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MEDIA CULTURE & SOCIETY

From cultural defence to political culture: media, politics and collective identity in the European Union

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European transformations

The ending of the Cold War has had a profound impact on how we categorize European culture. The polar divisions between West and East — which constituted an organizing grand narrative about democracy and totalitarianism, capitalism and socialism, freedom and repression — disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Such political designations were also cultural ones, in the sense that they constructed bounded social collectivities as different, and symbolized distinctions between types of regime and of society. They marked, defined and simplified, and in so doing distorted the complexities to be found on each side of the old Iron Curtain.

Today, bloc no longer faces bloc. Instead, the transformed political geography of the continent has left us with an incomplete architecture, whether this be thought of in political, economic, military or cultural terms. In the case of ex-Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, political disintegration has been accompanied by the emergence of arenas of armed conflict and persisting instability in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Despite its expansion in January 1995, with the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden, and the lining-up of further would-be members among favoured post-communist states in Eastern and Central Europe, the European Union's political trajectory remains uncertain and troubled. Much, of course, hangs upon the introduction of a single currency and coherence in foreign and defence policies. The process of political and economic integration is far from unilinear in its impact, in some respects evidently accentuating the sense of difference to be found in the European

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Union at the same time that it officially proclaims its supranationality. For instance, in relation to present concerns about European identity, even before the Maastricht Treaty of 1991 was signed, nationalist reactions to further integration were apparent in many member states and, below the level of the national state, autonomist claims have added to the complexity (Schlesinger, 1992). We might add the xenophobic — sometimes neo-Nazi — reactions to the growth of multicultural complexity due to earlier or present migration into the EU space and the rise of what has been labelled 'cultural fundamentalism', the post-racist doctrine in which sacralized cultural difference replaces racial superiority as the ground for refusing pluralism (Stolke, 1995). Collective identity crises in Europe are thus vertical and lateral, and occur at sub-state, state and EU levels.

They are actually inherent in the transformative dynamics that are labelled 'Europeanization', the result of which is that we cannot take as given 'political structures and actors, boundaries and communities, collective identities and understandings, and distributions of resources and life chances'; consequently, the current European situation invites us to consider how 'basic frameworks of political life might be changing' (Olsen, 1995: 3).

If we accept that invitation — and actually we cannot refuse — this still leaves the diagnosis of our times an open matter. We might well agree, for instance, that there is a loss of economic sovereignty on the part of the national state and that dense networks of affiliation and communication criss-cross the European space, thereby modifying social relations and systems of representation, and still not be sure as to how we should theorize this. Are we entering a 'post-national' era that demands a new politics and culture? Is Europe a kind of test-bed today for arguments about the demise of the nation-state? There is a growing debate on these questions, which need to be taken seriously, although they can hardly be said to be settled (see for example, *Daedalus*, 1995; Schmitter, 1995, 1996).

Against such uncertainty about what kind of political formation is emerging, the vagaries of a media policy that has to negotiate different levels of political authority in an as yet unsettled framework need not surprise us. In what follows, I offer an interpretation of recent policy developments concerning audiovisual media in the EU as these have come to symbolize the struggles over collective identity in the 1990s, most particularly against the threat of 'Americanization'. This article is not so much policy analysis as a drawing out of the largely unstated underpinnings of current policy debate. I wish to show how the assumptions underlying present policies and their consequences relate to debates about collective identity.

Both the GATT (General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs) talks and post-GATT developments offer a useful way of addressing how EU policy-

makers now think about the 'Europeanization' of culture in a global market. If federal state formation is where the EU will ultimately lead, then one of the prime objectives of media policy should be to help to achieve genuine pluralism and a widespread democratic commitment on the part of the European Union's peoples, present and future. As I shall demonstrate, the current drift of policy actually runs against this view or, at best, marginalizes it, because it is so dominated by global industrial competition considerations and, therefore, may well be blocking the possibility of building a democratic political culture in Europe.

The EU as an emergent cultural actor?

During the GATT negotiations in 1993, the European Union took on the fleeting guise of a cultural collectivity. The EU had adopted a cultural protectionist stance based on a conception of a European collective identity largely modelled on the nation. According to the account then offered, the nation is seen as entitled to defend its own cultural space. National audiovisual production — something quite distinctive, rooted in a given heritage — is perceived as a source of authentic self-expression. It needs to be sustained as a way of articulating a collective identity valued for itself. This set of ideas about the place of the audiovisual industries was drawn directly from the French response to the *défi americain* initiated during the first Mitterand administration. As a result of French persuasiveness it came to be represented as the 'European' position in 1993 in the closing months of the Uruguay Round (Mattelart, 1995: 15–18; Palmer, 1996). Of course, its novelty lies in little other than as being represented as 'European', for among European politicians and elites there is a history of fear of the American cinematic invasion that goes back to the First World War.

Since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, competence in cultural matters has become a fully acknowledged part of the EU's remit. It was only in 1987 that media questions began to figure seriously on the then European Community's agenda (Hainsworth, 1994: 16). During the GATT negotiations in late 1993, the Union operated as a single, sovereign *cultural* actor on the global stage, a distinctive departure from earlier practice. Although the lines between Community action in this domain and that of the member states will remain a matter of contention, it seems reasonable to suppose that the more the EU begins to behave like a federal political formation, the more it will need to define a supranational cultural policy.

However, before looking more closely at the detail, we need to disentangle two distinct senses of 'culture' commonly elided in contemporary discussion: (a) culture broadly understood as the 'way of life', broadly shared values, practices and beliefs of a social group; and (b) culture

narrowly understood as the production of artefacts that may become commodities traded in a marketplace.

In the European Union policy context, culture in the first sense is normally identified with 'national culture', namely the body of values, practices and identities deemed to make particular nations different from others. Culture in this first sense may be thought of as 'thick', as 'dense', as exercising special demands on the affects and loyalties of those who live within it. It is also worth noting that such national cultures have commonly been developed and sustained by states over extensive periods. Indeed, in the European Union, the national state has been, and remains, the principal building-block of political and economic integration. That said, stateless nations (such as the Catalans and the Scots) may also properly be said to have national cultures and to have institutionalized these in ways akin to states, adding both political complexity and another sense to the term 'national'.

National cultures are not repositories of symbols, beliefs and practices to which the entire population must stand in identical relation. Rather, as I have argued elsewhere, they may be thought of as sites of contestation in which competition over the very boundaries and nature of the national community routinely occurs (see Schlesinger, 1991: 173–4). The fault-lines of power and inequality run through them. But, at the same time, even if struggles occur within these national cultural spaces, they do remain crucial points of departure for thinking about community and belonging. It is this compelling, and still resilient, framework of national cultural reference that has to be both addressed by, and negotiated with, the European Union.

Culture in the second, narrower sense, that of the production of artefacts, has traditionally been the object of debates about how such products may be classified and the kind of value they might be assigned — such as 'high', 'low' or 'popular'. In the current context, this particular framing of the argument is largely irrelevant to the main protagonists. While European audiovisual culture contains a vast range of output running from the art-house movie via news and documentary to soap opera, situation comedy and popular cinema, it is not distinctions of genre, market appeal or associated aesthetic value that have been relevant. Rather, it has been the defence of audiovisual culture *tout court* as an expression of collective identity that has been on the agenda. Nor, indeed, has it just been the expressive *quality* of the audiovisual domain that has been at issue. Rather, it has been the assumed *impact* of the production and consumption of audiovisual culture upon national (and European) culture as a way of life that has been central to debate. However, among those who make arguments for cultural defence, these two levels are not always kept distinct: sustaining audiovisual production is commonly conflated with protecting (because it is believed to shape) a whole way of life.

'Europeanization' vs 'Americanization'

The process of European integration, it has been noted, increasingly transcends traditional forms of international cooperation, with the result that policy-making cuts across national boundaries (Andersen and Eliassen, 1993: 3, 11–14). This growth of complexity requires us to move away from the national level in terms of how we understand the policy context, policy-making processes and policy outcomes. 'Europeanization' involves increased complexity for political actors in pursuit of their strategies because there is greater heterogeneity in the political system.

In the context of global competition, audiovisual culture has come to the fore as of signal importance. Articulated in different ways in different European states, current official worry about the 'Americanization' of culture has long-standing roots among the national elites of a number of countries. Now, signalled as a 'European' concern, it has an ideological function: it allows 'Europeanization' to be presented as a kind of antidote to an external threat. There is also anxiety about competition in communication technologies from Japan: but to denounce the 'Japanization' of culture is hardly a convincing rallying cry.

However, if official Europe is worried about America and 'Americanization', people's Europe most certainly is not, as witness our tastes in films, popular music, fast food and casual clothes. Yet this does not mean that we have all become identical any more than it means that — despite the globalization of a culture of consumption — that there is a single, global culture. In fact, both Europe and the USA seem to be going through identity crises at present, exacerbated in many respects by the ending of the certainties of the system of Cold War blocs.

'Americanization', in a rather different sense, is currently a preoccupation in the USA. For the liberal establishment, the traditional, hegemonic centre of the culture is in question and the 'overarching political commitment' of the population is perceived as under pressure. This is symptomized by concern about the position of English as the common language and reflected in the debates about political correctness, the curriculum and multiculturalism (Schlesinger, Jr, 1991). Others, however, see the threat as an undelivered promise, a quest by the excluded, whether in terms of ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, to redefine the scope of the culture. Americanness is thus the object of discursive struggles based upon competing political agendas (Goldberg, 1994). Opposed to the lamentation over failing assimilationism, which is resolutely modernist, we find other voices that celebrate difference and indeed the decomposition of the nation-state form as a point of reference. Modern and postmodern, national and post-national visions jockey for position. How the national public space is to be constituted is in question; so, indeed, is whether it can be properly defined *as national* (Anderson, 1994; Appadurai, 1993).

The historical depth of the concern to define and redefine Americanness in the USA is not surprising in a state founded upon successive waves of immigration (Löfgren, 1993). Present elite concerns about whether the assimilation process still works — now posed, interestingly enough, in terms of a crisis of national identity — are therefore nothing new.

Such matters are of no concern on this side of the pond when official worries about importing American values are aired. Perhaps they should be, for this sketch suggests that we need to reconsider official fears of the 'Americanization' of Europe with due scepticism. We are, after all, not talking of one object confronting another. American diversity is such that whatever we take from it is selective, and in any case integrated dynamically into our wider national cultures (Pells, 1996). I would suggest that official worrying about 'Americanization' should not obscure a critical analysis of what is presently meant by the 'Europeanization' of audiovisual culture.

The GATT and 'cultural exclusion'

The economic stakes in the audiovisual sector are considerable. In 1995, the USA had a surplus of $6.3 billion with the European Union (*Screen Finance*, 14 November 1996: 12–13). There has been a steady rise in the US–EU trade gap over recent years. European cinema is widely recognized to be in crisis, symptomized by a dual decline in cinema audiences and production coupled with the increasing domination of the European box-office by Hollywood (Mattelart, 1995: 26; Hill, 1994: 56).

Audiovisual trade has been so important for the USA because of its particular success in international film and programme sales compared to the performance of US goods and services as a whole. This relative importance explains why the USA has repeatedly tried to remove barriers to trade in cultural products by negotiation. However, it has failed, most recently in the cases of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the GATT.

If the USA's market size is fundamental to its success, it is easy to account for EU policy-makers' belief that the European single market may improve the global competitive position of the audiovisual industries (Hill, 1994: 60–1). Addressing one large audience would generate the high revenues necessary to enable higher production values to be used and significantly amortize the costs of production in the domestic market. However, European diversity stands in the way of following a US-style strategy. There are numerous linguistic and cultural barriers, based in the system of national states in EU Europe, that make such a solution inherently implausible. Strengthening production capacity at the level of

the national state, therefore, does not obviously translate itself into a *European* capacity to compete with the USA.

If the causes of present US dominance in audiovisual trade are predominantly economic and cultural (Wildman, 1995), this has considerable bearing on the ultimate sustainability of protectionist positions, since it implies that there are very long-term advantages in the global market-place for US audiovisual production, advantages that may not credibly be counteracted by using tariffs or subsidies.

Just prior to the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, more than 4000 artists and producers from the 12 EU member states signed an appeal for cultural works to be excluded from the GATT (Carvel, 1993: 8). The scene for postulating 'cultural exclusion' had been set earlier in July that year by a resolution of the European Parliament identifying the 'cultural specificity' of cinema and television production and its need for preferential treatment (Nundy, 1993). The attack was spearheaded by the French who have the clearest state policy on cultural defence in Europe — and, not coincidentally, the greatest resistance to US domination of the national box office.

The European Union succeeded in having audiovisual services excluded from the market liberalization package agreed with the USA (inspired in part by the success of the Canadian government in securing 'cultural exemption' under NAFTA). The USA held to a position that goes right back to the origins of the GATT in the immediate post-Second World War period (see Jarvie, 1992: 251–2). It refused to accept the Commission's wish to freeze television quotas and domestic film production support schemes. Although the USA moved to exclude the audiovisual sector, it is important to recognize that it did not accept the formal *principle* of 'cultural exclusion' argued for by the French in particular. The USA insisted that there be bilateral negotiations between the EU and the USA in the future.

Divergent conceptions of cultural trade — and collective identity

The debate about cultural trade may be seen as a manifestation of US cultural imperialism. Perhaps we can read beyond this to how it expresses divergent conceptions of cultural identity. For the USA, audiovisual trade is *just* a business whereas for Europeans it is *both* a business and (when convenient) a cultural matter. This emerged in the very language of debate. Mickey Kantor, the US negotiator said: 'We can best advance the interests of our artists, performers and producers — and the free flow of information around the world — by reserving all our legal rights to respond to policies that discriminate in these areas' (cited in *New Media Markets*, 16

December 1993: 5). In contrasting vein, the EU Commissioner, Leon Brittan, talked of the EU as having a legitimate right to protect its culture (in the singular, note). More pointedly, the late François Mitterand, then French President, invoked 'the right of every country to create its own images. A society which abandons the means of depicting itself would soon be an enslaved society' (cited in Goodell, 1994: 26).

Thus, whereas in the USA the rhetoric is that of the market, business and the freedom to communicate, in Europe, at least among producer and political interests, there is undoubtedly a tendency to use metaphors of cultural war, and on this occasion to represent *Europe* as though it had a singular national culture and identity. So behind the GATT negotations were far-reaching differences over the relationship between cultural products and collective identity.

This is deeply rooted in two factors. First, the USA does *not* have a cultural policy as such for the audiovisual sector, which is its second most successful business. Cultural industries are basically concerned with the provision of entertainment. Underpinning this is a commitment to free trade which accords no privilege to cultural goods and services, a line with historical roots that can be traced back to before the First World War (Jarvie, 1992: 17).

Second, although the degree of interventionism varies considerably in Europe, there is generally a quite different conception of the relationship between culture and state from that of the USA. The 'European' view of audiovisual trade during the last GATT negotiations was quintessentially French in inspiration, marked by the long-standing preoccupation with the role of state intervention in shaping the national culture. It also had contemporary characteristics rooted in French audiovisual policy since the early 1980s. The film and television policy of Jack Lang — and his successors — aimed to defend a French industry losing its share of the domestic market to the USA (Hayward, 1993).

The US position on GATT stems from a key unstated premise. As the ruling official conception of Americanness is a juridico-political image of the collectivity, rather than a national cultural one, there is little official inclination to see mediated culture as an object of policy for conferring national identity (Ferguson, 1993: 51). It is as though the argument over GATT expressed two extremely simplified models of what counts in constituting national identities, with the European conception of the collectivity explicitly centred upon national culture in contrast to the USA's constitutionalist conception of the polity (Wolin, 1988).

The European argument, moreover, was characterized by two other features. First, it took on a distinctly Third Worldist tone, driven by a sense of relative disadvantage to the dominance of Hollywood and therefore reiterating arguments about dependency that had appeared during earlier cultural debates, most notably over the New World Information and

Communication Order, back in the 1970s (Schlesinger and Morris, 1997). Second, it rested on a simplistic counterposition between 'American' and 'European' culture, as though these were each homogeneous and also radically distinct, with no traffic between them (Uricchio, 1996). In effect, the EU pursued an argument about *national* culture translated to the level of the Union. But, despite the rhetorical claims, the EU does *not* have a transcendent common culture and identity analogous to the national cultures and national identities of its component states.

After the GATT: the shifting ground of policy

Since 1994 there has been a shift to a new idiom — one more pronouncedly technicist and economistic — in which earlier talk of creating a 'European audiovisual space' has been replaced by the call to institute a 'European information area' (European Commission, 1994: 17, 35).

In the post-GATT context a number of factors have redefined the approach to media policy. This is based on the growing technological convergence between broadcasting and telecommunications coupled with a recognition that digital compression will have profound implications for broadcasting capacity, with potential access for viewers to 500 channels. In this environment, controlling content by means of quotas is largely beside the point. Effective policing would be difficult and the vast expansion of capacity could no more be met from domestic sources of production than it can today. The coming digital future has fed a technology-driven conception of the creation of a common communicative space in Union Europe. Furthermore, it has been accepted by policy-makers that the GATT stand-off offers only a temporary respite and that a new industrial strategy is required to develop a sufficiently large programming base in Europe to recapture the market (Williams and Dawtree, 1993: 46, 49).

Such an approach has profound implications, first, for how culture and identity are thought about and, second, for conceptions of pluralism and citizenship and their relations to the audiovisual media. From a policy point of view, a key shift in the post-GATT debate in Europe was signalled by the European Commission's *Strategy Options* Green Paper of April 1994 (European Commission, 1994) along with the accompanying Think Tank *Report*, submitted in March 1994 (Vasconcelos, 1994). These made the case for the 'Europeanization' of a nationally fragmented audiovisual industry coupled with a shift from the micro-economic methods used so far in the MEDIA programme — the EU's main form of intervention in support of the audiovisual industries — to a more macro-economic approach. Apart from the rhetoric of convergence and the invocation of the 'information superhighway', the employment considerations outlined in the

December 1993 European Commission White Paper figured large (European Commission, 1993).

The diagnosis of the EU audiovisual industry could be summarized thus: in ten years European cinema had lost two-thirds of the audience; European films were largely confined to their national markets, the Single Market favouring US productions backed up by effective distribution mechanisms; the European star system had collapsed with European productions not attracting investment from within the EU; liberalization of television and the growth of video distribution had strengthened the US position. EU intervention (in the shape of funding and the *Television without Frontiers* Directive) had thus far been ineffective. Europe was mired in its national systems, with a low rate of transborder circulation of programmes, weak production structures and a shortage of marketable product (European Commission, 1994: Ch.2; Vasconcelos, 1994: Ch.2). 'Europeanization' was needed to cure the ills of the European condition — notably, fragmentation into national markets — for otherwise the European Union could not compete in a transnationalizing economy.

This vision was substantially shared in the European Commission's industrial policy thinking as expressed in the report by Industry Commissioner Martin Bangemann's so-called High-Level Group, published in May 1994 (Bangemann, 1994). Market mechanisms breaking through existing monopolistic and anti-competitive environments are seen as the route to the 'information society', central to which is liberalization of the telecommunications sector. Alongside this is the perceived need for comprehensive re-regulation on the European level, specifically in the field of cross-media ownership, privacy, encryption and intellectual property rights. The techno-utopia of overcoming European cultural diversity through market forces alone is held out to us: 'once products can be more easily accessible to consumers, there will be more opportunities for expression of the multiplicity of cultures and languages in which Europe abounds' (Bangemann, 1994: 11).

The prolongation of uncertainty?

In the wake of the Green Paper on *Strategy Options*, an attempt was made in April 1995 by Marcelino Oreja, the EU's present audiovisual Commissioner, to set aside the 51 percent European quota provision in the *Television without Frontiers* Directive. It was proposed to scrap the 'where practicable' requirement for European broadcasters from the clause requiring at least 51 percent of airtime to be devoted to European programming. This was intended to please the French government, the most adamant supporter of quotas, by removing the vagueness and scope for evasion by television broadcasters. The trade-off, for other states, such as Germany

and the UK, which are against quotas, was to scrap the quota over a period of ten years. The matter was temporarily resolved in December 1995, when it was decided to prolong the life of the existing European Union broadcasting rules and maintain the 'where practicable' clause, despite its enforcement loopholes. Most European governments felt that quota enforcement was ultimately unworkable protectionism but they came up against the resolute opposition of France (Fuller, 1995: 8; Tucker, 1995a; Watson, 1995: 36–9).

The issue came to the boil once again in February 1996 when the European Parliament voted substantially in favour of proposals to force European broadcasters to screen a 51 percent quota of European-made programmes. Quotas were also to extend to new 'superhighway' services. This decision pitted the majority of Members of the European Parliament, backed by film trade unions and writers' organizations, against the Council of Ministers, the Commission and major media enterprises. It remains to be seen how this division over the use of cultural protectionism will be resolved (Bates, 1996: 17; Southey, 1996: 2).

A step in the direction of continued modest EU intervention in support of audiovisual production was taken when, in February 1995, the European Commission decided to extend the expiring MEDIA 95 programme to the year 2000. The subsidy to what is now called Media II is ECU 400 million (some $505 million) — twice the previous budget. In an effort to bring greater focus to the project, three areas of intervention have been identified: support for training, the development of programmes with a 'European dimension' and the 'transnational distribution' of European programmes. *Inter alia*, these measures are intended to address the key shortcomings of European audiovisual marketing at the pre-production and development stages and — crucially — to ensure that distribution improves (*Media Policy Review*, 1995: 12).

Economizing on culture

Paradoxically, in EU policy circles cultural diversity and identity are seen both as *obstacles* to economic rationalization and, at the same time, as *resources* that might enable a particular kind of technically-driven market growth to be effected. At one level, therefore, Union Europe has the character of a market, of a trading space. At another, it is filled with cultural content: it is linguistically and ethnically diverse, which, when looked at from an economic point of view, is a source of problems, an obstacle to uniform market growth and a source of increased transaction costs (Vasconcelos, 1994: 24). From the standpoint of such economism, culture can take on a positive value only when determined by a purely economic logic.

A central plank of the ascendant argument is that the European Union needs to adapt to the emergent digitized, multichannel, multimedia, convergent information system. To this end, some protection and subsidy could be justified in terms of a logic of the market, provided that such intervention stimulated a virtuous circle of production and distribution. But this needs a move away from cultural defence to a 'success and market-oriented approach' informed by an international vision alive to technological change (Vasconcelos, 1994: 57).

The European audiovisual heritage is seen principally as a crucial economic asset that needs to be exploited, with technological trends potentially helping this along. The fragmentation of audiovisual markets emerging from the proliferation of border-transcending distribution systems and the relative decline of national systems of public service broadcasting, it is suggested, may result in cross-national niches that restructure European consumption patterns (European Commission, 1994: 10; Vasconcelos, 1994: 64). We are told: '"Mass communication" . . . is now a thing of the past. The current trend is now one of personalising the television supply and very individualised product mixes' (Vasconcelos, 1994: 64).

This presumes a post-national — essentially a postmodern — conception of a television audience faced with generalized access to abundant information delivered by digital television technology. Personalized consumption moves centre-stage, severed from its relationships to forms of collective action and identification, such as nation, region, class, ethnicity and language.

In recent policy discourse, the very cultural diversity that is seen as an *obstacle* to the Europeanization of the market — 'a negative factor' — is turned into a potential *asset* or *resource*: 'exploiting cultural diversity can be turned into an opportunity to be seized' (European Commission, 1994: 12). The new magic formula seems to be: digital compression plus Euro-heterogeneity equals profitability, thus ensuring global competitiveness.

Media and pluralism

Alongside the debate about audiovisual policy is a related one concerning pluralism and media concentration in the single market. This has had a much lower profile, tending to take place in relative isolation from the audiovisual and information society arguments. Central to concern about pluralism in the media is the quality and quantity of information available to the citizen to enable political participation. There is also the matter of the ownership and control of media enterprises and the regulatory regimes intended to shape their actions.

The question of pluralism arises at a number of levels. First, there is the most obvious one of the nation-state, still the key locus of political

identification. Official, state-endorsed national identity is unquestionably not going to fade away and will remain a dominant feature of Union Europe's plural character. To complicate the picture further, however, there are other levels and layers of collective identity that need to be taken into account, namely nationality, language and ethnicity.

The nation-states of the EU are not homogeneous. In several key instances there are fracture lines in which distinctive national claims are made that undercut, or coexist with, the overarching official identity-claims of the state. Take the United Kingdom, for example, where the consequences of such diversity is institutionally embodied, as it is elsewhere. The national distinctiveness of the Scots and the Welsh (and the complicated difference of Northern Ireland) have been reflected in special broadcasting provision (Cormack, 1995; Harvey and Robins, 1993). Another key example is that of Spain, where broadcasting in the autonomous communities of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, has had to engage with politically charged linguistic differences based upon officially recognized 'historical nationalities' (López and Corominas, 1995; Maxwell, 1995).

Advocates of minority language and cultural rights have judged the EU's cultural countermeasures to the elaboration of the single market to be somewhat lacking. For instance, from this point of view, the political order (based in national states) and the linguistic order (rooted in ethno-linguistic communities not coterminous with existing political boundaries) are held to be in contradiction. One solution proposed is that all European linguistic communities be given constitutionally endorsed recognition of the 'normal' status of their languages (Gifreu, 1996). In similar vein, it has been argued that the small political, cultural and linguistic communities have been largely ignored, the building of a transnational European audiovisual space being privileged over the actual regional diversity that pertains to the Union. The rationale of a countervailing 'regional' communication policy is seen as lying in the encouragement of political participation through proximity, as reinforcing more localized 'spaces' of cultural identity, as spreading economic opportunity, and as encouraging innovative uses of new communication technologies (de Moragas and Garitaonandía, 1995: 15–16). In the light of the analysis offered above, it is unlikely that these claims are going to be perceived as other than highly marginal to the broader project of building the greater European audiovisual market.

Related, but distinct, is the question of 'ethnicity', a term which in the EU context refers principally to non-European immigrants to EU states and their descendents, often (if not always) people of colour. Members of non-Christian religions, Islam in particular, may also be bracketed together as 'ethnic minorities'. As the European Union is perceived to take on a more 'fortress-like' aspect, and the control of inward migration becomes ever more central to the political agenda, critical voices have argued that those

who do not belong to the hegemonic nationalities by descent are increasingly being marginalized as 'others', even though they may have the formal equality of citizenship.

Viewed from this standpoint, the EU's media policy, as outlined above, serves the interests of the dominant ethnic groups. Hence, it has been argued, positive policies are required to give such groups fair representation in the media. The 'TV nation' is a selective one, and since media may be seen as a significant vehicle for constructing a collectivity's sense of itself, the question of appropriate access becomes crucially important (Husband, 1995).

Of course, it is by no means the case that the politics of recognition will necessarily equally favour national states, nations without states, and linguistic or ethnic minorities. What these tensions do point us toward, however, is the acknowledgement that established conceptions of citizenship are increasingly under pressure. It also puts firmly on the line the question of how contemporary citizenship might relate to public communication, a normative question of the first importance for media policy (Murdock, 1992).

The issues of public access to information and the relations between media and the forms of representation in the public domain are central to current debate in the EU, as elsewhere, and have been forced on to the political agenda by changes of structure and organization. In recent years, for instance, there has been a pronounced trend towards the growth of transnational multi-media enterprises, in part fuelled by a perceived potential advantage of size and vertical integration in meeting the challenges of new technology and expanding markets. The siren call of the so-called 'information superhighway' has led to a rush by firms to extend across computing, telecommunications and media. The expansion of distribution systems is increasingly putting a premium on the content to be distributed, making questions of intellectual property and copyright crucially important.

These trends have provoked a regulatory challenge for the EU. Not only are there 'competition' concerns to do with the well-known tendency to oligopoly in media markets but also 'public interest' concerns about the safeguarding of pluralism and the role played by diversity in extending cultural and political enfranchisement among citizens.

The policy issues in this area were summed up in the European Commission's 1992 Green Paper on *Pluralism and Concentration in the Internal Market*. There, securing 'pluralism' was discussed in terms of ensuring 'diversity of information' and the question of who controls the media has been singled out as of paramount importance. The document noted 'a complicated web of shareholding and media ownership networks centred around a few large national operators' and pointed to disparities between different member states' internal cross-media ownership rules

which might represent obstacles to the proper functioning of the internal market (Commission of the European Communities, 1992: 18, 20–1, 27).

The Commission invited responses from member states and media industry participants as to which of the following options would be preferred regarding EU-level intervention: first, no Community action on media ownership, or second, action to improve transparency (to facilitate the exchange of information between member states in the interests of transparency of media ownership), or third, positive intervention — via a directive or a regulation — to harmonize national media ownership rules throughout the EU.

These options are still before the EU, and there are broad lines of division between those (principally among the major media companies) who favour greater flexibility on media ownership rules both at the national and the European level, the better to meet competition from the American and Japanese industries, and those (principally sections of the European Parliament) who support the implementation of a new directive on media ownership aimed at addressing the expansion of media conglomerates across European borders and across media, and the protection of pluralism (Commission of the European Communities, 1994).

Currently, the position remains under review by the European Commission, with attempts to define a viable approach for defining the concentration of media ownership through assessments of the share of the audience captured by any given media group. The most recent proposals apparently 'aim to set common standards across the EU on how many media operations a company or individual can own' (Tucker, 1995b: 2). According to Mario Monti, the Single Market Commissioner, it is essential to overcome the diversity of national rules in order to encourage cross-border investment in Europe's media industry. This proposal has thus far proved to be controversial within the Commission, with media interests intent on giving themselves maximum scope for expansion, and with member states wishing to regulate their own media space under the principle of 'subsidiarity' (Johnstone, 1996–7: 1). 'Subsidiarity' is the doctrine that no political issue should be decided at a level higher than is absolutely necessary. If it can be dealt with locally or nationally, then it should be left to the appropriate authorities and the EU should act only where there is a clear-cut need for a supranational level of action.

Whatever the level at which new rules of the game are eventually applied, the question of what ceiling to set for media ownership and how to effect this remains open. Currently, proposals exist for basing judgements on a combination of a company's audience share and the identification of the real 'controller' behind its investment. The conundrum of how to balance the commercial interests of dominant EU media enterprises engaged in international competition against the consumer benefits of pluralism across the single market remains to be resolved. On one

pessimistic (though plausible) reading, the EU's policy machinery is simply ill-suited to address such concerns (Kaitatzi-Whitlock, 1996).

The necessary articulation of culture and economics

Does a vision of media dominated by technological and industrial considerations actually make sense for our continent? It does evade the issue of what we need to have in common to establish an eventual political community in the European Union, should this be desired. The dominant economic logic has to seek an accommodation with political and cultural logics — namely, to acknowledge resistances in the shape of national sovereignty and regional identity claims, embodied in the much-touted principle of 'subsidiarity'. If, as argued above, the supranational drive is also producing resistances at other levels, it is indeed difficult to see how demands for 'subsidiarity' could be effectively side-stepped.

A second point concerns the validity of the postmodern projection of cultural consumption. It would be convenient for a market-driven variant of 'Europeanization' if nations were to disappear. However, it is by no means certain that they will obligingly ride off into the sunset. Nationally based consumption patterns in Europe, crucially defined by linguistic differences, are currently estimated to account for some 94 percent of total television viewing; this picture looks likely to continue for the foreseeable future (Stewart and Laird, 1994: 5).

The reductive conception of European culture that has latterly emerged is the consequence of a consistent market logic and side-steps at least two main issues. First, there is a tendency to ignore the actually existing complexity of the relations between 'Europeanness', national identity and audiovisual culture. Cultural diversity is more than a set of consumption practices susceptible to rationalization by the policy process or by the market. It is the expression of historically produced differences, which in Europe are centrally focused upon the national state. This tendency is still vital (if we needed to be reminded, there is the pattern of postcommunist state-formation after 1989). To the extent that audiovisual culture is conceived of simply as a vehicle for postmodern consumption, is purely marketized, it will necessarily play into existing differences rather than provide a basis for the building of commonality. In other words, there is a case for rethinking the place of public service broadcasting not just in response to the commercialization of national markets but also in relation to the wider European project, which plainly needs a sustaining political culture.

Second, an emergent European communication policy will need to bring into some kind of coherent articulation what is argued for the audiovisual domain and what is argued in respect of cross-media ownership. It is

precisely at this point that arguments about fostering cultural diversity link to those of democracy. At present, there is a serious lacuna in an audiovisual policy governed by industrial and employment considerations and not at all — or hardly so that it shows — by political and democracy-building concerns.

The market plus technological innovation will not alone deliver pluralism and there are as yet no clear institutional guarantees of how this might be achieved beyond the policy interest of member states in supporting national and other forms of identity and in regulating media ownership. Backing winners in Europe means encouraging the growth of Europe-based transnational multi-media groups and constitutes no guarantee that a plurality of voices will be heard. Although economic competitiveness in the global market is of major importance, it cannot be equated with meeting all the needs of citizens for participation in the determination of political and cultural affairs.

Thus, it is time to engage in a comprehensive debate that embraces not only audiovisual and information policy but also the question of media pluralism. A report of the European Parliament argues that under the Treaty on European Union 'protection of cultural diversity and pluralism comes under the heading of cultural aspects' (Fayot and Schinzel, 1994: 8). The means by which this key objective is to be secured remain open to question.

The demand for a new articulation of culture and economics is likely to be unavoidable in the medium term, despite the present dominance of technology and market-led thinking. The ascendancy of market-oriented individualism is not necessarily destined to endure, dependent as it is upon a specific balance of political forces. Consequently, although current technology-driven individualized consumption is presented as a solution to the problem of cultural identity, it is unable to completely obscure the underlying problem of how the collectivity can attain some measure of solidarity. Putting it differently, the question of how to fashion a cultural order and new collective identity for the EU will persistently reappear through the back door.

Back to political culture?

Perhaps we need to make the kind of normative leap sketched out by Jürgen Habermas in his attempt to discuss an emergent post-national European identity based on a new public. He states that 'the political culture must serve as the common denominator for a constitutional patriotism which simultaneously sharpens an awareness of the multiplicity and integrity of the different forms of life which exist in a multicultural society' (Habermas, 1994: 22–3, 27). In essence, Habermas proposes the

reconstitution of the nation-state within a federal system with a political culture to match. The new community is linked not to deeply-felt common symbols as the locus of identity but rather to the rule-governed matrix of a 'constitutional patriotism'.

What, therefore, might be the place of political culture in the European Union? This dimension of political life — one much broader than formal, institutionalized politics, and indeed, in part constitutive of it — is an important aspect of national culture in the sense delineated earlier. First and foremost (but by no means exclusively), political culture is located within the public space of the nation-state and significant in shaping conceptions of national identity. At the national level it is 'thick', 'dense' and compellingly imbricated in everyday life. For our purposes, however, it is also important to identify the emergent political culture of the European Union, which, detached from nationality, occupies a rather different space. It is located in what Keith Middlemas (1995: 684–7) has termed a 'unique political market-place' where elite participants drawn principally from the member states' political and business classes, together with a range of other lobbies, are involved in a long-term game in the framework of informal statehood.

For insiders of the Euro-political process, the EU has taken on some of the complex affective pull of national sentiment and is seen as needing promotion as a desirable locus of collective identity (Shore, 1993; Tumber, 1995). However, because such engagement is hardly widespread, there remains a major lack of popular consent and support for the EU, widely known as the 'democratic deficit' (Schmitter, 1996; Wallace and Smith, 1995). By contrast with the density of national political cultures, the Euro-political culture is 'thin', broadly perceived as characterized by elite brokerage, bureaucratism and legalism. For instance, the lack of EU-wide political parties and electoral campaigns, and the rather insignificant legislative role of the European Parliament, ensure that there is no recognizable supranational centre of popular legitimacy to European Union politics, a feature which substantially defines the scope and nature of much media reporting of EU affairs (Morgan, 1995). The EU's disaggregated political space affects the very possibility of constituting a European public and citizenry.

The Maastricht Treaty's Article 8 has instituted a category of European citizenship that arguably provides 'the potential basis for the development of a varied and consequential "Euro-citizenship" above and beyond the existing national citizenships guaranteed by member states' (Schmitter, 1996: 5). However, the exercise of these more than national rights is, as yet, embryonic, and it is too early to say how they might ultimately modify national political identities and cultures. What *is* apparent, though, is that broad popular engagement in the emergent European polity would be a

necessary precondition for a significant shift of loyalty and sentiment to the European plane.

Jürgen Habermas's vision of a European constitutional patriotism, therefore — a hyper-rationalistic model of political involvement and identification par excellence — would have to be able to withstand the continual seductive pull of the national. No easy matter, as given the continuing potency of national identity, we must realistically appraise the difficulties of constructing acceptable rules of the game for a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural political community. Such difficulties, however, do not mean that we should neglect this focus, not least because it counteracts the dominant economism and technicism. It does imply, however, that apart from thinking about the rationality of a Euro-political culture, we do also need to consider its affective dimension. The putative Euro-citizen is no dessicated calculating machine versed in the tropes of political philosophy. In addition to the necessary normative leap there is an affective one to put into the frame as well.

Because existing, state-bounded spaces of national culture, identity and politics remain potent and crucially significant, we should be cautious about the views of those such as John Keane (1995: 19–20), who argue that the national bindings have been substantially undone by developments in communications technologies, social movements, working life and consumption patterns that have engendered new relations at levels below and beyond the nation-state. In a nutshell, the argument goes, cyberspace has reorganized political space by reconfiguring collectivities. The transformative potential of new communicative practices should not be dismissed. However, the attraction of such techno-utopias is apt to decentre the question of how political power is exercised, and where it is ultimately located, a point justly made by Nicholas Garnham (1995: 24), who emphasizes the continued role of the national, state-bounded public space as relevant for the enactment of democracy. However, the latter's puristic Habermasian rationalism does not provide a convincing framework for understanding what makes collectivities cohere. It quite underestimates the undoubted power of non-rationalistic elements of political and national culture that confer a wider, non-deliberative sense of solidarity and belonging. It is this hinterland of taken-for-granted presuppositions — akin to what Raymond Williams called a 'structure of feeling' — that first needs to be conquered politically for an ostensible constitutional patriotism to come into its own. It also needs to be factored in to any theoretical analysis.

Hence, if there are good grounds for believing in the persistence of national complexity, and the continuing pull of national sentiment, that aspect of European culture which is likely to count most in shaping a new collective identity is the emergent supranational political culture. Cultural and industrial defence, while important objectives, neglect the building of

common political institutions and practices and contribute little to the creation of those broader forms of solidarity that are necessary conditions for any conceivable European polity.

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