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Euronews: the first European news channel as a case study for media industry development in Europe and for spectra of transnational journalism research

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Euronews is a medium full of contradictions. Although the Lyon-based television station employs five working languages, the specialist media journalists frequently write about its programme *No Comment*, a genre born of a shortage of staff which allows TV images to speak for themselves for several minutes without any journalistic treatment.¹ Only a pointed marker indicating the time and place of the events acts as an orientation aid for the viewer. Numerous articles refer to this and other occasionally questionable concepts, and describe the genesis of Euronews.²

Apart from this, the European news channel can be regarded as a model case from the point of view of transnational, critical journalism research in two respects: first it is to be demonstrated, on the basis of theoretical considerations relating to the course taken by communications policy, how a rationalized media operation is positioning itself in the European context of media industry development. Second, it can be viewed against the background of transnational journalism concepts. In both areas there are various means of access to the model case represented by Euronews, for example via media policy, media economic, media law and technological routes, as well as by considering editorial content. With reference to Euronews, a unique case within the European context, the following contribution aims to provide an outline of the problems associated with the development of the media industry in Europe and the features peculiar to multinational editorial offices. In the process it will become clear that new insights can be gained by combining the above-mentioned 'classical'

approaches with the research perspectives opened up by the special European or transnational nature of the TV station. Euronews serves as a model for a rationalized editorial operation and therefore for a quite specific type of journalism. As will be seen in the course of the following analysis, this rationalized mode of working in the multinational form found at Euronews is suitable for the integration of journalistic product and media industry development strategy at the European level since Euronews is capable of providing contents for the new communication systems ('highways'). This explains why the station has practically been bought up by the large French communications company Alcatel Alsthom (49 percent participation).

The European project Euronews is thereby caught in the maelstrom of a media industry development which, in the USA, has already led to an increasing integration of communications services and networks and which will have similar effects on media and communications companies in Europe. As this contribution will show, the journalistic product of Euronews and the manner of its production mean that it is predestined for this type of integration. It will also be shown, however, that this has a considerable impact on the journalism which is practised.

Television as a means of integration

Development of theoretical fundamentals against the background of the political will to shape matters at a European level

A transnational television channel as a means of effecting European integration? The idea is just as enticing as it is false. Several years ago now a complete change of paradigm occurred in the discussion about the integrative function of European television. As late as the 1980s quiet optimism prevailed in connection with the forerunners of Euronews which had been started up on a test basis (Eurikon, later Europa-TV):

Television introduces people to one another. Transnationally, this ... can also [occur] as a result of multinational channels which are offered in a variety of languages. ... If it is acknowledged that television in Europe has the task of contributing to European integration, a channel which follows the model of Europa-TV is particularly suited to performing such a contribution to integration. (Schwarzkopf, 1986: 23f)

This was the decade of advances at the European level: the European Parliament demanded a joint television, the European Commission was working on the Directive 'Television without Frontiers'.³ The European Community, only rarely the subject of journalistic reporting on account of its frequently abstract and protracted processes, wanted to create an image for itself on the television screen.

This was supplemented by a consideration, promoted by France in particular, that Europe had to protect itself from inundation by television images from the USA (Machill, 1997). To this end, Paris forced through, for example, within the framework of the Television Directive, quotas for film and television productions and spoke out in favour of the *exception culturelle* during the GATT negotiations at the end of 1993 (Machill, 1997). In the news sector the idea of a joint television station arose from the defensive attitude, supported by France, towards US dominance: even today Euronews considers itself to be the 'European answer to CNN'.

However, the theoretical approaches which were intended to underpin this result of a media policy desire to shape developments have proven to be inadequate. Instead they were to 'underpin' political wishful thinking. In 1995, too, this concept continued to be proclaimed without any theoretical basis to support it: 'Euronews is a part ... which shows itself to be the great opportunity and panacea with regard to reaching the common horizon by means of a European cultural identity' (foreword by Murciano in González Martín, 1995: 11). In a similar vein Siebenhaar (1994: 27) states that 'the integrative effect of television appears to be particularly necessary' and that 'it is precisely the audiovisual media which are particularly suited to performing an essential part of this task of integration'.

By contrast, a much more critical examination of the theoretical discussion surrounding the question of European 'integration as a social function of the media' occurs in the study undertaken by Meckel (1994: 26-34) which appeared at almost the same time. In it the author also examines integration-oriented theoretical concepts of a federalist and functionalist type for their 'fruitfulness' with regard to television as a means of European integration. The conclusion which she draws here is negative. Just as devastating is Venturelli's (1993) appraisal in her analysis of European media policy undertaken from the standpoint of democratic theory. The author argues that the 'reinvention of democracy on a transnational scale' (Venturelli, 1993: 496) by means of transfrontier TV channels and communication policies is not possible.

In particular, the theoretical works by Schlesinger (1991, 1993) and Wiesner (1990) make clear the change from optimism to disillusionment. The thought that a European television channel could have a similarly unifying effect in the heads of Europeans as the national TV stations have with regard to the citizens of individual nations has proven to be an inadmissible extension of precisely this *national* experience. In contrast to a nation, Europe is not unified politico-culturally. Accordingly, it is also necessary for a uniform television to face cultural, linguistic and political diversity. 'The making, if only in part, of a common European culture and identity via transborder flows of European-made television seems today an almost naïve aspiration' (Schlesinger, 1993: 13). Wiesner (1990) demonstrates equally impressively that a 'European cultural identity' appears to

be hardly conceivable. By means of a definition of the concept 'cultural identity' which excludes application to Europe, Wiesner exposes opposing approaches as being 'targeted towards a particular purpose' and 'ideology-driven' (Wiesner, 1990: 169). He therefore comes to the conclusion 'that it will hardly be possible to approach the problems of a culture-oriented European media policy sensibly via the concept of a "European cultural identity"' (1990: 172).

Disintegration in transmission practice

Euronews's theoretical foundation broke away before it was able to demonstrate its ability to confer unity and meaning since Euronews would, in fact, provide the opportunity to make Europe more 'well known'. It is still the case today that, due to complexity and unspectacularness, it cannot be taken for granted that European topics will be taken up in the national media. The media-immanent criteria which allow an event to become a news item only rarely apply in the case of Europe-related topics. The reasons for this (inter alia, protracted processes, political compromises instead of 'victories', the absence of highlights) have been collated by Loch (1986: 83ff). An additional problem lies in the fact that Europe is closed to the image-based language of television. When analysing European connections, the 'typical' TV images from Strasbourg or Brussels (press conferences, politicians, buildings, etc.) tend to disrupt rather than support the text.

As a consequence, EU reporting is under-represented among national television stations. For example, 90 percent of the economic reports featured in the main German news, the *Tagesschau* (ARD), relate to national events. By contrast, in the case of the news at Euronews, EU topics account for 78 percent of the reporting on economic issues (Meckel, 1994: 283). The same applies to reporting on individual EU member states (i.e. on topics apart from the European Commission, European Parliament, the Council of Europe, etc.). In a comparison of the structure of the news presented by Arte, the BBC World Service, CNN, Euronews, ITN, the *Tagesschau* and TV5/FT2 Meckel (1994: 291) established that Euronews broadcasts the most diverse news if the variety of EU states is regarded as the decisive criterion. By contrast, during the sampling period (for the EU member states), CNN only reported on Britain, Italy and Spain.

There is therefore an opportunity here for Euronews to fill a gap. It is a gap which also exists because the station considers itself to be an information channel whose aim is to complement the particular national companies.⁴ In addition, Euronews would offer journalists the opportunity to 'turn their backs on publicistic simplifications in national one-way streets' (Loch, 1986: 79). In principle, the *gatekeepers* in Lyon are not

subject to national constraints when selecting and allocating an item of news. As a result, it is conceivable that a form of journalism might exist which would release the viewers from their national thought patterns and bestow identity in a European sense. However, Euronews has not succeeded in designing European topics in such a way that they 'not only reach the viewer in terms of transmission technology but also occupy, entertain, move and encourage him or her to reflect' (Schardt, 1986: 9). Even allowing for the increasing Europeanization of the political, economic and cultural phenomena, it is still the case that 'the debates in the European Parliament will not number among the dramatic highlights on the television screen' (Brüske, 1986: 44). As will become clear from the following analysis of the programme design, it is certainly *not* the case with Euronews, contrary to the claim made by Siebenhaar (1994: 254), that 'the material which is used is prepared in such a way that a specific European perspective is expressed. Even topics which appear to be exclusively national are placed in a transnational context.'⁵

Programme design at a transnational news station

The use of five languages at Euronews is of particular interest to transnationally oriented media research. Five journalists (one native speaker per transmission language), who are instructed by a further journalist, the *chef d'édition*, come together per work shift.⁶ The unusual features of this work organization will be discussed later.

Content-related shifts due to differences in the lengths of languages, journalistic styles and conceptions of journalism

The individual languages, especially the journalistic language prevailing in the particular cultural sphere, require differing amounts of space, i.e. words, in order to convey information. It would even be possible to differentiate further and examine the differing number of morphemes which are required to convey the information. Due to the need for declination in German, more morphemes are necessary. This is, however, not the place to provide a more detailed linguistic analysis.⁷ English-speaking journalists at Euronews frequently use, inter alia, participle constructions, this enabling them to pack the most information into a 40-second contribution. The French style is also compressed, mainly due to the use of ellipses. In contrast to the work of their Anglo-Saxon colleagues, however, this does not have a positive effect on the informational content since the personalized and emotionalized style runs counter to it (see below). Whereas the language employed by the Italian journalists approximately represents the mid-point, the Spanish and the Germans require the

greatest number of words to convey their information (frequent use of main and subordinate clauses). However, on account of the *Tagesschau*-style typically found in Germany, one characterized by slow language and articulation aimed at creating the impression of neutrality and seriousness, the German journalists are clearly located at the end of the scale.

This can also be explained phonetically. The German language, in particular the High German cultivated by the *Tagesschau*, is characterized by a clearly audible glottal stop between the individual words (Klein, 1963: 29), thanks to which the beginning of words with an initial vowel can be clearly recognized. In normal speech, this glottal stop is not present either in the French language system, the other Romance languages or in most of the Germanic languages.⁸ In French there is nothing to signal the beginning of a word, the words almost merging into each other in one breath. This saves time when presenting news texts.

The fact that the preconditions in the languages are not necessarily reflected in the news content of a report is revealed in the following comparison of the five versions of a Euronews news item:⁹

Version 1: Deutsch

Die deutsche Regierung fordert härtere Strafen für Teilnehmer von Sitzblockaden. — Im Zusammenhang mit den jüngsten Demonstrationen und Sitzblockaden gegen den Atommülltransport von der Verladestation Dannenberg zum Zwischenlager im niedersächsischen Gorleben will die Bonner Koalition einen neuen Gesetzesentwurf einbringen. Danach sollen Teilnehmer von Sitzblockaden mit bis zu fünf Jahren Haft bestraft werden können. Dieser Entwurf solle noch vor der Sommerpause im Bundestag debattiert werden, so Rechtsexperte Norbert Geis in einem Artikel der 'Bild am Sonntag'. Das würde jedoch ein gänzlich neues Gesetz erfordern. Das Bundesverfassungsgericht hatte erst im März entschieden, daß Sitzblockaden lediglich eine Ordnungswidrigkeit sind.

Version 2: Français

14.000 policiers déployés dans toute l'Allemagne pour assurer la sécurité du convoi de déchets nucléaires, en Basse-Saxe, la semaine dernière. La note des manif est salée: officiellement 55 millions de marks, près de 200 millions de francs. Et personne ne veut payer. Ni le gouvernement fédéral, ni le land de Basse-Saxe, géographiquement concerné. Du coup, la coalition conservatrice du chancelier allemand Helmut Kohl veut employer les grands moyens. Elle vient de rédiger une proposition de loi visant à punir, selon leur gravité, de cinq ans de prisons maximum ce genre de sit-ins. Projet qui devrait être présenté devant le Bundestag d'ici l'été.

Version 3: English

The German government is to draft legislation making participation in sit-ins punishable by up to five years in prison. The move follows demonstrations by anti-nuclear activists attempting to block the transport of nuclear waste from the south to the north of the country last Monday and Tuesday. Fourteen-thousand police were deployed to hold back protesters. Germany's Constitutional Court revised legislation on sit-ins last March, making it an infringement but *not* a

criminal offence. The cost of the police operation has also sparked controversy with federal and regional government at odds as to who should pay.

Version 4: Espagnol

El gobierno de Helmut Kohl declara la guerra a los ecologistas alemanes. Aleccionado después de que la semana pasada miles de protestantes obstaculizaran el transporte de un cargamento de material nuclear, el ejecutivo redactó un proyecto para sancionar actos de descontento como éstos. Si fuera aprobada, la ley condenaría hasta a cinco años de cárcel a quien entorpezca el tráfico de mercancías. Bonn considera que impedir la circulación significa restringir el derecho de otros a la movilidad. El mismo razonamiento ya fue rechazado en marzo por la Corte Constitucional alemana, que no vio nada ilegal en las sentadas de ecologistas.

Version 5: Italiano

Scocciato dalle poderose manifestazioni contro il trasporto di scorie nucleari sul suo territorio, il governo tedesco, guidato dal conservatore Kohl, vuole varare una legge per punire con la reclusione fino a 5 anni coloro che organizzano dei sit in per fermare tali carichi. Lunedì e martedì scorso infatti le grandi proteste contro il trasferimento di residui nucleari da una centrale verso un deposito di stoccaggio si erano concluse in una serie di scontri tra la polizia e gli ecologisti. Intanto sulle pagine della *Bild Zeitung* di sabato il deputato conservatore Norbert Geis sostiene che esiste già una proposta di legge per punire i sit in.

Comparison of the five language versions reveals what are, in part, considerable differences in the design of the news item.¹⁰ Wide variations are to be found, especially in connection with the lead-in. Whereas the classical lead-in (the central element of the report — who and what — is presented in one sentence) is employed in the German and the English versions, the French version begins by telling a short 'story'. The actual report, namely that the German government wants to introduce a draft bill for the punishment of demonstrators participating in sit-ins, does not feature until the second half of the report. Due to this design, the informational content of the French version is the lowest.

The lead-in to a news item is of particular importance at Euronews since the contribution cannot be presented in the same manner as at typical news stations. The utilization of five languages excludes the appearance of a presenter on the screen. In order to ensure that the essential information which would otherwise be included in the presentation is conveyed at the beginning of a news item, the approach recommended at Euronews is the use of a headline ('Bonn demands prison sentences for sit-ins'). However, this approach is not applied uniformly by the entire editorial office.

The Spanish version even begins with a sentence offering a value judgement and a comment ('Helmut Kohl's government declares war on the German environmentalists'). The Italian version also starts with a value judgement ('Irritated by the mass demonstrations . . .') before moving on to the key statement in the second part of a sentence which must be regarded as too long for a news item lead-in ('the German government, led by the conservative Kohl, wishes to create a law in order to . . .').

These five examples show how different the journalistic approaches to design can be. The image sequence, which is the same for all five journalists in a Euronews news team, is supplemented by different texts.¹¹ An additional factor, as can be seen from the five texts, is the differing treatment of the key statement which is drawn, in the main, from the news agencies. In connection with the print sector Schroeder has shown that when a medium is to be internationalized, the editorial content must be adapted to the communication culture of a particular country:

Most of the problems are to be found within the sphere of editorial content since it is related to the communication culture which prevails in a country. This not only applies to the selection of the topics but also to the manner in which the content is presented. (1992: 9)

This insight can be applied to the news sphere and, therefore, to Euronews. The dry, factual *Tagesschau* style would be certain to put a French viewer off in the same way as, conversely, the style of a French *journal*, which is narrative in character and delights in playing with language, would, at the very least, surprise the German viewer.

Comparison of the German and French Euronews versions also confirms Schroeder's insight that the informational content of the German reports is greater (Schroeder, 1992: 10). The narrative style of the French version corresponds to Schroeder's analysis that 'the French journalist personalizes the news. His German counterpart is more neutral, he restricts himself to communicating the facts' (1992: 10). If, in the specific case involving Euronews, the English-language (high level of information) and the Spanish (lead-in with comment) example is added to the French-German contrast, it is easy to construct a contrast between Mediterranean and Nordic journalism. Here, however, such a statement is nothing more than a hypothesis to be examined in a study based on content analysis. At least the hypothesis corresponds to the insights gained by Schroeder within the framework of a comparative study of news stations:

In Italy, Spain and France information in the news programmes is usually specially prepared, i.e. presented in an attractive manner. This approach is revealed for example in a lively form of presentation, in a highly cultivated personal, occasionally affective style of speech ... as well as by a situation in which personal comments are not kept separate from the facts. By contrast, in Germany and in Britain great value is placed on objectivity and on a clear separation of information and commentary. As a result, the news programmes show themselves to be clearly more sober and pragmatic. (Schroeder, 1994: 45)

What is conspicuous during news items lasting between 30 and 50 seconds can become a problem in the case of Euronews background reports (analysis, international) lasting several minutes. Ensuring that these reports really appeal to the five language groups in equal measure would require

the creation, as early as the image-selection stage as well as later in connection with the text contents, of a new genre: the European TV report. Up to now Euronews has not confronted this design problem. Instead, the favoured approach is to take prefabricated background reports from Reuters or the national TV companies and translate them into the relevant five languages. The requisite adaptation, not only in the micro area (design, preparation) but also in the macro area (selection of topics, interpretation) does not feature in the process. An imbalance at the decision-making level (editors-in-chief, heads of staff) also has an effect in this area. Since there is both a Spanish head of staff and a Spanish editor-in-chief, there are often 'good reasons' for using and reworking magazine-programme contributions from Spanish television. When it comes to the selection of topics, the contributions from the German-language stations have a smaller lobby.

In addition to the country-specific differences with regard to journalistic design and the selection of topics, on another level there is also the problem created by the fundamentally differing conception of journalism in a society. For example, it is not until relatively recently that French journalism research has concerned itself with the fact that in France investigative journalism plays a peripheral role and that — especially in the audiovisual area — there is great proximity between the state and journalism.¹² These differing conceptions are reflected at an early stage, namely in the various training systems which exist in the European countries. Whenever, therefore, a journalistic product which is influenced by the conceptional ideas of a country is received by the public of another country, irritation may occur. This problem exists with regard to the model case Euronews. Incidentally, the same applies to the German-French culture channel Arte. It was established there that only animal programmes enjoyed the same level of favour among both the French and German public, otherwise the viewers' preferences were for those programmes shown on the culture channel by the particular national stations which participate in Arte. Without the adaptation demanded by Schroeder, a Euronews report produced under English 'influence' may well have far exceeded the limits of invasion of personal privacy in the eyes of a French public. Conversely, a report under French 'influence' may not be considered to be sufficiently substantiated by a German public due to the lack of proof for a supposed revelation.¹³

Organization of a multinational editorial office

Impact of the national imbalance in the staff

The imbalance in the staff at the level of decision-making editors and the employment of five languages result in a media law problem which needs

to be discussed in the context of transnational journalism: who bears legal responsibility for a news item at Euronews? The original intention at Euronews was for an editor-in-chief to be installed for each of the languages which are represented. Since, however, neither the German public channels ARD and ZDF nor the BBC participate in the European news channel (Buéas, 1992; Lintörfer, 1992) there has not been a German editor-in-chief since the start of transmission. The position of English editor-in-chief was likewise cancelled at a later date.

The German situation is doubly critical due to the fact that, since the beginning of 1995, no German journalist has been represented at the level of *chef d'édition*.¹⁴

Even if Euronews should again employ a German *chef d'édition* in the near future, a media law vacuum would still exist. None of the *chefs d'édition* or editors-in-chief has command of all of the five broadcast languages to such an extent that a text which is due for transmission can be examined to ensure that it provides no grounds for concern. German texts, in particular, pass through the television station unedited. This can result in serious errors such as occurred, for example, at Christmas 1994 when in a news item on the blessing *Urbi et Orbi* it was stated that the Pope 'blessed his sheep' in St Peter's Square. Such a representation disregards the need for restraint in news journalism and shows scant respect for religious acts.

A one-sided news presentation within a report on the Turkish invasion of the Kurdish area in northern Iraq in the early part of 1995 resulted in several hours of protest calls from Turks living in Germany. This news item had also been transmitted unedited.

In addition to the absence of control mechanisms within the editorial office, a further potential danger exists. In the classical national news editorial offices young journalists are often supported by experienced colleagues who, as a result of their practical work in news journalism, are well acquainted with the peculiarities of this type of journalism. At Euronews the new recruits are often left to their own devices and are, in part, not even trained journalists. Both among the freelance journalists and the permanent members of the editorial staff there is a significant number of journalists who have completed neither on-the-job training nor a (journalism) study course.

In addition, the extreme working conditions (12-hour period of duty in a day, midday and night shift) promote the use of young, resilient, mostly single journalists. A news editorial office organized along such lines and without experienced editors to provide leadership runs counter to the idea of continuously improving the quality of the people who work there: as soon as the newly recruited journalists have gained experience — and, at the same time, have been 'burnt out' by the extreme working conditions — they will seek more comfortable positions. Evidence of this is provided by the staff turnover at Euronews.¹⁵ A successive improvement in quality

TABLE I
National presence at the various levels of hierarchy for the
Euronews editorial team (1996)

	Editors-in-chief	<i>Chef d'édition</i>	No. of practising journalists ¹⁶
English		1	7
French	1 ^a	1	16
German			6
Italian	1	1	9
Spanish	1	1 ^b	9

Notes: ^aSimultaneously editorial director; ^bsimultaneously deputy editorial director.

within the news editorial office is improbable from the outset within this system.

Rationalized editorial office organization

In the light of these 'practical constraints', Euronews has developed an editorial office organization which is interesting in the context of transnational media research. To avoid quintuplication of the journalistic work in all areas (e.g. research) as a result of the employment of five languages, the task of the journalists at the lower level (see Table 1) is reduced to simple 'execution': a text must be written and spoken to fit a ready-cut sequence of images. Classical journalistic tasks, such as research and the selection of information, are dispensed with.¹⁷ It is clear that the journalists feel this work to be 'unsatisfactory'. The segmentation of the individual steps does not serve to produce a European product in the sense of a joint product to which each nation has made its particular contribution. The division of labour at Euronews hardly allows the task-executing journalists any room for creativity. Even today numerous characteristics of a rationalized operation are identifiable at Euronews (see Table 2).

In the laboratory situation at Euronews journalistic modes of working are practised which generally belong to one trend in the area of transnational journalism. For example, division of labour and outsourced pre-production occur in the printing area as a result of cooperation between news magazines. For Tatò (1994: 242) such cooperation represents almost the last glimmer of hope for a form of European journalism: 'due to the policy of exchange and cooperation we at least find ourselves facing a hopeful beginning'.

An example of this form of European cooperation is an agreement between the German magazine *Focus* and the French magazine *L'Express*. *L'Express* was chosen because 'it is closest to *Focus*'.¹⁸ This editorial exchange contract lays down that 'whatever can be exchanged, is exchanged: archive material, photos, summaries, finished articles'.¹⁹ There is

TABLE 2
Editorial office organization

Characteristics of a rationalized operation	Specific work-organization at Euronews
Flat organization	Classical departments are missing. Consequently, no head of department. Hardly any control of the journalistic products.
Optimization of the production process	Pre-cut images and pre-researched dossiers are presented to the 'task-executing' journalists. From these each journalist prepares the TV-contribution for his/her language.
Shift-based period of duty, time is pre-structured	The course of production for the reports is 'pre-determined'. A minimum amount of contributions must be produced per unit of time. Additional research is prevented. Shift-based periods of duty make specialization difficult.
Outsourcing of pre-production	The production costs in Lyon are low since use is made of picture material from Eurovision.
Reduction of fixed storage costs	Low storage costs since a press archive is almost non-existent. ²⁰

also to be cooperation with regard to the dispatch of special correspondents.

Such editorial exchange agreements open up a new level which is beyond the scope of classical research methods associated with the analysis of media concentration and diversity of opinion. It is meanwhile an accepted fact that the European dimension has levered out national concentration limits (when Berlusconi and Kirch sell each other media, although the media laws which were tailored to suit them are observed, the change in the concentration is, however, only formal). Although the described type of exchange agreements cannot be assigned to the areas relating to ownership concentration at either national or European level, it does, however, create a higher area: journalism concentration or content-related convergence in the course of European media development. It is similar to the congruence in terms of content revealed by the various language versions of the Euronews programme.

The European journalism laboratory Euronews has got a future. That said, the classical programme with its five sound sub-carriers will, however, only be of secondary importance. This will become apparent during the overview of communication technology developments and the theoretical bases for communication policy which concludes this article.

In order to facilitate understanding, it is first necessary to discuss aspects relating to media economics and media policy of relevance to Euronews.

Basic media economic and media policy conditions applying to the European journalism laboratory

Transnational low-budget journalism

The initial thought is economics related: the television images which are produced day after day by the broadcasting companies which have come together in the European broadcasting organization (European Broadcasting Union, EBU) exceed the transmission capacities of each of the national companies. Within the framework of Eurovision, an exchange of programmes, which Euronews only has to log into in order to 'siphon off' the images, takes place many times a day. Terms such as 'recycling' and the 'utilization of left-overs' are heard in this connection (Meckel, 1994: 275).

It would be a banal observation to point out that merely siphoning off material, rearranging it and immediately broadcasting it is hardly innovative in the sense of creating a European television. As has been shown, the product known as 'Euronews' does indeed have its weaknesses. However, the standard Euronews will gain in importance within a short period of time precisely because of the condensed form of working which typifies it as well as because of its function as a 'collection point'.

For two and a half years after it started transmission on 1 January 1993 Euronews faced financial ruin. The television companies which make up the EBU found themselves in a financial crisis and, as a result, were unable to support their joint Euronews project to the necessary extent. The grants from the EU were nowhere near as plentiful as the wholehearted declarations of support from Strasbourg had led people to believe. The French government also withdrew from the scene: instead of supporting Euronews, as early as the autumn of 1993 it committed itself to the educational channel which in the meantime transmits during the day on the ARTE frequency. As a result, further financial aid for Euronews had become even less likely (see Williams, 1993). The President of Euronews, Massimo Fichera, appeared 'very disappointed by the attitude of the state authorities and the banks of France or Lyons' (Elie, 1993). This disappointment was all the greater since, during the media policy wrangling surrounding the location of the station, France had made considerable pledges: 'In connection with the application for the site, the city of Lyon, the region and the French State have undertaken to make up, for an unlimited period, any shortfall which might occur' (Pitzer, 1992b).

Instrument of French media policy in the European context

Euronews is an important piece in the mosaic of France's Europe-oriented media policy. 'Euronews must be regarded as the first great European

deployment against the supremacy of international dominance... Although it is not possible to analyse all of the facets of this media policy here, two further elements should be mentioned.

First, with regard to the underlying journalistic concept, Euronews has got a younger brother in France: the Europe editorial office of Radio France Internationale (RFI). Also, from the beginning of 1993, a multi-national editorial office has been working in the Maison de Radio France in Paris producing, since May 1993, a daily radiophonic Europe-journal in French, English, Spanish and German. This initiative represents the erstwhile summit of a series of measures to improve French presence among the world radio stations. In 1988 a study commissioned by the Prime Minister established that 'France's audiovisual presence abroad was inadequate' (Pericard, 1988: 13) and that France ran the risk of being dominated by Anglo-Saxon world radio stations. RFI's Europe editorial office provides the opportunity to interpret Europe from a French perspective and to broadcast French topics throughout the world.

France also places a European emphasis within journalist training in the form of a postgraduate course at the renowned Parisian school of journalism CPJ. With considerable financial support from the French Foreign Ministry and the European Union a course of journalism studies is offered there which is intended to provide both French and foreign students with a 'preparation for Europe'. However, it has proven to be the case that the contents of this preparation bear a clear French hallmark (for details see Machill, 1993).

It is certainly true that Euronews cannot be instrumentalized as *La Voix de la France* in Europe and no one would wish to imply such an intention on the part of French media policy. However, the 'Mediterranean list' (Lintörfer, 1992) of the TV station from Lyon may well be regarded as a counterbalance to the EU's shift in emphasis towards the north which France perceives as a threat. France considers its influence to be diminished by the inclusion in the EU of the Germanophone Austria and the Scandinavian countries. The topics which Euronews takes up — and it is not rare for these to be French topics — can also be transported into these regions.²¹

Integration of media enterprises

The process of 'Frenchification' of Euronews has certainly not been slowed down by the participation of the French company Générale Occidentale. At the end of May 1995 the company, a 100 percent subsidiary of the French telecommunications, transport and energy company Alcatel Alsthom, took over 49 percent of the operating company.²² The Director General of Générale Occidentale, Françoise Sampermans, was appointed deputy presi-

TABLE 3
Euronews (1996)

Association of organizers SECEMIE	Operating company SOCEMIE
18 members of EBU (100%) (responsible for the programming)	• 51% 18 EBU members • 49% Générale Occidentale (since 1 June 1995)

dent at Euronews.²³ Editorial independence is to be guaranteed by the association of organizers which the 18 EBU members continue to hold on to.

Even if influence on programming is excluded, at least institutionally, the commercial operating company Alcatel Alsthom, which produces telephone equipment, cables and the high-speed train TGV and has interests, via its subsidiary Générale Occidentale in publishing houses, media, cable companies and the video rental business (Preissner, 1995), will integrate the Euronews radio station into a new strategic concept.²⁴ Central to this concept is the integration of media industries, i.e. in this case linking content-creating companies with enterprises from the telecommunications industry. In the course of the liberalization of the telecommunications markets in Europe, the industry giants such as Alcatel, Deutsche Telekom and France Télécom are attempting to secure good starting positions for themselves. And the best chances of a good start into the multimedia age belong to whoever possesses both the networks via which the data can be transported and the contents which are to be transported via the networks. Such contents may take the form of databases, complete editions of magazines and newspapers and, in the near future, digitalized television programmes too (see later). This integration of the media industries was reinforced as a result of Alcatel Alsthom entering into an alliance with the French multimedia company Havas according to which Havas took over Générale Occidentale. In a parallel move, Alcatel Alsthom took over 21 percent of Havas's capital. Euronews, which fits Alcatel Alsthom's strategic concept particularly well, was excluded from this transaction and therefore remains, on the basis of a 49 percent share, in the hands of Alcatel.²⁵

Accordingly, by October 1995 the strategic concept had been successfully translated into practice: thanks to its subsidiary Générale Occidentale, Alcatel Alsthom was able to offer for sale a company which possesses publicistic contents. With the exception of Euronews, Havas even took over this area and, in return, opened itself up to Alcatel Alsthom which, as a result of this financial participation, is in a position to influence decisively the consumer market for Alcatel's most important business segment, telecommunications. Together it is therefore possible for 'multimedia activities' to be expanded. And quite 'incidentally', according to its

own information, the French company Havas has become the fifth largest media organization in the world after Time-Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann and Murdoch as a result of this transfer, something which, in turn, is in the interest of French media and communications policy (see below).

A secondary aspect with regard to this strategic concept is the difference in the way advertising is handled. It is, of course, possible for Euronews to acquire more advertising. However, in this sphere, too, media research in recent years has laid an illusion to rest. Similar limits apply to transnational advertising as they do to transnational television. Differing national consumption and experience-related habits make it difficult for an advertising campaign to be exported. Problems start with the name of the product: an Irish liqueur named 'Irish Mist' can be expected to enjoy little success with German consumers due to the negative connotation of the word 'mist'. In the same way, a Japanese car manufacturer had failed to consider that its model 'MR 2' is pronounced '*MR deux*' in French and, if spoken quickly, can soon become the French word for excrement.

The internationalization of advertising can therefore only be conveyed via images, music, lifestyle. However, it is precisely these lifestyles which are so different throughout the countries of Europe.

As a result, one comes to the conclusion with regard to the television-advertising sector, too, that Europeanization fails due to limits and differences which are both qualitative and content-related. It can therefore be stated with regard to television advertising too that, generally speaking, a ... reverse trend is observable. (Meckel, 1994: 156)

Precisely this reverse trend, which at first sight might appear to be a further flaw in the project, turns out to be a trump card from the point of view of the new shareholding partner in consideration of the new telecommunications technologies which are associated with it.

Euronews as cargo for communications systems

Why are Générale Occidentale and, therefore, Alcatel Alsthom, interested in participating in Euronews and securing its survival? In order to answer this question, basic theoretical insights into communications policy will be considered that will help provide a prognosis about the future use of the location Euronews to be ventured.

The deregulation of the telecommunications markets in the EU opens up new markets for Alcatel Alsthom. By 1998 the monopolistic positions of the classical state and meanwhile privatized telecommunications companies will have ceased to exist in the EU states. Nearly all of the large companies active in the media sector are forcing their way into these new markets (see Meise, 1995). Contents holding particular attraction for telecommunications

companies include digital television, data highways, pay-per-view, video-on-demand and similar 'new services'. Recognition of the fact that these services are not primarily oriented towards existing demand but, instead, 'are exclusively conceived according to the profit motives of media industries and the technological conditions under which they compete at the national and international level' (Dröge and Kopper, 1991: 66) ought to number among the fundamental insights in communications policy research today.

It is necessary also to be aware that, as a rule, media innovations are at first technical frameworks which still have to be filled out with programme contents. Whether, and if so which, opportunities there will be for utilizing such innovations, developed as they have been with regard to economic and political criteria, cannot be predicted at an early point in the developmental phase. 'The media markets are therefore provider markets: the growth of requirements and need is contingent on the services on offer' (Dröge and Kopper, 1991: 52). Applied to the strategy devised by the communications company Alcatel Alsthom, the question which arises is as follows: which communications products are to feed the communications systems (co-)developed by Alcatel Alsthom? The planning undertaken by the French company testifies to its far-sightedness, particularly within a European perspective: on the one hand there is the communications technology, on the other, participation in Havas and, therefore, in the contents in the form of Euronews. In this regard, Euronews is extendable. When, in the foreseeable future, new possibilities for transmission arise as a result of the digitalization²⁶ of the television, according to the prognosis, Lyon will not only produce *one* TV image with five sound sub-carriers but *numerous* TV images with numerous sound sub-carriers, research services, on-line services, etc.

Euronews offers a highly rationalized editorial process by means of which numerous programmes can be produced. An editorial agreement already exists between Euronews and the regional station Tele Monte Carlo (TMC): every evening Euronews utilizes its resources (international agencies, EBU material, archive images, editorial groundwork, international know-how in the form of the journalists who are directly available) to produce a classical news programme with on-screen presenter and news items which are played in as required. Frequently the items run parallel in the Euronews news (with a French sound sub-carrier). The programme which is produced for TMC is fed live into the ongoing programme of the regional station.

Using digital transmission technology several programmes of this type can be produced in various languages in Lyon. Numerous synergy potentials exist for Euronews here: an editorial office comprising a multinational team does not require fivefold time and resources for the production of five (language) versions of a news programme as compared

with the production of one programme. Consequently, from the point of view of media economics, Euronews has a key role to play. At a time when the transmission frequency is no longer the scarce and therefore expensive good it once was, importance attaches to 'being able to produce programmes to fill the large number of channels or to sell them from stocks to which rights are held' (Luyken, 1990: 629). Euronews has this capacity five times over and is therefore in a position to achieve economies of scale in a linguistically heterogeneous Europe.

A second model able to provide contents for the communications systems euphorically termed 'highways' might exist in the form of special services such as, for example, picture research. Thanks to the background reports it offers in five languages, Euronews provides a source for information seekers throughout Europe. In addition, there could also be on-line services such as European weather reports, portraits of 'European' personalities, sports news, etc. All of this in five languages. In order to access this information without changing location, use must be made, in turn, of the communications systems. And who is standing at the ready to build these highways?

It is precisely contents such as databases for picture research or film archives, which will be tried out within the framework of the multimedia pilot project 'Infocity NRW' in North Rhine-Westphalia. The biggest German public radio and TV station WDR will then, for example, be able to link its broadcasting centre in Düsseldorf with the main office in Cologne via a high-speed data network and, within seconds, call up film material from the archive and from ongoing production. Euronews could provide these services Europe-wide and in five languages.

Euronews is in fashion. Not in terms of its programme — this is demonstrated by the viewers' poor response to it. It does, however, follow the trend with regard to its business strategy within the framework of the development of the media industry in Europe. The strategy, consisting of 'being able to offer a combination of network and services' (Meise, 1995: 139), is already known from the USA. The increasing integration of services and systems is one of the main characteristics of the current development of North American communications systems. The development there is a mirror image of Alcatel Alsthom's strategy: North American production companies from the film and video industries, which are therefore producers of contents, are buying cable networks in order to have at their disposal their own distribution channels.

The business strategy in relation to communications technology is thereby rounded off. The participation of Générale Occidentale in Euronews is an example of 'integration levels of production, transport, communication and the consumption of material and intellectual goods which have previously not been much in evidence' (Dröge and Kopper, 1991: 79). Such a development is extremely problematical when seen

against the background of journalistic diversity and quality. Euronews turns out to be a European example of a 'standardization of industrial manufacture which is also occurring in the area of so-called intellectual production' (1991: 79). For Alcatel Alsthom the virtual purchase of Euronews by its subsidiary Générale Occidentale represents a logical piece in the mosaic consisting of positioning a communications company en route to the multimedia society. There are further partnerships with publishing houses, news magazines and radio stations. Recent developments show that Alcatel Alsthom cooperates with communications companies (including Siemens) in order first to construct the networks in France and, second, to test the demand for the communications products as described above (Ridding, 1995). And, in the form of Euronews, Alcatel Alsthom already has something 'to offer'. The fact that in 1994 Générale Occidentale also bought into the biggest Swiss cable television company Rediffusion (approx. 600,000 subscribers) can simply be regarded as a further piece in the mosaic of this business strategy (Preissner, 1995): what cable company could resist a situation whereby the contents are delivered directly by companies belonging to the same group?

On the other hand, these insights can be refracted through the spectrum of media policy research: even if the large French concerns with media interests²⁷ compete against each other vigorously, in a European perspective they are certain to enjoy the support of French media policy. Law no. 94-98, which came into force on 1 February 1994 (*'loi Carignon'*)²⁸ considerably relaxed the concentration rules that had previously applied. For example, the upper limit for participating interests in private TV stations was raised from 25 to 49 percent (!). The background to this decision was clear:

To prepare French companies for international competition and the constantly changing market conditions: the multiplication of the satellite channels, the digitalization of images and sound, the deregulation of telecommunications, the formation of large conglomerates, in particular in the USA and in Japan... (Drouot, 1994: 155)

According to the then Minister of Communication Carignon, the French state 'is called upon to face up to its responsibilities'.²⁹

French companies reacted immediately to this initiative: Bouygues increased its stake in the largest TV station TFI from 25 to 34 percent (Kempinski, 1994), CLT and Lyonnaise des Eaux each raised their participating interests in the TV station M6 to 29 per cent (Colonna d'Istria, 1994; Schwartzberg, 1994) and the large commercial radio stations RTL and Europe 1 both expanded their market shares (Bailly, 1993). The idea that the thrust of law no. 94-88 was not only in the direction of media economics but, instead, at the same time provided

evidence of the close ties between the state and the (media-based) economy in France will not be developed further here.

With its participation in Euronews, Alcatel Alsthom has taken advantage of the media policy situation in France. Even if the aspects relating to media policy and economics are set aside, the consequences of this development are grave. From the journalistic perspective alone, the danger exists that the special news contents and styles, which a pan-European television actually ought to develop (Schwarzkopf, 1986: 25), are not developing along the lines of either purely journalistic or purely viewer-oriented criteria. Instead, style and content are following the line of development in communications technology: 'Which fit must the journalistic product have in order to correspond to the innovations in the media?' To this extent Euronews could, after all, turn out to be the voice of Europe, not, however, in the journalistic sense but, instead, as an example of a European telecommunications development which is staking its claim to 'European' contents.

Notes

1. See e.g. Le Caisne (1992) and Deffner (1995).
2. Inter alia: Anschlag (1993), Cahapé (1993), Loibl (1991, 1992b), Oltmanns (1994), Pasch (1993), Weber (1992b). The only Euronews monograph (González Martín, 1995) consists of the thoughts of the Spanish editor-in-chief at Euronews and is to be regarded as a chronicle rather than a media-science analysis.
3. For Directive 89/552 see, inter alia, Cluzel (1993: 46-58) and, for a detailed account, Martín-Pérez de Nanclares (1995).
4. Conversation with the *Directeur de la Rédaction*, Gérard Decq, on 30 April 1995.
5. This account corresponds only to the aims which Euronews set itself; it cannot, however, be justified on the basis of any analysis of the programme.
6. In addition to the shifts which produce news around the clock, there is also a parallel production line for the background reports. There the head of the shift calls himself 'producer' and is responsible for the conception, the research and the picture editing of a background report.
7. For the basic linguistic units see the detailed account by Martinet (1963: 23f).
8. For the phonetics of words and sentences see the detailed account by Klein (1963: 29ff).
9. The contribution was broadcast on 29 April 1995. It is a randomly chosen example which, however, can stand in place of many other news items. The extent to which these insights can be generalized must be examined on the basis of a representative sample.
10. Individual Euro-journalistic deficiencies such as, e.g., the use of names which cannot be assumed to be known ('Dannenberg', 'Norbert Geis' in the German version) — certainly not in Austria and in Switzerland — will not be discussed further here.
11. As a result, sound-image divergence occasionally occurs, i.e. there is a lack of correspondence between the image and the text. At Euronews this effect is

additionally reinforced by the fact that in order to ensure understanding, in dependence on the target viewing public, differing amounts of background information must be provided. If, for example, the Italian politician Umberto Bossi appears in a report for 10 seconds, the Italian Euronews journalist can assume that he is well known. His German counterpart must provide help in categorizing him, at least through the inclusion of an additional sub-clause.

12. For further details on this complex topic: Gerbaud (1993) for the sphere 'investigative journalism' and Bourdon (1994); and Chamard and Kieffer (1992) with regard to 'the proximity of journalism to the State'.

13. Legal judgements in France have caused the media to employ innuendo rather than evidence in reports making 'disclosures'. In April 1995 the Upper Court of Appeal upheld a judgement which stated that the publication of a tax report was inadmissible for use in a 'disclosure' even though it conceded public interest in the 'disclosure'. By contrast, in Germany an absolute ban on publication does not even apply in cases where information has been acquired illegally so long as the disclosure is in the public interest (Branahl, 1990: 3/20).

14. In issue 6/1995 (June) of the German magazine *Journalist* a vacancy for a new *chef d'édition* was advertised (p. 111). In issue 4/1996 (p. 94) the position was advertised once more, this time holding out the possibility of offering the post of *chef d'édition* to a freelance journalist. Meanwhile, a former 'normal' journalist has been promoted to take the position.

15. At the time this article went to press, of the journalists employed at Euronews at the start of broadcasting on 1 January 1993 only two editors from the German team remained. By 1994/5 numerous editors with unlimited work contracts had already left the editorial office.

16. The figures have been taken from a reply sent by Euronews (4 May 1995) to the author of this article. To these journalists (employed on both a fixed term and a permanent basis) must be added the freelance journalists who, particularly in the case of the German team, make up the majority.

17. See also Oltmanns (1994: 57).

18. Maud Boussegeon (BURDA France) in an interview with the author of this contribution (18 May 1993).

19. *Ibid.*

20. By contrast, the picture archive is carefully maintained. This is also particularly important for Euronews: in the case of an important current report TV pictures are sometimes not yet available. Other stations can let a presenter read the report. Since there is no presenter at Euronews a series of images (from the archive) must always be employed.

21. Whether it really is the case that a disproportionate number of French topics are taken up must be examined during observation of the programme over several weeks. However, for example during the presidential elections in April/May 1995, increased treatment of this topic, in part unjustifiable in terms of content, was noticeable (e.g. pure election campaign reporting), creating the impression of a French TV station rather than a European one. This insight casts a different light on the results produced by Meckel (1994) concerning the diversity of the news contents.

22. See Communiqué de Presse (Euronews) dated 31 March 1995.

23. This was announced by Madame Sampermans on 28 April 1995 during a company meeting at Euronews. However, after the takeover of Générale Occidentale by Havas in the autumn of 1995 Madame Sampermans lost this post again.

24. At this point it is also necessary to discuss whether in a multicultural editorial office such considerable differences in the remuneration of the journalists

as occurred in the years 1993–5 can be maintained in the long term. On account of the higher 'domestic prices', a German freelancer earned almost twice as much per day as his Spanish counterpart who had to perform exactly the same work. Euronews is also far removed from achieving a corporate identity due to the fact that French nationals make up the entire administration and a large part of the technical side of operations.

25. In addition to the shares in Euronews, the 49 percent participation in Radio Nostalgie remains with Générale Occidentale. The audiovisual area was excluded from the transaction.

26. Digital transmission technology allows the amounts of data necessary for the transmission of television pictures to be compressed. More television programmes can therefore be transmitted for the same capacities. Consequently, the frequencies are no longer a scarce good. An explosive increase in the number of TV channels is therefore technically possible. However, the question of the contents of the channels still remains.

27. In addition to Alcatel Alsthom, above all Compagnie générale des Eaux, Bouygues, Matra-Hachette, Chargeurs and Lyonnaise des Eaux should be mentioned.

28. Named after the Minister of Communication who has since been arrested on suspicion of corruption.

29. Alain Carignon during a hearing of Commission des affaires culturelles, familiales et sociales in front of the French National Assembly on 12 May 1993.

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Television news and the economy: inflation in Britain

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Introduction

The economy is a hotly disputed realm in almost all political systems, and economic turbulence is linked in successive studies to political support for parties (for example, see Nannestad and Paldam, 1994). We might assume, therefore, that media coverage of the economy warrants exploration, with its contribution to public understanding and, through this, effective citizenship at issue. Does the news satisfy the needs of an informed citizenry; can it educate the electorate on the economic issues that decide elections? In this context, it is surprising that the literature on the media and the economy is so underdeveloped.

In Britain in the 1970s, the Glasgow University Media Group's (1980) ground-breaking and controversial work addressed the perceived lack of impartiality in economic news on television. Yet, while there has been considerable development in other areas of public communication, there has since been relatively limited interest in media coverage of the economy — although a few studies touch upon the topic. Political science, in contrast, takes a keener interest in economic news, modelling its relationship with different measures of public opinion. Research in the USA suggests that the press has an important mediating role between the public's experience of economic turbulence and the resultant political fallout (e.g. Mutz, 1992). Blood and Phillips (1995) suggest a more direct role, with press coverage of the economy driving public opinion — a finding

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