he says, adding later that the Armed Forces 'themselves' could not retain their 'fighting power' were the ban to be lifted. After this, a former lieutenant commander, who was dismissed after someone attempted to blackmail him over his sexuality, criticises the government's questionnaire in an upper-class, well-educated accent. We are also informed by the reporter that the British government's own legal advice says it will lose in the end. The opposition Labour Party is quoted as describing the ban as an unacceptable infringement of civil liberties, and we are informed that President Clinton also has difficulties on this issue. The report ends with a picture of a tank with a long gun sticking out of it driving off.

The *News at Nine* item can be read as a closed text which portrays the Defence Minister's decision in a matter-of-fact, if not self-evident way. The images that accompany the information read by the newscaster are time-honoured symbols of the British military tradition. There is nothing to discuss. The text in the *BBC World* report is more open. The suggestion is that the decision to uphold the ban is not self-evident at all: gays are permitted to serve in the armed forces of European allies, and even the world's leading military nation, the US, does not find the issue clear-cut. We are also given cause to wonder whether the Defence Secretary is really the right man to be making this decision, and the suggestion that it is not ultimately his decision at all.

What, then, are the resulting images? The British audience is reminded that they are defended by an armed force comprised of 'real men'. In the *BBC World* report, the Dutch are portrayed, in both words and accompanying images, as relaxed. The British, by contrast, appear upright. The government and armed forces merely reiterate a stance: those doing the fighting, in this report, are the homosexuals who have been told they do not belong in the army. The public addressed in the *BBC World* report is given an image of a Britain that is out-of-step with its allies and perhaps lagging behind them—a Britain,

moreover, that will eventually lose another battle to 'Europe' on this issue. There is arguably a meaningful difference between the two portrayals.

37 An example is "Olof Skötkonungs monetära union", *Dagens Nyheter*, Sunday 14 May 1995, pp. 2-3 which, like the *Aktuell* reportage and, as will be seen below, a DN report of the burning of the library in Linköping, takes issue, albeit obliquely, with the right-wing extremist who claim to be the guardians of Swedish heritage. The article is about the first Swedish coins, discovered at the site of the royal mint in Sigtuna, made a thousand years ago by the king who is referred to in "our schoolbooks as the first king to convert to Christianity". By starting to mint coins, we read in the article, King Olof apparently wanted to join the top level of Christian regents in Europe, and his ambition was "att främstå som en kung över ett stort rike".³⁷ Not only the first Swedish coin, but all the first Scandinavian coins, were copies of an English silver piece, made from German metal. The coin had symbolic value at a time when the king was trying to win the allegiance of neighbouring lords and acceptance for the new Christian ideology. "This is obviously an interesting history lesson for *Dagens Nyheter* to provide at a time when the relinquishing of national currencies was being so hotly debated, both in Sweden and England. The reader is reminded that 'Sweden' did not exist a thousand years ago, that the Swedes have not always had their own currency, and that political and economic interaction between Europeans predates both. However, the reader is also informed that it took three hundred years before a common currency was successfully established in the new political structure that was to become known as 'Sverige'.

The common cultural heritage shared by Europeans is a recurrent theme in *The European* (although this too requires systematic empirical confirmation). Whether or not it is typical, an example attempting to make a case for a common European cultural history, I would argue, is the colour cover story "Cicero was here", *The European Magazine*, 19-25 September 1996. About the so-called Grand Tour, on which well-educated young Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans were wont to embark in the 18th century, it argues that the tourists were not just intent on enjoying beautifully and morally tax Italian women and acquiring souvenirs left strewn about by the ancient Romans, as has long been assumed. Some of the visiting Britons actually were responsible for 'tingely productive' excavations and "were not looters but partners with the Roman authorities in an enlightened cultural project." Europe was on the threshold of a glorious new age, we read, by subsidising the authorities in the poor south of the continent, the rich northerners enabled the opening of the "greatest of all art galleries", the Vatican Museum, in 1758. And had Edward Gibbon stayed at home in England instead of venturing over to the continent, that great English classic, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* would probably never have been written.

38 After viewing the *inslag* several times, I have also begun to wonder whether it could not invite a gendered reading as well. All of the figures who represent pessimism, ignorance and resignation in it are men; those who get on with their democratic duty and who are prepared to adapt to the new situation—and, *not least*, the reporter—are women.

39 An example, taken from a different Swedish television news programme and from a later period than that studied here can illustrate the point. At the European Cup finals in England in June 1996, disappointed English fans clashed with German supporters after losing a match. The Swedish programme used footage of and interviews with nationalistic Englishmen when reporting the events. The German fans were largely invisible. The resulting impression was that "we", Swedes were positioned beside the Germans, observing the daft Englishmen together with them. Invisibility here amounted to identification. The question is whether Europe is invisible in French and German news in a similar way.