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CULTURE REPORT

Progress Europe

Europe in the Media - Media in Europe

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FOREWORD

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More Debate, More Curiosity

More and more people in Europe are turning their backs on newspapers and are informing themselves via television, and, increasingly, via the Internet. In this edition of the Culture Report, Umberto Eco watches television and proceeds to dissect the phraseology of politics, analysing the dramatic composition of reporting, criticising the power of images. Time and again he exposes the superficiality and the lust for sensationalism in our media-driven society. Granted, the media populism of Silvio Berlusconi's Italy is presented as an extreme case. But the fusion of media power, business and politics we see in Italy is also an issue in other European countries.

It is also an issue with regard to Brussels. The average citizen often finds it hard to understand exactly what goes on there. The complex apparatus of the EU appears to lack transparency. The citizen has not developed an emotional attachment to the Brussels bureaucracy.

It is certainly not the task of the media to carry out PR-work for a European Union that remains remote from its citizens. But the media can contribute to the development of a European public space. Up until now though, Europeans have been talking more about each other than with each other. They still largely inform themselves via a media that speaks their own language and that is almost exclusively produced in a national context. Hardly anyone is aware of the public debates that captivate people in Portugal or Bulgaria. And yet issues such as the environment, terrorism or the alignment of legal systems affect all Europeans, and decisions on these issues are no longer made along purely national lines. A number of attempts at establishing a European-wide journalistic media have failed. But the stronger Europe grows, the more grave will be the ramifications of the lack of a democratic control mechanism offered by a properly functioning media. And the less we see of Europe in the media, the greater the distance will become between Brussels and EU citizens.

So, what can the media do to promote more discussion and curiosity about European democracy – as well as more contention and critical debate? This is the theme of this report, which 21 authors from 11 different countries have dealt with. I'd like to thank the authors as well as the translators, who have made it possible for this report to be published in other languages. I'm delighted that the Culture Report "Progress Europe" has established itself, with this second edition, as a European project. I look forward to future editions. This Culture Report makes one thing clear: Europe thrives on exchange and seeks out discourse.

Ingrid Hamm

Executive Director, Robert Bosch Foundation

European Rituals

Can culture in the European Union play a strategic role in contributing to the formation of a European identity? This was the central question posed in the first edition of the Culture Report "Progress Europe," which was published last year by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations together with the Robert Bosch Foundation. It's hard to get excited about Europe, said Wim Wenders in that first edition: "Europeans are longing for emotions but we don't use them."

After the first edition of the Culture Report presented an overview of the standing of Europe's cultural relations in all its facets – from film to fashion – the focus of the second edition is an especially pressing subject: Europe in the Media – the Media in Europe. It builds on the results of a conference of journalists and researchers that took place in Brussels in June 2007.

Pan-European television does not yet exist but a specifically European media culture is certainly discernable – be it in shape of publicly funded broadcasters or in the style of classical journalism commentaries of leading newspapers.

Europe produced the first newspaper and has created the world's biggest network of correspondents. It will therefore be all the more affected by the collapse of quality journalism, says John Lloyd, the founding editor of the Financial Times Magazine. The political scientist Christoph Meyer asks whether the 27 nations of the European Union really need a European public sphere in order to function effectively and democratically. He argues for the introduction of more personalised voting in EU politics, so that constitutional referenda no longer become scapegoats for the mistakes the EU has made in the past. According to the analysis of the Polish author Adam Krzeminski, fragments of a European public sphere are already present on the continent. But these fragments are largely to be found in elite circles.

How can a European public sphere take wing? The Internet, low-cost airlines and the Erasmus student exchange programme have ensured that a new generation of young people has become the new Europeans. And sometimes a European public space appears to be within grasp: the whole of Europe sits down each evening to observe the same media rituals. The differences in our media habits are becoming less noticeable, the similarities are becoming greater.

I'd like to especially thank the Robert Bosch Foundation. It is due to their commitment that the Culture Report has been made possible at all. And I thank our partners, the British Council and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, who have made sure that this report is also published in English and Polish, and that it actually reaches a European public.

Kurt-Jürgen Maaß

Secretary General, Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations

Europe Is Our Common Future

In the first edition of "Progress Europe," I wrote that, just as Europe was changing, cultural relations were changing with it. As the UK's international cultural relations organisation, we at the British Council are glad of this opportunity to contribute to the second edition.

Over the last year, we ourselves have progressed. We are translating our vision of "building next generation Europe" into reality. We are doing so through a series of European projects – European in terms of themes, scope and partnerships. Each of these projects brings Europeans together to take part in conversations about the key issues facing Europe today. In the process, we are making our own contribution to the "European public space."

For example, we have brought together next generation influencers from all over Europe to address the challenges and opportunities created by ageing societies; teachers and pupils from different European regions to share best practice in culturally diverse schools; representatives of different European cities to explore the relationship between civic openness and economic success; and young leaders representing new demographics on both sides of the Atlantic to explore Europe's future relationship with North America.

In addition we have staged public debates in 28 countries in Europe and North America to explore the findings of comparative research into national policies for the integration of migrants. We have created space for artists, educators and scientists to seek a common language with which to debate solutions to climate change. Apropos language, we have surprised many who know us for our traditional role promoting the teaching and learning of English by committing ourselves to the promotion of multilingualism as a factor in European cohesion.

For us at the British Council the European public space has become our everyday reality. It is our workspace. Again and again, we have been confirmed in our belief that cultural relations in the 21st century are no longer about promoting positive perceptions about nation states. Competitive public diplomacy is an anachronism. Collaboration is what we are about and European partnerships on a global stage. I therefore welcome the opportunity to partner, once again, the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation.

Michael Bird

Director, British Council in Germany

Cohesion Through a Public Sphere

The media, which we deal with every day, which we use every day, is a creator of the European public sphere and, at the same time, a part of this sphere as well. This collection of articles and essays shows in a concise way that there are a number of ideas about what "European public spheres" are or what kind of "European public spheres" we need. For some, the public sphere is formed by the body of reporting about Europe, by the seething swarm of some 1200 correspondents at EU press briefings in Brussels. For others, the public sphere is made up of citizens who represent the cultural diversity of Europe and remain in contact with each other and who, in their difference, enrich each other.

Everyone is agreed that one or even a number of European public spheres are needed, if we want to nurture, promote and further develop the latent, arduously achieved, perhaps sometimes questionable but by no means insignificant efforts by the citizenry to promote social cohesion.

Everyone talks about diversity in unity. No one knows how to go about achieving it: here, the brokering of a bilateral or trilateral history book; there, forcing through one lingua franca as a language for common usage. The economic, political and institutional integration of what we call the "European community" formed very slowly. The media in Europe has been a part of this development, and it is certainly sensible that it continues to contribute actively to European integration. The media world in Europe is experiencing at least two accelerated processes at the moment: it is being concentrated into an ever decreasing numbers of hands and the public media is being commercialised in the Internet. We are rapidly heading towards mega-media concentration, in which the acceptance by Web 2.0 users will probably determine the media's existence or non-existence in the end.

It is enthralling. Though it's still not yet quite clear whether we are viewers and participants who are there for the blast off of two rockets that will soon explode above us into the brightly coloured fireworks of a "European public sphere of Web 2.0 users." Or whether we take into account the constraints of our capacity to process and record information in relation to content, multiplicity, relevance and linguistic performance and, as a result, ask for no more than the football results from the weekend, tomorrow's weather and the latest traffic information – and whether, in passing, we mourn the demise of culture altogether and the demise of our media culture in particular.

Albrecht Lempp

å*Chairman and Managing Director, Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, Warsaw*

Chapter 1: European Public Sphere

Europe has got a communications problem. Individual European countries make a good impression on investors, consumers, the media, tourists, corporations and governments, as they parade the world stage, vying for attention. But Europe as a whole has a tougher job presenting a clear picture of itself. That's the analysis of the world's leading expert for nation branding, Simon Anholt. Europe is still perceived, even by its own citizens, as a bureaucratic monstrosity. Europe still resembles a collection of friendly states without any great interest in a deeper rapprochement. What can the European Union do, not only to present itself in a better light but also to create a fruitful basis for better communication between the member states?

It's called "Six One News" in Ireland, "Jurnalul" in Romania, "Wiadomości" in Poland and "Nyheterna" in Sweden. Studio photos from the most popular TV news programmes from 27 European nations are gathered in this report. Each night, Europeans observe similar news watching rituals, whether it's with Patrick Poivre in France, Huw Edwards in the UK or Małgorzata Wyszyńska in Poland. These newsreaders are prominent in their own countries. But who has ever heard of them in other European countries?

Lithuania, TV3, Zinios

Whisperings Between Neighbours

Elements of a cultural public space are already visible in Europe but they are not inter-connected. The public sphere can be seen in elite circles or within national (media) borders. How can it be spread more broadly? How does one awaken curiosity in the debates and concerns of neighbouring countries?

By Adam Krzeminski

A European public sphere is both a reality and a chimaera, if not a philosophical impossibility. It is only with some difficulty that the circuits of national discourse come together to form channels of communication, stretching from Poland to Portugal and from Cyprus to Lapland.

Europeans hold discussions about a common foreign and energy policy, about the Lisbon Agenda and about the Bologna Programme. They follow the presidential election campaign in France with great interest as well as parliamentary elections in Germany, England or Poland, because they now know that the results of these elections will soon colour their internal politics.

But at the same time they still live, above all, with their national media – even if it is owned or published by 'foreign' media companies – and the national media concerns itself, in turn, with its own national problems, corruption affairs, ranking lists and economic interests. A European public sphere remains a kind of day dream.

There are wonderful examples of this. A German film maker, Volker Schlöndorff, produced a film about the strike in Poland in the summer of 1980 because, for him, it was an important contribution to the debate in Germany about the revolutionary aberrations of the twentieth century. But in both Poland and Germany his film received little recognition.

There are also surprising successes – even with regard to a European public stretching beyond EU borders: Polish film maker Jerzy Hoffman, for example, with quite modest financing, made a film trilogy about the Ukraine, "Ukraine. The Birth of a Nation." The film was discussed as intensively in the Ukraine as would have been the case in European countries in the nineteenth century after the release of a new national novel.

Whoever wants to find easy access to neighbours is able to do so. The Internet, satellite dishes and cheap flights make it possible. But one needs to know the language.

A knowledge of English will get you so far but not far enough if you want to find your way as a Pole through the Ukraine or as a German through Poland. English is, and remains, the lingua franca in this European tower of Babel. Nevertheless, even relatively good school or tourist English is rarely sufficient to allow neighbours to carry out a qualified or psycho-analytical discussion with each other. And such discussions are sorely needed in a Europe that is proud of its national, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity but with its numerous bloody national histories, cherished collective egotism and arrogant ignorance towards neighbouring countries. However, despite all this, fragments of a European public sphere are a part of our daily experience.

It begins with TV news reports about the endless rounds of summit meetings – EU, G8, NATO – even if television consumers only receive a small piece of what is really happening: some kind of EU expansion here, a veto of some sort of contract with Russia there, America's anti-missile defence shield in Poland. TV viewers are already used to the fact that even their own private worlds can no longer be understood within a purely national framework.

Even in Poland, where until recently a national-conservative government tried to revitalise the deep-rooted mistrust and dislike of Germany and the Germans, the opinion polls show that Poles are more Europe-friendly than ever before. The EU's institutions, including the European Parliament, are valued more highly than the national parliament. Europe's Constitutional Treaty would be approved with a clear majority in a national referendum.

For most Poles, Europe is not only the norm, it is also a kind of insurance against the abstruse antics of their own political classes. After the entry to the EU in 2004, the majority of Poles were even in favour of a directly elected European president, a common foreign policy, the formation of a European army, and the quickest possible conversion to the euro. And at the same time they wanted to see the individual nation states receive a stronger say within the EU – a squaring of the circle, that's not atypical for Europe.

Larger fragments of the European public sphere enter the national consciousness where the EU is directly present in internal political debates. Has the government negotiated the best EU-entry treaty possible or has it "gone down on its knees" and "sold out" its national interests? Are European parliamentarians who undertake proceedings against their own institution in Strasbourg traitors or good citizens who are mobilising Europe against attacks from their own hillbilly-like politicians.

Insuring against abstruse antics

In a huge sense, Europe has become a corrective, a monitoring mechanism and a pedagogical institute. It acts as a litmus test and a catalyst for national debates and domestic political conflicts. Even euro-sceptics from the Law and Justice Party of the Kaczynski brothers, who avoided making their position clear in the accession referendum of 2003, and who, in their party's platform in 2005, did not want to move beyond the European ideals of Charles de Gaulle from the 1960s – in other words, they were against the introduction of the euro, against the Consti-

tutional Treaty and against a common EU foreign policy – even these euro-sceptics call for a common EU energy strategy towards Russia.

However, the rapid Europeanisation of EU member states has also brought with it a clear counter movement. The call for a "renationalisation" in the 1990s came from the so-called old Europeans, not from the new ones. In Germany, there was, first of all, concern about Germany as a business location, then about Germany's cultural identity, national pride and the "new patriotism." It was not surprising to witness the egocentrism of the French, who declared the German-French position on the Iraq War in 2003 to be a European position and who rejected the Constitutional Treaty in a referendum in 2005 because of an apparent threat to the French labour market by "Polish plumbers." In 1954, it was France that rejected the proposal for a European defence community. And in French eyes, there is nothing more inappropriately rude than to call on France and the UK to give up their permanent seats on the UN Security Council, at some time in the future, for the benefit of a common EU voice. Now Germany is also pressing the claim for a seat for itself on the UN Security Council.

It is not political discord that places the existence of a European public sphere in jeopardy but the lack of political will to solve the existing problems in an efficient manner. At the moment, national interests take precedence in European political discourse.

And there are still not enough proponents of a European public sphere. The British press baron Robert Maxwell stopped publishing *The European* after nine years. It was a newspaper that was meant to be a forum for European intellectual exchange. European democracy plays itself out to a high degree within nation states and not at a continental level. The ponderous television channel EuroNews has not succeeded in creating a European public space. However, without a European consciousness there will be no European federation.

We are still more or less captive to the sphere of influence of our local media, even if it is owned by international corporations. What is still unimaginable is the idea of a European television channel (which not only functions for the Eurovision Song Contest), with a reach from Lisbon to Helsinki and from Kiev to Ankara.

To this point in time, only local television channels with a limit of two or three languages have met with any degree of success. The German-French culture channel Arte does not have all that many viewers but it is held to be one of the most cultivated and ambitious TV channels in Europe. It would have been nice to have seen the founding of other Arte-like TV channels by now, such as a local Polish-Ukrainian TV channel, based in Przemyśl in Poland and Lemberg in the Ukraine, as well as a German-Polish-Czech television channel, based in Dresden, Breslau, and the Czech city of Hradec Kralove. There is no chance of establishing a pan-European version of CNN.

Although English is spoken everywhere, Europe does not at all speak with one tongue. Europeans will continue to remain dependent on interpreters, intermediaries and

"For Poland, Europe has become a corrective, a monitoring mechanism and a pedagogical institute."

translators of neighbouring cultures for some time. And they often do a very good job.

The Dutch reporter and essayist, Geert Mak, has single-handedly mastered an overview of the horrific history of Europe in the twentieth century. His book received rave reviews in many countries. But it can only be read in a few languages. Arne Ruth, a Swedish author and commentator, notes correctly that European journalists read and discuss Francis Fukuyama, Samuel Huntington and other agenda setting American authors, but they communicate very little with each other about European journalism.

Timothy Garton Ash's account of German Ostpolitik, "In Europe's Name," may have been discussed in Germany and Poland but less so in France, let alone in Spain or Greece. In turn, his book "Free World" appealed to the British, the Germans and the French but not to Poles or Czechs. In 2003, we all read Robert Kagan's philippic against Europe, but only the French read Emmanuel Todd's passionate epitaph on the USA – apart from a few hundred Germans and one or two Poles.

Europeans have no equivalent of *The New York Review of Books*, no qualified source of information about European thinking. Each European country has its own monthly magazine, which, like the German magazine *Merkur*, is dedicated to "European thinking" but only from a particular perspective.

Old European dominance

Europe's main weekly newspapers and, in Germany, the *feuilletons* and the Sunday inserts of major newspapers, occasionally look over the fences of their neighbours. The garden beds they see next door are also quite interesting. But they are seldom used to cultivate a complete ecosystem of European discourse.

No European cultural magazine or website continually publishes the best-seller lists of all EU countries. If we saw them we would suddenly recognise how out of synch we are as Europeans. Together we read the same American world best-sellers and after that we each read our own national best-sellers. If we also read a book by one of our neighbours, then it's mostly much later so that no common literary circle or exchange of ideas develops. Of course, there are exceptions. When Günter Grass amazed the European public with the revelation that he was a soldier in the Waffen-SS for a short period during World War II, it was Polish people from Grass' birthplace of Gdansk who stood by the author and, in the end, snuffed out the German campaign against him. In this case, the channels of communication worked.

For these to function however, one needs interpreters who not only translate words but who also explain the motivations of the other and scrutinise the clichés. These kinds of interpreters, however, are missing from European discourse. Or rather, they are there but they are hardly called upon.

In all honesty, who knows about the current affairs debates in Portugal, Greece or Finland? Who at all ponders the fact that a representative opinion poll in Portugal has revealed that the dictator Antonio Salazar, of all people, is held to be the most important politician in Portuguese history?

What German author or satirist, who made fun of the Kaczynski brothers as the third rehash of Pilsudski, took care to compare the founder of the Polish state from 1918

not with some strongman from a banana republic but with – from a half-century earlier – Otto von Bismarck? And when Gerhard Schröder took along Bismarck's portrait to a talk with European intellectuals outside of the chancellor's office or when Schröder, in Bismarck-like fashion, went over the heads of Poles and Lithuanians to cuddle up to the squeaky clean democrat Vladimir Putin in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, German writers and commentators expressed no sense of outrage at all. Why should we concern ourselves with inviting the presidents of Poland and Lithuania, which border Kaliningrad, to Putin's celebrations, so long as the oil continues to bubble out of the ground in Siberia?

A European public sphere still has to formulate in our heads. The dominant steers – the venerable intellectuals of 'old Europe' – still graze in 'old European' pastures. They read English, French, German and sometimes a little Italian. And their image of Europe is also impoverished.

In 2003, when two of Europe's greatest philosophers – one German, one French – wrote a manifesto of Europe's concept of itself, they exclusively invited colleagues from 'old Europe' to a debate about their thesis: an Italian, a Spaniard, someone from the UK; but no Czechs, no Poles, no Estonians. One excellent historian, who spoke about Western (meaning Atlantic) values, did mention that Eastern Europeans shared these values. But beyond this lip-service recognition no one knew anything about the history of Polish or Hungarian ideas to the extent they would have known about French, German or American ideas. And because of this, the debate was missing all the subtleties of a lack of concurrence between 'old' and 'new' Europe. It is a lack of knowledge which often leads to misunderstandings in daily political affairs.

It's enough just to refer to only a few examples. When, in 2005, a Lithuanian minister compared Stalin's crimes with those of Hitler's, she was sternly rebuked by Western Europe and reminded that only the negative memory of the Holocaust, and not the Soviet Gulags, have a place in the founding myths of the united Europe.

Another example is 'old' Europe's failure to stand in solidarity with Poland in its dispute with Russia and the prevailing Stalinist view that the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, and the ensuing annexation of Eastern Poland and the Baltic States by the Soviet Union, was legal and morally acceptable. As well, the refusal of Vladimir Putin to classify the Stalinist mass murder of Polish elites as genocide is treated with indifference in 'old' Europe. The much-talked-about "Change through Integration" policy towards Russia will not push the Kremlin to revise the Stalinistic premise of Russian historical philosophy.

One might argue that the essence of a European public sphere does not lie in the shortcomings of history lessons. Let us rather – as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas recently urged us to do – discuss a new kind of structural change in the public sphere; that is, the sale of quality newspapers to international corporations that are not concerned with the balance of democracy but only with profits and circulation figures.

Let us talk about the new electronic media, about the blogger, who, especially in times of crisis, such as during the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, is able to research more quickly and much better than professional

journalists. Why always complain that Europeans remain ignorant about their own history, or that they rarely look at the quality press of their neighbours, when there are services like Perlentaucher, in German, and signandsight.com, in English? These sites offer a weekly overview of issues and debates covered in the most important European, American and even Arabic weekly newspapers. They are supporting and fostering a kind of international cultural and political debate that is not hemmed in by parochial or 'old' European views.

Europe's required reading

The Internet is helping Europeans to network. There is eurozine.com, cafebabel.com and eurotopics.net. But it is time to talk not only about the channels of communication but about the contents; to talk, for example, about the lists of required reading in each EU country and to compare the extent to which the books on these lists are national as well as European. How much of Europe's literary heritage permeates through to Spanish, Latvian and Bulgarian school students, as well as to German and French students? Where are the remaining blind spots of European consciousness? It simply cannot remain so that in the schools of 'old' Europe, nothing – literally nothing – is said about the cultures of Central-Eastern Europe.

"Together we read the same American world best-sellers and after that we each read our own national best-sellers. If we also read a book by one of our neighbours, then it's mostly much later so that no common literary circle or exchange of ideas develops."

And this gets to the heart of one of the most compelling debates in Europe. Is a common European history book, which would have to be approved in each EU country, possible? The EU Commission is pursuing this goal. Historians and many cultural commentators are sceptical. European history is a collection of national narratives, and a sensible amalgam of these narratives is hardly conceivable. What for one nation was a glorious victory was for another a shameful (or honourable) defeat. It's as simple as that. Nevertheless, there have been attempts – some more, some less successful – to forge links between us Europeans. The successful attempts come – just as in the Middle Ages – from individual historians who single-handedly try to view Europe as a whole.

What appears to be among the less successful attempts is a collectively written German-French school book of European (not German-French) post-1945 history. Clear in its composition, not at all excessive in complexity, it is ultimately, however, too narrowly focussed on a German-French perspective. The events in East Germany on June 17, 1953, for example, are dealt with in five times as much space as the *Solidarnosc* protests in Poland, which were denigrated to a footnote. The decades-long debate about the recognition of the Oder-Nysa border between Germany and Poland is suppressed in the school book, denying students any knowledge of the momentousness of German-Polish reconciliation.

The high point of modern European history in this rather strange school book is an icon of the so-called St. Petersburg Tripartite: a large picture of Jacques Chirac, Gerhard

Schröder and Vladimir Putin. It was probably meant to be a tribute by the authors to the political imperatives of the day, but within a year of the book's publication the Tripartite had been completely forgotten.

On the other hand, the so-called Weimar Tripartite, formed in 1991 by France, Germany and Poland, is not mentioned because the authors did not consider it opportune in terms of modern-day politics. Yet this German-French attempt to produce a common history book does deserve praise for being initiated at all and it inspires others to emulate the feat. A German-Polish school textbook is meant to follow. Hopefully, it will also be read critically in neighbouring countries.

The European public sphere may well be a theoretical impossibility, as the Berlin political scientist Ulrich K. Preuß claims. But there is rudimentary evidence that it exists, albeit indistinct and fragmentary. It may sometimes remind one of a game of Chinese whispers, in which the last participant in the circle of information hears a completely different message than the one originally delivered. But we are communicating with one another. Somehow.

In the world of business, it already functions splendidly – no one asks anymore whether in relation to matters of finance a European public sphere exists or not. *The Economist* or the *Financial Times* have long been the European media for managers and economists.

However, this is only one part of the European public sphere. Other parts are still waiting to play a role because transnational publishing houses worry very little about a European public sphere. Above all, they serve national circles of communication and stir up national emotions. Such was the case in 2006 when the Polish tabloid press, which is owned by the German publishing house Axel Springer, exhaustively stoked the fires of anti-German sentiment, while the German press peddled anti-Polish clichés. Whether this was, nevertheless, the beginnings of European public sphere remains to be seen.

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Adam Krzeminski, born in 1945 in Radecznica, has been an editor of the magazine "Polityka," in Warsaw, since 1973. He has published numerous essays and articles in German daily newspapers and weeklies and is a guest-editor of the German weekly "Die Zeit." As well, he is writer of film scripts for historical-political documentary films.

Rituals and Routines

Each weekday at high noon a routine procedure takes place in Brussels: in a huge cinema-like hall an assorted mix of people is assembled. A briefing by the European Commission is about to commence. Up to 1200 correspondents, purportedly the largest press corps in the world, gather before two dozen or so officials from the Commission. Are these meetings merely routine or do they actually represent the stirrings of a European public? *By Joachim Fritz-Vannahme*

There are enough complaints about the absence of a European public. But why does one really need to complain about the failed attempt to set up a European-wide journalistic media, when journalistic functions are duly being carried out at a national level? Can one really argue that the consequences of a lack of democratic control will become an even greater concern the more Europe grows?

Even without an institutionalised European public there is not less Europe in the media but more. Is the absence of a European public really the reason for the identifiable and expanding distance between Brussels and Europe's citizens? Shouldn't we look more searchingly at the quite simply miserable relationship between citizens and politicians generally?

In actual fact, Europe finds a much greater echo in the media than it did 15 years ago. Reporting about the European Union has increased noticeably over this time period and the number of journalists in Brussels has almost doubled. So much for the popular belief in the absence of a European public. It has existed for some time. The question is, who propagates this belief – or, who complains the most about its apparent absence? The answer is, first and foremost, that it is we Germans who do so. The idea of a European public sphere is not debated in Britain. First, because of the constitutionally-free political system that operates in Britain, and second – and above all – because every form of EU statehood remains quite remote from British thought, and the idea is fought with relish. The avant garde of this defence force is the London tabloid press, which is actually owned by the publishers Rupert Murdoch, an Australian, and the Canadian, Conrad Black. So much for the ideal of British independence. Debate about a European public sphere is also absent in France. Both the media and *opinion publique* do not command much respect in the land of Rousseau. Both of them lack the almost constitutional status they enjoy in Germany.

Where does the specifically German desire for a European public sphere come from? The first answer is that Germany's constitution plays a role. After its defeat in World War II and the subsequent division of the country, acquiring the skills to function according to the constitution was a learning process for the

whole of society. The media played a role in this process and is therefore held in high esteem.

At a more intellectual level, the work of social philosopher Jürgen Habermas also resonates in the demand for a European public sphere. His work "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere," published in 1961, is, without doubt, among the most influential analytical works in the history of modern Germany. It has been of great significance for a generation of journalists who've adopted it as a blueprint in terms of their understanding of their role in society. Habermas established with philological accuracy that the imported idea of "the public" – by which was meant the bourgeois public – found its way from the highly developed nation-states of England and France into the pre-nation state (or the politically "underdeveloped" state) of Germany during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The concept was imported a second time after 1945 from Britain and America, less so this time from France. For Habermas, there is no functioning democracy without a public sphere. This was also one of the core ideals of West Germany. Habermas makes the key point that after 1789 the public "cast aside its literary guise" and was no longer subject to the educated classes but to the uneducated masses. So viewed, the public sphere becomes a weapon for an emancipated population and a spearhead in the fight for democracy. What was successfully applied to a young – and, in the beginning, not uncontroversial – West German democracy is today applied across the European Union: there is no democracy without a public sphere. And the opposite also applies: because the EU is apparently lacking in legitimacy, in democracy, there is no European public. And because there is no European public, European democracy remains half-baked.

My proposition is this: there is indeed a European public sphere. It is only just coming into existence, a delicate plant that at the moment hardly resembles the lush, blossoming public sphere that exists at a national level. In turn, this European public space can only be appreciated by one who conceives of the building of the house of Europe as occurring in the same way as individual nation states were built.

Granted, the EU cannot be made into a state. Its form as well as its history does not comply with the ideals and the provisions that once prevailed for the individual nations that today make up the Union. Those who long for the EU to be modelled as a nation fail to recognise the originality of the commonwealth of the EU. Unfortunately, this is a common mistake that explains many of the misunderstandings about European politics. We need to remember something we have almost forgotten, 18 years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain: during the height of the Cold War, there was a media network, in the form of Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, RFI, BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle and later Radio Luxemburg, which strove to be European-wide, and in fact functioned as such. Nevertheless, the Berlin social historian Hartmut Kaelble is absolutely correct when he says, today, that this media network did not provide the "impetus for the emergence of a European public."

To return to my proposition: if the delicate plant of a European public is already emerging, where is it to be found? The answer is: at midday, every Monday to Friday, at Berlaymont, the home of the European Commission in Brussels.

In a huge cinema-like hall, as bright as day,

"The public sphere becomes a weapon for an emancipated population and a spearhead in the fight for democracy."

although cut off from the banality of natural light, a colourful assortment of people gathers. They are multilingual and always in a hurry. But here, suddenly, they have arrived in a place of peace and quiet. At high noon, the European Commission begins its daily briefing. Up to 1200 correspondents – purportedly the largest press corps in the world – are gathered before two dozen or so officials from the European Commission. A celebrated, ritualised conversation takes place, which can also be followed on the Internet.

Information exchange and social forum

This hall functions as a stock exchange of information as well as a social forum. As a stock exchange, most of what is debated here is administrative gibberish. Nevertheless, it is regurgitated through the information-hungry machinery of the media. This involves risks and produces side effects: under the pressure of meeting deadlines and beating the competition, administrative decisions are dressed up as politically important decisions. Administrative pronouncements, which would hardly be reported on by national media in national capitals, become a sensation in Brussels. The result of all this for the general public is disappointment and boredom. The pubic is meant to understand a political discourse that is hardly worth bothering about.

The EU briefings also function as a social forum. Without them the newcomer as well as experienced hands would become lost in the labyrinth of Brussels. Most of the 1200 correspondents are general reporters – none of them can know everything, let alone understand everything. This is why everyone eagerly helps each other out. Competitors work within a kind of professional club. Operating within this social environment also involves risks and produces side effects: conviviality sometimes leads to complaisance. Brussels lives for and within itself.

This is the hard core of a European public. But how is this brought to life? Through the labours, the common principles of each EU nation; through the issues raised in the common briefing room; through pictures and TV images recorded in the room and made available to the European picture bank; through inner-European conflicts, which every journalist at the briefings is aware of and which are reported on differently by each journalist afterwards. As well, this European public sphere is made manifest through a media consumption that is becoming more similar in Europe from country to country, where news is mutating into forms of infotainment. There are shows whose formats apply from country to country or which are exactly the same for all countries, from *Big Brother* to *The Weakest Link* to *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

The third part of my deliberation involves addressing the question of why it is that we are now talking at all about a European public sphere. The first answer is to be found in the wish that the EU, finally, ought to become more self-confident in cultivating a European identity. But another answer is to be found in the course of events at the European level. Some common European milestones can be identified on the path towards a European public space.

The first of these was the 1992 Maastricht Treaty because it ushered in a new relationship between the EU and its member states, and between the Union and its citizens. Following this was the Danish "No" to Maastricht – practically the scene setter for the study of European political psychology, as it was the first time that the citizen entered the political game as a naysayer. I'm reminded of Jürgen Habermas: it is no longer the educated classes

who are the subject of attention but the uneducated masses – they want to have a say and influence decisions.

The second milestone was the Cresson Affair. The French EU Commissioner Edith Cresson fell from office in 1999 because of her own stupidity, but also because of critical reporting in the European press. (Only the French press held back from criticism because their reporters did not believe the campaign against the former French prime minister was an attempt to establish a critical public sphere but merely an anti-French conspiracy.) There may well have been a deeper reason for French sensitivity: since EU expansion in 1995, the scene in Brussels had become more Anglophone. As well, the Scandinavians brought to the EU a culture of transparency that was not necessarily an ideal of the French. At the same time, the Cresson Affair marked the point of entry of investigative journalism into Brussels politics.

Milestones in the development of a public sphere

The next stage in a Europeanisation of public political space was the case of Buttiglione in 2004. This was centred on a European theme par excellence: the freedom to express an opinion as against political correctness – with the latter winning out in the end. An anti-clerical reflex versus anti-homosexual views. It created great theatre; even, for the first time, great opera: death on an open stage. For days, the designated Italian EU Commissioner Rocco Buttiglione sang his swansong, in various languages, into every available microphone – and then cut his losses and stayed in Rome in the end.

Further milestones on the path to a European public space included the so-called Bolkestein Directive, ensuring freedom of movement for service providers within the expanded EU. There were also the various referenda on the EU constitution and a heightened media awareness right across Europe. The French, in any case, stayed at home in their lounge rooms almost every night during the first part of 2005 to watch the evening news. As well, the question of the admission of Turkey to the EU is not to be underestimated in terms of its contribution to the development of a European public space. It is debated everywhere, although viewed differently.

Also not to be forgotten: the Iraq war, which also became a point of dispute in Brussels and within the European arena. It was no accident that Jürgen Habermas, together with his French colleague, Jacques Derrida, celebrated the Iraq anti-war demonstrations of February 2003 as the beginning of the formation of a European public space and as the "re-birth of Europe." Perhaps this was put a little too simply but it wasn't too badly thought out.

Viewed in this way the European public doesn't look so poorly. Granted, what is missing are some well developed "transnational resonance structures," as the social scientist Klaus Eder calls them. In this sense, the Polish journalist Adam Krzeminski makes a good point when he argues that the reach of European debates is still quite limited. When Krzeminski laments the lack of communicative input by, of all people, European intellectuals and philosophers, then he is right. He is criticising those who, in earlier centuries, were the flag bearers of enlightened debate, of European debates.

"The whole of Europe knows and cultivates the same media rituals every evening – the differences are becoming smaller, the similarities are becoming greater."

They are missing, for the time being, from the resonating room of debate. Their places have long since been taken over by others, by intermediaries and commentators in the media.

So this European public sphere, which in my opinion has been visibly evolving for some time, where is it heading? The fundamental political question that needs to be addressed here is: is a European public needed at all in order to bring more transparency, legitimacy and accountability to Brussels? What would be gained, either politically or practically? And, don't the national media in individual countries already do the necessary work? Are these national media not already converging in terms of the technology they use, their economics and their contents? Are these national media not involuntarily or even unconsciously becoming agents of an increasing Europeanisation?

Is it possible that a European self-consciousness is already much further developed than one might be led to believe, on hearing about problems of communication between Brussels and the average citizen?

Tony Blair spoke in June 2007 in the Reuters Building in London about the relationship between politics and the media in his country. Blair made an assessment in relation to Britain which applies everywhere in Europe. He said: "The media world is becoming more fragmented. The main BBC and ITN bulletins used to have audiences of 8, even 10 million. Today the average is half that. In 1982, there were three TV stations broadcasting in the UK. Today there are hundreds. In 1995, 225 TV shows had audiences of over 15 million. Today it is almost none (that have audiences of that size)."

Consumers of television, radio and the print media in Europe today watch mostly private, non-public TV and radio, and read – whether in Poland, Austria, Germany or France – newspapers that belong completely or mostly to a European media corporation. The consequence of this is not only an internationalisation of ownership but also of the contents of the media. The catchwords are: *Big Brother, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?, The Weakest Link*, Soap Operas, Breaking News, *People Magazine*. And there is also Arte, the *Financial Times*, Café Babel, *Lettre International*, EuroNews. The forms and the formats are becoming noticeably similar. One only needs to pick up two relatively serious newspapers like *Le Figaro* and *The Guardian*. Recently, both of them were graphically redesigned, both of them look amazingly similar. If they were not printed in different languages ...

What can the media do to lead Europe out of its identity crisis? This was the headline question at the "Progress Europe" conference in Brussels in June 2007. But what if this identity crisis doesn't really exist, because Europeans and their media are already pursuing the kind of populist consumption and production of content outlined above? Simply put: the whole of Europe knows and cultivates the same media rituals every evening – the differences are becoming smaller, the similarities are becoming greater. That is the trend.

This development need not be gratifying. It ought to provide sober pause for thought. Simply denying it cannot really go on any longer.

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Joachim Fritz-Vannahme is the head of the Europe desk at the Bertelsmann Foundation in Germany. He studied history, literature and politics before completing his training as a journalist at the "Badische Zeitung" in Freiburg. Later, he became the newspaper's correspondent in France. In 1988 he began working for the weekly newspaper "Die Zeit," first in Paris and then in Bonn. Between 1999 and 2006 he was the bureau chief in Brussels for "Die Zeit."

So Near and Yet So Far

The Swedish city of Malmö and the Danish capital Copenhagen are linked by a bridge. Nevertheless, quite different media cultures exist on either side of the Öresund. What are the chances of establishing cross-border journalism in Europe? The Swedish author and newspaper journalist, Arne Ruth, explains why such a transnational journalism is indispensable for a European public sphere. *By Arne Ruth*

Nowadays, few people recall the fact that the defeat of the Nazi regime changed the structure of the press in large parts of Europe at a stroke. In Germany, not a single paper published today was in existence before the war. In many countries which were occupied by Germany, there are still newspapers which were originally founded as part of the resistance movement.

The toughest retribution against the structures of occupation was in France. A total of 649 newspapers were confiscated. The Resistance's own underground papers took over premises and machinery. *Le Monde* first made its official appearance on Liberation Day. It moved into a building occupied until then by one of the worst collaborationist newspapers.

It was Charles de Gaulle who settled the matter. He was anything but a socialist, but he had no sympathy whatsoever for newspaper proprietors' rights. Anyone who had played along with the Germans would have to pay the price – their shares became worthless. Albert Camus, himself a member of the Resistance, graphically described the situation: "Journalism is the only sphere in which the purge has been complete, as we have managed to get the legal settlement to include a complete change of personnel ... France now has a press liberated from money. This is something we have not seen for a hundred years."

With hindsight, we can see that Camus was describing a beautiful utopia. *Le Monde* is now fighting in a newspaper-weary market, forced to change its original ownership concept in which the staff were sole proprietors. *Liberation*, another left-leaning political project, is even worse off.

A deficiency of capitalism

This reflects the core demand of capitalism: companies must grow or fall by the wayside. Those that try to maintain a state of balance risk stagnating in the market. And part of the process of growth is the creation of increasingly complex organisations in which growth itself becomes the principal

objective. The editorial concept on which a newspaper was originally based becomes a secondary consideration.

I have had reason to reflect on this in relation to my own professional position. For sixteen years, I was editor-in-chief at the liberal *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's largest quality daily with a circulation of around 380,000. Ten years ago, I quit my job. The immediate cause was the fact that the holding company of my paper, itself part of the largest media conglomerate in Northern Europe, the Bonnier Group, was on the verge of buying the only competing nationally distributed quality daily in Sweden, the conservative *Svenska Dagbladet*. The deal was negotiated in secret for several weeks.

As a member of the board of my newspaper, I was restricted by Swedish company law from discussing the attempted take-over publicly while negotiations were in progress. I fought it from the inside. Once it had leaked into the public, I attacked it as a clear-cut case of monopolisation and told my readers why I had chosen to resign. The deal collapsed within three days. Looking back on it now, it might seem like an idealist attempt to fight the inevitable. But I take some comfort from an observation – slightly ironic, yet flattering – made by the legendary Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski: "In major press enterprise the idealistic journalists, those gentle dreamers in pursuit of truth who once ran our newspapers, are now often replaced by businessmen."

Control of the market means playing it safe. The managerial business attitude affects journalism by trying to limit risk taking. Competition increasingly means everyone doing more of the same. In Kapuscinski's words: „The world of the media has exploded to such an extent that it has become like a self-sufficient entity, living for itself. ... Teams of special correspondents sweep the world. They move as a pack, in which each journalist keeps a close eye on what others are doing."

News, which is now the main sales oriented journalistic field, is based on a particular set of categories, emanating from a value system where commercial, social, political, cultural and professional attitudes are in constant interaction. The foundation of any news operation is a set routine for the coverage of political, social and economic institutions. The choice of perspective starts with a definition of a sales-oriented territorial basis that tends to be local, regional or national but hardly ever international.

The core of business

In commercial terms, human interest is a crucial aspect of news journalism. A classic definition was made in 1860 by a legendary American journalist, Horace Greeley, in a letter of advice to local editors: "Begin with a clear conception that the subject of deepest interest to an average human being is himself; next to that, he is most concerned about his neighbour. Asia and the Tonga Islands stand a long way after these in his regard ... Do not let a new church be organised, or new members be added to one already existing, a farm be sold, a new house raised, a mill set in motion, a store opened, nor anything of interest to a dozen families occur, without having the fact duly, though briefly, chronicled in your columns. If a farmer cuts a big tree, or grows a mammoth beet, or harvests a bounteous yield of wheat or corn, set forth the fact as concisely and unexceptionally as possible."

Television has made Greeley's concept relevant beyond the level of local journalism.

National celebrities are the counterparts of Greeley's village personalities. The mechanism is similar: by naming names, journalism defines the symbolic characters of both national and local belonging.

The logic of this mechanism makes foreign affairs reporting unattractive. And Greeley's concept is still prevalent in the United States, where, with the exception of New York, Washington, Los Angeles and a few more cities, there is still very little coverage not only of the Tonga Islands but of Asia in general. This fact no doubt increased the horror element in the September 11 mass killings on American territory.

But, in contrast to large parts of Europe, American journalism has an element which to some extent counteracts provincial attitudes. Greeley's emphasis on human interest can be applied to today's minorities. The fact that the American media in general has covered Northern Ireland extensively has a material basis: the large number of Irish Americans.

Swedes are still largely stuck in a tradition of homogeneity. The fact that more than a hundred thousand Swedes have an ex-Yugoslav background and seventy thousand emanate from Iran has very little influence on the definition of foreign coverage. A still valid analysis of the epistemology of news journalism was made by the legendary American political commentator Walter Lippmann in 1922. Anyone who has been working in a news medium will recognise his description of the mode of operation. All news gathering is based on a daily coverage of central institutions and personalities involved in their activities.

A concept of social rules is a core element in determining news values. Crime of all sorts is a prime category, where the status and celebrity of those accused are central elements. Holders of political power who are accused of breaking rules are solid front page news. Lippmann compares these premises with the journalistic conventions used in covering a baseball game. The journalist takes for granted that his or her readers will know the essential rules. But, asks Lippmann, what if the rules are suddenly and drastically changed? Until the new conditions have become common knowledge, any journalist who wants to convey the facts of the game will have to refer to the new conditions as an integral part of the story. Sticking with the baseball metaphor, Lippmann draws the following conclusion:

"The more you try to imagine the logic of so absurd a predicament, the more clear it becomes that, for the purposes of news gathering, it is impossible to do much without an apparatus and rules for naming, scoring, recording ... Whenever there is a good machinery of record, the modern news service works with great precision ... The events which are not scored are reported either as personal or conventional opinion, or they are not news."

The rules of baseball

According to Lippmann, neglected aspects of journalistic coverage will only come to the fore when, in his words, "somebody protests, or somebody investigates, or somebody publicly, in the epistemological meaning of the word, makes an issue out of them."

His metaphor of the changed rules for the baseball game can be applied to the process of European integration. Rules have changed, and so has social behaviour. But with the exception of media for business and intellectual elites – most of them American-owned – and sports and entertainment television,

major structures in European publishing and broadcasting are still largely framed by languages and national borders. The basic journalistic division between domestic and foreign news serves to consolidate psychological distances. Hence, the political discourse on common problems in Europe is still enacted primarily at a national level.

To the extent that opinions are influenced by the media, they take shape largely within the national framework. Without cross-border interaction, stances taken at the national level tend to remain limited in perspective, thereby reinforcing Euro-scepticism.

From the perspective of European integration, the problem seems to be that the national media both reflects and strengthens national particularities, and journalists rarely acknowledge insular tendencies in the value system on which they base their coverage.

I'll give an example from Scandinavia. Denmark and Sweden, sometimes regarded as twins in terms of values, have contrasting tendencies not only in relation to alcohol, but also in two other symbolic fields: sexual services and immigrant rights.

Malmö and Copenhagen are linked by a bridge across the Öresund. On the Swedish side, using the services of a prostitute or earning money as a pimp is a criminal act. By contrast, the largest Copenhagen tabloid, *Extrabladet*, every day publishes several pages offering sexual services. In this field, Denmark is liberal. But it's more legally restrictive than Sweden in relation to immigrants. Danish citizens who want to marry a non-Dane under the age of 24 increasingly leave for Sweden, where the age limit is set at 18 regardless of nationality. The national differences in attitude rarely confront each other.

"Without cross-border interaction, stances taken at the national level tend to remain limited in perspective, thereby reinforcing Euro-scepticism."

Hence, a general aspect of European values is true of Scandinavia as well: what is a firebrand issue in one country is a minor matter in another. Political discussions rarely take place across national borders. National movers in debate and polemics are little known even in neighbouring countries. And languages shared across borders do not substantially alter this tendency. Germany, Austria and German speaking Switzerland are separate realms, as are England and Ireland, France and Walloon Belgium, and Sweden and Swedish speakers in Finland.

Political commentators who are read and discussed all over Europe tend to be American, such as Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama. Hence, European integration is blocked when it comes to effective cross-border communication. But in terms of influence on people's lives, European integration is certainly institutional and ideological as well as economic.

Member states are now enmeshed in a political-administrative system in which ministers are also European decision makers, national bureaucrats, executers of EU decisions, and interest group actors in a lobby system centred on Brussels. Both public and private actors are already partners in a multi-level European governance system where a fluid system of networking is a crucial element.

The result: EU institutions have enhanced their influence in relation to national governments. They have established new, direct links to sub-national authorities and have reduced the power of national parliaments. Nation-states are still very much pre-

Slovakia, TV Markiza, Televízne Noviny

sent. But they are increasingly becoming nodes in a network of national, regional, local and international political institutions. External issues increasingly govern national politics, although politicians rarely acknowledge this openly – except when they blame Brussels for having to make unpopular decisions. They tend to demand national solutions to problems that cannot be solved nationally, while on other occasions they demand European solutions to problems they are unwilling to deal with at home. It's no wonder that such a system breeds populist tendencies of all sorts.

Islands of European thought

Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan has summarised the paradoxes in the European realm in these words: "In the absence of a single European public space, there are myriads of European niches, each providing a distinct meeting place to participants from all member nations who have shared interests ... The more circumscribed the agenda, the more smoothly the all-European exchange proceeds: experts, technicians, specialists have no trouble finding each other, nor do entrepreneurs from the same branch, believers from the same church, athletes from the same sport or scientists from the same discipline find it hard to congregate and communicate. But these multifarious niches, neatly separated as they are, do not add up to a European space. On the contrary, as the agenda widens and comes to encompass broader cultural, social and political issues, communication becomes that more difficult. There are literally hundreds of specialised journals that carry the epithet European or an equivalent in their title. But when it comes to general cultural and political reviews, there may be no more than a dozen that achieve a genuine European distribution, and almost all of these are in English."

An effective way of making an issue out of important subjects that are neglected at the national level is to have them prominently covered by the media in other countries, a process which affects national pride.

I have a personal experience of this. In 1997, my newspaper conducted an investigation based on academic research which, until then, had attracted very little attention. The story had a strong element of human interest. It dealt with the consequences of a policy of forced sterilisation which had affected some 60,000 Swedes, most of them impoverished, between the mid-1930s and the mid-1970s, when the practice was ended by a parliamentary decision. It took a whole week for our journalistic coverage to become a real issue in Sweden, eventually turning into a top-level political controversy. The government was forced to introduce a system of compensation for people who had been sterilised. The week-long delay was due to the time taken by media around the world to discover the story and send crowds of reporters to Stockholm to cover it. The enormous international interest forced the issue into prominence at home. In the annual report of the Swedish Foreign Office on foreign coverage of Sweden for that year, the sterilisation controversy represented two-thirds of everything published around the world.

A similar case of foreign attention making an issue out of a neglected subject occurred in Norway in the mid-1990s. Fifty years after the end of the German occupation, Norwegian journalists re-visited the theme of resistance and national liberation. One of them, Björn Westlie at the business daily *Dagens Näringsliv*, published a very different tale. Based on extensive research in Norwe-

gian archives, he told the story of what happened to the small minority of Norwegian Jews, most of whom were arrested by Norwegian police and deported to Auschwitz in 1942. Their belongings were confiscated by a newly instituted official authority and sold at public auctions, where buyers were in full knowledge of the origin of the items. The small number of survivors was given only nominal compensation after liberation. Most of the officials involved in the confiscation were never punished.

Very little attention was paid to Westlie's articles. But seven months later, a report written by Westlie for the World Jewish Congress in New York was published and immediately covered by Reuters news agency. Then, all hell broke loose for the Norwegian government. Within weeks, it was forced to set up an official investigatory commission. Eventually, the Norwegian parliament decided to pay generous compensation to Jewish survivors and the Jewish Congregation.

The advantages of cross-border journalism

In both these cases, cross-border journalism helped democracy at the national level. And in general terms, if major decisions are taken at a European level, without political debate taking place across borders and on a European scale, democracy has very little chance of working. In Abram de Swaan's words: "A European public space will in the end turn out to be a necessary condition for the survival of national democracies. This requires European journals and newspapers, European cultural meeting points and intellectual networks."

"An effective way of making an issue out of important subjects that are neglected at the national level is to have them prominently covered by the media in other countries, a process which affects national pride."

It is fair to assume that democracy will face increasing problems in individual member countries without public debate taking place at all levels of the European community. A cross-border policy should embrace all these varieties and aim to increase the level of interaction.

Continued support for the European project requires the adaptation of national institutions to the European governance system. It also requires an open discourse where issues related to change are confronted and discussed, both at the national level and in cross-border dialogue, before these changes are implemented in Brussels. Broad-based discussion and critical debate is needed in order to clarify the issues and modify the positions of the power elites.

There are some encouraging tendencies. Present-day Europe does have a number of dynamic new networks. The Committee of Regions, an advisory body to the EU Commission, is one of these. Growing pan-European bodies exist among business and labour organisations, artists' associations and, last but not least, foundations.

New electronic media enables journalists, writers, artists and musicians to reach an audience without intermediaries. As a field of communication, the Internet can disrupt the power of media giants to control distribution.

Increasingly, websites with news, debates and opinions – either individually tailored or structured in relation to activist issues

– successfully stage discussions across borders. They carry information in more than one language and present contributions from several countries.

Such cross-border ventures succeed because of the involvement of European students who increasingly study abroad. The plurality of such efforts results in fragmentation but also, potentially, in creative interaction. This variety of opinion-building, however, is by definition a solicited one. For the older generation, as well as a vast group of people of all ages, the main source of information remains the traditional media.

A truly European discussion would still mean a multiplicity of views and arguments. Voices from all member states would agree to disagree, but also to interact on matters of common interest regardless of borders. A European public sphere should be conceived of in terms of partially overlapping public spheres where local, regional and national actors, of various political tendencies, are encouraged to establish positions in relation to allies and opponents in other parts of Europe. Civil society is a crucial player in this process. It seems to me that foundations, which are allowed to use their resources for purposes other than making a profit, could play a crucial role in helping new journalistic initiatives to build such a public sphere.

Arne Ruth was born in 1943 in Goleniów, Poland. He is the founding chairman of the Swedish Rushdie Committee. In 1977, he became cultural editor at the daily newspaper "Expressen" and was editor-in-chief and cultural editor of "Dagens Nyheter," the leading liberal Swedish daily, from 1982 to 1998. Ruth has published works on Nazi aesthetics, European culture and politics, and international human rights. He has been a visiting professor in Sweden, Norway and the USA, and has won several European prizes for his journalistic work.

Fighting Back the Urge to Yawn

Whether it's educationally sound Euro comics or sleazy sex films: the European Commission is prepared to use almost any means to fight against its yawn-yawn image. But Europe's citizens have simply not developed any kind of emotional attachment to their bureaucrats in Brussels. Europe only becomes interesting for Europeans when a good old row erupts. Does the EU really need to come to terms with its boring image?

By Alois Berger

Democracy needs a public. And that's why Europe has a problem: Europe's citizens are not interested in the politics of the European Union; Brussels remains a world unto itself. The European Commission uses every possible means to make itself noticed: it produces comics, blogs and soap operas. But the search for new methods of communication reflects, above all, its helplessness. The matter is quite simple: the communications of the future begin by addressing the problems of the present. The Commission has to work at becoming more transparent. And it has to remain silent more often, when it's not even being asked to comment.

For the first time – and for a short moment – the European Union actually managed to attract the attention of a broad spectrum of the public: more than two-and-a-half-million mouse clicks for a 44-seconds-long film clip on the Internet in just one weekend. The press officer of the European Commission was smiling from ear to ear; above all, because the audience was apparently the much sort after "Internet kids" segment. For years the EU has been trying to discover ways to get through to the minds of the overly stimulated generation of the future. It has financed the production of EU comics, cleverly made and pedagogically useful. Most of these attempts have proven to be ineffective.

Even the famous film clip, which the EU Commission had placed on the Internet site YouTube months earlier, exhausted the EU's desperate attempts to establish a presence for itself in the very newest field of communications. Around 560 clicks for an anti-smoking clip: that's about the number of clicks the European Union usually gets for its modern, Internet-adapted messages. And nothing has changed since the flash in the pan in June of last year: a 44-seconds-long edited clip of sex scenes taken from prize winning films, which had been financed by the EU, with the slinky message at the end "Let's come together – Europe supports

European films." Several million Internet users had a quick look – and that was that. In fact, the film clip had remained almost unnoticed on the Internet for five months. If a few strait-laced European parliamentarians from Poland and Britain had not suddenly made a fuss about the clip, it would have remained unnoticed. The commotion caused by the film clip related not so much to the soft-focus sex scenes but to the fact that an institution like the European Commission should claim authorship of them – an institution that doesn't normally come to mind when one thinks of sex. After three days the hype was over and it's doubtful whether any of the two-and-a-half-million viewers now see the EU in a new light.

"In essence, we only ever reach people here in Brussels with our messages," a communications officer with the EU Commission eloquently put it. "No matter what we do, no one outside takes any notice."

One should build on this insight. Perhaps one should take a closer look at the actual situation in Europe and focus more attention on what is achievable. The complaint is often made that there is no European public sphere but that's not quite right. If the French president says today that interest rates are irresponsibly high, it will be reported tomorrow in almost every European newspaper. One newspaper will become agitated about the doggedness of the European Central Bank, another about an attack by the French president on the independence of the bank. When the European Parliament decided to open up EU markets to service industries, people in Paris, Madrid and Berlin took to the streets to protest about trading licences for Polish plumbers. And in Poland, Slovenia and Britain, the newspapers complained that the liberalisation of the service industry didn't go far enough. It's quite obvious that the European public sphere is alive and functioning – just differently than Brussels would like it to.

Maybe the Commission in Brussels ought to reconsider what it actually desires. There are certainly European issues that are being discussed concurrently throughout Europe. But it's a bit like the popularity of European football: the interest is not based on the fact that European teams are playing *together* but that they are playing *against* each other. FC Bayern versus AC Milan: for most viewers, such a match up isn't a festival of European togetherness; it's about German football versus Italian football.

Not politically correct, but constructive

In short: European democracy needs, above all, more debate, more quarrels and more arguments. For five years the European Constitution was the most boring of all political topics. Whenever the German television program *Report from Brussels*, broadcast on WDR, raised the subject of the European Constitution, the number of viewers fell – and this with a clearly politically interested clientele. These things can be measured. Viewer numbers are assessed by the minute. Interest in the topic increased

"Around 560 clicks for an anti-smoking clip: that's about the number of clicks the European Union usually gets for its modern, Internet-adapted messages."

when Dutch and French voters rejected the constitution in respective referenda. Above all, there was widespread interest in controversial discussions about which parts of the constitution should definitely be saved. The EU Constitution was suddenly interesting. Newspaper journalists discovered that an amazing number of their readers wrote letters on this theme – not flippant and clichéd letters but serious, intelligent ones. It was a similar story with the EU's service industry directive which was a journalistic non-starter for four years – until a few newspapers discovered the Polish plumber. The discussion was not always politically correct but it contributed in no small way to raising the profile of the EU.

Europe attracts attention to itself when a respectable wrangle erupts. Every attempt to create a feeling of European togetherness, through the use of pedagogically sound messages, has, above all, increased the yawn-yawn image of the EU.

One of the most interesting ideas generated to help the EU ride the road to popularity was the idea for a Euro TV soap opera; an idea which was finally meant to make the EU better known out there in the various countries. According to the EU's Communications Commissioner, Margot Wallström, the majority of EU citizens are not fundamentally anti the European Union – they are simply not interested in what it does; the EU is unimportant for people. And what might reach out to those less interested in politics better than a daily *Avenue de Tilleul Européenne*, thought Ms Wallström – a kind of European version of *Coronation Street*. But whenever she raised her idea with television producers the reaction was the same: "Um, not really."

The idea for such a TV soap opera reveals three points of misunderstanding. For one thing, such a programme would have no chance of obtaining a considerable quota of viewers, no matter how well it were made. The joint German-French TV channel Arte has been experimenting for years with German-French programmes and has learned from experience that viewers of entertainment programmes or series do not really take to bi-national themes. "We have learnt that the material needs to be nationally anchored and emotionally accessible," says Arte director Klaus Wenger. This matches the views of the television screenwriter Andreas Fuhrmann from Grundy-Ufa. The characters and the themes have to be based on the direct experiences of the viewers, says Fuhrmann. And in terms of the scope or the breadth of those experiences, the best format is a national one – or even narrower. "Plans have already been developed for regionally based soaps," says Fuhrmann.

The second misunderstanding is to believe that the absence of a European public sphere is due to a lack of information. There is much more written, published and broadcast about the EU than most people need to know. This also applies to the Internet. If European citizens don't pay any attention to the EU, then it's above all because they don't want to give it any of their attention; because they are simply not interested and would rather be left in peace. New channels of communication will not change anything. The attempt to provide disinterested citizens with some basic knowledge about the EU, packaged as an entertainment programme – to administer an 'EU injection,' so to speak – is not only laughable, it is counterproductive. Television soap operas offer most viewers a

form of relaxation, a time-out from their everyday lives. That ought to be respected if one doesn't want to make oneself unpopular.

Third, it is not the task of the media to promote the EU. The job of the media is to follow political debate and to describe it in all its forms and facets. It's about producing a public sphere, not popularity. It is exactly this difference that is all too often blurred – by journalists as well, who believe they have to protect Europe from criticism. Up until a few years ago the EU-advocate type of correspondent in Brussels was more the rule than the exception. In the meantime, this has changed. This is partly due to many younger journalists now working in Brussels who no longer see the European Union as a kind of threatened species that needs to be protected, but as one area of political activity to be reported on, as self-evident as political activity at a local or national level. And they see that the EU functions, even under duress.

The European Union is not only solid enough to withstand criticism, it needs criticism to develop further. First, a critical debate creates much-needed credibility. One of the problems the EU faces is that it is seen as something of a black box by many of its citizens; as a non-transparent structure whose messages ought to be met with scepticism. The European Commission's mania for controlling and trying to influence information about itself is partly to blame for this problem.

The worst case of information control was the police investigation instigated by the European Commission a few years ago into the activities of a journalist from the German magazine *Stern*. The journalist had reported on a case of corruption which was said to have involved EU civil servants. It was about the unfair awarding of contracts and (rather small) sums of money flowing into the wrong channels. The Commission claimed that the journalist had bought his information from a civil servant – an accusation which the EU never proved.

The result of this police inquiry was devastating. The story published in *Stern* has long been forgotten. What has been remembered is that the EU wanted to silence a journalist with unsubstantiated accusations. A communications student from Leipzig recently referred to this incident as proof that journalistic reports from Brussels are generally filtered by the EU.

However, this is not the only way the European Commission undermines the credibility of reporting on the EU. The Commission maintains countless websites that store a lot of very useful and often well edited information. But these Internet sites are only really used by EU specialists. The EU Commission is therefore seriously considering establishing its own press agency. Whether this will achieve anything is unclear. The EU already supports a number of EU-wide Internet information services such as EurAktiv and Europa-Digital. These services pass themselves off as independent but the articles now presented on these websites – with only a few exceptions – are as politically

"It is not the task of the media to promote the EU. The job of the media is to follow political debate and to describe it in all its forms and facets. It's about producing a public sphere, not popularity."

sterile as the EU's own websites. In the same way that these websites reflect the fear of politically uncomfortable evaluations and above all present the wonderfully perfect world of Europe, the information services supported by the Commission also reflect the fear of contradicting EU policy.

Worse still are radio and television reports that agencies like Mostra produce for the EU which are then offered to television and radio stations free of charge. In times of increasing pressure to keep costs down, private broadcasters latch on to these offerings and broadcast these propaganda film spots, unattributed, as their own journalistic productions. This is not only a serious breach of journalistic ethics, this kind of phoney journalism – with its "Europe is good" message – contributes substantially to the boredom and tedium the Europe has to contend with.

The urge to control information sometimes goes so far that even good intentions are inadvertently steamrolled. For the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, a film was shown in Brussels about the beginnings of the European Union: *Nous nous sommes tant hais*. The film explains the history of the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community after World War II; describes how extensive the hatred was between opposing sides, especially between Germany and France; shows how tough the negotiations were among community members; and how great the resistance was to working cooperatively. The film was nicely edited and sequenced with a German-French hate-love story from the time.

The film is essentially an advertisement for the European idea – interesting, and not at all brash. It came at the right moment: with the fiftieth anniversary celebration, there was quite a deal of interest in looking back at the beginnings of European integration. One could have used the media presentation of the film in a positive way; to have invited a few officials from the time of the founding of the Coal and Steel Community to give their views of how things were then. These are the kinds of things that would have made a nice story. The film might have become a nice little piece of the puzzle in the European public sphere.

Instead, it was announced that the film would be introduced with a speech by the Austrian EU Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner. The immediate reaction of many journalists was: "Oh right, a school film by the European Commission. Forget it." Most of the media did not show the film or report on it. Even before Madame Commissioner began her hymn of praise for the EU the story had already been declared dead.

The European public needs, above all, a clear separation of information from propaganda. It needs transparency and leading figures who state their opinions so that they can be differentiated from others. According to its job description, the European Commission is the custodian of the various European treaties; it is not the custodian of the European idea. The European idea is borne along by political debate, in which the Commission participates as one of many actors.

What limps along, gets there

Over the next few decades this political debate will be reflected largely in the classic forms of journalistic media. An increasing proportion of information available on the Internet is already being produced by exi-

sting media institutions. Whoever wants to find out information will find it out. Those who are not interested in Europe will not warm to it through Internet blogs, infotainment and videoclips.

The amount of news coverage of the European Union has increased dramatically in the last 15 years. The number of journalists in Brussels has nearly doubled over this period. Europe takes up much more space in the media than it did in the past. This has certainly got something to do with the increasing importance of the EU for the everyday lives of the people in its member states. But above all, it means that, on balance, the dainty buds of the European public sphere are growing. Although they're at a very early stage of growth, they are detectable. Nevertheless, the reach of European debate will always be limited, in the same way that the reach of every political debate is limited. You see evidence of this in the monthly survey carried out by Germany's *Spiegel* magazine, in which the names of leading politicians and federal ministers remain completely unknown to a large part of the German public. An estimated three percent of Germans know how an act of parliament is brought into being; hardly anyone is able to explain the division of powers in the Bundesrat – Germany's upper house of parliament. Why should European politics, in particular, be more interesting for people?

This is not necessarily bad. Most people are happy not to have to concern themselves with environmental policy, issues of development, economic growth, etc. In normal times of peace, politics is never really a huge event. The masses tune into politics when something goes wrong or threatens to go wrong. The European Union is often criticised for being too distant and for lacking transparency. But the basic principles of its existence are only disputed – leaving the British aside for the moment – by a tiny minority of people. That is not bad at all.

All of this would be sad news if one wanted to turn the European Union into a single, new, larger nation-state. To achieve this, a sense of Europeanness, a feeling of European loyalty would indeed be needed. If, however, the European Union were to be seen for what it currently is, as a political problem solving machine, then it would be quite sufficient to simply allow it to function as such.

The EU Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and journalists could each concentrate on their individual jobs, and not always have to produce propaganda for some sort of august European ideal; an ideal that would, in any case, be understood differently in each of the 27 EU countries. The dream of a single Europe that would make the current nation-states irrelevant was really only ever a German dream. This dream has lost its appeal somewhat, now that Germany is no longer burdened so heavily by its past. In France, the EU was never seen as anything more than as a means to making France greater. For Portugal, Ireland and Austria, the EU created an escape from forever having to remain dependent on a much larger neighbour. There is not one European ideal but 27 of them.

As understandable as the desire for a societal and cultural European coalescence is, it has little to do with reality. Europe was never a cultural project. The European Union was founded to make Germany harmless through economic integration and to prevent further wars in Europe. This was achieved through intertwining: first, with

coal and steel markets, then with agricultural produce, then with internal trade. The price for this interdependence is a bureaucracy that is clearly frightening for some.

In his book "The Face of Europe," the Europe correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* described in great detail the concerns about the "senseless, massive bureaucracy for the counting of every litre of milk, for every harvested peach." The author suggested setting up what many in Europe would also like to set up: a European Union in which agricultural policy and other "petty" activities were ditched; a Union that concentrated instead on more substantial things. The community should reflect, argues the author, on how it might help to promote democracy and to "embrace the unifying civilisation hidden beneath its own abundant differences." The thing is, such an organisation already exists. The Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, pursues exactly these goals. It has not created a huge bureaucracy; it has no agricultural policy; no competition authority and no structural adjustment fund. The Council of Europe concerns itself only with human rights and democracy – it embodies what many believe the EU is missing: a soul.

The problem, however, is that the Council of Europe does not have much impact. It is noble but it has no power and no real strength. In order to become members of the Council of Europe, no Eastern European country ever gave any thought to reforming its economy, to rebuilding its justice system, to fighting corruption or to reconciling itself with its neighbours. In order to gain entry to the European Union, however, ten countries have taken exactly these steps because the EU is an economic power and they wanted to be a part of it.

The EU has largely fulfilled its main tasks. It has done more for peace than any other institution. There is still much to be done. What the EU is missing is a bit of composure, and the ability to trust that the majority of people know exactly what the EU is on about – even if it doesn't sing out its own praises every day. When it comes to the democratisation of the European Union, the Polish aphorist Stanislaw Jerzy Lec was spot on when he said: "What limps along, gets there."

Translated from the German by Geoff Rodoreda

Alois Berger works as a freelance journalist in Brussels for Weltreporter.net and German public radio. After completing his apprenticeship as an electrician in Bavaria he entered the seminary and then the German School of Journalism, in Munich. As well, he studied philosophy, politics and economics in Berlin, Paris and Baybay in the Philippines. He worked as a television reporter in Saarbrücken and as a radio reporter with RIAS in Berlin, before heading to Brussels 14 years ago to write for the "Tageszeitung" newspaper.

Beyond the "Lived-in World"

From the Eurovision Song Contest to the Champions League: a few colossal media events do manage to attract a mass audience across Europe. However, journalists providing news and information from Brussels do not present a positive view of Europe. Only public service broadcasters, with their duty to engage in public education, are laying the groundwork for a stronger identification with the European Union.

By Deirdre Kevin

Traditionally considered, the media has an obligation to inform, educate and entertain. This was certainly the case in former years when, first, the press, then broadcasting in the form of radio, and then television, served as "windows on the world." Those traditional roles are still safe-guarded in several ways: through the public service remits of public broadcasters; through licensing requirements (which may include news, local news, and current affairs) for commercial media; and via the ethical codes of journalists requiring fair, balanced and truthful reporting.[1]

When the press mainly consisted of newspapers (up until the 1970s and 80s) that tended to reflect various political ideologies – and, indeed, still do, with certain papers tending towards the left (*The Guardian*, *El País*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung, Le Monde*) or the right (*FAZ, The Times, ABC*) – people gravitated towards those publications that reflected their own values.

Market forces have altered this situation with more competition from tabloids (*Bild* and *The Sun* being the two best selling newspapers in Europe), from free press such as the *Metro*, and competition for resources, such as advertising, with new media platforms such as the Internet. With increasing competition the reader has changed from being a citizen to becoming a consumer, forcing the press to "sell" rather than "provide" news. This may have had consequences on the nature of news values, on the selection of news.

With regard to television, where formerly state or public service television was dominant, market liberalisation has brought more competition, more consumer choice, and also competition for resources and audience shares that place a value on resources such as advertising.

There is now a wider range of choice for the media consumer. As well, massive technological changes have increased the entertainment possibilities with music, video-on-demand, pay TV, computer games etc. – so much so, that younger generations may have an entirely

different perspective on the role of the media in their lives. On the whole, it is reasonable to say that the function of entertainment overrides that of information and education: we have even been given a new term for this, "infotainment."

Conflicting interests

Financial pressure, the globalisation of markets and the convergence of media services place added pressure on the output of the media. Journalism, in particular that of the printed press, is frequently placed under pressure. A range of studies and reports[2] show that there are several ways in which the work of journalists can be compromised. This has a direct impact on the role of journalists for both national and European democracy.

Media owners often have other economic, business and political interests. The media is frequently owned directly by political actors or controlled by the state. Foreign media ownership often involves huge multi-national firms whose interest is purely economic rather than to serve society.

The Social Democratic Party in Germany recently issued guidelines concerning the organisation of the media in the digital environment. With regard to foreign ownership of the media, they called for an investigation into ways of preventing media businesses from becoming purely objects of financial and speculative interest.[3]

The ways in which journalism can be placed under pressure vary from the aggressive to the very subtle and such pressure exists in both the newer and the mature democracies of Europe.

One particular problem concerns the training and education of journalists, particularly in some of the newer EU member states, where the rapid expansion of the media created a huge demand for journalists. In many countries the employment position of journalists is fragile with many operating as freelancers, and many without contracts. Such insecurity can prevent them from carrying out investigative journalism for fear of upsetting the interests of owners or advertisers. They may also be open to producing journalism for money, based purely on the public relations work of businesses in order to supplement their incomes. For media owners, the approach to reporting on national and European affairs can be influenced by their own economic or political interests, or by those of their advertisers. A particularly well-known example of this is the Rupert Murdoch campaign against British membership of the single currency, carried out over years in his best-selling tabloid, *The Sun*. Where the state or political actors are involved in the media this influence can be even more effective.

The media markets in the member states of the European Union are vastly different in terms of size, maturity, the nature of ownership, consumer use of media, and the balance of strength between public and commercial broadcasting. The countries in which these markets are situated are also very different as regards political and historic experience, and the nature of political culture.

The nature of television industries varies from state to state. Many have strong public service broadcasters and others have weak public service channels (in terms of audience share) that are often financed directly by the state thus leaving them vulnerable to political interference. Commercial broadcasting also plays a role in news provision and cultural ex-

change. However, throughout Europe, commercial television channels are largely owned by large multinational media moguls. There is certainly common content and programming but as this is based on mass consumer interest and the economics of joint purchase and broad distribution, this content is predominantly US produced.

Giving Europe a voice

Despite these challenges, there are many examples of media organisations attempting to address the issues of Europe with a view to providing the perspectives of others. There have been several initiatives to provide an exchange of articles between major European newspapers, and indeed to create some type of 'European' quality paper based on the output of national quality press. A formal cooperation has not yet developed, due mainly to the expense of translating articles from and into English, French, German, Italian and Spanish etc. However, many newspapers do syndicate some articles from foreign newspapers in an attempt to reflect the debates and attitudes in other countries. Of course, publishing initiatives such as *European Voice* also exist but these are rather more focused on the Brussels community.

On television, aside from news and political affairs programmes, the subject of European integration is rarely addressed. Several years ago at a European television conference, a British film producer described the challenge he faced when asked by the BBC to produce a series of documentaries about the European Union.

"They said to me, it is not going to be sufficient if you make interesting stories about fascinating people who live in 15 countries, unless it tells us something about the European Union. I had a problem with that because in my view most people are like me. Their ordinary lives do not relate to the European Union. Do you know what the European Union is doing? They don't. They are more interested in their families, their jobs, making money, their kids, whatever."[4]

Although the prospect was challenging, the production team did manage to produce an interesting series of stories that was shown on BBC, on the French-German television station Arte, as well as in the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. However, by the time the series was finished a new controller of television programmes was in charge who scheduled the films late at night (11.20pm), saying: "Films about Europe with subtitles? Not interested." This example illustrates the difficulty of successfully producing television programmes about issues of European integration and cultural exchange.

A 2003 study (Kevin, 2003) found that programmes focusing on European issues were being shown at the time in Poland (then preparing for EU membership), France, Germany and the Netherlands. There were documentaries about living and working in Europe and about experiences of emigration. Others programmes dealt with history, while some addressed common economic or political

"The ways in which journalism can be placed under pressure vary from the aggressive to the very subtle and such pressure exists in both the newer and the mature democracies of Europe."

problems. Worthy of note was a broad range of programming in Poland. Perhaps this indicates that the time when people are most interested in the European Union is when they are preparing to become members. Overall, the most popular types of programmes about the lives of others in the European Union are those dealing with travel and holiday destinations on the continent.

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) supports a range of cooperative ventures that contribute to the exchange of news and cultural information on radio and television. The EBU's Eurovision project, responsible for the famous song contest, is also engaged in a significant exchange of news, as well as co-productions between European public service broadcasters in the areas of documentary, culture and children's programming.[5]

Beyond the "lived-in world"

Before we can expect the media to open a "window on the world," we must ask ourselves whether Europe is actually a part of our world or whether it is a part of the "life world" as the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1984) described it: the "life world" or "lived-in world" being the area of communicative action where active subjects are, and where social interaction and communication takes place. What defines the world people live in and their identities? Is it local, city, regional, national, religious or ethnic? Developing a sense of 'Europeanness' among Europe's citizens will depend on two things: personal experience and information from outside.

An interesting illustration of the operation of national and cultural identities in a European context can be seen in the system of mobile-phone voting in the Eurovision Song Contest. Old political affiliations – or attempts at conciliation – are still evident: there is mutual voting between Greece and Cyprus; between Finland, Sweden and Norway; between the Balkan states. At the same time the expressions of national identity are strong: only immigrant populations are able to vote from abroad for their 'home' entrant. This occurs to a huge extent with minority populations influencing the highest vote: Turkey got the highest vote in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands; Lithuania got the highest vote in Ireland. This could be considered a reflection of the strength of national allegiances and relationships. It also shows that for those who live and work as migrants throughout Europe the strongest links are with the home country.

The concept of European integration has, for different nationalities, always had different meanings. For the original six members, the European Community was a post-war solution, while for later members, there were frequently economic rather than value-based reasons for joining this trade block.[6] European politics has tended to become an 'add-on' to national politics.

While EU legislation strongly influences national policies, the national politicians still enjoy rights of negotiation and the power to shape legislation. More importantly, they need to be seen to be exercising these powers, both within the EU institutions and at home. Because EU affairs are frequently filtered through national politics, it should come as no surprise that referenda on the EU tend, really, to be barometers of satisfaction with the performance of national governments. The same applies to elections for the European Parliament.

This state of affairs has an impact on the work of the media. A wide range of studies show that when discussing the coverage of EU affairs, journalists talk about the need to find a "national angle," to relate the news to the every day life of the citizen. Further, journalists mention the importance of using national news sources, such as local politicians etc., to explain EU affairs.

Certain aspects of European integration appear to have become a part of the citizens' world. The most obvious example, again an economic one, is the euro. However, according to journalists, a story on Europe that is likely to attract a mass audience must be dramatic, scandalous, interesting.[7]

The role of the journalist

As part of one particular study (AIM 2007), a range of journalists from EU member states working as EU correspondents in Brussels were asked about their role in the development of a European identity or the promotion of European integration. The findings were quite different. For example, French correspondents, while supportive of the integration project, did not believe that their reporting should reflect this, as their role was to inform people.

British correspondents felt their role was to educate and make people aware of European issues, but not to promote European identity or integration. In contrast, correspondents from Romania expressed a pro-Europeanism and felt they had a role in developing European identity. Whether this is reflective of the process of attaining EU membership – as Romania was an EU candidate at the time of research – or whether it represents an overall difference in attitudes of Romanian journalists is difficult to say.

In order to communicate with one another, people need to speak a common language. To be frank, the majority of national populations speak only one language: German in Germany, French in France, English in the UK. Exceptions to this may be the Scandinavian and Baltic States and the Netherlands where knowledge of English is not only of a high standard but quite widespread. Hence, the exchange of media output becomes more complex and more expensive: there is a need to translate press articles and there is also a need to subtitle or dub programming.

Brussels is home to 1000 EU correspondents and more than 2000 lobby groups, mainly business and industrial. But others adding to the conversations of Europe include politicians, lawyers, NGO representatives, academics, those attending conferences and so on. The point at issue is how to bridge the gap between the citizen and the EU; how to increase support for the project; how to get people to vote "Yes" in those referenda!

The coverage of EU affairs cannot be about promotion or propaganda for Europe. It should be about presenting the facts in a balanced way; providing background information; and providing platforms for debate.

Euroscepticism, purely for the sake of it, or based on the belief that it sells well, as apparent in the tabloid and mid-market press of the UK, is wrong and is bad journalism. But criticism based on truth is a part of good journalism.

"According to journalists, a story on Europe that is likely to attract a mass audience must be dramatic, scandalous and interesting."

Using education to counter boredom

So what is the status of things and what can be achieved? There is no mass media that operates for the European citizen and given language obstacles there will not be one in the near future. The Internet represents a potential nirvana for democracy, not only regarding the access to huge amounts of information but also regarding the power available to the individual to seek alternative sources. At the same time people first have to be interested in a subject and choose to seek out information on the Internet. As well, the information is not always reliable or subject to the checks and balances of the traditional media.

The European public sphere remains bound within national systems. This naturally influences the approach to news in Brussels; the resources the national media send there; the number of correspondents that are sent. Projects of interest include attempts at exchanging news items, press articles and stories across borders, and also the exchange or co-production of television programming, which may help to educate the citizen on the perspectives of others, on the lives and cultures of others. The market for such information and programming – the assumed audience interest – is limited and, where it exists, it will appear in the quality press or the public service media.

The EU is seen as a driving force for prosperity, as an economic entity, and the EU needs to work at changing this perception. As long as people see EU membership and being a European as simply a guarantee of economic well being or prosperity, there will always be some disappointment; expectations will always be higher than what is realistically achievable. There will be a string of referenda returning verdicts of "Non, Nein, and No".

Is it possible to create political debate on Europe when this does not even necessarily occur in relation to national political debate? Why do the Danes and the Swedes always come out on top in studies measuring the amount and depth of news coverage of Europe? Is it because levels of debate, civic education and political culture differ in these countries and reflect national political engagement? Does this more extensive news coverage of Europe lead to support for European integration? The UK is frequently criticised, particularly its media, for its Euroscepticism. However, in all these countries when people are asked about European identity, they tend only to claim their national identities as being important to them: the UK 67 percent, Sweden 61 percent, Finland 61 percent and Denmark 56 percent.[8]

It is important that the press covers European affairs in a balanced way and that cross-border exchanges of articles and television programming continue. Civic education is also of vital importance; a civic education aimed at improving national political cultures and enhancing trust in institutions.

We can hardly argue that European news is entertaining, and we are not happy when EU scandals become a source of entertainment. We are also frequently informed – often by journalists – that EU information is complex, boring etc. So leaving aside entertainment and information, we are left with education. Education might help prepare people to receive information. Education might help to create an audience of citizens to which the media can transmit information, rather than an audience of consumers to which the media must sell news.

Deirdre Kevin is a media consultant who has worked for various media institutions and organisations in Europe, including the European Cultural Foundation. The focus of her research is political communication, the development of a European public sphere, and media policy and regulation. She has published widely on these topics. She is the author of "Europe in the Media: A Comparison of Reporting, Representation and Rhetoric in National Media Systems in Europe" (2003).

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1 Please see also the essay: "European Media Systems: promoting European identity and citizenship?" Completed for the first Progress Europe report.
2 See for example: IFJ/ILO (2006); IPI (2006); IREX (2007); OSCE (2003).
3 http://www.spd.de/menu/1722731/
4 Colin Luke of Mosaic Productions speaking at the European Television and Film Forum, 2001, see EIM 2001. See also the web site of the Eutopia film series: http://www.mosaicfilms.com/dist_eutopia.html
5 http://www.ebu.ch/en/eurovisiontv/home.php?force_show=true
6 Footnote 1, op. cit.
7 See for example De Vreese (2003), Kevin (2003), AIM (2007).
8 "How Europeans see themselves: looking through the mirror of public opinion surveys." Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001. ISBN 92-894-0077-3

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Seeing Beyond Borders

Does the Europe of 27 nations really need a European public in order to function effectively and democratically? Or are we trying to emulate a communications ideal that we Europeans neither need nor are capable of achieving? Christoph Meyer argues for the introduction of more personalised voting in EU politics so that constitutional referenda do not become scapegoats for the deficiencies of the EU. *By Christoph O. Meyer*

We like what we know. And we like others to adopt what we have. If we are faced with something new, we tend to be sceptical or even fearful. What we know is largely defined by our national horizon of experience and communication. This is one of the basic laws of transnational public communication and one that is confirmed by an analysis of the debates on the EU Constitutional Treaty. The British had problems with the Constitutional Treaty because Britain does not have a written constitution and the sovereignty of each newly elected parliament is supreme. The French very much liked the idea of a more permanent president of the European Council and a preamble of values and goals, while the Germans were keen on the Charter of Fundamental Rights because it read like a European manifestation of the Basic Rights in the German Constitution.

Nevertheless, the EU Convention was able to agree on a common text after sessions of arguing, bargaining and top-down drafting over the remaining differences. However, this consensus crumbled as it entered public debates about referenda in the Netherlands and France – two countries, whose populations have been known to be amongst the more Europhile.

The referendum debates in both countries were dominated by national perspectives in terms of the themes, the issues discussed and the speakers participating: is this an indication of the absence of a European public sphere?

Awakening interest

Further questions can be raised: is the European public sphere a bit like the European Constitution, an idea much liked by German elites but without much popular appeal elsewhere in Europe? Is a European public something we think we need but can actually do without – at least for the moment?

If one looks at the national origin of re-

searchers writing about the European public sphere one discovers that many of them are German. Most of these writers are stimulated by the ideas of Jürgen Habermas – who argues that a public sphere is a condition of a functioning democracy – and wish to see a public sphere develop at a European level. Many also see the idea of European constitutional patriotism or civic identity as a viable substitute for a strong European cultural identity.

Does the Europe of 27 nations actually need a European public sphere to work effectively and democratically? Or are we striving for a communicative *finalité* that we neither need, nor want, nor can have?

For me, the European public sphere does not mean that everyone speaks to everyone else in the same language in the same medium. In this sense, neither the absence of a common European language nor of a pan-European mass media are necessarily impediments to a European public.

A sphere of publics

A European public sphere means that national discourses, as constructed through the news media, are sufficiently open, engage in debates on common European problems, and give other European speakers, actors and interests a legitimate voice in this discourse. A network of Europeanised public spheres develops. Philip Schlesinger called it a European sphere of publics. It denotes the possibility of conveying the compromises and debates, which occur in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, to a broader audience.

This process would allow minorities who are outvoted by EU-majority decisions to better understand the reasons for a decision. And it would allow majorities, whether they are predominantly national, demographic or socio-economic, to understand the particularly strong concerns of minorities.

Finally, a European public sphere would allow for the effective scrutiny of political decisions taken by EU institutions and actors, as well as those taken by national actors on matters of European importance. This would be a precondition for finding agreement on standards of governance and codes of behaviour to apply to European institutions and elected representatives.

A European public sphere is needed if we want to have truly democratic governance at the European level; a public sphere that is able to deal with the inevitable conflicts arising from joint decision making by majority voting. Therefore, the European public sphere is not a narrowly German concern, it is shared increasingly by people from across Europe.

"A European public sphere is needed if we want to have truly democratic governance at the European level; a public sphere that is able to deal with the inevitable conflicts arising from joint decision making by majority voting."

Paying for the sins of the past

The emergence of a European public sphere does not mean, however, that the Eu-

ropean Union will necessarily become more popular or that there will be less conflict in European politics. In fact, the contrary may well be the case, at least in the short term. But it would help to deal with what I have called the "fait accomplit syndrome," the perception of not having been consulted on key issues of concern.

The result of this perceived lack of consultation is negative referenda outcomes, which I see more as due to Europeans reflecting on the sins of the past than on an anticipation of the future.

Is there evidence for the emergence of a European public sphere as defined above? First, we should not expect this question to be answered with "Yes" or "No." The evidence from a range of research projects reveals a picture with many shades of grey.

There is now substantial evidence to show that media coverage of the EU has moderately increased since the 1980s. This has occurred more so in countries with a higher level of newspaper consumption.[1]

Scrutinising Europe

The European Union is now a part of domestic political discourse and is subject to increasing media scrutiny – the Brussels press corps is the largest in the world and little remains secret given the demand for scoops and the various potential sources of information.

There is also evidence that cross-national debates on topics of common European interest do occur; for instance, with regard to the question of the admission of Turkey to the EU, with the invasion of Iraq, the Constitutional Treaty, and with the electoral success of Jörg Haider and his Austrian Freedom Party in 1999.[2]

Small states are particularly open to such debates, while Britain remains, in many respects, an atypical case, regarding interest in European debates, even for a large country.

It has also become clear that genuine transnational debates in the media, what is called horizontal Europeanisation, are stagnating or even declining in number. It appears that the attention devoted to other countries and speakers within them has been replaced by an increasing media focus on EU institutions and actors.

Moreover, individual national actors and idiosyncratic national events can easily disconnect a national public discourse from a wider European one. This shows how fragile the European public sphere is.

Rejecting the Constitutional Treaty

Conflict about the Constitutional Treaty was often framed in terms of national politicians versus Brussels (Czech Republic and Poland) or in terms of country X against country Y (Chirac versus Blair), rather than along the lines of classic political discourse such as left against right, Christians against secularists, free-traders versus protectionists, students against pensioners, and so on.[3]

The debates are easily high-jacked by the dead-weight of integration past and the multiple dissatisfactions of the present. This was

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"We need to face up to the fact that the communicative structures currently in place render a genuine transnational debate about the constitutionalisation of the European Union very difficult if not impossible to conduct."

borne out by debates on the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in France and the Netherlands.

The intensity of debate in both countries was quite different (high in France; little and late in the Netherlands) but the post-referendum analysis revealed by the EU's Eurobarometer public opinion survey series (Eurobarometer, 2005a; b) suggests there were important commonalities.

Few citizens were motivated by concerns related to any particular provisions of the Constitution. They were concerned about eurosceptic macro-issues such as a loss of sovereignty or identity (in the Netherlands) or the neo-liberal bias of European integration in general (pushed by the Left in France).

There were other more specific concerns in the referendum campaigns in the Netherlands and France, such as Eastern European enlargement, Turkey's candidature for the EU, and – in the Netherlands – the high exchange rate on changing to the euro. But even these issues were retrospective in nature, and had little to do with the actual Treaty.

In a rare feat of successful scientific foresight, the Amsterdam-based communications researcher Claes de Vreese argued that citizens would reject the Constitutional Treaty if there were high levels of anti-immigration sentiment, a pessimistic economic outlook, and/or unpopular national governments (De Vreese, 2004).

Letting off steam

I would thus interpret the debates and referendum outcomes in France and the Netherlands, at least in part, as providing citizens with an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction about past EU treaty amendments.

In most member states, EU treaties were approved with little domestic consultation and visibility. (Except in Britain where the EU has been politicised for a long time.) The asynchrony of European integration and public debate has led with some delay to a greater media focus on European politics, as witnessed by the empirical evidence of vertical Europeanisation of media discourse.

So does a European public sphere exist? And what are the political ramifications for the future of the EU?

My answer is that some kind of fluctuating European public sphere exists with regard to quality media, and in particular the quality press, but it is much less evident if one looks at tabloids, private television and the regional press. A popularised mass-mediated public sphere is weak in form – although it would be wrong to say it doesn't exist at all.

However, we do need to face up to the fact that the communicative structures currently in place render a genuine transnational debate about the constitutionalisation of the European Union very difficult if not impossible to conduct.

Reporting deficits

The deficit in reporting among larger EU nations on events and debates taking place in other EU countries restricts citizens from seeing the shortcomings of their own government's performance in comparison to negotiated outcomes in other countries. It hinders a better understand of how certain EU decisions, and in particular treaty amendments, are compromises that are not necessarily beneficial to everyone involved in all respects.

Neither the Commission nor European parliamentarians are yet in a position to act as effective and legitimate European voices within national debates. As long as this is the case and as long as events with a European dimension are covered by the media in this way, national referenda on EU treaty amendments will become increasingly difficult to win.

At the same time, media coverage often focuses on the political choices of citizens, and so referenda are much more intensely covered than parliamentary ratifications of EU treaty amendments or, for that matter, European parliamentary elections.

The genie in the bottle

Appealing to the media to change the focus of its coverage or boosting the professional public communications work of the EU will not achieve anything. Neither will attempts to put the genie back into the bottle and return to business as usual, as the European Council in Brussels tried to do in 2007.

"Only when one creates opportunities for citizens to elect people to positions of power or to directly decide on issues that matter ... will media coverage of European-wide topics become more relevant."

It argued that a referendum was no longer necessary on the "Reform Treaty" as all the constitutional elements had been removed from it and the remainder was uncontroversial as it did not affect the balance between member states and the Union.

The mandate for the Intergovernmental Conference is, however, not for a mini-treaty but a maxi-treaty, in which most of the major changes, proposed already in the Constitutional Treaty, are preserved. Countries which have held referenda on the treaty or were considering holding them will find it difficult to deny their citizens a say – at least not without strengthening further the "fait accomplit syndrome" regarding European integration.

The only way to counterbalance this dissatisfaction, in my view, is to think about ways of personalising European parliamentary elections – with candidates standing for the position of Commission president, for example – and by Europeanising national elections.

One would also need to rethink the conditions under which the European parliament might be given the right of legislative initiative. And one could also consider allowing for European-wide referenda on carefully defined issues or as a result of high-threshold citizens' petitions. In the medium term, this would ease the pressure on treaty

or constitutional referenda becoming scapegoats for the sins of the past.

Stimulating debate

If one really wants to stimulate transnational debates, one needs to create opportunities for citizens to elect people to positions of power or to directly decide on issues that matter. Only then will media coverage of European-wide topics become more relevant.

In the long-term, the European Union and its citizens do need and deserve a constitution. However, such a document should not be a hybrid such as the Constitutional Treaty or a depoliticised Reform Treaty.

In all significant respects it should be a constitution with strong selling points, including possibly direct elections of the Commission president. In order to stimulate serious and cross-national debates, two things need to be changed.

First, the referenda need to be held at the same time in each EU country and need to be supported by cross-national campaigning platforms and structures. And second, a super-QMV (Qualified Majority Vote) needs to be introduced as suggested by British EU-parliamentarian Andrew Duff, together with credible and workable options for those countries that vote "No" in referenda.

Christoph O. Meyer is a lecturer in European politics at King's College London. As a teacher and researcher he has worked at Birbeck College London, the University of Cologne and the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies. He has published widely in numerous newspapers, including the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," the "International Herald Tribune" and the "Frankfurter Rundschau."

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FOOTNOTES:

1. (Meyer, 2002; Sifft, et al., 2007; Koopmans, 2004)
2. (Steeg, 2004; Wimmel, 2004; Kurpas, forthcoming)
3. (Kurpas, forthcoming)

Europe Is Not Programmable

Television will remain anchored in national-cultural contexts in the future – although programme content and story formats will draw on a wider variety of experiences and images. How will it be possible then to deal with the subject of Europe? How can one arouse curiosity about Europe? Above all, the viewers have to be able to identify with the content, argues Klaus Wenger, Managing Director of Arte Germany.

By Klaus Wenger

"If it is not possible within a short amount of time to rebuild the movement for Europe, the voices of those willing to proceed with the project will vanish or become embittered and turn towards achieving other ideals."

This observation was made by the first president of the European Commission, Walter Hallstein, on March 30, 1955. It is just as relevant today, three years after the failed constitutional referenda in France and the Netherlands. Europe finds itself with an identity crisis and the much-hoped-for European public sphere is, at best, only in an embryonic stage of formation.

Such a European public, however, demands of its citizens – in the sense of a citoyen – an awareness of various geographic, national and social origins. But it also requires that citizens do not cut themselves off from others; that they remain consciously open to others. The *reconnaissance de l'altérité* – respect for one another – creates the basis for a readiness and an ability to engage in dialogue. Public discourse, within the framework of a European public space, is based on this premise.

The question I wish to address here is not so much how (political) information about Europe or the work of the European institutions can be brought to the public's attention. I am more interested in how this discourse might be supported as intercultural and transnational dialogue. Accordingly, political communication is not in the foreground of my thoughts but intercultural dialogue. A European public space is not only a sphere of democratic dialogue in the way that Jürgen Habermas described it, it also thrives on cultural diversity, and it functions within the various socio-cultural experiences and mindscapes in Europe.

Despite the increasing variety of broadcasters and programmes and the splintering of the public that is connected with this development, television will remain one of the most important forms of mass media and communications for a long time to come. Beyond this, television – along with cinema – is the medium whose communications processes are pla-

yed out at a cognitive and well as an emotional level. The question therefore arises as to how Europe is to be conveyed in a word-based but picture-dominated medium.

Can television pictures contribute to promoting European dialogue? Which issues and formats can be used to allow this dialogue to occur? How do these shape the contours of a European public? A broadcaster like Arte is confronted with these questions on a daily basis. It thrives on intercultural dialogue and is therefore a kind of experimental laboratory for learning about and trying to develop a European public space.

Nevertheless, the expectations of what television can achieve should not be exaggerated. New technology will indeed provide viewers with more freedom of choice in terms of programmes. At the same time, the banal and fragmented nature of the programmes on offer is a retrograde step in which a part of the democratic culture is lost. It is becoming less and less so that TV channels, despite there being more of them, open up a window onto the world. They focus more and more on local or specific mentality niches. In the world of television, we are becoming less demanding in terms of our respect and fairness towards people of different opinions, as the Munich cultural philosopher Julian Nida-Rümelin states. A second admonishing aspect to think about is the lack of audience acceptance of European-wide broadcasters like EuroNews. It shows that the bounds of cross-border cooperation in television are limited.

"Europe finds itself with an identity crisis and the much-hoped-for European public sphere is, at best, only in an embryonic stage of formation."

As an audiovisual mass media, and as entertainment, television will remain anchored within a national-cultural context. This applies to creativity and production as well to the way it is received. European television that ignores these fundamental principles is bound to fail because it offers its viewers no way of identifying with the contents being presented. Therefore, the material and the themes must be selected and processed so that people from different national and cultural roots can understand them and relate to them.

Disconnecting from a national perspective

A bi-national television broadcaster like Arte – simply on the basis of its structure – is similar to a national TV organisation. First, the programme makers themselves are moulded by different patterns of thinking and behaviour. As well, when it comes to the actual programme production work, the various frames of mind – the 'imaginary' – of the public in both countries has to be taken into account. The programme contents and story formats draw on a wider variety of experiences and images. The content addresses viewers whose patterns of reception and worlds of understanding are also varied. While journalists or programme directors in national television can assume that their words and pictures will be understood and contextualised by the audience without major effort, the writer or director at Arte has to keep in mind that a large proportion of the audience live on another plain of understanding. On the other hand, it is exactly these various cultural contexts that

provide an approach for an intercultural dialogue through this medium.

Let's begin with the especially difficult and sensitive area of the news or the journalistic work of a TV station. The daily news programme, Arte-Info, has to take into consideration the different news developments and audience expectations in at least two national broadcasting zones. In the editorial office, this leads to differing assessments and judgements about news stories because they have to be arranged in a transnational context.

This type of news programme offers viewers something other than a purely national perspective of news events and challenges them to re-qualify their own standpoints. This change of perspective leads, in the long term, to an opening up of issues and questions that look beyond the local church tower. In this way, the right conditions are created to awaken interest in specific European themes and events.

Nevertheless, it is also particularly hard for Arte to translate the work of European institutions into pictures, to make 'viewable' the way these institutions affect the everyday lives of Europe's citizens. This is in no small part due to the fact that there are very few faces that identity European themes and events. For the medium of television, the very important principle of visualisation through personification is missing when it comes to European politics. If we see anyone at all dealing with Europe on television, it is likely to be our national representatives as they step out of their limousines at a meeting in Strasbourg or Brussels or at a European summit somewhere, rather than members of the European Commission or the European Parliament. This doesn't help at all to bring television viewers to identify with Europe. What makes it even more difficult is that the EU Commission and many long serving members of the European Parliament use a hard-to-understand 'sociolect' when they speak. It is hard to translate into pictures. This dialect, which includes a lot of short forms and technical terminology, tends to alienate outsiders and contributes to making European issues less attractive.

'Sociolect' and a maze of languages

Nevertheless, this form of journalistic reporting on Europe is a part of the daily work of Arte. Beyond this, Arte endeavours to deal with European issues and stories in other formats. In contrast to news programmes, documentaries and fictional programmes provide viewers with an emotional connection to particular themes – whether they are about people or about stories the audience can relate to, or about picking up on everyday themes.

Feature reports and documentary films, for example, offer a forum for observing and connecting with people who have different perspectives and lifestyles. The viewer is forced to deal with fundamental questions of our time by seeing them from an unusual point of view. In this way, as well, a virtual intercultural dialogue is created – at least in terms of approach. The documentary film "In Love in Belfast" describes the daily lives of two young women in Belfast who are separated by walls of peace. "Convent Life" follows a group of young girls from the French Provence through a hostel in Paris as they prepare for the 'competition' in an elite French school. "Milk Bar" follows two women in Wroclaw who, despite the pressures of globalisation, want to continue to run a small milk bar. By

portraying people from different regions in the most different of everyday situations, the documentary series Faces of Europe aims to "give Europe a soul." The former president of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors, was not the last one to say that Europe needed a soul.

The impressions generated by such films allow viewers to piece together a mosaic, to see how Europe in all its diversity is growing closer together. The contribution of fictional formats to this dialogue should not to be underestimated, as they incorporate the imaginary, the world of pictures. It is exactly this mixture of entertainment, story telling and emotional elements that allows issues to be tackled in a way that dealing with them via a journalistic approach does not.

Using emotional elements and telling stories about the fate of individuals allow viewers to enter the world of the foreign and the unusual. In the short-film project "Border Crosser," film makers from five European countries reveal the difficulties of finding one's feet and trying to feel at home in another European country. At the same time, these films are searching to describe the building blocks of a common European identity.

The feature film "One Day in Europe" shows with captivating humour how a variety of European cultures is expressed in a Babylonian jumble of languages, and how new forms of understanding develop out of this multilingual chaos. "Anger in the Cities" is a searching confrontation with the causes of the riots in French cities in 2005. "The Flight" brought home not only the human dimension of forced displacement in France after 1945 but also led to a better understanding of this emotionally charged issue – and showed that it is an issue not only for Germany but for France. There are many more films that could be named to show how the emotional quality of film can awaken curiosity and openness to various themes. The emotional response to a film does not occur within one particular national-cultural experiential framework; it is an element of European historical consciousness and identity.

"Using emotional elements and telling stories about the fate of individuals allow viewers to enter the world of the foreign and the unusual."

An audio-visual network is developing, involving writers, directors and producers from almost every country in the European Union. They are working together and creating programmes that contribute to preserving, depicting and exposing the contrasts of a variety of European identities, and are revealing Europe in all of its facets.

Through these programmes, the viewer sees others (or is seen by others) through a different lens. The viewer develops an image of the other and can thereby enter into a dialogue – at least a virtual one – with someone from another world. In this way, television can contribute to a dialogue of cultures, not only through disseminating factual information but also through delving into the possibilities of the real-life and imaginary worlds of people from other nations. This change of perspectives forces programme makers and viewers to avoid a purely national perspective and to open themselves up to others.

Nevertheless, even after 15 years of German-French programme making, one needs to state self-critically that a European public

sphere is not 'programmable.' The medium of television both portrays and reflects national-cultural conditions, and can exert very little influence over changing these conditions. Whoever wants to reach a European public with television, and to contribute to supporting European awareness, ought to accept the national-cultural essence of this medium. The issues and story formats ought to be developed upon the basis of this premise so that through a continuous change of perspective and in relation to other stories a form of intercultural dialogue comes into being.

It is still perhaps a quantitatively modest contribution but in a qualitative sense it is not to be underestimated: given that more than 15 million people throughout Europe watch Arte each week, it is fair to say that the medium of television is making a contribution to one Europe; to a Europe that is becoming aware of its cultural identity through the telling of its own myths, pictures and stories. As the film maker Wim Wenders put it: "There will be no European identity, no connecting element, for so long as we do not succeed in putting our own mythologies, our own feelings, our own stories into pictures and to watch these pictures."

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

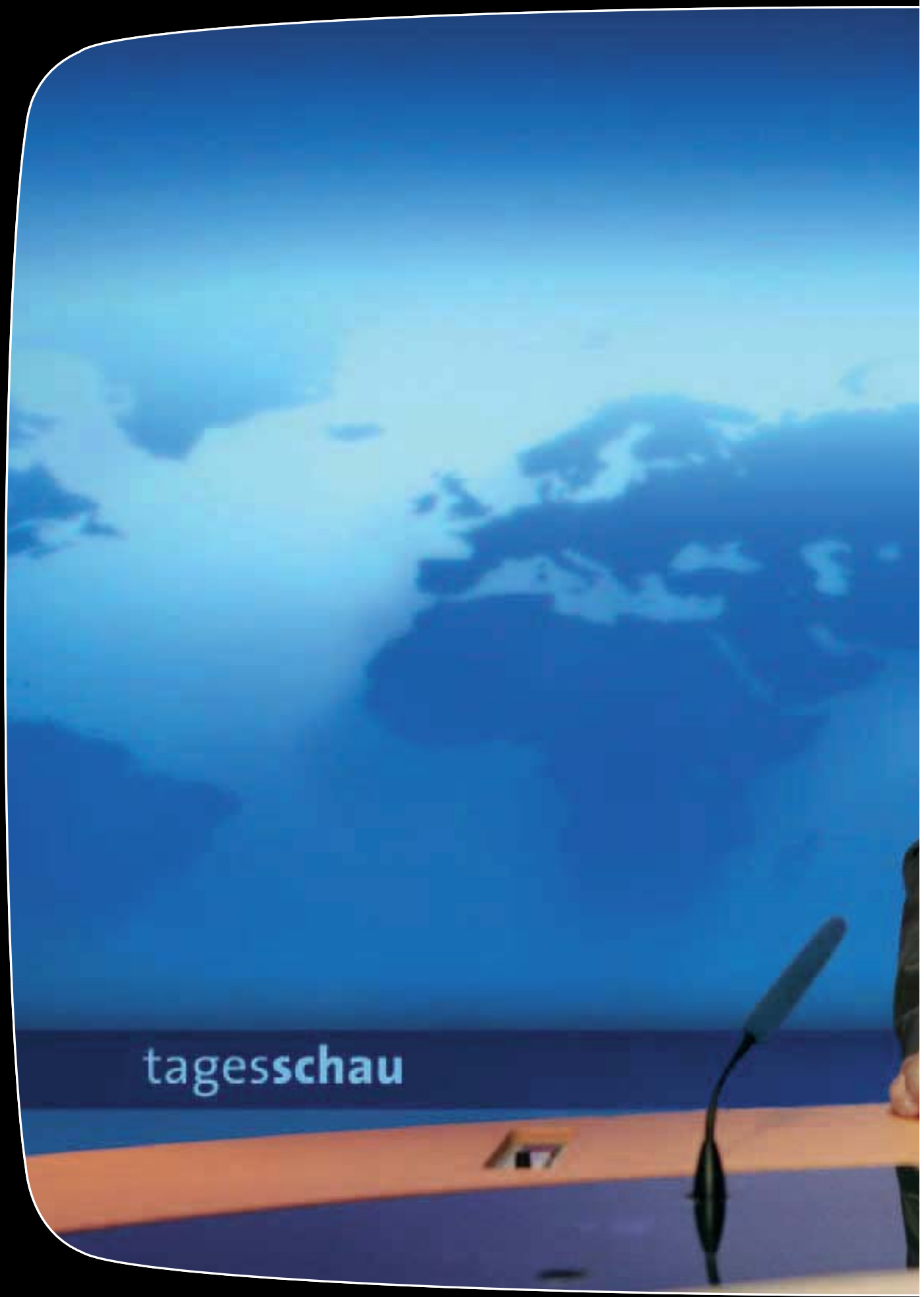
Klaus Wenger is the managing director of Arte Deutschland TV GmbH. He studied history, German and educational science in Bonn, Munich, Paris and Göttingen. Before he moved to Arte in 1991, he worked as a senior editor for South-West German television. For his commitment to German-French cooperation, Klaus Wenger was awarded the Strasbourg Prize, among other awards.

Latvia, ltv, Panorama

Chapter 2: Media Market Europe

Europe's journalists are worlds apart from each other. "Our journalism doesn't have a single style or a common history. We have scant means of talking to each other, let alone to readers beyond our national borders," says the British journalist Peter Preston. The European media landscape has gone through radical changes in recent years. Where previously there may have been only two TV channels, today many Europeans have access to up to 200 channels. With such abundance, why is there no European television, and hardly any cross-border newspapers? It is not only the job of the EU in Brussels to ponder this question, it is also the media's job.


REPORTER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In the Stranglehold of the Tycoon

It could be a false warning or a glimpse of Europe's future. Is the media populism of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy merely the prelude to a show that might soon be seen on various stages across Europe? Reflections on the fusion of media, business and political power in the era of Berlusconi. *By Umberto Eco*

Every epoch has its myths. The one in which I was born had the myth of the Man of State; the one in which today's children are born has the myth of the Man of Television. If we add up the circulation figures of the Italian press, we get a fairly paltry number compared with the number of people who watch television. The problem is controlling television, and the press can say what it wants. This is a fact, and the facts are facts precisely because they are independent of our wishes.

So in our day, if there is to be a dictatorship, it has to be a media dictatorship and not a political one. For almost fifty years people have been writing that in the modern world, except for some remote Third World countries, you no longer need tanks to bring down a government, just take over the radio and TV stations. The last person to notice this was George W. Bush, a Third World leader who mistakenly ended up governing a highly developed country. Now the theorem has been demonstrated.

It's wrong to say that you can't talk about Berlusconi's regime because regime calls up the Fascist regime. A regime is simply a form of government. Fascism abolished the freedom of the press, but Berlusconi's "media regime" is not so coarse and antiquated. He knows that consensus is managed through control of the most pervasive information media. As for the least pervasive, it costs nothing to allow a few newspapers to dissent (those you can't yet buy – ownership, I mean, not a copy). What's the point of detaining an opposition journalist like Enzo Biagi and thereby risk making him a hero? Just keep him off television, and he will be forgotten.

Today's media regime

The difference between the Fascist regime and today's media regime is that, in the former, people know that the press and radio issued only government-approved news, and

that you couldn't listen to Radio London on pain of a prison sentence. It was precisely for this reason that, under Fascism, people mistrusted the press and radio, listened to Radio London with the volume low, and put their trust only in news that reached them by word of mouth. In a media regime where, say, ten percent of the population read the opposition press while the rest get their news through controlled TV channels, people believe that dissent is accepted. But the reality created by TV news programs (if I hear that a plane has crashed and see the sandals of the dead floating on the water, it doesn't matter if the images shown are stock footage from a previous disaster) ensures that we know and believe only what the television says.

Television under government control doesn't need to censor the news. The minions of power do make attempts at censorship. But these are only the most visible (and, were they not so serious, laughable) cases. The problem is that you can establish a media regime in a positive way, giving the impression that you are saying all there is to say. All you need to know is how to say it.

The artistic use of concession

If no television channel said what a leading opposition figure like Piero Fassino thinks about a certain law, viewers would begin to suspect that the television is concealing something, because they know that there's an opposition out there somewhere. So television in a media regime employs a rhetorical device known as "concession."

Let's give an example. With regard to the question of buying a dog, there are fifty pros and fifty cons. The pros are that the dog is man's best friend, that it will bark if burglars try to break in, that the children will love it, and so on. The cons are that you have to walk it every day so that it can see to its bodily needs, that it costs money in food and vet fees, and that it's hard to take it with you when you're travelling ...

If you wish to speak in favour of buying a dog, the device of concession is: "It's true that a dog is expensive to keep and you can't take it with you when travelling" – and the antidog people will appreciate your honesty – "but you should remember that a dog makes excellent company, is adored by the children, guards against burglars, and so on."

Preferred information media , per country

	Daily newspapers		Daily television news		Daily radio news	
Country	1999	2001	1999	2001	1999	2001
Germany	63	56	68	68	56	53
Austria	54	58	63	62	67	63
UK	49	48	71	77	45	42
Italy	29	77	82	78	23	21
Spain	27	20	70	76	32	24
France	26	28	58	55	37	33

Source: Eurobarometer 51, 1999; Eurobarometer 56, 2001.

This argument is in favour of dogs. Those against would concede that it's true a dog makes excellent company, is adored by the children, and guards against burglars, but – the counterargument follows – a dog is an expense and a problem when travelling. And this argument is against dogs.

Television works this way. If there is a debate about a law, the issue is presented and the opposition is immediately given the chance to put forward all its arguments. This is followed by government supporters, who counter the objections. The result is predictable: he who speaks last is right. If you carefully follow all the TV news pro-

grams, you will see this strategy: the project is presented, the opposition speaks first, the government supporters speak last. Never the other way around.

A media regime has no need to imprison its opponents. It doesn't silence them by censorship, it merely has them give their arguments first.

What effective form of protest is left for that half of the Italian population that doesn't feel represented by the televisual system? Refuse to watch the TV or listen to radio? Too great a sacrifice. Also, (1) I have a right to watch a good film in the evening, and I don't worry about the views of the owner of the movie house when I go to the movies; (2) it's useful to know the opinions of the ruling party and see how it presents the news – even if there were a programme on the wartime resistance conducted solely by die-hard exponents of the right and crypto-Fascists, I should know what these persons think and say; (3) finally, even if that half of the Italians who make up the opposition stopped watching TV, the government and its electorate would not change their minds.

TV consumers protest

What can be done by those Italians who do not accept the monopoly of television? Use their economic power. Let all those against the monopoly punish Mediaset by refusing to buy any of the products advertised on that network.

Would this be difficult? No, simply keep a sheet of paper by the remote control and note down the products advertised. Do they recommend Aldebaran fish fillets? Good, so at the supermarket you buy only Andromeda fish fillets. Do they advertise a brand medicine with acetylsalicylic acid? When you go to the pharmacy, buy only a generic product that contains the same aspirin and costs less. Since there are many products available, it involves no sacrifice, merely a little care, to purchase Marvel soap powder and pasta Radegonda (not advertised on Mediaset) instead of Wonder soap powder and pasta Cunegonda.

If this course of action were followed by only a few million Italians, within the space of a few months the manufacturers would notice a drop in sales and would act accordingly. You get nothing for nothing, a little effort is necessary, and if you're unhappy with the monopoly on information, then express your unhappiness in an active way.

The "Poor Woman" affair

On welcoming the premier of a foreign government, Berlusconi made a few statements concerning a presumed (i.e., rumoured) relationship between his wife and another gentleman, describing his wife as a "poor woman."

The episode, as reported in the papers the following day, was susceptible of two interpretations. The first being that, as our pri-

"Clinton got caught with his underpants in his hands, but he glossed over the matter and even got his wife to rally around and say so on television that it was an insignificant affair."

"Berlusconi is establishing a regime by mass media populism. The media is used to forge a direct link between the Leader and the people, thus eroding the authority of Parliament."

me minister was exasperated, he had given vent in public to a most private matter. The second was that the Great Communicator, on realising that an embarrassing rumour was making the rounds, decided to cut the Gordian knot and turn the whole thing into a public laughing matter, thus depriving it of any hint of shame.

In the first case, "poor woman" would have been offensive with regard to his wife; in the second case, it would have been offensive with regard to the presumed third party (the lady being a poor soul, that is, if the rumour was true – but obviously it isn't true, since I'm making a joke about it).

If the first interpretation, which I tend to discount, is correct, the case is more a matter for a psychiatrist than a political scientist. Let's accept the second one, which is food for thought not only in seminars on communication science but also in history seminars.

The Great Communicator seems unaware of the principle that a denial is tantamount to giving the same news twice. For example, I heard nothing about this rumour – it was probably circulating among a few politicians and intellectuals, plus a few guests on board luxury yachts on the Costa Smeralda, so at most one or two thousand people. After the prime minister's remarks in public, and considering the existence of the European Union, the matter was communicated to hundreds of millions of people. As far as moves made by great communicators go, it doesn't strike me as brilliant.

Usually, politicians do their best to keep their domestic problems separate from matters of state. Clinton got caught with his underpants in his hands, but he glossed over the matter and even got his wife to rally around and say so on television that it was an insignificant affair. Mussolini was what he was, but he worked out his problems with his wife within the four walls of his home, he didn't discuss them before the crowds in Piazza Venezia. When he sent off a whole lot of men to die in Russia, it was in pursuit of his own dreams of glory, not to please his mistress Clara Petacci.

Where in history do we find such a fusion of political power and personal affairs? In the Roman Empire, where the emperor was the absolute master of the state. No longer controlled by the senate, he needed only the support of his praetorians, and so he could kick his mother, make his horse a senator, and force all those courtiers who didn't appreciate his poetry to slit their wrists ...

This happens when you have not a conflict of interests but an absolute identity between your private interests and those of the state. Such an identity foreshadows a regime in the imagination of one who dreams of the late Roman Empire.

Talk shows instead of parliament

On the day when Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi appeared on a major TV talk show to announce the forthcoming with-

drawal of the Italian contingent in Iraq, and over the days that followed, I was in Paris for the opening of a book fair. And so I had the chance to talk about Italian affairs with the French, who are specialists in never understanding what is going on in Italy – often not without reason.

First question: Why did your prime minister announce such a serious decision on a TV show and not in Parliament, where he would have had to ask for opinions or a consensus? I explained that Berlusconi is establishing a regime by mass media populism. The media is used to forge a direct link between the Leader and the people, thus eroding the authority of Parliament. The Leader doesn't need to seek a consensus, because consensus is guaranteed, therefore Parliament becomes a rubber stamp for the agreements made between Berlusconi and talk show host Bruno Vespa.

The questions came thick and fast over the following days, when after severe reprimands from Bush and Blair, Berlusconi stated that he had never said he would withdraw the troops from Iraq. How can he contradict himself like that? people asked me. I replied that this is the good thing about media populism. If you say something in Parliament, it's on the record and you can't say later that you didn't say it. By saying it on TV instead, Berlusconi achieved his goal, which was to gain popularity with the voters. Afterward, when he said he hadn't said it, he reassured Bush – yet without losing the popularity he had gained. Why? Because one of the virtues of the mass media is that the people who follow it (and don't read the papers) forget by the next day what was said the day before,

"No one protects and takes home the Fool of the global televisual village, whose function has become similar to that of a gladiator sentenced to death for the pleasure of the crowd."

or at most they retain the impression that Berlusconi did something agreeable.

But, my questioners observed, don't the Italians realise that Berlusconi (and Italy with him) will lose credibility not only with Chirac and Schröder but also with Bush and Blair? No, I replied, the Italians who read the papers may realise this, but they are few compared with those who get their news only from television, and Italian television only gives the news that Berlusconi likes. And this is regime by mass media populism.

Steps back

In the form of a fake review of a book attributed to a certain Crabe Backwards, I observed that recent times had witnessed technological developments that represented authentic steps back. I noted that "heavy communication" had entered a crisis toward the end of the seventies. Until then, the main means of communication was the colour television, an enormous, cumbersome box that in the darkness emitted sinister flashes of light and enough sound to disturb the entire neighbourhood. The first step toward "light communication" came with the invention of the remote control, thanks to which the viewer could not only turn down but even switch off the volume. The same device also made it possible to eliminate colour and

"surf" from one channel to another.

Skipping through dozens of debates, sitting in front of a black-and-white screen with the volume off, the viewer entered a state of creative liberty known in Italy as the "Blob phase." Furthermore, old television, which broadcast events live, made us dependent on their linearity. Emancipation from live television came with the VCR, which not only marked the evolution of Television into Cinema but also enabled the viewer to rewind cassettes, thus completely freeing him from his passive and repressed role in the event being related. At this point it would have been possible to eliminate the sound altogether and coordinate the random sequence of images with a pianola soundtrack synthesised by computer; and – given that TV channels, under the pretext of helping the hearing-impaired, had taken to inserting written captions commenting on the action – it would not have been long before we had programmes in which a couple kissed in silence while viewers saw a word bubble with "I love you" inside it. And so light technology would have invented the silent films of the Lumiere Brothers.

The next step was the elimination of movement from the images. With the Internet the user could save neural effort by receiving only low-definition stills, often in black and white, and no sound was needed, since the information appeared on the screen in alphabetical characters.

A further stage in this triumphal return to the Gutenberg Galaxy would have been the radical elimination of the image. We would have invented a box that emitted only sound and didn't even require a remote: you could surf simply by turning a knob. I was under the illusion that I had invented the radio, but I was only predicting the advent of the iPod.

That transmission over the airwaves, with all its attendant physical disturbances, was superseded by pay-per-view TV and the Internet, which marked the beginning of the new era of transmission via telephone cable, so we moved from wireless telegraphy to wired telephony.

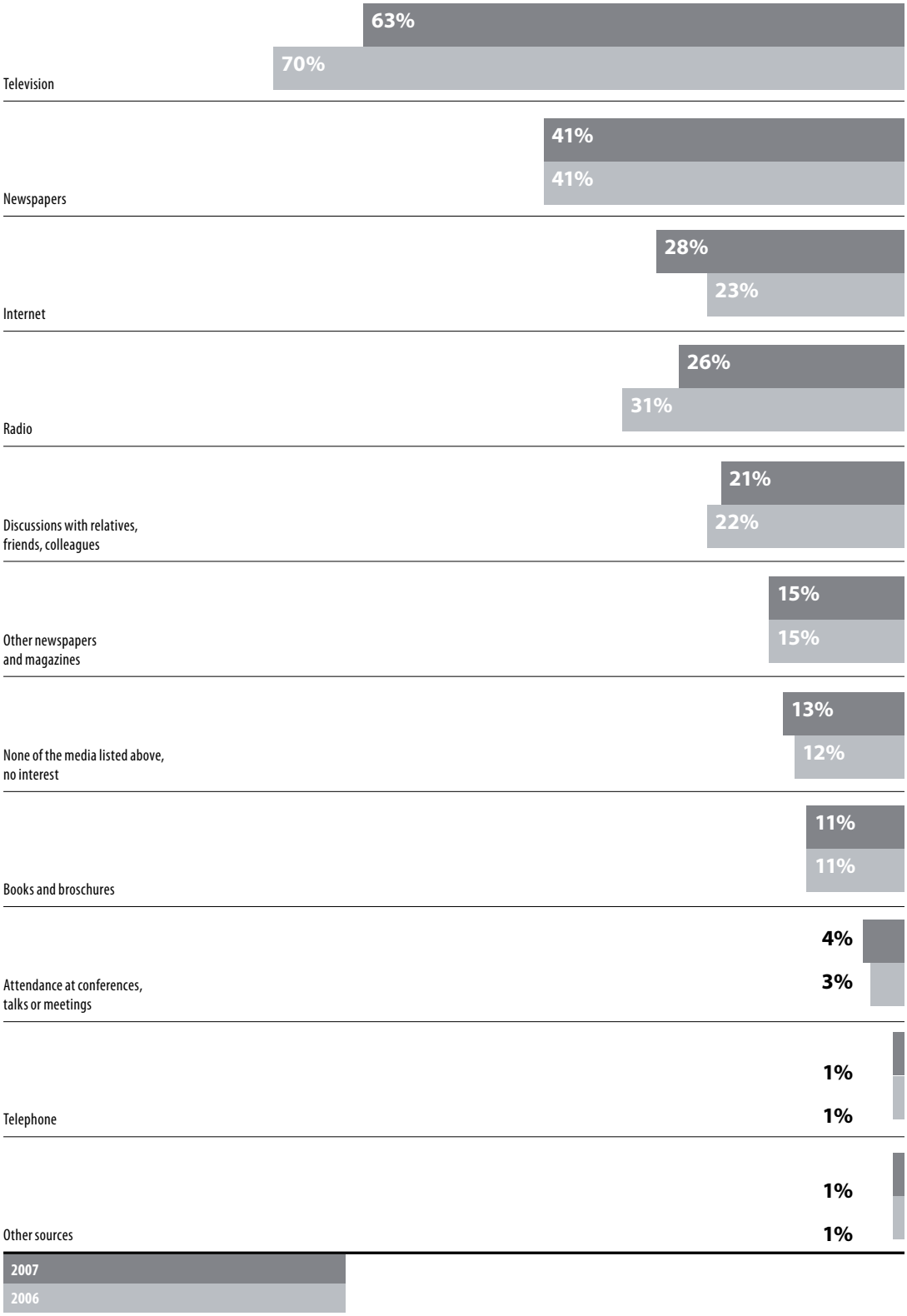
The Fool of global television

The village idiot of times gone by was one who, shortchanged by Mother Nature both physically and intellectually, would frequent the local inn, where cruel fellow townsmen would buy him drinks so that he would get drunk and say unseemly or lewd things.

The latter-day Fool of the global televisual village is not an average person, like the husband who appears on the screen to accuse his wife of infidelity. He is below average. He is invited to talk shows and quiz shows precisely because he is a Fool. He is not necessarily backward. He may be a bizarre soul, like a discoverer of the Lost Ark or the inventor of a new perpetual motion system who for years has been vainly knocking on the doors of newspapers and patent offices, until at last he finds someone who takes him seriously. He

"The Fool's performance persuades the public that nothing, not even the most embarrassing misfortune, has the right to remain private, and that the display of deformity brings rewards."

Sources of information about the European Union



When Europeans search for information about the EU, they use these sources.
Source: Eurobarometer 67

may also be a weekend writer who has been turned down by all the publishers and has realised that, instead of doggedly trying to write a masterpiece, he can become a success by pulling his pants down on television and using swearwords in the course of a cultural debate. Or the televisual Fool may be a provincial bluestocking who finds an audience at last as she pronounces difficult words and talks about her extrasensory experiences.

Once, when the company in the inn egged on the village idiot until he behaved in an intolerable manner, the mayor, the chemist or a family friend would step in, take the poor soul by the arm, and lead him home. But no one protects and takes home the Fool of the global televisual village, whose function has become similar to that of a gladiator sentenced to death for the pleasure of the crowd. Society, which tries to keep depressives from committing suicide or drug addicts from the craving that will lead to their death, does not protect the televisual Fool; it encourages him, as it used to encourage dwarfs and bearded ladies to exhibit themselves in fairground freak shows.

This is clearly a crime, but it is not the protection of the Fool that concerns me (though the authorities should not permit this abuse): the problem is that, glorified by his appearance onscreen, the Fool becomes a universal model. If he has managed that, anyone can. The Fool's performance persuades the public that nothing, not even the most embarrassing misfortune, has the right to remain private, and that the display of deformity brings rewards. The dynamics of the ratings ensures that, as soon as the Fool appears on TV, he becomes a famous Fool, and this fame is measured in advertising contracts, invitations to conferences and parties, and sometimes the offer of sexual favours (Victor Hugo does teach us that a beautiful woman can fall for the Man Who Laughs). In short, the very concept of deformity is deformed, and everything becomes beautiful, even ugliness, as long as it is elevated to the glory of the TV screen.

Do you remember the Bible? Dixit insipiens in corde suo: Deus non est. The televisual Fool proudly states: Ego sum.

A similar phenomenon is now under way on the Internet. Exploring home pages shows us that many sites are set up merely to exhibit the site owner's squalid normality, if not abnormality.

A journey to secret recesses

Some time ago I found the home page of a man who made available, and maybe still does, a photograph of his colon. As we know, for many years now it has been possible to go to a clinic to have your rectum examined by a probe whose tip is equipped with a tiny TV camera. The patient himself can observe on a colour television screen the travels of the probe (and the camera) through his most secret recesses. Usually, a few days after the examination, the doctor gives the patient a highly confidential report complete with a colour photograph of his colon.

The problem is that the colons of all human beings (not counting those with termi-

"Exploring home pages shows us that many sites are set up merely to exhibit the site owner's squalid normality, if not abnormality."

nal tumours) resemble one another. Therefore, while you might be interested in a colour photograph of your colon, a photograph of another person's leaves you indifferent. The man I am referring to went to the trouble of setting up a home page to show everyone his. Evidently we are dealing with a person to whom life has given nothing, not heirs to carry on his name, not partners drawn to his looks, not friends to whom he might show slides from his vacations, so he relies on this last desperate exhibition to gain a little visibility. In this, as in other cases of voluntary renunciation of privacy, lies an abyss of desperation that ought to persuade us to take pity and look away. But the exhibitionist (and this is his tragedy) does not allow us to ignore his shame.

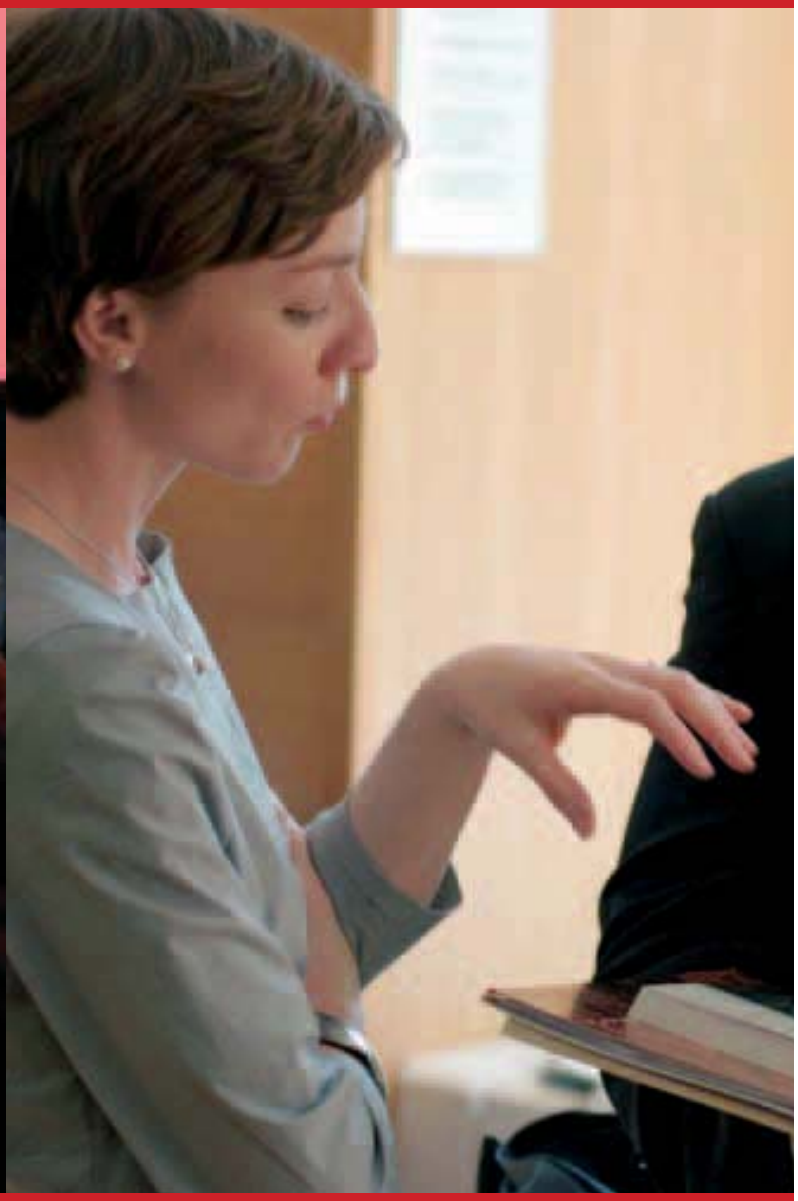
Translated from the Italian
by Alastair McEwen

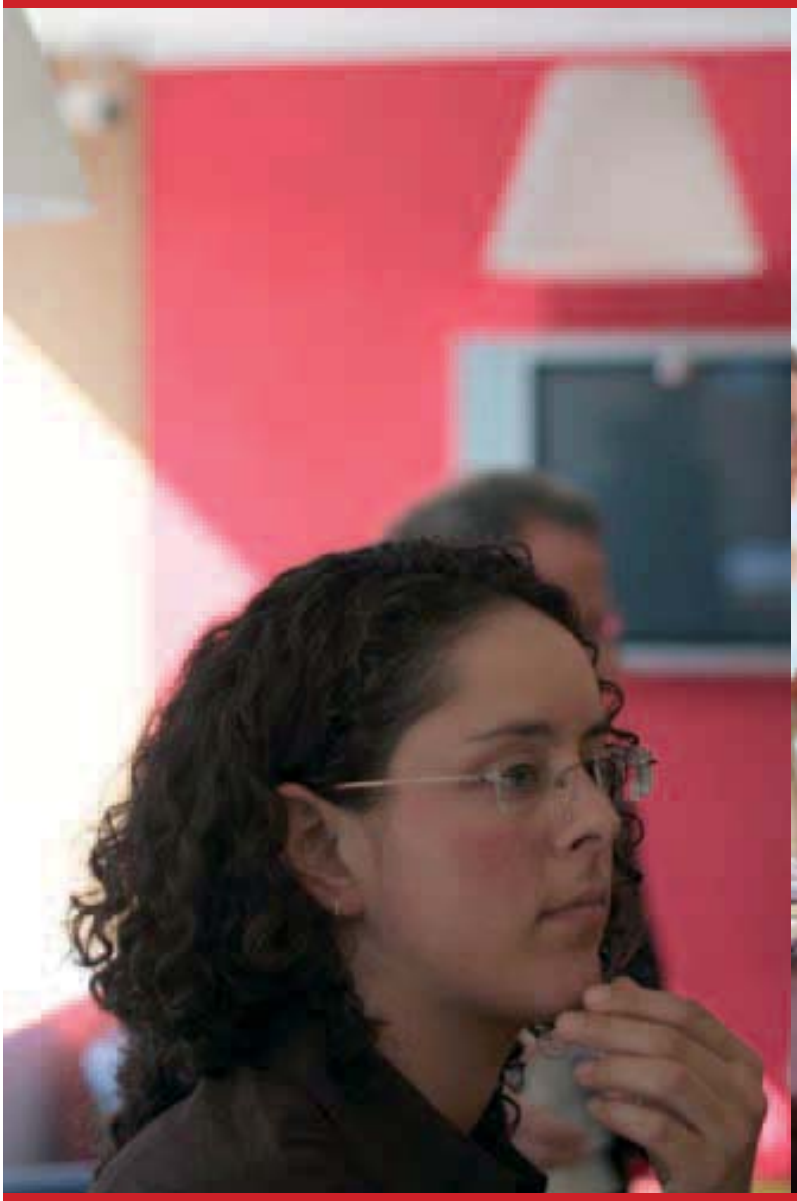
Umberto Eco, born in 1932, is Professor of Semiotics at the University of Bologna. His extensive body of work includes the novel "The Name of the Rose," with which he became world famous. This article is taken from his book "Turning Back the Clock. Hot Wars and Media Populism," which was recently published by Harvill Secker. It is an indispensable read, not only in relation to political developments in Italy.

Bulgaria, bTV Novinite


LUB UK

IEuropeans talk a lot about each other but very little with each other. More debate, more arguments and more contention: that was the wish for Europe from the participants of a conference hosted by the British Council in Brussels and organised by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations and the Robert Bosch Foundation, for the release of the first Culture Report “Progress Europe.” How can we awaken curiosity about people and events in our neighbouring countries? What can the EU do to improve communication between member states? How can the media make a contribution in this regard? Journalists, researchers and culture specialists examined the role of the media in Europe and in the European public sphere.



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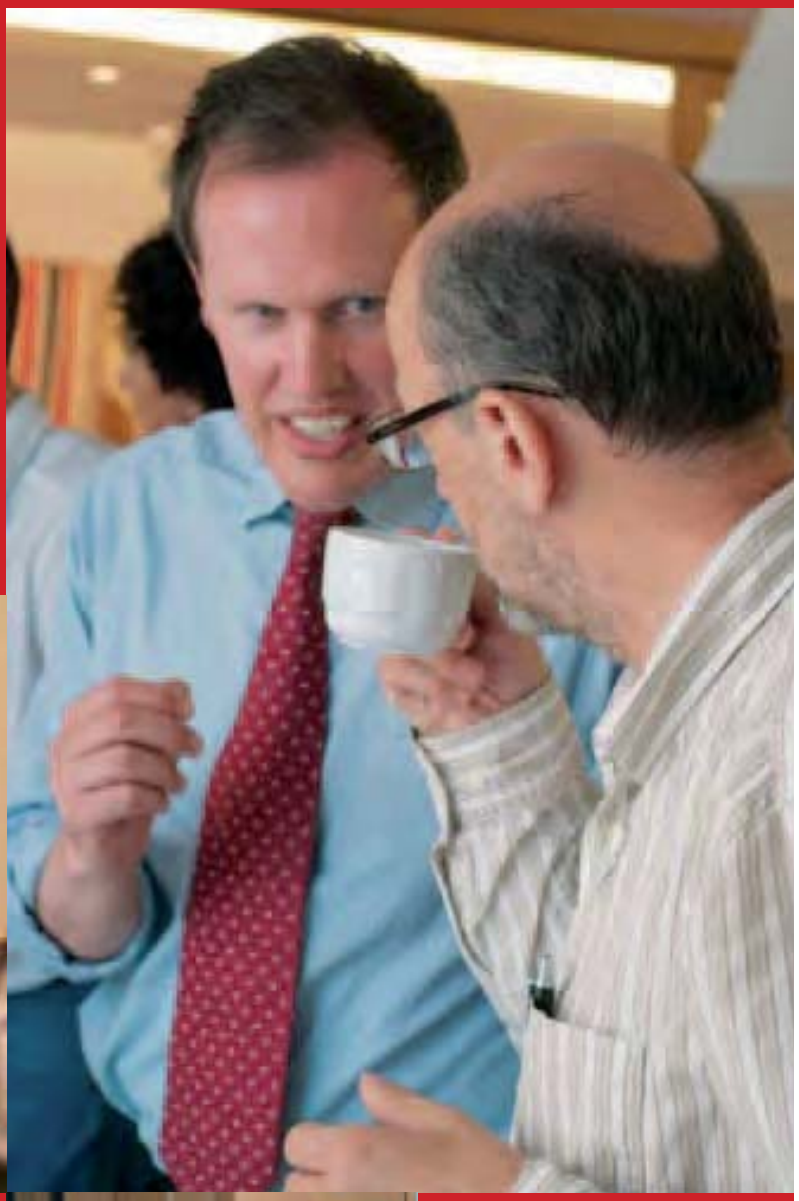


P. Knüsel

Journalism As an Ego Trip

Europe produced the first newspaper and has the biggest network of correspondents around the world. It is therefore being hit hard by the demise of quality journalism. But things are not as bad as they seem – even if the lifestyle editor has become just as important as the Washington correspondent. In future though, journalists won't always have the last word. For society, the Internet offers many opportunities. *By John Lloyd*

Journalism has always been confronted with perils: most of all, in states other than in the rich and developed world, such as Germany or the UK. In these states, journalists are threatened with or suffer suppression, attended by various degrees of force. In some places, such as China, things are getting better: in others, like Russia, they are getting worse. Much of the world still does not have a free press – or at best, a half free one.

In democratic states, the perils have been different. They have come from governments who do not wish the media to tell the truth or to expose wrongs or to question certain institutions. They have come from corporations who closely guard their secrets with threats of legal action. They have come from powerful figures in the establishment who regard it as impertinent that they should be investigated or held to account.

These perils are well known. They have been around, in one form or another, since journalism began in a recognisable form four centuries ago. But, we have to say, they are less of a threat than they were. It is rare for an advanced, democratic state to try to suppress news in the public interest – or indeed, news that is not in the public interest. Most corporations have accepted, albeit reluctantly, that they will at times be questioned harshly; if sometimes not enough, or not thoroughly enough, it is more the fault of journalism than theirs.

Few public figures, no matter how grand, can really stand on their dignity and expect no one to touch them. More than that, the leaders of the democratic states not only accept free media, they proselytise on its behalf. In her recent meeting with Hu Jintao, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, pressed him to cease prosecuting journalists and bloggers, and allow full press freedom.

Now, instead, the talk about journalism is that it is threatened not by power but by indifference; threatened not by those who seek to curb it but by those who don't care about it; suppressed not by censors or dawn

raids by police but by a tide of entertainment. Our enemy is not political power so much as market power; not the effort to impose one voice but the huge proliferation of choice; not a public forbidden to read or see or listen to what we wish to tell it but a public unwilling to even sample it. The problem is multi-faceted. It includes:

- the Internet which produces information in huge quantities for no upfront cost;
- bloggers who supply opinion for free;
- satellite and cable technology, vastly increasing TV choice;
- free newspapers, taking away newspapers' markets;
- advertisers who won't support newspapers and TV news programmes;
- citizens not caring about politics and foreign affairs;
- consumers who are becoming accustomed to getting news for free;
- media corporations who cut newsrooms, concentrate ownership and crowd out family companies dedicated to high news standards;
- editors who less often assign reporters to hard news, analysis and investigation;
- reporters who prefer celebrity beats to town halls;
- producers who put reporters on the air when they have just arrived at the site of a story.

"Journalism is threatened not by power but by indifference; threatened not by those who seek to curb it but by those who don't care about it."

You will notice that most of these reasons are related, in one way or another, to one particular power: consumer power. The fact of the matter is that changes in technology, in taste, in society, and in corporate structure have combined to produce a very large increase in choice in the media markets. And with that choice, the readers, listeners and viewers have chosen to migrate from news, or at least – and the distinction is an important one – to migrate from one way of taking in news to many others, many of these not yet clear.

The power of the consumer

This 'migration' is commonly viewed as a bad thing for our democratic fabric. Here is a German scholar, Thomas Meyer, on the effects of this flight from seriousness in political news. Even in political broadcasts, he writes, "There is a preponderance of programming with extremely scanty information content and little room for debate, with much of it offering an image of the political that would more likely distract viewers from actual events than help them understand what is happening ... (the effect being that) the most crucial informational inputs emanating from an important segment of the mass media system, in short, simply do not meet the standards of appropriate information for a democratic polity."

In a recent piece in the *New Yorker*, the writer Nicholas Lemann recalled that his grandfather, a chiropractor, read the *New York Times* every evening from the front page through to the second page and so on to the

opinion pages and the sports pages, in exactly the way it was laid out. It would never occur to him, wrote Lemann, to question the wisdom of the editors of the *New York Times* as to what was news, which were the more important news items, and that opinion should be read after the reader had a grasp of the facts. The same would be true, more or less, of the readership of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, The Times, Le Monde* and *Corriere della Sera* – and, for that matter, of the audience of the BBC, ARD, CBS, RAI, TF1 and other trusted – or once-trusted – broadcasters.

A matter of trust

That trust is no longer there, for a number of reasons. First, news is contested. Trust in newspapers, both tabloid and upmarket ones, is falling – perhaps most of all in Britain, where newspaper circulation is still relatively high. Indeed, the British trust the tabloids very little and buy them in large numbers, leading you to the conclusion that they buy them not because they trust what they say but because they want to have fun. Trust is not part of the decision to buy.

Indeed, the lack of trust may even be the reason to buy, since information which is fun is often not trustworthy. Most people like jokes, though they don't believe them. So it is with tabloids. In the upmarket papers, trust is higher but news and opinion is challenged much more, usually through the papers' websites. When bloggers target papers, it is usually the upmarket papers, which they accuse of being biased either to the right or to the left. Whole websites now are devoted to one newspaper, recording their slips, prejudices and blunders.

There is an aroused and sometimes angry section of the public that challenges media, above all serious news media. It is of course a small minority of the public but it is enough to dent the confidence of large newspapers – accustomed to referring to themselves as 'great' newspapers, with a century or more of history behind them – that they have been right about most things.

Television is in the same position. An example: in September 2007, the BBC decided to drop plans to televise a rock festival devoted to publicising the danger to the planet from global warming. After an intense internal debate, the BBC announced it would no longer carry on with the planned programme. It cited relatively low ratings for a previous all-day festival of this kind. But in fact, its decision was based on a calculation that it could not afford to be seen to endorse one opinion on global warming, even if that were the dominant one. The BBC has been accused, most of all in a report it commissioned itself, of not being impartial.

Crisis of the soul

The pessimism that now abounds in our industry is often hard to overstate. In a piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, the Pulitzer prize winning journalist Michael Skule, now a professor of journalism, dismissed the blo-

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"News pours out in short pieces, as in 24-hour news or business news, increasingly niched for those who want to keep up to date constantly, or for those who want specific kinds of news."

gosphere and much of what is on the Internet, saying that blogs were "often tiresomely cranky and never in doubt. Something harder is needed – the patient sifting of facts – we once called that reporting."

Note the stress on what used to be, and is ceasing to be.

The critique was greatly deepened by a speech by John Carroll, the former editor of the *Los Angeles Times* – former, because he had left the job, one of the most prestigious in American journalism, when he refused to acquiesce in another round of editorial job cuts commanded by the new owners of the paper, the *Chicago Tribune* group.

In a now celebrated speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Seattle the year before last, Carroll sees in journalism "a crisis of the soul." He pointed his finger, especially, at newspaper owners who, he said, were increasingly private capital companies with one criterion: making money.

Thus newspapers which were seen to have no long term future were "harvested" for high returns over a short time period. He deplored the "shrinking of newspapers' social purpose," and said that "restoring the balance between financial performance and public duty is probably impossible under present ownership." The job of journalists now was "to save journalism itself ... to ensure the existence long into the future of a large, independent, principled, questioning, deep-digging cadre of journalists in America, regardless of what happens to our newspapers."

In Britain, a famous TV presenter, Jeremy Paxman of *Newsnight*, gave the annual lecture at the Edinburgh TV Festival last year – and echoed Carroll's blast against newspaper owners, applying it to the bosses of his medium, TV. He said: "People at the top are less concerned with content and more concerned with bottom lines. There are too many people in this industry whose answer to the question 'What is TV for?' is to say 'To make money.'"

A crisis of confidence, or as Carroll puts it, of the soul, comes when we know that people aren't watching, listening to or reading us. In the last years of the nineteenth and first years of the twentieth century, people saw newspapers as the great engines of information for every citizen. The US journalist Walter Lippman wrote of the newspaper as a kind of common man's encyclopaedia, and of the high calling of the journalist, responsible for informing the masses, a vital job in a democracy. There is little such belief now in these ideals.

New niches of news

It is not that there is less news. Indeed, there is more. In his lecture, Paxman said that in the ten year period from 1995/96 to 2005/06, the hours of news put out by the BBC had more than doubled, from 5270 per year to 12,485 per year. At the same time, though, budgets and the time allocated to more analytical programmes – like his own – were being cut: *Newsnight* had suffered a budget cut of 15 per cent over the past three

years and faced another cut of 20 per cent in the next five years. News pours out in short pieces, as in 24-hour news or business news, increasingly niched for those who want to keep up to date constantly, or for those who want specific kinds of news. In these niches, a good living can be made and good journalism can happen: *The Economist* is one of the most successful news magazines in the world and the *Financial Times* is unique among British papers in increasing circulation over the past year. Busy and committed people will be able increasingly to tailor their news to their specific needs, receiving constant updates on the issues about which they wish to keep informed.

News for free

The people who don't constantly want a lot of information on current affairs or business or foreign affairs are now served for free. Free newspapers have been among the greatest and least attended to trends in journalism in the developed world over the last five years. They are, of course, a great threat to the established press – especially the remaining city evening papers. The sales of the *Evening Standard*, the long-established and (before the free sheets) monopoly London evening paper, have fallen by almost a half in the past year.

Free papers are in most cities in the developed world and are spreading elsewhere. They are regarded by existing newspaper owners as something like the bubonic plague was regarded in the late Middle Ages. They began as little more than a two-minute read, with lots of information about what's on and TV. But they are rapidly becoming more sophisticated, hiring more reporters, columnists and specialists, and closing the gap between themselves and the established popular papers. And they are rising as the established are falling.

"Free papers are in most cities in the developed world and are spreading elsewhere. They are regarded by existing newspaper owners as something like the bubonic plague was regarded in the late Middle Ages."

The expert on this sector is the Dutch researcher and scholar Piet Bakker, whose Newspaper Innovation site is a (free) encyclopaedia on free sheets. Here's one entry, which is typical of the chronicles of success which is the present free newspaper experience: "French free daily *20 Minutes* saw its readership increase with 12 percent to 2.4 million daily readers in 2006/2007. The Epiq (étude de la presse d'information quotidienne) study by TNS Sofres showed that 23 million French (46.4 percent of the population older than 14) read a newspaper on an average day. National paid dailies dropped by 4 percent to 7.76 million readers while the regional dailies lost 1.5 percent and have now 17.4 million readers.

"Free papers gained 14.3 percent and have a total readership of 3.49 million a day. *20 Minutes* reaches 2.42 million readers, *Metro* 2 million (+ 28 percent). *Direct Soir, Matin Plus* and *Bretagne Plus* were not audited yet. Sports paper *L'Équipe* had 2.37 million readers, *Le Parisien/Aujourd'hui* 2 million readers, *Le Monde* 1.89 million, *Le Figaro* 1.19

million and *Libération* 806,000.

"Advertising income for French free papers (including weeklies) is also rising. In 2006 they gained almost 8 percent in revenues – compared to 2005 – and now have a share of 3.3 percent. This share is *equal* to that of paid papers." (My italics.)

In the Scandinavian countries – where free sheets began – there is now door-to-door delivery, and a collapse of the classified advertising market for paid-for papers. The Danish free press market is perhaps the most active in the world: less than a year ago the country had nine different free titles, 25 editions with a combined circulation of two million. Now, four titles are left – the most powerful of which is *24timer*, which has swallowed most of the others. *24timer* now has five editions, with a total circulation of 500,000. The combined circulation of the freesheets is now 1.6 million. In 2006, paid circulation in Denmark was less than 1.3 million.

An exception in Germany

No country has managed to keep them out – except Germany, whose newspaper proprietors are facing a sharper fall in sales than in many other European countries. In December 1999, Schibsted, which had invented *Metro*, the first free paper, launched *20 Minuten* in Cologne. Very quickly, the local publisher DuMont Schauberg and the large Alex Springer group, which publishes *Bild Zeitung*, launched spoilers. In July 2001 Schibsted gave up, and closed *20 Minuten*. The 'spoilers' then closed immediately. An ambiguous court decision earlier this year was interpreted by Dumont Schuberg as meaning that, in the worlds of Matthias Schuilenberg, the company spokesman, "no publisher who wants to publish a free daily in Germany can be sure that the court will not stop them."

Piet Bakker comments that: "The court ruling, actually, could be read the other way around as well: the first verdict still stands, free papers are protected by law just like any other paper. But the Gratis-Angst has a firm grip on German publishers. And they probably still think market conditions can be changed by court orders. These conditions in Germany are at the bottom end in Europe: a drop of 17 percent between 1995 and 2006. And no free dailies to blame because there aren't any."

"Free newspapers have been among the greatest and least attended to trends in journalism in the developed world over the last five years."

What readers want most

Even if the free sheets are acquiring more 'paid-for' like features, they come at journalism from a different direction than at least the upmarket papers. They have always tailored their offering to what the readers and advertisers want most, and that is useful information, leisure pursuits, celebrities and little more than the headlines, with a few paragraphs on the top stories (more if it is a human interest story).

The established papers, in contrast, have a 'public interest' justification for themselves: that is, classically, that a citizen needs a cer-

tain amount of understanding about what is happening in the public sphere – nationally and internationally – in order to make informed choices. That isn't the case with the freesheets (it isn't the case with many tabloid papers either). They are more pure market vehicles – and in being so, threaten papers which are, as they have always been, a mixture of market actor and pillar of democracy.

The loss seems to be in what has been thought of as general news aimed at the national public. This had been viewed by those who made it or wrote it as bringing the nation together around a common agenda. It reached its apogee first in radio then in TV news, with the image – and to an extent the reality – of the nation gathering round the radio or TV to be informed on issues of the day.

Lifestyle instead of politics

In the past, newspapers shared this 'common agenda' image. Though they differed greatly, they usually agreed on the choice of the most important stories. Now, mostly, they don't. *The Times* of London, once the paper for the British establishment whose choice of what was important reflected the public concerns of the UK, is now a tabloid and, more importantly, chooses on those days where there is not an overwhelmingly important national or international event to put on its front page issues of health or lifestyle or the housing market. It has sought, successfully, to make itself more relevant to its readers, and relevance is now seen as not so much a shared interest in national events as a concentration on what is good for me and my family. It is in part the journalism of the me generation, and for that, different kinds of journalists are needed and different kinds of journalists are privileged. The health correspondent or the housing correspondent becomes as prestigious as the diplomatic correspondent – or even the political editor.

Even the (relative) success of *The Times* shows the extent of the problem. Recently, it proudly announced it was selling more than *The Daily Telegraph* – the latter having been, since the war, the paper of the Conservative middle classes of Britain, with a sale, until the nineties, of well over a million – as against a *Times* which, when it was the establishment paper, sold less than 300,000. *The Telegraph – The Times* claims – was now selling fewer copies then it was – though it may give away many more – and both were selling fewer than 500,000 each. The biggest selling upmarket paper in Britain now is the *Financial Times*, at just under 500,000. This figure reflects world wide sales, with over three quarters of its readers outside of the UK.

For one like me, who has worked in British newspapers for much of his life (mainly for the *Financial Times*), the change is astounding, even shocking.

One could lengthen the list of doom. But there is no point in doing that here. The larger issue is that which was raised by John Carroll: that the job of journalists who are

"That some of the great newspapers of Europe should now be uncertain of their future – and all, great or otherwise, have major concerns – is of great concern."

"The health correspondent or the housing correspondent becomes as prestigious as the diplomatic correspondent – or even the political editor."

alarmed by these trends is to make sure a type of journalism survives that is "large, independent, principled, questioning, deep digging."

This is of particular meaning to us Europeans because of the central role Europe plays in the history of journalism, and the traditions – which remain – of serious journalism in print, and on radio and television.

European beginnings

Newspapers probably began on this continent – the first ones gave news of trade and the fate of the ships through which trade was conducted, and were printed in Venice and Amsterdam. Broadcasting, especially since the last war, has in nearly all European states included a substantial commitment to public service programmes, mainly news and current affairs, on channels owned by the state.

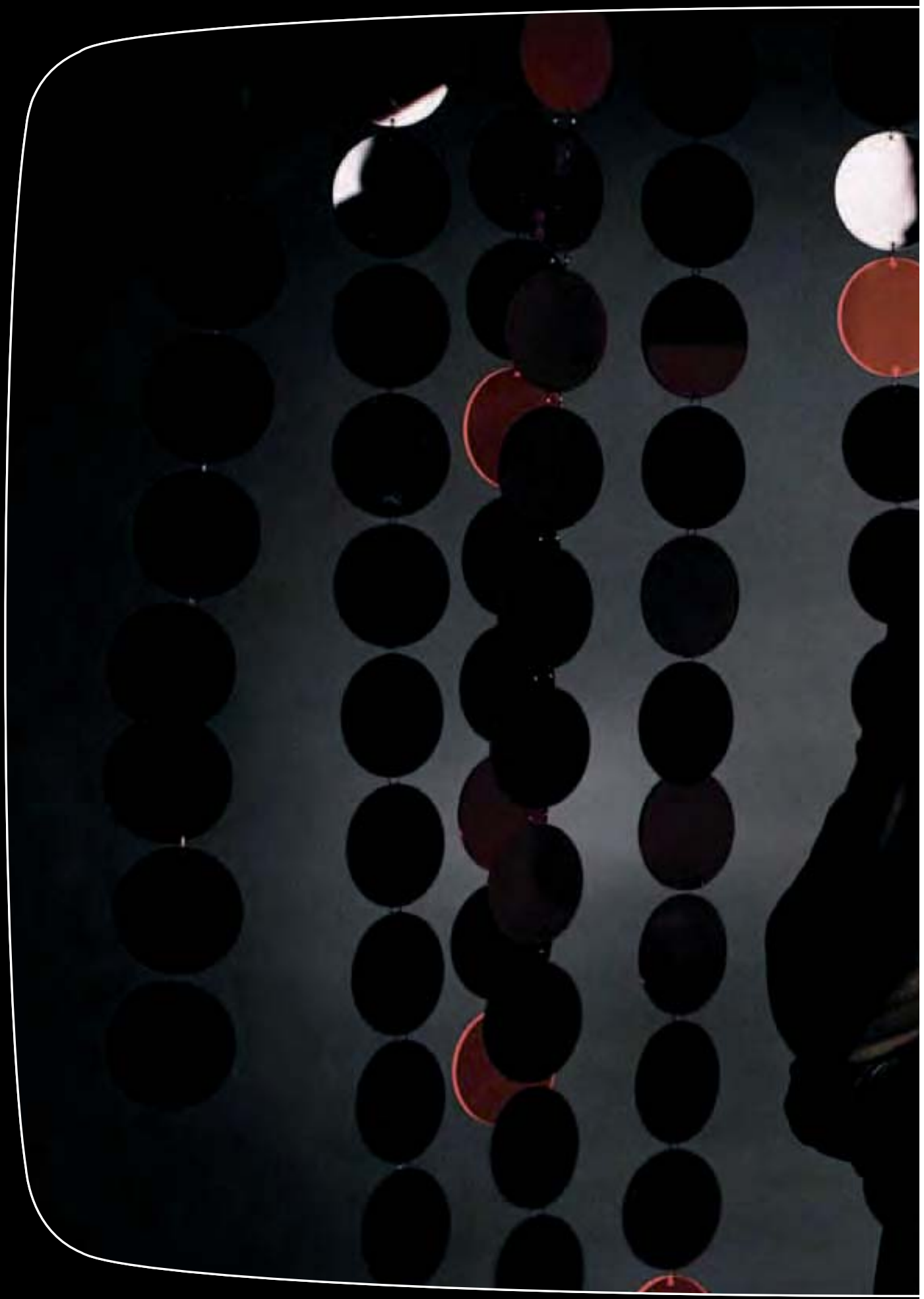
That some of the great newspapers of Europe should now be uncertain of their future – and all, great or otherwise, have major concerns – is of great concern. Our national public spheres have, like those in North America (though naturally earlier), been defined very substantially by newspaper reading.

This is a territory whose discovery owes much to Jürgen Habermas. In the words of John Thompson (in *Media and Modernity*, 1995), Habermas saw that "the critical journals and moral weeklies which began to appear in Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries provided a new forum for the conduct of public debate. While these publications often originated as journals devoted to literary and cultural criticism, they increasingly became concerned with issues of more general social and political significance. Moreover, a variety of new centres of sociability appeared in the towns and cities of early modern Europe. These included the salons which, from around the mid-seventeenth century on, became places of discussion."

Newspapers and journals created that public sphere and sustained it – and sustain it still, though with dwindling effect. These spheres were confined to the nation, even to the town or city. Now, in the new Europe, a 'European public sphere' is tentatively emerging, hindered by language barriers and by the largely national audiences for media, but helped by the spread of English as a common language and the much greater mobility of the continent's young. The media can and to a limited extent do play a role in explaining Europe to its citizens. But the loss of audiences, particularly for newspapers, threatens that fragile beginning.

Virtual public spaces

It may be that new technology can be of some assistance. The Internet is not, as Skule and Carroll and others claim, always a destroyer of good journalism. And because of the ease with which it can be accessed any-



Sweden, TV4, Nyheterna

where, it is much more international than national papers or broadcasting channels. The sites favoured by the new and now vast Internet audience can be anywhere, and with a common language it constitutes something of a new "virtual public sphere."

The media writer and academic Jay Rosen, whose PressThink blog is one of the best things on the media available, replied in the Los Angeles Times to Skule's pessimistic piece. He listed some 20 examples of where bloggers had broken stories, conducted investigations and revealed abuses that mainstream media had missed.

News is now increasingly put together by the consumer, and in that lies both the problem and perhaps the salvation. Individualism – sometimes referred to as the "me generation" and often dismissed as mere selfishness – is the major social trend in the world. At its best, it means more personal autonomy and, what must attend it, more personal responsibility.

That trend, confronting the Internet, means that news is not now handed down, as it was to Nick Lemann's grandfather, sitting on his porch of an evening reading the *New York Times* in exactly the way that the editors wished it to be read, but as material which is shaped by the consumer, by the reader and the viewer.

Niche news

In part this is what I have called niche news; in part it is a preference for entertainment, celebrity and fun which drives the popular media; and in increasing part it is people engaged on that practically infinite resource, the Net – putting out their life on YouTube and MySpace, challenging received wisdom in blogs, creating received wisdom in Wikipedia.

Serious journalism will have to find its own niches on the Internet. I use the plural because clearly there will be more than one. Already, a good deal of innovative documentary making is done for the web – often incubated in universities, paid for by not-for-profit institutions.

The investigations and revelations which Jay Rosen lists are evidence that the blogosphere is taking on a quasi professional edge. Newspapers are developing websites that include the journalism done for the papers and, increasingly, journalism done for the web. And above all, people are able to put together their universe of news from the vast libraries of material available within seconds.

It is of course confusing: as far ahead as can be seen, society will need that cadre of people called journalists who are paid to interpret events. But it will have to be collaborative, it will have to be more aware of its limitations and it will have to be both more ambitious in its scope and more modest in its claims to have the last word.

The Net allows journalism – indeed encourages it – but only as the first draft of

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"We have lost some precious things in journalism, such as fine TV current affairs programmes, such as foreign correspondents' networks on big city papers, and we may lose more."

history. After this, second drafts of history follow not in fifty years when the archives open and the historians have digested and reveal the real story, but the next day, when someone else gets hold of it and rewrites it.

The most fruitful possibility of collaboration is that which combines professional with citizens' journalism: that is, a collaboration which uses the insights, local knowledge and often specialist knowledge of those who normally consume the news in harness with the professional investigative and analytical skills of good professional journalism.

A marriage of convenience

Both sides – professional journalists and citizen journalists or bloggers – have developed a distrust of each other, the first often dismissing the new techniques as amateurism, mere opinion ungrounded in facts; the second seeing the mainstream media as incapable of modernising, stuck in old routines which no longer appeal to a broad public. In fact, it is in the interests of both to strike an alliance: to recognise each has strengths worth preserving or developing and that only through such a merger can new forms of journalism be developed.

In another decade, serious journalism will look something like this.

Magazines containing serious journalism, essays, investigations and analysis will continue to survive. *Die Zeit*, *The Economist* and the *New Yorker* will all still be publishing and others may have joined them. Some of these will not make money. The British monthly *Prospect*, one of the best new serious titles of the last decade, may continue to need funding by private investors, as does the US *Atlantic* and the Italian *MegaMedia*. Some, like *The Economist*, will be very profitable.

New niche magazines will continue to pop up, as in the past though some of these may have a web presence, and some will be aggregating sites, such as *signandsight* and *Arts and Letters Daily* – both immensely useful reference points.

Magazines will survive because of their portability; their ability to give an explanatory survey of recent events rather than a confusing daily update (*Die Zeit, The Economist*) or to produce reportage of some length and some significance (*New Yorker*, *Prospect* and many others).

Newspapers may survive as global products, as the *Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Herald Tribune*, or as local notice boards, or as free sheets. It's hard to see the appetite for a daily roundup of events, which you can hold in your hand, disappearing. Though if a portable 'scroll' on which newspapers can be downloaded is brought to the market successfully, then paper copies might more or less disappear.

The great newspapers will survive – if they face the future intelligently – as electronic products. They'll have to develop the mix of professional and amateur journalism

described above, and produce websites which publish this journalism and amplify it by aggregation of material on the same subject, so that the reader can go more deeply into areas s/he wishes to know thoroughly.

In fact, electronic distribution solves the perennial and expensive problem of newspaper distribution, and it benefits newspapers. Their survival, of course, presupposes advertising support.

The hopeful sign is that advertising is migrating to the net; the doubt is that it will do so in quantities that will support costly journalism, especially international journalism.

Radio is often the forgotten medium in journalism though it is ideally suited to analytical journalism. Many radio services, such as BBC Radio 4, are distinguished in this regard. However, it is unlikely to be commercially viable: the expense of compiling accurate reports makes programmes much more expensive – and sometimes less attractive to advertisers – than talk or music shows.

The public service model of state-backed support or the subscriber/supporter backed network, such as the US National Public Radio, will continue. The latter may even expand, as it has in recent years in the US.

Television will virtually cease to do serious current affairs as a routine matter on mass channels. These will go to niche channels, as they already have: the Discovery Channel has taken on the old show format and is developing it for its worldwide viewership. Or current affairs

TV will exist as Internet productions: much documentary and investigative material is already available online, everything from amateur analysis and investigations on YouTube through to foreign reporting subsidised by not-for-profits and/or university journalism departments.

The Net will continue to develop hugely, and will be the biggest driver of and innovator in serious journalism. When – as will soon be the case – the TV screen and the computer screen merge into one, and the modern home has screens which are active sites of discovery and creation as well as passive receivers of programming, the line between producer and consumer of media will become ever fainter.

Readers as writers

Technology is creating a new present and foreshadows a new future for the news media. It is right to reflect on this with some foreboding. We have lost some precious things in journalism, such as fine TV current affairs programmes, such as foreign correspondents' networks on big city papers, and we may lose more.

But in the end, if we are to preserve serious journalism, we must now have faith that those who are its object – the readers,

"If we are to preserve serious journalism, we must now have faith that those who are its object – the readers, listeners and viewers – will wish to become its creators, and in doing so will open a new chapter."

listeners and viewers – will wish to become its creators, and in doing so will open a new chapter. This will remove the ability of journalists, in any medium, to have the last word; to say, as Walter Cronkite, the CBS news anchorman, famously did: "That's the way it is."

There is no one "way" of how it is; there is never a last word. If the net can make that into a reality – and more, into a way of doing journalism – then it will be a blessing, not a curse.

John Lloyd is the director of Journalism at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. He was a Bureau Chief of the Financial Times in Moscow and a founding editor of the Financial Times Magazine. He has worked as a television producer and reporter and has edited and published many articles and books about journalism, among them, "What the Media are Doing to our Politics" (2004).

Czech Republic, ČESKÁ TELEVIZE, Události

The Ancient Greek of the Present Day

Jürgen Habermas launches a Core Europe initiative but no one discusses it with him. Who had ever heard of Theo van Gogh, outside of the Netherlands, before he was murdered? And in Paris, as the sixtieth anniversary of the freeing of the city is celebrated, no one pays any attention to what's happening in Warsaw. A plea for more recognition for the thought provoking but rather isolated world of cultural criticism or *feuilleton* journalism in Europe. *By Thierry Chervel*

"Un ange passe," say the French, if a babble of voices suddenly goes silent. The angel, in this case, is Europe. It recently passed over the grave of Pierre Bourdieu. It is only a little story, a bit sad and a bit laughable, actually rather incidental, but it tells us something about the European public sphere.

Shortly before his death, Pierre Bourdieu, the great French sociologist, turned once again to one of his much-loved subjects, which he also viewed with some suspicion: himself. A farmer's son from the province of Bearn, at the foot of the Pyrenees, Bourdieu overcame the cultural crags of the Ecole Normale Superieure and, in the end, became a Lord God of sociology. This quite amazing success story stood in blatant contrast to the sociology of Bourdieu, which sought to explain everything in relation to descent and habit. Bourdieu wrote his last book with the title "A Sociological Self-Experiment," and he died shortly thereafter.

A short while later, the French weekly, *Nouvel Observateur*, published an extract from the forthcoming book and provoked a sensation. Bourdieu was the last intellectual who could really stir up a tumult in the Paris media. He hated the media for it. Of course, Bourdieu's heirs had not authorised the publication of the extract from his last book, because Bourdieu had played a trick on the French media: the text was meant to be published first, in German, in Germany, and thereafter in France. Bourdieu did not want to arouse any sort of frantic media hype regarding his uneasy self-reflections. He hoped to spark off a composed and serious debate. But did he really want what then actually happened?

What happened was ... nothing. A few months after Bourdieu's death, the German book, "Ein soziologischer Selbstversuch," was released by the publishers Suhrkamp. Silence. The German media had absolutely no idea that a good story was lurking within the pages of the book; that it was an otherwise hotly sought-after text. It was a gift from Bourdieu to what was thought to be a more-qualified German public. Months later, the newspapers published a few obligatory reviews of the book. In France, as well, the release of the book in Germany trigge-

red not the slightest reaction. An extract that had provoked scandal just months before had now appeared in book form and it may as well have not existed at all. No one in the French media reads German at all seriously and they do not employ any scouts who keep track of cultural oscillations in Germany. Only when the book appeared in France, in French, did it produce the usual hurly burly.

Is there a Europe beyond the milk quota? Apparently, only as an angel who passes through the room, provoking a pause in the conversation, a short, blank space in the flow of communication. The Bourdieu-effect has occurred more often in recent years. Jürgen Habermas launched a Core Europe initiative but no one discussed it with him. Who had ever heard of Theo van Gogh, outside of the Netherlands, before he was murdered? And in Paris, as the sixtieth anniversary of the freeing of the city was celebrated, no one talked about events happening at the same time in Warsaw. While in Paris a number of streets were named after communist resistance fighters, whose heroism after 1941 is beyond dispute, people in Warsaw remembered Stalin's ice-cold smile as he watched Hitler bomb the Polish resistance to smithereens. That was the end of the liberation movement.

The ignorance of the other is greatest in the big countries of Western Europe, whose public remains in self-satisfied repose. One concerns oneself with who should be the candidate for the job of chancellor, late night comedy stars and football scandals. The intellectuals sit as if in a cinema: they all look in the same direction, straight ahead, spellbound, taking no notice of their neighbours, and snort indignantly over the latest crimes of that very nasty boy, George W. Bush. The phantom pain of the loss of utopia following the fall of the Berlin Wall is being anaesthetised by criticising globalisation.

But it is exactly the opponents of globalisation who generate the kind of morbid fixation on America that they pretend to criticise. They prefer to see evil remain in one, fixed location and avoid looking in the other direction – for example, towards Chechnya. Or towards their neighbours. Is it really the fault of Bill Gates and Steven Spielberg that fewer and fewer French are learning German and that fewer Germans are learning French?

An article recently appeared in the French edition of *Le Monde diplomatique*, the central organ of the opponents of globalisation, written by the founder of the ATTAC movement, Bernard Cassen. It was about a preferred international language policy. The Frenchman, Cassen, wants to curb the influence of English, which he sees as the vector of neo-liberalism. "The imperial power of the USA is not based on material factors alone (such as military might and scientific know-how, the production of goods and services, the control of money and energy etc.), it also embodies, above all, the mastery of the mind; in other words, the mastery of the cultural iconography and cultural frames of reference – and especially, therefore, of the icons of language."

The dollar of discourse

English is the dollar of discourse! And that's why Cassen suggests a new policy of language groupings. In schools in Romanic countries, argues Cassen, the languages of the Romanic neighbours ought to be learnt at least to such an extent that a French person is capable of understanding a Spaniard or a Brazilian, and visa versa. Based on this idea, the Germans could chit chat quite well with

the Danes and the Dutch. The Poles would be compelled to carry on a conversation with the Russians.

In Cassen's vision, Europe appears, at best, as a Brussels institution, which threatens to cave in under the influence of English. In his anti-discourse, the European public sphere crumbles to dust in the palm of one's hand; he is not at all interested in it. His dream is focussed, above all, on the Romanic languages, which he would like to consider as "a single language," and which could be made into a forceful counterweight to the hated language of capitalism. Cassen's fixation with America is exactly what his enemies succumb to.

The influence of English is, in fact, expanding due to the Internet. The Internet does indeed facilitate an extreme fragmentation of the public – even a cannibal can, literally, find willing nourishment. At the same time, the Internet only offers a range of opportunities if certain standards of communication are adhered to. Computer programming languages like html or Linux, as well as audio compression processes like MP3, are counted among these standards, but also, unfortunately, is the English language. Oddly enough, standards such as MP3 and the World Wide Web were invented in Europe, but not Amazon, Google, E-bay and Yahoo. These services have changed the lives of everyone who reads and writes and can operate a computer. They also affect the public sphere and restructure it. It is a mystery why none of these brilliant and equally problematic ideas originated in Europe.

"Oddly enough, standards such as MP3 and the World Wide Web were invented in Europe, but not Amazon, Google, E-bay and Yahoo – services that have affected the lives of everyone and which have restructured the public sphere."

The English-language media itself has grown in status through the Internet. The *New York Times* operates one of the best Internet sites of all the quality international newspapers. With its Internet newsletter it is now able to reach a much wider public than with the 'extract' newspaper it distributes throughout Europe, the *International Herald Tribune*. Those who searched the Internet, after September 11, 2001, for information about Afghanistan or Islamic terrorism were better served if they spoke English.

And how would it have been if one were searching for information in Arabic? It was by no means only the American media that

signandsight.com

The website signandsight.com seeks to foster European cultural debate. It was founded in 2004 by the German online culture magazine perlentaucher.de. The German Federal Cultural Foundation provided funding for the site to the end of 2007. Signandsight.com was able to prove that the European public sphere does indeed function, by launching a debate on Islam in Europe, which aroused a sensational response across Europe and even in the USA. It began with a sharp attack by the French writer and commentator Pascal Bruckner on an article published in the *New York Review of Books* by Timothy Garton Ash, titled "Islam in Europe." Garton Ash replied immediately to Bruckner's criticisms, and other writers – including Ian Buruma, Bassam Tibi, Necla Kelek and Lars Gustafsson – joined in the debate. A number of European newspapers, such as *Le Monde* in Paris, *Expressen* in Stockholm, and *Corriere della Sera* in Milan, re-printed articles from signandsight.com or organised their own articles on the topic. It was, in a sense, the first international cultural criticism (or feuilleton) debate. Signandsight.com believes two tools of transmission are needed for a European public sphere: the English language and the Internet. At the moment, signandsight.com receives only a small amount of funding from the Augstein Foundation. The producers of the site are on the look-out for financial backing from European foundations.

provided information following the 9/11 attacks; it was also highly specialised University institutes, the Internet sites of think tanks and exiled Afghan organisations. Cassen is wrong when he claims that English only conveys an ideology or the exclusive interests of a single country. The English-language magazine *Outlook India* – a magazine quite critical of the US – ranks as highly in a Google search as the *Weekly Standard* of the American neo-cons. Even Al Jazeera TV broadcasts in English in order to reach a worldwide public.

Nevertheless, a double-headed kind of provincialism threatens to manifest itself. On the one hand, as already stated, there exists a growing tendency among non-English speaking public spheres – such as those in France and Germany – towards self-satisfaction and contentment. Added to this is the fact that quality German newspapers like the *Süddeutsche* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* partition off access to their Internet sites, allowing only paying subscribers to gain full access. European journalists research English-language sources on the Internet for their stories but their own newspapers restrict access to their own contents, offering no free-flow of communication in return. Beyond this, European newspapers were never interested in, or in a position to establish, European networks. The only newspaper that would be able to create a European public, if its owners wanted to, would be the *International Herald Tribune*. And its owners are based in New York!

A blind spot in communication

And on the other hand, one might recall the love the American cinema had for Paris up until the 1950s. They glanced in this direction. Europe had something to say and America appeared to want to hear it. Today, a provincialism also threatens to envelop the English-language public sphere, if Europe remains a blind spot in the lines of communication.

It is time to awaken from our stupor, massage our necks and reflect on our own strengths. Germany, for instance, has the best arts and cultural criticism – known as *feuilleton* journalism – in the world! It not only reports and reflects on a unique cultural landscape, with first-class opera houses, galleries and museums in every middle-sized city, it also offers an excellent debating space. Demographers write about shrinking cities, doctors write about ethics, Jeremy Rifkin writes about Europe and Gilles Kepel or Bernard Lewis write about Islam.

Even if *feuilleton* editors sometimes succumb to the misunderstanding that their own, often-brilliant articles are really the only important articles in the newspaper, even if aspects of research or the telling of stories in German arts and cultural journalism is considered to be inopportune, the *feuilleton* press is the only really social, cosmopolitan debating space in the German public sphere. It was within this space that the debate among historians, which redefined the relationship of Germans to their history, took place. It is here that Günter Grass writes about copyright or Andrzej Stasiuk writes about the Ukraine. The relative openness of the *feuilletons* to Eastern Europe is one of its great strengths. It is within this debating space that Germany is decidedly less provincial than Western Europe and the English speaking countries. Would Imre Kertesz have won the Nobel Prize for Literature if he hadn't achieved success in Germany? Germans like reading internationally: they know that Peter Esterhazy and

Juri Andruchowytsch are fabulous writers.

The rich culture of debate, developed by the German *feuilletons*, is a product of modern German history. After the Second World War, the allied powers who controlled Germany allocated licences to reasonably blameless Germans to allow them to publish newspapers. "Teach Germans democracy," was what the Allies told these new publishers. But they also told them that Germans should in no way be invited to write political commentaries themselves, because the society that spawned Nazism was still susceptible to such ideology. Political editors in Germany have held to this maxim to this day and have barred members of the public from publishing political commentary pieces in newspapers. This work is alone the preserve of scrutinised editors who are permanent, full-time employees of the newspapers. In this way, a rather sterile formula for political commentary has developed, in which the same opinion-makers write the commentaries. This has left the actual tumult of the world, the tribulations and the colour of discourse to the *feuilletons*.

Little of this is known beyond Germany's borders because German, in general, is a kind of Ancient Greek of the present day, and is very seldom used. Isn't it about time we translated some of this into English? For the benefit of Europe, as well as China, Russia, India, Burkina Faso and the USA?

The public sphere is becoming more internationalised. *Le Monde diplomatique* is leading the way with its various spin-off publications. Another very distinguished example is *Lettre International*, which appears in many European cities, and which works to promote the reciprocal recognition of cultures through its Ulysses Award for the Art of Reportage. *Eurozine* is an Internet magazine, with English, German and French translations of articles from European cultural magazines. Signandsight.com presents articles from the German-language *feuilletons* in English.

Regional difference needs the idiom of globalisation in order to articulate itself. Un ange passe: Let's talk European!

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Thierry Chervel, born in 1957, studied musical science at the Technical University of Berlin. He worked as a film and music journalist, and as a political editor with the "Tageszeitung" newspaper. He was also the culture correspondent for the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" in Paris. He is the co-founder of the online magazines perlentaucher.de and signandsight.com.

The Dance of the Lilliputians

It applies to film as well as to news: Europe sells itself badly. Why? Because a real, unified European media market does not yet exist, according to Sergio Cantone. The development of the media industry is lagging behind developments in other industries. The European Union hopes the Television Without Frontiers directive will create a pan-European distribution strategy. What are the chances of success? *By Sergio Cantone*

When it comes to the media, continental Europe looks like a garden where myriads of Lilliputians dance. It is a rather clumsy dance, in which the main characters try to cope with the impact of globalisation and their market oriented miscalculations. As a result, they simply try to "sell the story to their own people." Who are these people? The answer is: they are the citizens of the European Union, who are, of course, well separated by traditional national state borders. Europeans watch and read their own very local news, as well as American movies. They might know everything about Iraq, the Middle East and the amazing economic miracles of China. Then, with a giant step backwards into the domestic sphere, they learn about every detail of a murder that happened just around the corner; they find out about a local politician who's having a spicy love affair with a starlet or who is getting a kickback to create a kindergarten.

But they know very little about their neighbouring countries, which are European and, in most cases, European Union members. When it comes to the national media, the interest in and the knowledge of the EU and its activities ranks below that of the appeal of any football test match.

This is the European media market. It is not a single space; the rules are not even the same for each space. Yet it is a parcelled playground.

Within this framework, it is interesting to examine the European Commission's famous plan D ("D for Democracy") organised in response to the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the French and the Dutch, and the EU's loss of popularity following the referenda in these two countries. This plan D has yielded an interesting set of studies, reactions and deceptions concerning the European media scene. It is relevant to stress that the EU undertook this study to find out how to reconnect with its citizens.

From a formal and an institutional point of view, it was known as the white paper on

"a new communications policy," presented in February 2006. The study showed that NGOs were seen as more effective communicators. Sixty-five percent of journalists preferred the EU to issue a quick release of its position before EU events. They also called for better websites rather than the traditional channels of communication. Moreover, they demanded better conditions for in-depth reporting, investigative journalism and the protection of sources. What does this mean? It means that there's a clear attempt by journalists to offer information, European information, to their readers and/or audiences.

Since then, things haven't changed that much. Journalists in Brussels are still seeking ways to land a big European scoop and to breach the secretive iron curtain lying between them and EU institutions. And even when there's some big news, it is immediately shattered into 27 pieces along strictly national lines, and thus looses its real impact.

The conclusion: the media developed in the past, on a purely national basis, is still the strongest in Europe. But for how long will it retain its leading position? As for facts and figures concerning the European media, the audiovisual sector directly employs over one million people in the European Union. Television is the most important source of information and entertainment in European societies: 98 per cent of homes have a television, and the average European watches more than 200 minutes of television per day.

Despite speeches and studies concerning the Internet, TV, newspapers and many other forms of communication, Europe lacks clarity when it comes to deciding what to broadcast, what to publish, and, eventually, what to do. In fact, the media does appear to be strong: most European state broadcasters are funded through a mix of state money and advertising. They are still holding their own, despite the offensive, which began in the early 1980s, of privately owned media corporations.

"When there's some big news it is immediately shattered into 27 pieces along strictly national lines, and thus looses its real impact."

Nevertheless , public broadcasters think that the fragmentation of the market along national lines is helping to maintain their survival. The paradox is that they are using cultural differences as protectionist barriers; they are allied by a chauvinistic resurgence in Europe, by anti-globalisation and by xenophobic attitudes. All European national medias try to use these sentiments, as they have discovered that stereotypes sell easily.

The European Union has discovered that since the 2005 Constitutional Treaty setbacks, it will be a tough fight to conquer the hearts and minds of the public. As a consequence, it has decided to take action in order to smash the barriers.

And, incredible but true, so far the European institutions have been behaving with a more open-mind approach to the problem than other European media actors. This is due more to the vacuity of national public and private media companies, than to a particularly skilled approach by Brussels. European institutions seem to be aware of the importance of developing a pan-European media market.

The further development of the 1997 "Television Without Frontiers" (TVWF) directive is a clear attempt to tackle the

shattered European national-based media market, both from a business and a cultural point of view. As far as business and media market organisation is concerned, TVWF is based on the free movement of European television programmes within the internal market. In more concrete terms, this directive establishes that member states cannot restrict retransmission on their territory of television programmes from other member states. It also establishes broadcasting and production quotas.

According to the directive, member states must ensure that broadcasters reserve a majority of their transmission time for European works, excluding the time allocated to news, sports events, games, advertising and teletext and teleshopping services.

Broadcasters must also reserve at least 10 percent of their transmission time or 10 percent of their programming budget for European works from independent producers. There are also provisions concerning advertising: it is limited to a maximum of 15 percent of daily transmission time, and 20 percent of time within a one-hour period. It must comply with certain criteria concerning advertisements for alcoholic beverages.

In August 2006, the European Commission noted that "the average broadcasting time reserved for European works by European public broadcasters was almost 63 percent in 2004." It was the first time that the level of programming of European material had fallen slightly in Europe. However, according to the Commission, works by independent producers "substantially increased on all European channels during the reference period (about 31.5 percent) ... (Also,) the average proportion of recent European works by independent producers is increasing on television channels in the member states."

An industry lagging behind

Another step forward was taken by the EU with the implementation of MEDIA 2007. It is a new programme of support for the European audiovisual sector, combining two parts of the previous MEDIA Plus and MEDIA Training programmes. It encompasses the development, distribution and promotion of European audiovisual material, and has a budget of almost 755 million euros for the period 2007-13. The objectives of this programme are:

- To preserve and enhance Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity and its cinema and audiovisual heritage, guarantee public access to it and promote intercultural dialogue;
- To increase the circulation and audience of European audiovisual works inside and outside the European Union;
- To boost the competitiveness of the European audiovisual sector in an open and competitive market that is propitious to employment.

How is one to achieve these objectives?

- Through the upstream of audiovisual production to promote the acquisition and refining of skills and to support the development of European audiovisual works;
- Through the downstream of audiovisual production to support the distribution and promotion of European audio-

visual works;
- By supporting pilot projects to ensure that the programme keeps pace with developments in the market.

The European Union aims to establish a European distribution strategy by encouraging distributors to invest in the co-production, acquisition and promotion of non-national European films and to set up coordinated marketing strategies. The objective is to breach the national framework by shifting to a pan-European one, by offering incentives for the export, distribution and screening in cinemas of non-national European films.

In this way, European institutions are keen to create a European media market. Establishing non-national productions of fiction and non-fiction films would appear to be a step in the right direction but many people could claim that the EU is wasting public money. Clearly, this is the price that has to be paid for the creation of a European media market, and one might well argue that it is the role of the European institutions to boost areas that are lagging behind, such as the European media market.

More information needed

In 2003, the European Parliament Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs requested a research report to examine the "information of the citizen in the EU: obligations for the media and (EU) institutions concerning the citizen's right to be fully and objectively informed."

The report was eventually issued in the second half of 2004 and it covered the state of the media in the then twenty-five member states. The study reported: "It is important to bear in mind that the production of media, particularly audiovisual media, is an expensive task. Financial backing and capital has to come from somewhere: either the state (that is, the citizens) supports this through taxes, license fees or subsidies, or industry and business finance the media through advertising ... Investment in growing media markets is also necessary, particularly in the new democracies of the East, in order to bring capital, know-how and technology."

The report also stressed that in the European media market there are different rules concerning ways of assessing and/or limiting the influence of companies. In several countries, there are in effect legal arrangements prohibiting the monopolisation of the media or the domination of markets by one media player.

Media ownership is limited in Italy, Greece and France, while media mergers in Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and Ireland are taking place under specific binding rules. Cross media ownership restrictions do not exist in Spain, Belgium, Latvia, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Portugal or Sweden. There are no limitations on foreign ownership (including non-EU) in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy and Latvia.

All the actors involved in drawing up the European parliamentary report were aware of the importance of avoiding media concentration in Europe. In Europe, there are different rules that work towards a single goal: pluralism of information. What the study didn't deal with was the existence or non-existence of a real European media. The conclusion is that a real European media single market doesn't exist in Europe. There is too

much fragmentation. Although, as a lobbyist in Brussels put it: "It is not only a matter of fragmentation, there is not even a clear data base of the European media."

Whatever the economic incentives or financial opportunities that might be offered, it is very difficult to create a harmonised European media market because of diverging interests in terms of content and because of linguistic barriers among countries and regions.

But within the EU's framework, pluralism of information is identified as one of the most important issues that must be dealt with. Pluralism at a European level means, in particular, respecting cultural diversity on a national basis. In fact, it is not only a matter of allowing the existence of a media with different ideological aspirations, as occurs at a national level.

The 2004 report says: "In the context of the European Union, the development of media markets in Europe was considered an important concern in terms of safeguarding European cultural and political identities in the face of US domination of the information and cultural industries."

The EU has always been caught between the two often contradictory desires to develop strong media organisations at a pan-European level in order to counteract US or Japanese strength in the media sector, while at the same time wanting to retain pluralism at the national level in terms of cultural representation and political opinion.

However, EU member states have frequently blocked or hindered any pan-European approach to establishing harmonised rules with the argument that the regulation of market structures is more appropriately dealt with at the level of the nation-state.

One example of this was the Green Paper on Pluralism and Media Concentration in the Internal Market of 1992, which, due to political and industry opposition, did not result in the adoption of a directive.

"EU member states have frequently blocked or hindered any pan-European approach to establishing harmonised rules with the argument that the regulation of market structures is more appropriately dealt with at the level of the nation-state."

Therefore, the main legal instruments at the EU level up to now have been the TV Without Frontiers directive; the Telecom package, which entered into force in July 2003; and the competition rules, in particular, the merger regulation.

Interest in the exotic rather than Europe

There are many companies that have significant cross-sector and cross-national interests: Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp (press and broadcasting); Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset (TV and publishing); Lagardère (radio and publishing); Agora Media (publishing and media); Bertelsmann (publishing); and RTL (television and radio).

But does a pan-European media exist? First of all, its status and its role must be clearly defined. As for the status, it must be supra-national. Creating interest and making it possible to invest in other countries is important when it comes to creating a new

entity with a cross-border value.

In the case of both movies and news, Europe is a hard sell. Why? There are various reasons. First of all, nobody spends any time thinking about how to sex-up European stories. It's easier to immediately connect with a movie about American suburbia than with European suburbia. It is easier to become interested in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq than to understand a major political event just across a border here in Europe.

Are these events too boring? It may well be that the 'pathos' of, say, a Bronx gangster or of the Taliban in Kandahar are both stronger than that conveyed by copycat characters who are animating the European scene. But this is a rather feeble explanation.

Many interesting things also happen in Europe: Europe's 'suburbia' can provide just as many interesting stories as America's. And, as for politics, things happening in European countries are of great importance. Tackling climate change, the promotion of human rights, the fight against terror, immigration, energy security, debates about euthanasia, abortion, and stem cell research: these are issues affecting Europeans at least as much as wars in exotic landscapes.

And yet there is something that just doesn't work. Maybe it is the message itself; maybe it is the linguistic barriers; maybe it is the way Europeans tell stories or make movies.

The various European medias are concerned first and foremost with their own parcels of territory.

But let's have a look at Europe's international media scene. There are three main players in the market: the UK's BBC World, Germany's Deutsche Welle and the brand new France 24. What is their goal? It is to promote their country's respective view abroad. But who are their viewers supposed to be? Third world elites who are eager to learn from former empires about how to do things? Curious Americans? Chinese youngsters? Oppressed masses in failed states searching for the voice of freedom? Chauvinistic expatriate audiences proud to see how their country of origin still has clout on the world stage? Perhaps some of these groups make up a part of their audience, but this does not make these broadcasters part of a real pan-European media, addressing a pan-European audience.

A pan-European media would boost the appeal of European stories because European events would become the core and the original *raison d'être* of its very existence. It would convey to European viewers information about neighbouring countries and about events affecting their own lives, here in Europe.

Such a media already exists in the form of the Franco-German television channel Arte. It is a supranational media, aimed at promoting a supranational approach rather than a one-country, single-voice national interest approach.

It offers its viewers a wide range of programmes. They are mainly European related stories, documentaries, movies and fictions. It is Franco-German but it is open to the rest of Europe.

Arte could provide a good basis for a supranational media. It is a "European oriented public service broadcaster." The legal basis of Arte is a rather interesting one. It was set up under the provisions of an "interstate treaty" signed in 1990 by France and eleven German states. It establishes the foundation of the European cultural TV

Austria, ORF, Zeit im Bild

channel Arte. Members of Arte are La Sept and Arte Deutschland GmbH. The shareholders of Arte France are: France Télévision with 45 percent; the French State with 25 percent; Radio France with 15 percent and INA with 15 percent. Arte Deutschland GmbH's shareholders are the German public broadcasters, ARD and ZDF, which each own 50 percent. In 2005, its budget was 360 million euros. Its 2006, its audience was 4.1 percent in France and 0.4 percent in Germany. Other European public broadcasters – Belgium's French-language channel RTBF, Poland's TVP and Austria's ORF – are associate members, while SRG and SSR from Switzerland, the Spanish broadcaster TVE, Italy's RAI and the Finnish YLE all have a cooperation agreement with Arte.

A core group of pan-European media

When it comes to television with a supranational mission, the only single case of a purely pan-European news channel is EuroNews. It broadcasts news and other journalistic stories around the clock in eight languages: English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Rumanian.

EuroNews was created in 1992 and started airing its first programmes in 1993. Its creation was clearly rooted in the Zeitgeist of the early-1990s: to develop a European media policy to coincide with the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty and the end of Cold War, and to respond to the challenge of North America's CNN, which monopolized the coverage of the first Gulf War in 1991.

The challenge was to create a television channel able to cover world affairs from a European viewpoint. It was, of course, a very ambitious goal because it relied upon two very deep-rooted EU concerns: the persistent desire to create a political union and respect for national identities or languages.

EuroNews has experienced difficult moments in its history. Ups and downs in terms of management skills and the extent of its popularity, affected its capacity to create a single European way of doing news. In the beginning, it was limited in many ways by the main characteristic of post-production media: EuroNews could only rely on international news and TV agencies for its content. In one way, this provided advantages because it had access to European Broadcasting Union footage (along with APTN and Reuters pictures) but in another way it was an obstacle because of the lack of original material.

Nowadays, things have changed. EuroNews is producing its own programmes and it has reduced its dependence on international TV agencies. As a consequence EuroNews has recovered its independence.

From a media point of view its main characteristic is the prominence of pictures. As a matter of fact, EuroNews is a TV channel without presenters. Its hallmark programme is "No Comment," a three-minutes-long programme of edited pictures, without any commentary.

The content of its bulletins, reportage, interviews and debates is mainly concerned with Europe. It is not only about European Union affairs; it is also about events happening in European countries, with a collective European interest. Euronews reaches 185 million households in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, North America and Latin America. The channel is owned by 19 public

broadcasters from western and central Europe, Russia and northern Africa.*

The European media market badly needs more cohesion among public and private broadcasters in various European countries. First of all, it needs a core group of truly pan-European media, with a supranational role, inspired by Eurovision and European public broadcasters.

European media is also a matter of content. Europeans have to start discovering themselves through their own movies and their own news. As well, Europe needs to develop clear market rules to allow media groups to invest in other countries and overcome cultural barriers.

Sergio Cantone is a Brussels correspondent for the pan-European television channel EuroNews. Before coming to EuroNews he worked as a broadcaster and as a newspaper editor.

*The shareholders of EuroNews are: CyBC (Cyprus), ERT (Greece), ERTV (Egypt), France Télévisions (France), RAI (Italy), RTBF (Belgium), RTP (Portugal), RTVE (Spain), TMC (Monaco), YLE (Finland), CT (Czech Republic), ENTV (Algeria), ERTT (Tunisia), PBS (Malta), RTÉ (Ireland), RTR (Russia), RTVSlo (Slovenia), SRG SSR (Switzerland), TVR (Rumania) and NTU (Ukraine). The biggest shareholders are France Télévision, RAI, RTVE, RTR and SRG SSR.

A Dialogue With the „Dumb“

Poland and Germany live in different television worlds. Major public debates in Poland raise very little interest in Germany. Cross-border publishing ventures and joint committees of journalists have been able to change little in this regard. Is the case of Germany-Poland a reflection of the splintering of the European media landscape?

By Beata Ociepka

How can one communicate with people who are known as the "Niemcy" – the mute ones? This is what Germans are known as in Polish. The name originates from a time when the borders between the two countries were no great hurdle. When a new border was built after World War II, great efforts were made to make it impenetrable. No form of bilingualism developed along the German-Polish border, as developed in many European border regions. One was not allowed to communicate – although one didn't really want to, either.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the opening up of media structures on both sides of the border contributed to a better understanding of each other. The people of the former East Germany had suffered censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression just as Poles had, even if such restrictions weren't as institutionalised as in Poland. A process of transformation began and the democratisation of the media played an important role here. A framework was established for a free market oriented broadcasting and print media, as well as a culturally developed one. At the same time the concentration of media ownership increased. It was mostly German publishing houses that invested in Poland.

Poland's entry to the EU in 2004 awakened the fears, rooted deep in Polish history, that Germans would buy up huge tracts of Polish land. It soon became clear that German investors were not particularly interested in Polish land. Instead, from the middle of the 1990s, German publishers spotted a number of niches in the Polish magazine market and proceeded to service those niches with new media products. The commentary by Polish journalists read: "The Germans haven't bought up the land – they've taken the media."

The popular new magazines for the public, launched by German publishers, provoked a discussion about the dangers to Poland's cultural identity. The involvement of the German publisher Passauer Verlag in the Polish regional press – above all in Lower Silesia –

was strongly criticised in right-wing circles.

The investments did create new connections between German and Polish media structures, although these did not extend to content. The media structures were connected economically but hardly at all politically or culturally.

In the same sense, despite the process of European integration, there is very little to be seen of a common media structure at a European level – both institutionally and in terms of content. This is the case even though national media structures in Europe have many things in common. Such similarities can also be found between Poland and Germany. The Polish entry to the EU provided a framework for cooperation. But it also brought old conflicts to the surface under new guises. And age-old resentments always sell well in the media.

Historical conflicts

Geographical proximity, contentious problems in European politics and historically based conflicts – these are the causes of German-Polish media wars that have defined the climate of opinion between the two countries, on and off since 1998. This climate is only partly explained by the "hard politics" propagated in recent years by the national conservative Law and Justice Party of Jaroslaw and Lech Kaczynski.

Let's take a closer look at the media landscapes of both countries. With regard to the electronic media, there is a similar type of dual media system in place on both sides of The Oder river. In Germany as well as in Poland, publicly funded broadcasters still play an important role. Publicly funded television is watched by almost half the population.

The EU assigns the publicly funded broadcasters a special role. In the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, public broadcasters were declared to be an instrument for maintaining pluralism in the media. Despite the advancing commercialisation of the media, public broadcasters have more tasks to fulfil than commercial broadcasters. The programming responsibilities of the public broadcasters are defined individually by each EU member state.

A comparison of public broadcasting structures on both sides of the German-Polish border reveals various differences in organisation and function. The main ARD public broadcasting network in Germany is federally organised. Its members thereby have much more independence than the regional television departments of Polish television (TVP SA), which operates under a more centralised structure. Although in Germany, the second public TV network, ZDF, *is* centrally organised.

The funding made available to the various departments of Polish television through broadcasting fees is much lower than for a single regional German ARD-broadcaster. This means that Polish viewers have to live with many more advertisements in their programmes than Germans do.

Public broadcasters in Poland are popular but they are not recognised as a common good. Political parties try, as they do all over Europe, to use public television for their purposes. At the same time the broadcasters are facing increasing financial pressure, which leads to more commercialisation. In the end, both politicisation and economic constraints prevent public broadcasters in Poland from playing a greater role in creating a democratic public space.

The difference between Germany and Poland can be understood better when one analyses news reporting. Even the simplest comparison of the contents of the main informational programmes shows that the two neighbours live in different television worlds. Foreign news and information – information about other regions of the world – are as good as non-existent on Polish television. Over the last two years it was nearly impossible to find foreign news reports on the important info-programmes on Polish TV. The intensity of internal debate has almost eliminated reporting on events outside of Poland. Interestingly, this led to something of a new trend after 1989: more reporting about Poland in Germany

The public service contract to which public broadcasters are bound is the reason for the existence of "Kowalski trifft Schmidt" (Kowalski meets Schmidt), a TV programme about Germans and Poles, jointly produced by RBB (the Berlin-Brandenburg broadcaster), and TVP SA in Breslau. The programme has been running for ten years and has won much public recognition and acclaim in that time.

By now, one might have expected the producers would have found a common formula for cooperation; that they might have established a common working framework. However, there are differences in the content of the programmes. As well, the Polish producers in Breslau do not have the last word on what will be shown in the programme and what will not be shown – those decisions are left to producers at TV headquarters in Warsaw.

Stereotypes, which are cemented in the minds and the expectations of the viewers, are nurtured by the producers of the programme. As well, for the last year, the programme has only been broadcast in Poland once every month, whereas in Germany it has been shown twice a month.

"The intensity of internal debate has almost eliminated reporting on events outside of Poland."

The story of "Kowalski trifft Schmidt" brings to light organisational as well as cultural factors, as does every attempt to produce German-Polish media programmes. There is absolutely no discussion about a German-Polish version of Arte – the joint German-French TV channel, although Polish television does also work with Arte. The results of attempts in the 1980s to establish a truly pan-European television service do not give cause for optimism. That project only yielded the news channel EuroNews, which is broadcast today in seven languages.

The German public and the Polish public have different habits that cannot be overlooked. The language barriers between Poles and Germans should also not be forgotten.

And even in Germany, more than 18 years after reunification, there are still differences between East and West. Television viewers in the states of the former East Germany still watch more commercial television, such as RTL, than public television stations like ARD.[1]

Polish entry to the European Union opened up the broadcasting market to investors from EU member states. Foreign ownership or part ownership of media companies is an issue that not only has an economic dimension. In Poland, as in Germany, foreign ownership of the media sector has sparked off public protests and debate among politicians. The possible involvement of Italian media mogul Silvio

Berlusconi in the German television market, via a takeover of parts of the German media interests of Leo Kirch, aroused nervousness among the German public.

Despite the integration processes of the EU, citizens become sceptical when companies from other EU countries invest in their local media market – even though not every case involves someone who is both a prime minister and a media tycoon, as was the case with Berlusconi. The German public also questioned the takeover of the Berliner Verlag – and with it the takeover of the newspaper the *Berliner Zeitung* – by the finance group Mecom, headed by a British media owner, David Montgomery, who has also invested in Poland.

The reaction of German journalists to the involvement of the British consortium in the German media was similar to the reaction of their Polish colleagues to the sale of a regional newspaper with a rich tradition, the *Breslauer Tageszeitung*, to the Verlagsgruppe Passau. A number of journalists from the Lower Silesian newspaper quit their jobs and founded their own regional weekly magazine. Other colleagues participated in the public debate about the presence of a German publisher in Poland. They painted a very pessimistic picture of what it was like to work in editorial offices under German management.[2]

Before 2004, German companies already had a strong position in the Polish press market. Today, they publish some 50 percent of the popular magazines in the country.

New formats

An important development occurred in 2001: the German publisher Axel Springer launched a Polish version of *Newsweek*. It was the first pan-Polish political magazine to be produced by a German media company in Poland. Up to that point in time, this type of involvement by German publishers in Poland was too awkward to manage, as it left them exposed to accusations their magazines were "German titles" and that Germany was meddling in Polish politics.

With a foreign format and German investors in the Polish media market, the new political magazine promptly came in for strong criticism. *Newsweek Polska* has continually been accused of meddling as a foreigner in Polish affairs. But ultimately there is nothing to prove that this has been the case.

Since 2003, the popular press in Poland and Germany not only have the same publisher, but the same format of newspapers. The Polish newspaper *Fakt* belongs to the Axel Springer publishing house, as does Germany's popular *Bild Zeitung*. And both newspapers have the highest circulation in their respective countries. The issues covered by both *Fakt* and *Bild* correspond to the respective public agendas in each country and both hold fast to stereotypes in their reporting – even when it comes to German-Polish relations.

The Polish editors sometimes come up with surprises: in May 2006, *Fakt* ran a headline "Drive to Germany! Your car is already there!"[3] The issue of stolen cars is among the most popular clichés used by the German popular press about Poland, and it shows how doggedly stereotypes remain in the media. On this occasion however, a Polish newspaper had turned the tables on Germany, combining sensationalism with a surprise. The story was about two young Germans who were arrested in Poland for stealing a car.

The opinion making, nationally distribut-

ed newspaper *Dziennik* has also belonged to Axel Springer since 2006. The idea of establishing this type of newspaper has attracted great interest. Many observers believe that new newspapers won't be able to attract readers, in a country where only around a third of the population regularly reads a daily paper.

It was interesting to see how the new newspaper positioned itself in Poland's political discourse. Maintaining close relations with the governing party in Poland appears to be a strategy adopted by foreign publishers – a strategy comparable to that of the Australian-American media mogul Rupert Murdoch in Great Britain. Murdoch took over ownership of the traditional British newspaper *The Times* in 1981 during the prime ministership of Margaret Thatcher. In the case of *Dziennik*, the expectations of the experts have been confirmed. The competition fought the establishment of the new newspaper as a "German" project. Three days before the release of the first edition of the new Springer newspaper, Poland's second biggest newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, published an article about the *Bild Zeitung* with the headline: "A tabloid newspaper with blood on its hands."[4] Over the last couple of years we have witnessed a heightened "media war" between Germany and Poland. News reporting on German-Polish relations by the media in both countries focussed not only on tensions between the two neighbours but also on the media itself. Niklas Luhmann calls this phenomenon the "self-referencing of the media" and says that it can lead to "media narcissism."[5]

On the Polish side, the weekly magazine *Wprost* has contributed to a reinforcing of tensions in German-Polish relations in recent years. The magazine used anti-German stereotypes on its title page, depicting, among other things, Erika Steinbach in an SS-uniform riding on the back of former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. On its title page of July 1, 2007, the magazine depicted a bare-chested Angela Merkel breast feeding the Kaczynski brothers. It is believed the aim of the editors in publishing such title pages is to try to break taboos in public debate in Poland.

The articles in *Wprost* thereby reflect a trend of "pessimistic debate by experts and politicians" about Germany in Poland. This formulation comes from social scientist Matuesz Falkowski, who has researched the news reporting about Germany in the Polish media. His study concentrated mainly on the period before the 2005 election. Even then, German-Polish discourse was characterised by conflict.

An interesting point to note is that *Wprost* works closely with the German magazine *Focus*. Members of both editorial offices sit together in German-Polish journalism committees. Apparently this doesn't help to keep crass stereotypes out of the contents of the magazine.

After 1989, Poland only managed very rarely to push itself onto the front pages of German newspapers or made itself the lead story on television news programmes. As a middle-sized land, Poland is less interesting for Germany than the other way around. In the language of media studies, such countries are known as "news peripheries." By contrast, Germany takes on the role of being the regional "news centre" in Poland.[6]

"As a middle-sized land, Poland is less interesting for Germany than the other way around."

Only in the course of the negotiations for Poland's entry to the EU did Poland literally "grow" in the eyes of the German media. It is increasingly referred to as a "large country," in comparison to other EU candidates, or as the "Polish problem." This tendency was brought to further attention when Poland signed the "Letter of the Eight" and took over responsibility for a security zone in Iraq. In the German media, Poland was instantly referred to as an "occupying power." [7]

The fact is that age-old stereotypes and prejudices still dominate coverage in both the Polish and the German media. A common public sphere has not yet evolved – neither in bilateral affairs nor in a European sense. Programmes like "Kowalski meets Schmidt," created because of the public service commitment of publicly-funded broadcasters, attract fewer viewers than sensational *Spiegel*-TV stories. For *Bild* and *Fakt*, profit margins are more important than positive news stories about local council cooperation in the border regions of both countries.

The logic of the media does not serve to educate the public. Negative, personalised events are reported on – issues and events that sell well. This tendency does not rule out the coverage of European issues but it points to the fact that when it comes to reporting on Europe and the EU, scandals and issues of conflict are the most interesting. Conflicts between Germany and Poland, which can be observed at EU summits, have a greater media echo than the ritual meeting of diplomats.

The media analysts Gurevitch, Levy and Roch maintain that television reflects its own society and its own special forms of narrative. Television contents serve specific interests, which arise from a specific cultural background. This analysis also explains the diversity and the splintering of the European media landscape.[8]

It will be a long time yet in Europe before common stories will be told by a transnational European media to a common public.

Translated from the German by Geoff Rodoreda

Beata Ociepka is Professor for Political Science and International Studies at the University of Wroclaw in Poland. Since 2002, she has held the University's Chair for International Communications Research. She is a former fellow of, among others organisations, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service. She has written ten books and authored numerous articles in Polish, German, Dutch and Hungarian magazines.

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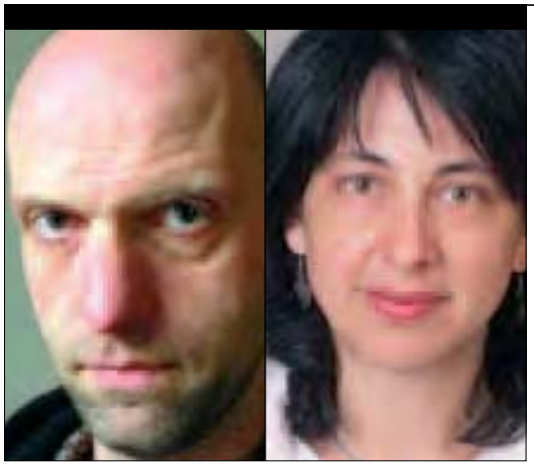
Don't Throw Rubbish Out the Window

One year after Bulgaria's entry to the EU, Europe is seen largely as an economic powerhouse that Bulgaria wants to be a part of. European social and cultural issues are certainly being debated by intellectuals but these discussions hardly move beyond academic circles. Nevertheless, the European public sphere carries a much greater weight in Bulgaria than might, at first, appear to be the case.

By Diljana Lambreva and Dirk Auer



In the last days of December 2006, shortly before Bulgaria's entry to the EU, the Sofia newspaper *Trud* presented its readers with a wonderful selection of self-critical irony. In recognition of the fact there was a need to do some explaining about Europe, the newspaper launched a campaign. Under the headline, "Bulgarians, you are entering the EU!" *Trud* offered some clever words of advice: "Don't throw your rubbish out the window anymore!" And, "Don't insult others all the time! Better still: never insult others!" And a few days later the advice was, "Live in prosperity and don't envy others who live better than you!"

This playful use of stereotypes – both with regard to Bulgarians themselves as well as to foreigners – reflects the enormous importance Europe has for most Bulgarians; especially, however, for the opinion makers in the media, in politics and in academia. Europe is seen as both a goal and as a source of hope. It is seen as a means to self-improvement: away with Balkan inefficiency, forward with European normality. People around 40 years of age and older have lived with thoughts and feelings associated with totalitarianism. The fear of isolation is an indispensable factor influencing their lives and their view of society. Everything that was "over there," on the other side of the Iron Curtain, was idealised. This overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the West has remained until today.

It is no wonder that the Western media remains an important reference point for many Bulgarian journalists. Most journalists in the mainstream media speak two or three languages. They take note of the issues, commentaries and analysis of practically all of Europe's leading media outlets, and this is in turn reflected indirectly in their own reporting. Or it is reflected in newspaper inserts. This is the case for the relatively new newspaper *Klassa*, which offers its readers a daily lift-out of articles translated from the *Financial Times*.

Without doubt, the most interesting project is that of the WAZ-Gruppe publishing house from Essen. The German publishers

are the owners of the two biggest newspapers in Bulgaria, *Trud* and *24 chassa*. Since October 2007, the WAZ-Gruppe has established a multinational bureau of correspondents in Brussels: a team of journalists from Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia and Croatia report for around two dozen newspapers, which the company owns, in various European countries. So it is not unusual for a commentary written by a German correspondent to appear in the Bulgarian newspaper *Trud*, or for an issue analysed by a Bulgarian colleague to find its way into a Hungarian paper.

Missing: a culture of debate

From this point of view, there is no need to worry about the ability of the Bulgarian media to become a part of a future European media. Nevertheless – and this is to a large extent the down side of an uncritical belief in the progressiveness of Western countries – the long years of isolation in the Communist block and the persecution of dissenters in Bulgaria has resulted in hardly anything approaching a culture of debate. European themes – in particular themes like cultural integration or the oft-invoked idea of European values – are rarely challenged. More than a year after Bulgaria's entry to the EU, Europe is mainly seen as an economic powerhouse that Bulgaria wants to be a part of.

Social or cultural phenomena are registered and reflected in the work of intellectuals. However, the discussions that result from this work, if they take place at all, tend to be very academic and elitist. The debate hardly emerges at all from an exclusive circle of scholars, prominent journalists, columnists and writers. This explains why the broader public remains largely unaffected by commentaries and reflections on European themes such as the Treaty of Lisbon or the Schengen Agreement. Analysis of these topics is mostly imported from outside of Bulgaria. Reports in the Bulgarian media consist mostly of factual information; analysing problems and issues from a Bulgarian point of view remains an exception.

It is no wonder that Bulgarian intellectuals have largely withdrawn from the national and European public sphere. It is too early to predict whether this attitude of passivity will hold out. In any case, it is expected that as an EU newcomer, Bulgaria will first have to find its place within the European family and discover itself before it becomes respected as a sovereign member of the new community.

Nevertheless, there is such a thing as a European public in Bulgarian society. While concerns are raised at meetings and conferences in major EU countries about Europe's lack of a public sphere, the notion of a European public is much more concrete, consistent and consolidated in Bulgaria. It is invoked again and again in Bulgarian politics as an imputed moral entity, above all by actors in civil society. Here are two examples of its invocation.

First, the case of the Mogilino children's home. For decades in Bulgaria no state institution was responsible for looking after disabled children. During the years of totalitarianism, people who did not fit into the image of the strong, healthy worker were pushed to the edge of society and had to look after themselves. Eighteen years after the collapse of Communism, the situation for children in homes has not changed much. In the summer of 2007, a Bulgarian human rights organisation informed the BBC about the unbeara-

Netherlands, NOS, Journaal ' 20.00

ble conditions for children in Mogilino. The BBC produced a TV documentary about Mogilino. The documentary provoked outrage, first in Britain and then in other European countries. The Bulgarian government then drew its attention to the matter. The Bulgarian public first learned about the conditions in Mogilino after seeing the BBC documentary on Bulgarian television. And the outrage in newspaper commentaries and analysis, as well as in Internet blogs was great: "How is it possible that in our European Bulgaria children are vegetating in a quasi internment camp?" was the question posed by people.

The second example relates to local government elections in October 2007, which were characterised by the biggest voting manipulation so far in the short history of Bulgarian democracy. During the election campaign, opinion polls were "ordered," the media was unduly influenced, and identity cards were collected to create fake voting lists. After the elections, it was clear to every politician and observer that votes had been bought. However, the irregularities only really became a public issue in Bulgaria after the Bavarian Minister for European Affairs, Markus Söder, expressed his disgust at the situation and threatened to activate safeguard clauses affecting Bulgaria's EU membership. The fact that the only German politician who spoke out on this issue belonged to the CSU – a political party that was fundamentally opposed to the entry of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU, and which had contributed to the negative image of both countries in the media – was not noted. After the US ambassador in Sofia also condemned the voting manipulation, Bulgarian politicians could no longer avoid having to explain the process to the public.

In both of the above cases, civil society structures within Bulgaria did not evidently have the strength to force the issues onto the political agenda and to apply pressure to state institutions. In both cases, the issue first had to be 'exported' – that is, the issues had to become scandals in other parts of Europe in order for them to be critically addressed in Bulgaria. Only through support from outside – from elsewhere in Europe – did leading figures in civil society feel strengthened. Only then was civil society considered a force to be reckoned with by the government.

Birth of civil society

Limited legal sovereignty; control by private and vested interests, and by informal networks; corruption; significant social problems; and parallel societies set up by criminal elements – these are the factor limiting democratic development in Bulgaria. And they are problems that always surface during elections. Bulgaria has had an entirely rudimentary, underdeveloped civil society, consisting of isolated elements that are not linked to each other, and which have had no serious influence on the political process.

Therefore, the emergence on the political stage of a new generation of people in their 20s and 30s has been greeted with euphoria by intellectuals. It is a generation that has been socialised in the post-Communist era and that is shaped by other role models and fears.

The success of young teachers, whose teachers' strike in late 2007 was seen as an expression of social discontent, and the case of a mother who fought for more child-care places are signs that civil society is definitely starting to develop.

Environmentalists who have defended na-

ture protection zones on the Black Sea coast against the interests of property investors, and who have blocked streets to protest against the exclusion of areas listed in the EU's Natura 2000 programme, are hardly any different from environmentalists in Germany in the 1970s.

These people do not protest because the Treaty of Lisbon is being discussed on television, nor do they protest to demonstrate how they belong to the European Union. Neither do they protest because that is simply what is done everywhere to show that this is what being a European is all about. The protests by young environmentalists are much more about an emancipated people with their own convictions who are, because of this, difficult to manipulate. Their actions led to the use of the term "common good" for the first time in Bulgaria. It is not their attitude and the issues at stake which unite them in spirit with other socially committed Europeans, it is their form of protest as a product of the media culture – through blogs, for example. When bloggers unite around an idea, they inform themselves on the Internet, organise themselves and go out to protest. It is certainly no accident that in the first year after Bulgaria's EU entry such a large number of various social groups joined in the protests: pensioners, environmentalists, prisoners, foresters, bloggers, teachers, scholars, doctors, taxi drivers, Internet pirates and public transport workers.

The formation of a European public sphere is quite a complicated process – a process that is continuing to develop. It is closely connected to the pace of convergence of various societies in the EU and the development of each country's own public sphere. For a long time Bulgaria was a land cut off from Europe. In terms of its present development, however, it is a society – for all its contradictions and absurdities – that doesn't remain unaffected by external events. In any case, the community of European discourse carries much greater weight in Bulgaria than Bulgaria believes it does. And conversely, it is hoped that after more than a year of Bulgarian EU membership, some impetus from Bulgaria – that is not at all perceived in Bulgaria itself – is perhaps being registered in Europe, and that that impetus has altered the European public sphere.

Translated from the German by Geoff Rodoreda

Diljana Lambreva, born in 1969, works on the foreign news desk of the Bulgarian newspaper "Klassa." She is the Bulgarian correspondent for Eurotopics, an online platform on European issues, set up by Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education. She also reports from Bulgaria for German-language newspapers such as Austria's "Standard" and the "Berliner Zeitung." She studied German, media studies and intercultural communication.

Dirk Auer, born in 1970, studied social science in Oldenburg and Bremen. He has been living in Sofia since 2006, where he works as a freelance correspondent covering the Balkans.

Caught Between Markets and a Mission

During 25 years of debate about adjusting its media laws to meet the challenges of the digital age, the European Union has always behaved in a contradictory manner. While it is committed to a broadcasting model with a social mandate, there is hardly any sign of this commitment in EU legislation. A report on the schizophrenia of a media-political debate in an age of free-market economics. *By Levente Nyakas*

If we take a snapshot of Europe's broadcasting landscape we see revolutionary changes. And we see these changes occurring in the European Union as well as in its member states. National governments and the EU say there is a need to liberalise media markets due to the technological revolution, rival markets, the need to create more jobs, and in order to stimulate economic growth. They have experts who state, rather adeptly: "We have no time to think, we are forced to take action!"

However, we wish to transgress for a moment, to draw courage, to look back and to think: what does the audio-visual medium mean for Europe and what sort of media policy is the European Union communicating to its citizens?

In contrast to the USA, publicly funded broadcasters in Europe initially developed a broadcasting model with a social mandate. This model was created by John Reith, the visionary behind the BBC's broadcasting philosophy. He quite decisively spelled out the basic function of the electronic media: it should be there to serve the community.

In Reith's view, the media system in the USA functioned in a completely different manner. The media there had neither a cultural mission nor was it set up to serve democracy or national values or any other kind of interest – it was committed purely to economic success. Reith's contrasting model was so well accepted that it became a role model for broadcasting in Europe, even though after World War II another ideology ruled in the eastern part of the continent.

Technological developments presented a great challenge to Reith's European media model. These challenges did not arise in the digital age, they arose much earlier.

The introduction of satellite broadcasting meant that media content was no longer bound by national borders. This had two consequences. First, the role of the state was weakened with regard to influencing media content. Second, one had to pay more recognition to the economic nature of TV channels. The European Court of Justice had made clear in a ruling that the broadcasting of television programmes was to be viewed as a service.

Because of this Europe could not avoid allowing the liberalisation of the media market. The success of the burgeoning private broadcasting sector strengthened the more market based model in contrast to the cultural model. Suddenly, consumption and global culture were accentuated instead of national identity and culture. It was no longer so much about democratic ideals, responsibilities to society and fostering dialogue within society.

European policy makers wanted to match the challenges of the market based model with a cultural model. In 1982, the European Parliament tried, with a statement of intent, to create a European public television station. EU parliamentarians hoped that with a satellite TV channel they might create new ways of bringing European politics closer to citizens in member states. They also had in mind the idea of making the EU more popular.

The dream of a European television channel also inspired discussion about a European identity, which has since been haunting European corridors of thought.

The advance of the market model

Reality has ignored all of these good intentions. In fact, things have moved in the other direction. A European Union green paper in 1984 mentioned nothing at all about the Parliament's idea for a public TV station. Paradoxically, in place of this, the green paper secured the economic base of the private broadcasters. The EU's media ministers agreed on an EU television directive, which was adopted in 1989 as a "Television Without Frontiers" directive.

"Europe could not avoid allowing the liberalisation of the media market."

European policy makers got nowhere with their culturally based media model and the values associated with it. It delegated the problem, without further ado, to the EU member states. But they had to wrestle with the ever strengthening lobby work of the private television industry, which was also particularly strong in Brussels.

In the end, the member states have in turn called on the European Commission to help protect the cultural model. The result was the Amsterdam protocol of 1997: the public broadcasting system in the member states was thereby strengthened. Nevertheless, the cultural model fell into the role of being permanently on the defensive. It is now also viewed from an economic perspective. This is revealed in the example of Hungary.

In Hungary, the liberalisation of the media market only began after the fall of the dictatorship. Although it actually only got underway much later due to fierce political quarrelling about the electronic media.

The 1996 media law, as well as the process of calling for tenders, yielded a balanced system accepted by the public broadcasting sector. The previous state broadcaster was transformed into a publicly funded broadcaster.

But the reality fell way short of the expectations of the public broadcasting sector. More than a decade later, under the dual media system that exists today, the overwhelming success of the private broadcasters has had a far more drastic effect on the media landscape than in the countries of Western Europe.

The public broadcasting system, which had a monopoly until 1997, lost its leading position within minutes of the opening up of the media market. The most brutal collapse occurred in the television market. Today, the two biggest private TV channels command an

audience share of between 70 and 80 percent of the market. The public television channel, MTV (Magyar Televizio), tried to free itself from this difficult position. However, its efforts failed because of government demands for political loyalty, as well as under financing of the public sector, which followed due to the broadcaster not wanting to meet the government's demands. Added to this, radio and television fees were abolished in Hungary in 2003.

This also explains why Hungary's private broadcasters – in contrast to those in Western Europe – did not launch any legal action in Brussels against state financing of the public broadcasting sector. Battered about and knocked to the ground, Hungarian television has been celebrating 50 years of broadcasting.

In the 25-years-long discussion about adjusting its media laws to meet the challenges of the digital age, the European Union has always behaved in a contradictory manner. One could say that European politics still sees itself bound to upholding a cultural model of broadcasting with a social mandate. Strangely enough, however, there is hardly any sign of this commitment in EU legislation.

From the perspective of a new EU member state, it might appear that the EU is theoretically pursuing a common cultural goal, but in practice, in relation to the electronic media, the member states are all focused on pursuing economic gains.

Nevertheless, linguistically and economically, the continent is still quite heterogeneous. The oft-proclaimed culture of "unity in diversity" is hard to imagine without the realistic pursuit of common cultural goals.

The role of the media, in this sense, would be to nurture a dialogue among Europe's citizens, to initiate debates, to arouse curiosity for one another and to broaden the knowledge of one's neighbours. But it is hard to imagine whether these tasks could be carried out without a subsidised cultural model for the electronic media.

Translated from the German by Geoff Rodoreda

Levente Nyakas teaches media law at the Calvinist University Gaspar Karoli in Budapest. He studied law and communications, and in 1997 began working as a lawyer for the Hungarian public broadcaster Magyar Televizio. In 1998/99, he took part in the media negotiations for Hungary's planned entry to the EU. In 2003, he was involved in a review of broadcasting law in Hungary. In 2004, he completed his doctorate and conducted research at the Institute for Applied Communications Science in Budapest.

Appearance and Reality

Due to the increasing commercialisation of the media, freedom of discourse is being held captive to market forces. The ideal of free and enlightened citizens engaging in democratic public exchange is disappearing. Notes from Hungary on the media, culture and democracy.

By Péter Nahimi

Theoretically, democracy means that Uncle Janos himself decides who will rule his homeland in whatever way. He should know best what's good for him.

At first glance this appears to be the most natural logic to adopt, but let's have a look at whether this really is logical. We make two assumptions here. First, that Uncle Janos clearly knows his interests. And second, that if he has a choice, he chooses what in his view is best for him.

However, from the outset, neither of these two assumptions is correct. Is Uncle Janos really expected to know what the best central bank policy for him is, which type of research should be financed at the Academy of Sciences, what diplomatic representation ought to be expanded or cut back in which African states?

The answer, clearly, is no: Uncle Janos doesn't know the answers to these questions. As well, he will not automatically vote for what is good for him. Cancer patients in the hospital garden all know what price they will have to pay for the short, yearning pleasure of a cigarette, and yet they light up anyway.

Things are not as simple as they seem. But every fourth year our Uncle Janos (or Uncle John, Uncle Jan, Uncle Giovanni etc.) goes out to vote. And on the basis of the dominating political trends of the time these votes end up shaping central bank policy, the research programme at the Academy of Sciences and diplomatic activity.

However, if a constitutional monarchy (which functions well in some countries) appears to be the ideal form of democracy for Uncle Janos instead of a republic, then he's got a problem. In Hungary, at least, no political party represents this view. If Uncle Janos would like to see double the state's income divided among the people, then he's out of luck – despite a very clear conception. No political party foresees such a concept in its programme. Instead, he has to choose from a given set of propositions.

What Uncle Janos thinks of the world, what he thinks is best, how he decides to vote from the choices he has on offer – all of this depends on how the world appears to him.

Theoretically, we should also know what washing powder is best for us. But we don't

know. What we buy is partly due to our own experiences as well the experiences of our friends and people we know. The decisive factor in the end, however, is how the producer presents his product in the media – in advertisements, through sponsoring, through product placement. All of this depends on the professionalism of advertising gurus and is also a question of how much money the contracting party can spend.

Ideally viewed, the media presents the issues, needs and opinions of the citizens to the political decision makers, who in turn make their plans and decisions known to the public through the media. However, as the German communications theorist Niklas Luhmann writes: the world is constructed through what we observe. Particular perspectives produce an image which appears in our brain as "the reality." The media, in turn, determines our perspective; the media allows us to see.

Our choice of parliamentarians also depends on the media, just like washing powder. The media affects democracy and if it doesn't carry out its function or exercises it wrongly, it can weaken or – in extreme cases – even destroy democracy. The media is therefore inseparable from democracy; its credibility is an immeasurable down payment for the effectiveness and legitimacy of democracy.

However, the official documents of the European Union refer to the media almost exclusively in connection with culture. This would only be half so bad if we were to use a very broad definition of culture, just as social scientists and cultural anthropologists do.

Actions instead of words

The use of the word culture, however, as well as what politicians think about when they use the word, is determined by the way culture is perceived in each country. And above all, culture is this: well-behaved, amicable, quiet intellectuals reading out poetry, looking at paintings, listening to classical music, and gathering here and there to analyse fully incomprehensible films.

The biggest danger that results from such an understanding is that it can contribute to underestimating the social importance of culture as well as the importance of the media and its impact on democracy. In this regard, there is much more communication about the political process today than there was a few decades ago. Nevertheless, politicians and journalists appear more often in front of the public as protagonists.

A reason for this may be the fact, deeply rooted in European culture, that one places words in opposition to actions. And thereby the word (the appearance) is more subordinate in importance to the "real world of actions."

Understood in this way, the world of the media becomes something virtual and symbolic. It becomes merely a representation of reality.

There are no clear borders between virtuality and reality. In the words of the Hungarian communications expert Özseb Horanyi, the media does not only represent the world, it constructs it as well.

Don Quixote identifying the windmills as giant enemies can be considered as pure vision and symbolism in terms of literature. But when he attacks them and a windmill knocks him to the ground it is no longer representation but physical reality.

The reality changes not only when the old knight begins to storm the windmills. It already changed when he began to kid himself about his "pleasant delusion." In the end, these delusions were more believable than every other real entity in the world.

What sticks in the mind often determines

human action more strongly than what is stipulated in laws. Between 1945 and 1990, Hungary was a part of the Soviet block and one-and-a-half decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain it became a member of the European Union. That means that we Hungarians, and other new members of the EU, were first able to construct a picture of the Union from the outside and examine the way it functions.

Only during the actual entry process did we come within touching distance of the inner life of the EU; we were able to observe its everyday practice. And what can we say about the EU from this perspective? The much longed-for Union, seen from afar, was not identical to the more closely experienced Union. And that is only partly explained by our own cherished central European illusions.

The world of EU policy is improbably colourful, rich and human; as if the dreams of the business owner, the politician, the scientist, the artist and the philosopher were a reality.

In real life we see, above all, international corporations and large companies that want to annex new markets by any means possible. Then we see bureaucrats about whom we know nothing: we don't know whether they really advocate the noble ideal of promoting the free flow of goods and services or whether they are enforcing the interests of companies they worked for before and will work for again after their time as bureaucrats.

We see politicians whose own internal political problems take absolute priority when set against great European ideals. (Here, we are reminded of a range of opposing views regarding farmers and what many felt was an unjust support for their cause in the old and new member states.)

All of this is important because culture is still the neglected child of the EU and a European public sphere is still a long way from becoming a reality. The decision makers in the EU must, however, abandon their way of thinking in which they distinguish between hard issues – mostly economic and political – which need "to be taken seriously," and soft issues, like culture. In the interests of democracy and in order to safeguard their own legitimacy, the EU should not only make agricultural subsidies, services directives or common markets a priority. They also have to ask themselves what role culture and the media might play in EU integration and how they might help influence the shaping of a European identity.

For now, all of these concerns are merely seen as issues to be dealt with in the much distant future. At present, the decision makers argue that "of course there are more important issues," but that these are nevertheless pushed into the background by "unfortunately, much more important issues." So long as nothing changes in this regard, Europe will remain fragmented with national media publics. A European public sphere, let alone a European identity, will not come into being. And because of this there will be no strengthening of democracy by the public in the EU.

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Péter Nahimi, born in Budapest in 1966, is the director of the Institute for Applied Communications Science in Budapest. He studied history and business, and was a member of the Hungarian parliament between 1994 and 1996. From 1998-2002, he was the director of the Fund for Media Programme Administration. From 2002-2005, he was the programme director for Strategic Research for Radio and Television.

Singing in Tune

The traditional European international radio networks – such as the BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle and Radio France Internationale – are facing new competition in the global media market. In order to deal with new challenges from Qatar or from China and to subsist in an increasingly complex media landscape, European broadcasters are now working more closely together. *By Adelheid Feilcke-Tiemann*

As the military junta violently cracked down on protesting monks and the democratic opposition in Burma in September 2007, pictures of the bloody repression were not only sent around the world, they were also seen back in Burma on international TV channels. People in Burma were able to see that the world was taking an interest in their fate. Because of this, the regime in Burma made Western broadcasters partly responsible for the civil unrest. At the beginning of 2008, the military junta drastically increased the fees for private satellite dishes in order to make their ownership practically impossible for the general population. It was a measure designed to ban critical voices from abroad indefinitely. Burma's rulers fear information from foreign sources more than almost anything else. But they are not the only ones. Authoritarian regimes evidently feel they need to monopolise the control of information in order to maintain power – and they do everything to keep out critical voices.

It is estimated that two-thirds of the world's population are still living in societies in which the right to free and independent information is denied. International broadcasters play a central role in this context as a source of alternative, uncensored information. As Jan Hoek, director of Radio Netherlands Worldwide, the Dutch international broadcaster, puts it: "Our most important task is to provide information for people who have no access to different sources of news and alternative standpoints, people who are missing out on reliable and independent information."

In much of Africa, for example, classic short-wave radio still plays a central role as a provider of information. This is why the Ethiopian government invests large sums of money trying to jam frequencies to prevent the Amharic radio programmes of Deutsche Welle and Voice of America from being heard. This is indeed proof that these radio programmes are appreciated by the local people and taken seriously by the authorities.

Around the world, the Internet has established itself as a form of cross-border media – it is popular in many undemocratic countries as well. Although the use of the Internet is mostly limited to city elites, these people are future decision makers and are also the main target group of international broadcasters. In 2007,

Deutsche Welle substantially expanded its Internet service for Iran. The positive response to the service shows that the Farsi-language service is well received.

A healthy online culture

In contrast to Iran, China has brought the Internet largely under state control. In the lead up to the Olympic Games it has further tightened censorship controls in order to secure what it describes as a "healthy online culture." The Chinese version of Deutsche Welle's website (dw-world.de) is only partly accessible to the local population – at times, it is not useable at all. Tens of thousands of cyber-police in China make sure that the locals are not able to download unwelcome material. Even establishing a platform for satellite TV services is not a free and easy affair in China. Thus far, efforts by Deutsche Welle to secure a licence for DW-TV in China have proved unsuccessful.

Today, radio, television and the Internet are the three equally important media that foreign broadcasters use to reach their target audience. They do this either directly or through cooperative ventures with local or regional broadcasters, cable companies and Internet platform providers, depending on which distribution or transmission method is most suitable in each country. "In many parts of the world international broadcasters remain an important part of the media mix," says Simon Spanswick, Director of the Association for International Broadcasting (AIB), an affiliation of international media providers. "The influence of these broadcasters, in the era of globalisation, is just as significant as in the past."

An important target area of European and American broadcasters is the Arab speaking world – and not just since September 11, 2001. This geopolitically important region is lacking independent local news providers. Only two independent TV news broadcasters offer a service for 400 million people in 20 countries throughout the region. "Perhaps more than any other place in the world there is an enormous need here for accurate and credible news services," says Spanswick. "International broadcasters are the only ones providing information to meet this need."

This is the reason why Deutsche Welle, in 2002, added an Arab-language TV service to its extensive radio and Internet news services. In 2007, the Arab-language TV service was expanded to eight hours. The director of Deutsche Welle, Erik Bettermann, says: "With this expansion of programmes Deutsche Welle is seeking to broaden, in particular, its news reporting services in the target area." The aim here, according to Bettermann, is to contribute to debates on the development of society in the region and to continue to develop a dialogue with people who show an interest in Germany and Europe. This is taking place "in the knowledge that we have common ideals as well as differences of opinion on ideals," says Bettermann. In some countries, Deutsche Welle's programmes serve primarily as a way for locals to learn more about both German and European perspectives. In other places, its programmes make a contribution to upholding freedom of the press and freedom of expression as well as the enforcement of human rights in general.

France and Britain have also recognised the necessity to develop more of a presence and to expand dialogue in the Arab-Islamic region. The new French international broadcaster, France 24, started an Arabic television service in 2007; the BBC followed with Arab-language programmes in 2008. The BBC is also planning a TV service in Farsi. And it's not only European broadcasters that are positioning themselves anew in the global media

Overview of International Broadcasting

1. Association for International Broadcasting:
The Association for International Broadcasting (AIB) is a non-profit organisation set up by international broadcasters with its headquarters in Great Britain. The AIB provides its members with – among other things – information about developments and trends in the international media market.
http://www.aib.org.uk

2. Bruges Group:
The Bruges Group, named after the Belgian city of Bruges where the group was founded, is an affiliation of European transnational public broadcasters.
http://www.groupedebruges.net

3. Deutsche Welle:
Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's international broadcaster with offices in Bonn and Berlin, offers a worldwide multimedia news and information service in 30 languages.
http://www.dw-world.de

4. BBC World Service:
The BBC World Service, Britain's international radio broadcaster, transmits programmes in 33 languages worldwide. The recently launched Arab-language TV service became the first television channel to be attached to the World Service.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice

5. Radio France International:
The French international broadcaster, Radio France International (RFI), transmits programmes in 19 languages.
http://www.rfi.fr

6. France 24:
France 24 is the French international television news channel. It transmits programmes throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East in English, French and Arabic.
http://www.france24.com

7. Radio Netherlands Worldwide:
Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW), the Dutch international broadcaster, with its headquarters in Hilversum, offers a multilingual and multimedia information service in nine languages.
http://www.radionetherlands.nl

8. Voice of America:
Voice of America (VoA) is the USA's official international broadcaster, based in Washington D.C. It transmits programmes in English and 43 other languages worldwide.
http://www.voanews.com

9. Al Jazeera:
Al Jazeera, based in Doha, Qatar, transmits news programmes in Arabic and English worldwide via television and the Internet.
http://english.aljazeera.net/English

10. CCTV-9:
CCTV-9 is the international English-language service of China Central Television. It focuses mainly on news and information from China and the rest of Asia.
http://english.cctv.com

market. Many other countries are investing increasing amounts of money in foreign broadcasting as part of their overall foreign affairs strategies and in order to play a role in the shaping of opinion globally. After starting off as an Arab broadcaster, Al Jazeera, in Qatar, has established itself as an alternative voice in the English-language TV market.

Other international broadcasters expanding in the international television market include Russia Today and CCTV-9, the Chinese state media's English-language channel. The latter has now established a presence across almost all of Asia and Africa. Since the middle of 2007, Iran has been presenting its view of the world, in English and via satellite, with Press TV. At the launch of Press TV, Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said the goals of the new channel would be to become a "podium for Moslems and for all those seeking freedom." He said the new channel would "proclaim the truth of the world."

Nowadays, broadcasting in the global arena is all about developing relevant content and about preparing and presenting this for a global public in the most suitable form. The aim is to allow consumers to access news and information at a time of their choosing and via a media platform of their choosing. In this context, Deutsche Welle is broadening its information services for mobile telephones and other electronic equipment and is cooperating with popular Internet providers such as YouTube. With its extensive Podcast service, DW has won new target audiences worldwide, providing information about German and European culture, business and current affairs.

Co-productions have proved to be an attractive form of cooperation wherever they are suitable and politically feasible. Both broadcasters benefit from the experience. Since 2003, DW-TV and the Arabic broadcaster Abu Dhabi TV have been co-producing a monthly talk

show called "Meet Europe," in which the issue of Arab-European relations is discussed with interviewees from Europe and the Arab world.

Joining forces

In view of the limited financial capabilities of individual broadcasters and due to the ever growing challenges in media markets worldwide, European broadcasters are increasingly working closer together. This occurs without each broadcaster having to relinquish its individual profile or editorial independence. Cooperation has proved to be fruitful in the case of training projects involving the DW-Academy and European partner organisations in Afghanistan. Synergies also occur in the transmission of programmes: listeners in St. Petersburg, for example, can currently hear Radio France Internationale on DW's middle-wave frequency, while Deutsche Welle programmes can be heard in ten Arab capitals via the ultra shortwave broadcasts of Radio Monte Carlo/rfi.

European foreign broadcasters have joined together in an association known as the Bruges Group – named after the Belgian city of Bruges where the group was founded. Jose Lopes de Ajauro, Director of International Relations for RTP, the Portuguese broadcaster, is currently the president of the Bruges Group. The BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, France 24 and the European community programme EuroNews, among others, belong to the association. The aim of the group is to use the synergies of publicly-owned international broadcasters to access important markets in America and Asia, and to benefit from one another with the joint placement of programmes. The Bruges Group sees itself as representing Europe beyond the European continent – or, as Jose Lopes de Ajauro puts it: "Together, we can achieve a lot more than we can individually."

The media environment is becoming more problematic in many parts of the world. Increasingly, in various countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, news reporting is becoming more and more restricted. Journalists are being threatened, imprisoned and murdered; restrictive media laws are being enacted; broadcasting licences are being revoked.

In the light of this, on January 7, 2008, the directors of the five biggest Western foreign broadcasters – BBC World Service, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, Radio France Internationale and Radio Netherlands Worldwide – published a joint resolution in which they condemned the "significant and increasing threats against the right to collect information and to broadcast this information beyond national borders." The signatories call on governments to respect the right to freedom of information, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As Jan Hoek added: "It is important that in an increasingly polarised environment, in which the media in many countries is confronted with serious restrictions on press freedom, that together we stand up for the needs of millions of media users – users who depend on us as a vital source of credible information."

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Adelheid Feilcke-Tiemann has been the director of international affairs at Deutsche Welle since 2006. She joined DW in 1992 to head up and to develop the newly established Albanian service. Since 1995, she has also worked as a trainer for the DW Academy, most recently in Burma in September 2007. She studied cultural science and anthropology in Cologne as well as journalism in Dortmund. She received a scholarship to go to Tirana, Albania, in 1989.

Ireland, RTÉ One, Six One News

Chapter 3: Communications In the Future

Images are the "most powerful weapons of the twenty-first century," says film director Wim Wenders. Without them there is no European consciousness and no European identity. If numbers and factual information cannot motivate Europeans to act, why not motivate them with images?
How can the media take advantage of new technology and new forms of communication on the Internet? According to opinion poll surveys, efforts to set up transnational networks yield results: in the age of low-cost airlines, a steadily growing "Erasmus Generation" moves confidently throughout Europe – and is indeed interested in Europe. What kinds of channels of communication can be used to reach the hearts and minds of young Europeans and other European citizens?


NEWS

France, Télévision Francaise 1, TF1, Le Journal

The Real Europeans

The Internet, low-budget airlines, studying under the Erasmus programme. A new generation of young people has become the real Europeans. They have a lot in common but no common media. Adriano Farano, 28, co-founder of the European website cafebabel.com, believes a "new European journalism" could help create a common European identity and help shape political debate about Europe. *By Adriano Farano*

Turkey's entry to the EU, the Bolkestein directive on services in Europe, terrorism, oil prices. There are issues that most people in Europe have heard about. Nevertheless, not everyone has been able to read about them in their proper dimension – a European one. Ordinary people still receive information that is produced exclusively within a national context and language.

One might well ask: What's wrong with our national media? Why do we need a European media? The problem is that the number of political, economic and social issues that can be dealt with at a national level is decreasing day by day. How can an interior minister still manage immigration if immigrants are allowed to circulate freely within the Schengen space? How can a finance minister use "every means possible" to revitalise the economy if his country's currency is the euro? How can a foreign minister, even if his rhetorical skills are better than Cicero's, avoid military intervention in distant foreign lands, given that today's nation states can achieve very little on the international stage by acting alone?

Make no mistake. In today's Europe, power is shifting to a meta-national level. That's why we need common, transnational media to discuss the challenges we Europeans are facing. We need a "European public space," as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas wrote in his 1998 essay, "The Postnational Constellation." In a more general way, a European media would also serve the cause of democratisation of the European Union.

Of course, the Reform Treaty signed by the Heads of State and Government during the German EU Presidency in 2007, permitted the crisis created by the French and Dutch rejection of the European Constitution in 2005 to be archived. But, given the complexity of the new text, one has to agree with European parliamentarian Graham Watson when he says the reformed Treaty now "reads like the instructions for building a Japanese pagoda translated into English by a Chinese middleman." In view of the EU's current institutio-

nal problems, European media can definitely help to overcome the political apathy. After all, democracy is not only about institutions, it's also about public debate. And if the former does not yet exist, maybe it's because the latter has not yet been able to develop.

In our societies the media is like the human circulatory system: if you block the flow of blood between two parts of the body, the whole system is blocked because the parts cannot be easily disconnected. The same can be said of European states: if we want to ensure a powerful EU, we have to enhance communication among Europeans.

But what is a truly European media? Agreeing on a definition is difficult, due to the traditional link that has existed historically since the end of the nineteenth century between the nation-state and the press. In France, for instance, the Emile Zola's "j'accuse" denunciation of the Dreyfus affair was launched in 1899 from the columns of *L'Aurore*, a Parisian newspaper. This crystallised public opinion into two blocks and developed into a true public debate. Moreover, it was the first time that a "debate" could be called truly "public."

Why? First, because a huge media infrastructure existed thanks to developments in printing technology. And second, the public was keen to participate and was able to participate in the debate due to the existence of a system of compulsory schooling launched by the French Prime Minister, Jules Ferry, around two decades previous to the affair. Education was no longer the preserve of the elites but had been extended to a wider public.

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What about today's Europe? Technology is not a problem. The Internet is now available in 52 percent of households on the Old Continent. Education and general knowledge aren't a problem either given Europe's standing in education compared with the rest of the world. There is only one problem. There is not enough truly European media.

But what is a "European media" exactly? A truly European media can be said to exist when three specific conditions have been met. First, a European media must provide a pan-European perspective on the news. This doesn't mean that European journalists always need to quote the European Commission or refer to the latest directive from Brussels. It means that the spectrum of analysis should be meta-national.

Let's take the example of a hot issue like Turkey's journey towards EU membership, which started with the opening of negotiations on October 3, 2004. The German media focused mainly on the then opposition leader Angela Merkel's wish for a "privileged partnership," the reactions of the German Turkish-born minority and the Social Democrats' support for Ankara's ambitions. A truly European media outlet would have quoted the arguments of the Brussels-based pro-Turkey lobby, ABIG, and the position of the European People's Party leader, Hans-Gert Pöttering; it would have conducted a magazine-style investigation into Turkish minorities across Europe. Attention paid in this way to European opinion leaders could even foster the birth of a European civil society.

Second, a genuine mix of cultures and backgrounds must be reflected in a truly European media rather than one national *Weltanschauung*. This should be taken into account in deciding the composition of editorial staff and writers. The reader is more likely to receive information that is genuinely trans European when the team of journalists is multicultural. However, achieving this aim can be very expensive as a true European media needs to have articles written from all around Europe.

Third, the media material should be accessed and accessible right across Europe. For popular media, this is synonymous with multilingualism. As Marco Schütz, editor-in-chief of the website of the French magazine *Courrier International* points out: "If we talk about a European media, it has to be multilingual." According to Schütz, TV networks like Arte (French and German) and EuroNews (French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and English) help to create a European identity by being multilingual. "By using a single language you're limiting yourself to a specific audience," he adds.

But how many languages should a European media 'speak'? In the EU there are now 21 official languages, excluding regional idioms. So, a real European media should cover at least the most widely spoken languages, such as German, English, French, Italian, Spanish and Polish – say around 350 million speakers out of a total population of 450 million.

Old wine in new wineskins

The willingness to go beyond these linguistic divisions in order to build a common space of debate and information is precisely the *raison d'être* of the first pan-European magazine, cafebabel.com (www.cafebabel.com). Currently, the magazine appears in seven languages (German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan and Polish). The aim of its founders was to pass from the Tower of Babel that is today's Europe – in which linguistic diversity is too often an obstacle – to a "café" Babel in which debate respects cultural differences.

Since its launch in Strasbourg almost five years ago, cafebabel.com has become – along with EuroNews – the media outlet that is most faithful to the three conditions outlined above. Each week it publishes around 15 articles (analysis, stories, interviews, etc.). Our weekly dossier-readers offer a complete overview of a specific topic from a truly European perspective.

The sections of the magazine might seem classical but their outlook is quite different from mainstream national media. Take the Culture section. It focuses on "Arts in Travel," examining international performances, multilingual theatre or music, European writing contests, and so on. The Society section is careful to keep abreast of transnational trends in today's Europe. It tell readers, for instance, about the success of Double Coffee, the Starbucks-styled café chain in Baltic Europe or about internet communication for transnational travellers or about the latest debate about abortion in Portugal. The Economy and Politics sections focus on money and power but with a transnational perspective. Finally, the World articles are focused on Europe's role in the world and European life and its impact abroad. Three distinct columns are representative of the website: "Brunch with..." is an interview with an interesting politician, an artist or a public person; "Tower of Babel"

plays with idiomatic expressions and proverbs by explaining the differences between languages; and "Gnam miam" is a journey into Europe's gastronomical richness.

The magazine's contents are all systematically translated for the various linguistic editions, with a specific cultural adaptation provided by a multi-national staff working full-time in the Central European office, in Paris. This means that every text can be slightly modified in order to suit each readership's background.

So far, the formula has worked. In June 2007, cafebabel.com was read by over 400,000 people, with more than two million pages viewed. However, the Website would not function without participatory journalism – without our readers being writers as well. We use a full range of interactive tools in line with the second generation (Web 2.0) of the Internet. The forums and blogs at cafébabel.com are potentially multilingual; visitors are encouraged to translate what they like. The articles are produced by the magazine's one-thousand contributors, drawn from over twenty local teams around Europe. Participation is completely free but every contributor has to sign and respect an editorial charter with basic journalistic standards. Those standards are implemented by the central office in Paris where each editor establishes a true human contact with every author and translator and edits the final version of every piece. All the contributors – students, journalists, civil society members – are volunteers and they participate to the interactive community along with readers.

But who are the magazine's readers? Alexandre Heully, head of cafebabel's Communication Department, says that they are mainly young professionals between the ages of 25 and 35, as well as students. "But we are also read by over-50s," he adds. The explanation for such success is simple: people like both the European dimension of cafebabel.com and the non institutional tone of its grassroots, 'magazine' perspective. Cafebabel.com is a product of the euro-generation: the first generation of people living Europe day-by-day thanks to the Erasmus Programme, the Internet and the euro. It's no accident that cafebabel.com was founded in Strasbourg, mainly by a group of students who were there because of the Erasmus exchange programme. European media is our future.

Adriano Farano is the co-founder and editor of cafebabel.com. He was born in Naples in 1980 but thinks of himself as more of a European than an Italian.

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Generation Erasmus

The 25-to-30-year-olds of today have grown up within the EU and are very much used to living with the single European market, the single currency, freedom of travel, student exchanges and the use of multiple languages. Do we really need new forms of media to close the much talked about cleft between Europe and its citizens – especially when Generation Erasmus takes hold of the rudder? *By Karen Hauff*

In Europe, critical voices are becoming ever louder where governments neglect to involve citizens in the creation of the European Union and when governments and the EU are not able to communicate the decisions made in Brussels and why they are made.

As the proposed Constitutional Treaty threatened to collapse, experts pointed to an unused opportunity, open to the EU, to enter into a dialogue with European citizens. Since the rejection of the EU constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005, what has become of these good intentions?

If European policy makers and those who are genuinely interested in European affairs become disillusioned about the sense of doubt about the European project, then at least there is one sign of hope: the coming generation.

Why? The 25-to-30-year-olds of today have grown up within the EU and know the single European market, the single currency, freedom of travel, student exchanges and the use of multiple languages as a matter of course. They, more than any other group, know about the opportunities and advantages of mobility in the European Union. Who, if not the coming generation, will hold fast to the European project and its ideals of peace, security, economic stability and cultural diversity?

Perhaps the mistrust in the United States of Europe will pass by when Generation Erasmus takes hold of the steering wheel. This generation of people is more mobile than their fathers and their grandmothers. These young people criss-cross European borders and travel beyond Europe, at very little cost, and without hesitations or concerns. Almost all of them have holidays within Europe. Each year, around 150,000 students take part in the European Commission's Erasmus student exchange programme. The number of participants in the programme is continually increasing – in the new EU member states it's increasing at a rate of around 20 percent per year.[1]

The low-cost-airline youth

Another important fact about the Erasmus Generation is that they are networked beyond borders. However, up until now they have expressed no interest in political Europe. The

low-cost-airline generation does indeed move through the space of Europe but it remains detached from politics, history and social responsibility. It does not perceive the European Union as an historical-political accomplishment, nor does it feel any responsibility in being a European citizen. The important thing for the Erasmus Generation is experiencing change in everyday life, the atmosphere of the place they are in, lifestyle and, of course, having the opportunity to consume.

According to a Eurobarometer opinion poll survey[2] from 2007, the EU, for 90 percent of European students, means first and foremost having the freedom to travel and to live and work anywhere in Europe. The Shell youth study of 2006[3] found that young people in Germany still viewed Europe positively, even though they remained more sceptical about the process of European integration than young people in previous years. Just like their parents, the younger generation chastise the EU – or at least the image they have of it from the media – for wasting money and for the exorbitance of its bureaucracy in Brussels.

The willingness to take part in the European project, to help shape a new Europe, is horribly lacking. The Eurobarometer survey shows that only 20 percent of European youth are engaged in a club or association or undertake voluntary activities – and most of these youth are in sports clubs.

In Germany, young people are somewhat more engaged in society than the average European. Nevertheless, they are focussed more on practical concerns in their immediate environment – concerns that are related to providing them with personal advantages and opportunities. They are noticeably disinterested in politics.

The results of these studies are not surprising. The young generation does not associate European identity with the Brussels institutions, the Maastricht Treaty or the Bologna Process. Only a few young people feel at all drawn to such a fragile political entity, which is always facing public criticism.

"There are more Europes," says the film maker and observer of Erasmus students, Cedric Klapisch. "There is the cultural perception of Europe and the political Europe." Klapisch's film, "L'Auberge Espagnole," focuses on a group of exchange students who are enjoying life in Barcelona. "The political Europe develops independently from each Europe that its 'participants' are building in the member states," says Klapisch. The students who take part in the Erasmus exchange programme, explains Klapisch, have got their own idea of a new Europe, which does not completely match what Brussels wants to achieve. The 20-year-olds are living Europe very personally, every day.[4]

It may be disappointing news for those pushing for closer European integration but the low-cost airlines – and the exchange students who use them – are moving in only one direction at the moment: to the south or the southwest of Europe. And in each of these countries, exchange students are gravitating towards the capital cities. Spain and France are the top destinations under the Erasmus Programme. The new EU member states are outward bound participants of Erasmus but, unfortunately, not inward bound – that is, they are not attracting Erasmus students themselves. Portuguese and Spanish students, who are already in the south, prefer to stay at home. [5]

European cultural centres are not the only

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attraction for young students. In keeping with the trends of globalisation, they also study in the USA or Japan. Ultimately, the European Commission's Erasmus Programme is not the only student exchange programme.

Young people are becoming more individual when it comes to assessing the variety of work and study opportunities before them. In the search for personal happiness and career success, they are creating their very own personal study and career paths. They hardly feel bound by social pressures and are each developing their own promising career niches. The Shell youth study characterised the great majority of young people in Germany as mostly pragmatic when it comes to exploring opportunities for personal development.

What conclusions can be reached from this? The number of young Europeans who've gained experience in other countries is growing but this has the potential to grow much more. The experiences gained from studying abroad are irreplaceable. The opportunity should be seized by everyone. Above all, young people from socially disadvantaged families should be encouraged – and should receive the chance – to study in a foreign country. However, a stay in another country is best accompanied by a special programme in order for it to become a real learning experience.

The traditional forms of "European encounter" – the school exchange, voluntary social service and foreign study – are by no means outdated ideas. Not every young person has experienced such an encounter. But where such exchanges do take place, a programme of political education and accompanying special projects can help make the experience more sustainable and less of a purely consumption trip. Completing an entire degree or any other course of study abroad fosters the collective learning experiences of students from different countries. It allows students to be confronted with European-wide or international issues and concerns over an entire period of study.

No longer old hat

Anyway, young Europeans are travelling to new destinations. For years now, they have been moving through the depths of the virtual world. Michał Hvorecky, a young Slovakian writer, paints a bleak picture of young Europeans. In his novel "Plush,"[6] the main protagonist is addicted to the Internet and to the stream of images if offers. He lives in the capital city of "Supereurope" where the meaning of distance is relative, in that everything is networked and can happen in one location. The city is possessed by global consumption, from brand names and from young people with no orientation, and no inner peace.

Hvorecky certainly paints a grotesque picture of Europe – we haven't yet arrived at this point. Nevertheless, his novel points to the importance of providing meaning. Young people should receive more helpful direction for their favourite pastime – interacting with the media.

A study conducted in Stuttgart[7] on the interaction of young people with the medi a shows that the computer is the thing they would least like to go without. The Internet is now as indispensable for them as television. Ninety-eight percent of young people have access to a computer. Sixty percent of them actually own their own computers. At home, 92 percent of young Germans regularly use the Internet.

The shaping of identity takes place, in the first instance, via representations in the media. Young people who meet up in school every day – but also young people who live thousands of kilometres apart – communicate with their peers via Instant Messenger Chat, e-mail and

Skype. Or they organise networks, forums and Internet contact sites.

The consequences of this communication are unknown. On the one hand, this specific pick-and-choose mentality, tailored to personal interests, leads to individualisation, to an impersonal and indirect way of communicating.

On the other hand, the Internet offers new forms of communication and a path out of isolation. These Internet communities are no longer bound to one place or to people of specific nationalities. They are being established along lines of thematic interest worldwide. To the horror of those who push for privacy protection, 20-to-35-year-olds do not baulk at posting up personal information on Internet sites such as Facebook, Myspace or Xing. This information then travels across Europe or even around the globe.

The increasing contact with the Internet is accompanied by new forms of communication: more hands-on formats for receiving information; new spaces for creativity and spontaneity; and a more natural way of dealing with (foreign) languages – above all, English. Contacts are made on the Internet and maintained. In the future, one will be in a position to communicate electronically with almost any place, using audio, verbal or visual technologies.

Those involved in educating young people now face new challenges. They need to keep up to date with the media and travel interests of young people and to take over the role of the navigator – of providing guidance and orientation – in this new world. Educators will need to keep abreast of the market of opportunities and the preferences of the young.

There is no need to teach most young people about the tools of communication. The challenge is more about evoking an authentic regard for social and political issues in Europe.

Educational projects should focus on sensible ways of using the media: constructive exchanges, creativity, autonomy, and being a part of a society. These projects ought to provide these virtual travellers with a connection to the real world so that they discover a Europe that is not only a confusing cultural construct but also a space in which young people can be active.

Where within the political decision making structures and the social networks is the initiative being taken? Who is taking responsibility and listening to feedback on these matters? How can the skills and professional qualifications be acquired? How are the sources of media information and the various actors to be appraised? And what sort of public spheres can we create ourselves for young people? Young people will only become a force for reform in a future Europe if they learn to act. Simply imparting knowledge about Europe is not enough; what must be strengthened is young people's ability to act, their willingness to take action.

In this sense, the great advantage of the Internet and electronic forms of communication is their potential to be interactive. They offer all sorts of possibilities for joint creativity, the freedom to innovate and to exchange. As part of educational projects, virtual spaces should be set up and made available in which young people are a part of the creative process.

The skills of media work will need to be

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taught – film making, photography, writing online, the construction of Internet platforms. However, the main focus should not be on teaching technical skills but on the contents – the communicative process. A critical approach to new media technology is needed in this regard.

What is required is a change of perspective: to surf the World Wide Web through the eyes of young people in order to understand what their interests and their needs are, and to see where educational material about Europe can be applied in a practical way.

Here is a portfolio of possible approaches:

- Support disseminators of information: lots of youth groups, clubs and associations with a connection to Europe are already active on the Internet. These projects should be supported, to help them disseminate information and reach more young people.
- Highlight the experiences of young people: young people develop projects themselves, speak up for themselves, report on their problems and what they've achieved. All of this can be presented in various media formats on the Internet, within the framework of a competition.
- Use the potential of the Internet: websites dealing with political education need to be equipped with interactive elements, such as quizzes, surveys, discussion forums, blogs and networks to connect young people with each other.
- Offer career advice: young people need international contacts, mentors and practical information to help them make choices regarding careers and study. European-wide job and work experience exchange forums on the Internet would be of help.
- Teaching intercultural skills: young people are interested in pursuing educational opportunities that combine learning a foreign language with getting to know a country – opportunities that qualify them for work and study.
- Keep abreast of the latest trends: pop music, film and fashion have an international appeal.
- Create new media formats: multi-lingual media projects on the Internet can help create a public sphere for discussions about Europe. These projects should include Podcasting and Wiki-elements, for example, and be jointly created by young people.

Some of the most interesting educational projects that use the latest media elements and formats are created by young people themselves. Examples include:

Galaxy Europe

In this interactive Internet campaign, a group called the Young European Federalists has encouraged young people to take a critical look at the work of young parliamentarians in the European Parliament. The group presents the European Parliament as a space station in which space heroes – young parliamentarians – seek to win the favour of young voters. Twenty-five parliamentarians – all under 35-years-old and from different political parties and countries – were probed and tested over a period of months. Each week, the parliamentarians had to answer questions about issues such as the expansion of the EU and a European constitution. Young people were given the chance to comment on the statements and vote for their "Parliamentarian of the Week." In a final round of voting, visitors to the site could vote for the Parliamentarian of the Year, 2006.

www.jef-europe.net

Politikfabrik

The Politikfabrik (Politics Factory) is a student agency for political communication. It has created an Internet site for young people, with blogs and Podcasts, in cooperation with Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education. It has also created an interactive game called "Wahl-O-mat" (Vote-O-matic), which, in a non-complicated way, presents the most important issues in an election campaign. The Wahl-O-Mat also offers young people the chance to take part in surveys, for example, on their mobile phones. During Germany's federal election campaign of 2002, the Wahl-O-Mat was used by more than two million voters.

www.politikfabrik.de (in German)

Youth Media Days 2007 of the European Parliament and the European Youth Press

Around 270 young journalists from all over Europe have posted up research dossiers and interviews as wells as television programmes and radio reports about European capital cities. The results of this project are: a campaign for the 2009 European Parliamentary elections; an online travel guide for young Europeans; a special dossier for the European print media; as well as blogs and Internet TV programmes presenting the younger generation's ideas and thoughts about the European Union.

www.youthmediadays.eu

Yomag.de / Yomag.net

Yomag is a European Internet magazine made by young people for young people, in German, English and Czech. It focuses on issues such as sustainable development, globalisation and how to deal with the media. Young people are invited to publish articles, pictures, surveys and videos on the site. They receive support from professionals and feedback from readers. Yomag reaches young people mostly through teachers and through schools. Young people are encouraged to try to write articles in a foreign language.

www.yomag.net

Some of these projects have worked so well that media companies, public educational institutions and the European Commission have entered into cooperative ventures with project organisers.

Translated from the German by Geoff Rodoreda

Karen Hauff is the Head of the Dean's Office and the Head of Academic Relations at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. She previously worked at the Robert Bosch Foundation where she directed European political education programmes for young people and initiated a network for student organisations in Central Europe and beyond the borders of the EU. She was also the contact person for the Robert Bosch Foundation in Brussels.

1 European Commission press release, Education and Youth Secretariat, April 27, 2007.
2 Eurobarometer survey on youth, 2007. Flash Eurobarometer survey 202, commissioned by the Education and Youth Secretariat, January 2007.
3 Youth 2006, 15th Shell youth study, published by German Shell Holding, Sept. 2006.
4 Interview with Cedric Klapisch, www.cafebabel.com, June 2007
5 Information from the Portuguese Youth Institute (Instituto Português da Juventude) and the database for international youth work: www.dija.de, updated in May 2007.
6 Michal Hvorecky, "Plush," published in German as "City – Der unwahrscheinlichste aller Orte," Tropen Verlag, Berlin 2006.
7 JIM-Study 2006: Youth, Information, (Multi-)Media. Study of media usage by 12-19-year-olds in Germany. Media Educational Research Association South-West (Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest). Stuttgart, November 2006

Radio For a Sense of Unity

At the initiative of Deutsche Welle and Radio France Internationale, local, regional, national and international radio stations from across Europe have joined forces to create the ERP, the "European Radio Project." Could it become a vehicle for pan-European debate and for the much-hoped-for European public sphere? *By Petra Kohnen*

Since April 2008, Deutsche Welle (DW), together with 15 partner stations from 13 EU countries, has been reporting more intensively from a European perspective. Joining DW and Radio France Internationale (RFI) to form the European Radio Project (ERP) are, among others, Radio Netherlands Worldwide, the Polish domestic and international broadcaster Polskie Radio, and the Spanish broadcaster Punto Radio Castilla y Leon. These partner stations broadcast a news and information programme daily with live elements and background magazine programmes, such as *Europe Today* and *Meeting Point Europe*.

In a saturated media market in Europe, international broadcasters have to adopt new strategies if they want to reach their listeners with news programmes in the future. With new opportunities provided by digital technology and the Internet, lots of local radio stations have become cross-border competitors for international broadcasters. This is why, in the summer of 2007, DW and RFI certified the ERP contract to intensify their cooperation. ERP disseminates quality, high-value, pan-European audio and online programmes in a variety of languages. With jointly produced programmes, the new network is aimed at creating a feeling of togetherness, and at improving European communication and simultaneously developing the much-discussed European public sphere. This cross-border initiative is also aimed at attempting to provide a solution to Europe's communications problems.

According to the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights, people living in the EU do have a "right to information" and the "right to freedom of expression." Unfortunately, these rights have not been sufficiently implemented throughout the EU. In recent years, information from Brussels was mostly a one-sided and complicated mediation of what the EU was doing. The free opinions and expressions of citizens were limited or didn't take place at all.

The new ERP network has been set up to help turn the "Brussels information monologue" into a "European communications dialogue." The goal is to inform people about issues of common interest, not only from a national perspective but also through a European, true-to-life coverage of news. In so doing, the goal

is also to create a common public sphere. In this way, the gulf in communication between the EU's institutions and its citizens is to be bridged.

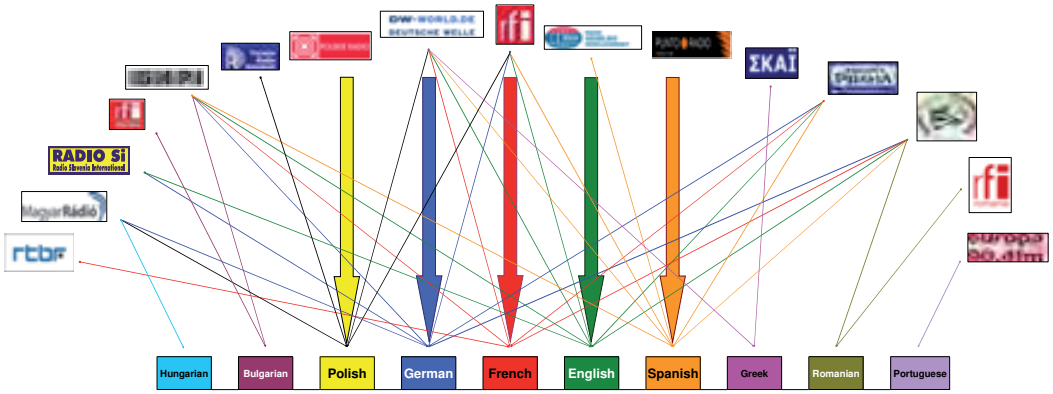
The directors of DW and RFI – Erik Bettermann and Antoine Schwarz – have long been of the view that Europe needed to have a "network of communications cooperation." ERP began to broadcast its information and feature programmes in ten languages. In the first year, this will comprise five main languages – German, English, French, Polish and Spanish – and five other languages: Bulgarian, Greek, Portuguese, Romanian and Slovenian. Programmes will be broadcast on the existing frequencies of the participating stations. Within five years the aim is to integrate all 23 official EU languages and many more radio broadcasters into the network. ERP will then reach more than 12 million listeners in Europe each day. The ERP material will be exchanged among the individual broadcasters via an audio platform developed by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). A visible sign of the cooperation, as of the summer of 2008, will be a multi-lingual internet portal presenting all of the ERP's programmes and initiatives.

A codex for communication

The editorial cooperation agreement among the 16 broadcasters, as well as agreements about programme contents and quality standards, demand not only the courage to compromise but also a lot of coordination work. Additional funds will be needed to allow the technical exchange of stories and sound material as well as pictures and audio spots.

In order to cover additional costs, the consortium has sought financial support and has received a five year funding package from the European Commission. During this time period, DW and RFI will be jointly responsible for the coordination and further development of the project. One of the most important ma-

European Radio Project



(from left to right)
1. Radio-Télévision belges francophones (Belgium)
2. Hungarian Radio (Hungary)
3. Radio Slovenia International (Slovenia)
4. Radio France Internationale Sofia (Bulgaria)
5. Bulgarian National Radio (Bulgaria)
6. Polskie Radio Szczecin (Poland)
7. Polskie Radio Warsaw (Poland)
8. Deutsche Welle (Germany)
9. Radio France Internationale (France)
10. Radio Netherlands Worldwide (Netherlands)
11. Punto Radio (Spain)
12. Skairadio (Greece)
13. Czech Radio (Czech Republic)
14. Radio Romania International (Romania)
15. Radio France Internationale Romania (Romania)
16. Europa Lisboa (Portugal)

A history of cooperative broadcasting

Radio E
The cooperative ERP venture, involving European broadcasters, did not start from scratch. Cooperation began in 1995 with "Radio E," a weekly programme jointly launched and produced by DW, RFI and the BBC. "E" stands for Europe. According to the description of the programme: "Radio E proves week after week how fascinating Europe can be. In German, English and French we report on, provide commentaries or showcase everything that interests Europe. As a rule, a single current issue will be covered … although political, economic, cultural, social and sporting issues can all find a place in the common programme." The weekly programme was produced in German by DW in Cologne, in French by RFI in Paris, and in English by the BBC in London. Initially, each language programme was exchanged by post, for re-broadcasting by each broadcaster. Today, each partner station's radio programme is no longer sent in the mail on a reel of tape. It is not even sent via telephone lines but digitally, directly to the work station of the programme maker.

The programmes "Treffpunkt Europa" (Meeting Point Europe), "Network Europe" and "Accents d'Europe" all developed from "Radio E." The radio reports are also available on the Internet. Over time, the contents of the programmes have also developed.

Treffpunkt Europa (Meeting Point Europe) www.treffpunkteuropa.eu
This programme shows how people live and work as Europeans – more so than they actually realise. It shows Europeans that they have rights in the areas of domestic life, work, study, travel, services and equality of opportunity that they don't know anything about. The programme brings to life an EU you can 'touch.' Ordinary citizens and EU experts are incorporated into the programmes so that preconceptions and fears about the EU as a kind of "bureaucratic tiger" or as an "anonymous entity" are alleviated.

Network Europe www.networkeurope.org
This programme is produced by leading international broadcasters in Europe. It reflects the variety of European societies and voices. In this sense, "Network Europe" is an exemplary project of European cooperation.

Accents d'Europe / Carrefour Europe www.carrefoureurope.eu
This is a cooperative project undertaken by international broadcasters in Europe. They have an ambitious goal: to bring the citizens of Europe closer together. Foreign correspondents are seldom heard; instead, the partner broadcasters explain aspects of their own country to listeners.

Europa – Terra Incognita
In the series "Europa – Terra Incognita," the Europe Department of DW reported on cultural specialities from all over Europe that were not necessarily to be found in travel guides. Twenty radio reports were produced in German, French and English, and were presented with pictures and in text form on the Internet. They were made available to radio partners and used in numerous other language programmes on DW.

xims is the acknowledgment of the freedom of the media. The media network is not subject to directives or demands on the part of any institution or EU member state or anyone else. It will produce reports with journalistic independence in a comprehensive, truthful, objective and pluralistic fashion. Each participating broadcaster has agreed to an editorial charter, contractually binding them to independent journalistic reporting. As well, most broadcasters have already committed themselves to a "Communication Codex."

The network of European broadcasters and audio suppliers wants to take on a mediating role for the contact between the EU and its citizens. Professional, journalistically processed information is to be made available on audio platforms. This will reach people in a variety of ways, such as via normal radio reception or satellite, as well as via Podcasts or Audio on Demand services on the Internet.

Via the Internet or via radio "call ins," Europeans will also be able to respond to the information being offered. With the help of professional moderators they'll be able to have their queries answered by EU experts. In this way, a forum for public discussion about European issues can be established.

Apart from encouraging a general dialogue among citizens, the new service could be of interest to target groups who have very specific questions (Where will my BA degree be recognised in Europe?) or to others who want detailed feedback on a range of topics (What really goes on at the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia?).

The audio network will not limit itself to covering news and current affairs. Its main task will be to investigate new aspects of Europe that play an important role in the collaborative life of the continent.

Developments in the field of mobile communications technology offer further opportu-

nities for reaching a target audience more efficiently. With the aid of new audio technology, a variety of recipients (EU experts, skilled workers, students, seniors, minorities, etc) can be specifically targeted. Through so-called "feedback rubrics" contact can be maintained with radio listeners and audio users.

European radio makers will produce lively feature-format stories, with personal case studies, about topics such as looking for a job, education, retirement pensions, health, social insurance, and so on. One will be able to download these stories from the Internet as Podcasts at any time. Links will also be provided to the appropriate EU institution or to EU experts. The jointly produced audio dossiers illustrate in a lively way the diverse activities of European organisations, centres or institutions, and demonstrate their connection to everyday European life.

New media-user formats allow these co-productions to last for a long time: media contents can be accessed or downloaded according to personal needs and, increasingly, independent of time and place. For radio and television, the online downloading of material (Podcasting) has established itself as an ever expanding form of distribution. With these technologies, the network will be able to expand its distribution of radio programmes via the Internet, and develop its editorial material for the newly created, interactive forms of media (IP-based broadcasting).

It is important for the European media to know what people who live in Europe think about their own social predicament, their health, culture, communications and information technology, or what value they place on environmental protection or the common currency. The network of European broadcasters will use the Eurobarometer surveys of public opinion, as well as other surveys, to examine different national viewpoints on various topics, from anti-discrimination to consumer protection. It will examine common European denominators and trends, and present these in the form of journalistic reports. It will focus not so much on the quantitative results of opinion polling but more intensively on what these figures mean for the daily lives of people in Europe. This is why the network is also committed to the co-production of feature programmes and stories that communicate the moods and mindsets of Europeans.

The makers of ERP are keen to find out how their audio programmes and materials are accepted and used by particular target groups in Europe, what sort of issues are of interest to radio listeners and Internet users, as well as what forms of audio they prefer and which language appeals to them. In order to find out answers to these questions, at the initiative of DW, the ERP will be working with students of communications and media science, and with on-campus radio stations in various European countries. The aim is to gain student feedback to the ERP's programmes in all 27 EU states. This feedback structure will not be limited to targeting young elites but will also be extended to other listener target groups. With the help of regular surveys, the network is aiming to generate meaningful feedback from across Europe in order to continue to develop its audio formats and contents.

Translated from the German
by Geoff Rodoreda

Petra Kohnen is the director of Deutshe Welle's Europa Magazine/EU Project. She has been working at DW in various functions since 1989, including as a journalist and editor, as a parliamentary correspondent in Bonn and Berlin, and as the head of the "Changing Europe" project. She studied communications, English and philosophy in Bonn.

Spain, RTVE, Telediario

Film Without Frontiers

The Internet has revolutionised channels of distribution in the creative industries. Internet suppliers can make a profit due to the large number of niche productions made available on the world wide web. The result is that blockbusters and niche films have become economic equals. What are the consequences of this for European film?

By Dina Iordanova

The multicultural realities of today's Europe make it important to grasp the complex interactions of circulating iconographies, ideologies and narratives. Our current understanding of the essence of cultural exchanges remains inconsistent and patchy. We need to acquire a better understanding of the forces and the effects of transnational cultural circulation, and we can only do this by analysing the various strands of trans-border cultural flows in our globalised environment.

After the end of the Cold War, global migration and diasporic cultural consumption intensified and new technologies were introduced. Countries that used to be traditional sources of emigration became recipients of immigration; worlds that were unlikely to touch or collide now intersect and overlap. The expanding universe of multicultural conviviality does not manifest itself fully within the national.

These processes are best seen on a scale that transcends strictly defined and discrete national frameworks. World cinema, in particular, can no longer be treated as a mosaic of discrete cultural phenomena. One increasingly sees that the localities of production are spatially disjointed and the audiences are scattered around the globe.

This is where transnational film studies comes into the picture. It approaches the cycle of film production, dissemination and reception as one dynamic process that transcends national borders and reflects a mode of human experience in the global age.

Today, there are four main channels of circulation of global cinema that function relatively independently from one another. First, there is the system of global Hollywood, which promotes the products of large US studios. Second, there is the somewhat overlooked but nonetheless influential system of the international film festival circuit. Third, and of growing importance, is the system of diasporic distribution of films from various alternative production centres, such as the diasporic-driven circuits of Bollywood product

or Chinese martial arts, or even the clandestine trans-border circulation of Jihadist videos. Fourth, and also of growing importance, are Internet-enabled channels, such as YouTube or new downloadable services like Jaman.

Some of these channels have been researched in detail and widely covered in the media while others have only recently become the object of attention. In each case, the focus has been on a single distribution channel. Journalists and researchers have not yet engaged in an effort to comprehend and compare the dialectical interactions of these distribution circuits within a global context.

There is extensive scholarship on Hollywood's global reach. In recent years there have been a number of publications that have focussed on diasporic distribution practices, mostly exploring global Bollywood and other Asian transnational networks.

It was only recently that studies began acknowledging the importance of film festivals as an alternative global distribution circuit, as well as the global reach and specifics of Internet-enabled distribution channels. The next step should be to examine, on the basis of cinema, the complex interactions between different channels. Such an examination would help to improve our understanding of the dynamics of global cultural flows. Unlike earlier studies that have investigated the workings of a singular system, the cycles of all four distinct circuits should be correlated to show the patterns of active interaction. This, in turn, would permit a contextual assessment of the true movements and the relative weight of global cultural outputs.

"One increasingly sees that the localities of production are spatially disjointed and the audiences are scattered around the globe."

The theoretical framework for such a dynamic understanding of cultural circulation is more or less in place, having been provided initially by scholars based in America or Australia. As well, globalisation anthropologists like Arjun Appadurai and Aihwa Ong first started focusing on new societies where multicultural interactions were determining all aspects of life. On this side of the Atlantic, Stockholm-based Ulf Hannerz also focused on the European dimension of the same globalising cultural dynamics. In sociology, the writings of Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen focussed on global cities. British-based John Urry and Anthony King as well as the media-mindful Mike Featherstone, David Morley and Kevin Robins, have highlighted the processes of global movements of people and ideas in an innovative and illuminating manner.

The machinery of Hollywood

MIT-based Nicholas Negroponte and Cambridge-based Manuel Castells have analysed the defining role of new cyberspace media for the global circulation of ideas and narratives. Other theoreticians, using material from literature and film,[1] have provided a powerful impetus for establishing a new understanding of the transnational dynamics of culture. Film scholars like Hamid Naficy (who coined the term "accented cinema") and Laura Marks ("intercultural cinema") have explored film and media circulation networks. Other scholars have developed an impressive body of work,[2] deploying a variety of methods, from media ethnography to extensive interviews with migratory media practitioners; from a political-economic analysis of production and circulation patterns to the analysis of consumption data, and case studies.

Many scholars have been studying the system of global Hollywood, engaged mostly with promoting the products of large US studios.[3] Even without the intricate insights that this scholarship offers, it is plain to see that Hollywood is everywhere, especially in Europe. Most of the biggest theatrical chains schedule exclusively Hollywood products. The hype about forthcoming films and Hollywood stars, the saturation releases that are scheduled often a year in advance and take up multiple screens across the country, are familiar features of the cinematic scene in each European country.

Hollywood operates via direct sales agents or via local subsidiaries, depending on the concrete legislation in the country. The blanket booking of multiplex screens is one of the leading Hollywood distribution practices whereby theatre owners have to book additional screens for unknown, upcoming Hollywood films in order to secure the chance to screen the next soon-to-be-released blockbuster. This leads to a situation in which multiplexes of 10+ screens are often only showing Hollywood films.

A star-studded Hollywood blockbuster may still be in shooting phase when the release dates are set across Europe. The third instalment of "Pirates of the Caribbean," for example, was just beginning to shoot in 2006 when the 2007 dates for the film's worldwide rolling release were publicised through the Internet Movie Database.

By comparison, the release dates for all other films are only announced through restricted access databases and are not normally known beyond a circle of journalists and programmers, thus restricting the chance to build up hype around certain films.

European films are only able to receive the same kind of exposure as Hollywood films if they manage to strike a deal with Hollywood distributors. The success of the recent German blockbuster "Good Bye, Lenin!" (2003), for example, was due mostly to the fact that it was picked up for distribution within Germany by the European arm of Warner Brothers and was treated in a way usually reserved for Hollywood productions – a simultaneous saturation release on a massive number of screens across the country.

Still, the domination of Hollywood is not as omnipotent as is often believed. New trends can be seen across Europe. In countries like France, Italy, Spain, the UK, and in particular in smaller markets like Denmark, where national films have found it difficult to recoup their budgets due to a small potential audience, domestic productions are now starting to win a significant share of total cinema audiences.

Just a few years ago the box office revenue from domestic films in many European countries was less than ten percent of total film revenue. Now, it has doubled across most territories. In addition, it is likely that we will soon see an even further improvement in the circulation of European films across borders to other European countries. As of 2007, new measures for improving the circulation of European film product were announced as part of the new phase of the European Union's MEDIA programme. More than 65 percent of the total budget of 755 million euros, for 2007-2013, will be allocated to improving distribution to match rising production levels.

In 1995, around 600 films were produced in Europe. This number had grown by nearly a quarter in 2005 to around 800, thus surpassing Hollywood, which produces around 500 titles annually, and fast approaching Bol-

lywood, which turns out around 900 films every year. The ambition is to match these impressive production figures with cinema admissions and to turn European cinema into a profitable and influential enterprise.

The diversity and variety of European product is there; the MEDIA programme measures are meant to allow this product to travel. It is recognised that even when European films do well domestically, they often struggle to reach out to audiences in neighbouring territories; this is why distribution is now the focus of attention.

Nodal points in the global net

It is essential to recognise the importance of the international film festival circuit as the second main global channel which facilitates the world-wide distribution of non-Hollywood cinema. It also plays a key role in the circulation of so-called "art film." Over the past twenty years festivals have proliferated all over the world. It is nearly impossible to provide exact numbers of existing festivals but it is clear that there are well over a thousand. France alone has more than 350 film festivals, around one for each day of the year. The world's most influential festival at Cannes, in France, takes place in May. Europe at large is home to most of the other definitive festivals, such as those in Venice, Berlin, Locarno, Karlovy Vary and Rotterdam. These festivals function as nodes in a global network; it is here that professional programmers and distributors gather to see new films and to decide what will be distributed to the audiences they have access to.

"The domination of Hollywood is not as omnipotent as is often believed."

A select few festivals hold the key to the global circulation of certain types of cinematic product. Sundance, which takes place in January in Utah in the USA, is the place where new, American independent work is showcased. The Toronto film festival in Canada in early September is where the best of European and Asian cinema from the previous year is shown to North American journalists, programmers and distributors, who then show these films to their respective audiences at smaller festivals or art-house cinemas.

The most exciting new films from across Asia are showcased at the festival in Pusan, South Korea, in October. A selection of films from Pusan is picked up and presented at Rotterdam at the end of January, so that European and American programmers and distributors can select and schedule films for further screenings and distribution.

Hollywood films that enjoy access to a globally powerful marketing machine do not need the festival network to reach their audiences. Most of the films made in other countries, however, depend on festival success as it secures them circulation beyond the immediate environment in which they are made. In 2006, for example, festival success at the Locarno and Sarajevo film festivals for "Das Fräulein," by young Swiss-Yugoslav director Andrea Staka, became the factor that facilitated the distribution of his film to more than ten European and other territories.

The Berlinale's Golden Bear for German-Turkish director Fatih Akin's "Head On" (Gegen die Wand) in 2004, secured screenings at more than one hundred other festivals and, later on, theatrical and DVD distribution deals for a wide range of territories.

It strongly enhanced the profile not only of Akin but also of the work of other German-Turkish directors.

The third circuit, which is particularly important to analyse, is the system of diasporic distribution of films from various alternative production centres. The first recognition of the importance of these transnational channels was made by two Australians, Stuart Cunningham and John Sinclair, whose collection *Floating Lives* traced the global channels used by diasporic media catering to audiences around the world. The new approaches to the study of disjointed image production and circulation were tested by scholars like Sheldon Lu in relation to transcontinental Chinese cinema.

Later on, however, this type of scholarship underwent a significant growth in relation to Indian cinema. Thus, the analysis of Bollywood diasporic-driven circuits, which cater to the needs of around 20 million non-resident Indians scattered around the globe, has already become a classic example in the study of transnational distribution. A growing number of academics have published studies in this area in recent years.[4] There have also been numerous journalistic contributions acknowledging the importance in the growth of this form of distribution.

Media of the diaspora

The biggest concentration of non-resident Indians in Europe is in the UK, yet there are significant pockets of Indian populations in many other West European countries like France, Germany and the Netherlands. The distributors of Indian Bollywood cinema, like Yash Raj Films or Eros International, operate internationally. The screenings take place in either dedicated theatres or specially rented premises. Although more and more screenings are now occurring in mainstream multiplexes.

The interesting thing is that Bollywood films transcend the limited Indian community, with more and more interest being shown by people of other ethnicities and backgrounds. This is enhanced by the widespread DVD distribution of many Bollywood titles as well as the availability of the soundtracks. The famous department store KaDeWe in Berlin, an epitome of Western consumerism which celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary in 2007, carries a selection of about twenty Bollywood films on DVD. Significantly, these are not classical Indian texts but recent song-and-dance films, featuring the current stars of Indian film such as Shah Rukh Khan or Aishwarya Rai.

There are also other channels of diasporic-driven distribution. Typically for these, the production centres may be located in one country, while the target audiences are scattered around the world. One example is the circulation of Jihadist videos which, reportedly, are clandestinely available through channels in the West – although little is publicly known of these channels.

Not much effort is needed, however, to stumble across other examples of the distribution of cinematic texts that overtly further ideologies other than those of the West. Even though these films are distributed via fully legitimate diasporic channels, they often remain outside the attention of the media and of sociologists. One such recent example concerns the Turkish blockbuster "Iraq: Valley of the Wolves" (2006). This film scrutinised American private mercenaries in Iraq and por-

trayed them at work with a shady clandestine medical operation, engaged in harvesting the organs of detainee terrorism suspects and shipping them to destinations in the West and Israel. The film used reconstructed scenes imitating widely seen images from Abu Ghraib prison, as well as other re-enactments of incidents reported by detainees released from Guantanamo Bay, such as automatic gun fire directed at a truck loaded with detainees. (A recreation of this incident was also shown in Michael Winterbottom's British film "The Road to Guantanamo.") "Iraq: Valley of the Wolves" was released internationally on DVD and theatrically in Germany where it played at the CineMaxx chain. As it was showing a very different face of the war, it soon became a public controversy.

What is particularly important to recognise in this instance is that it was an alternative distribution channel, controlled by and catering to the diaspora, that not only secured the import of the film but that also proved influential in terms of outlet access and public presence. The presence and degree of influence of such channels in today's multicultural societies ought to become the focus of further study. Research into this area might shed light on how it is that young people, who are born and bred in the West but of minority descent, end up with a world view that is profoundly different from that promoted by the official educational system and the mainstream media.

"Further research might shed light on how it is that young people, who are born and bred in the West but of minority descent, end up with a world view that is profoundly different from that promoted by the official educational system and the mainstream media."

What was particularly interesting in the case of "Iraq: Valley of the Wolves" was that the film employed many Hollywood special-effects consultants who had worked on creating the artificial limbs and guts that featured abundantly in the film. These were essentially the same professionals who gained experience working on Hollywood blockbusters, people involved with Steven Spielberg's "Saving Private Ryan" or Ridley Scott's "Black Hawk Down" and "Kingdom of Heaven."

The controversy about "Iraq: Valley of the Wolves" remained confined mostly to Germany. However in December 2006, the BBC World Service featured an item on the film as part of a programme covering international blockbusters that had not been heard of much in the West. Programmes like this shed some light on the vitality and the importance of diasporic channels of distribution, which allow films like "Iraq: Valley of the Wolves" to become, even in a limited sense, blockbusters in diasporic communities. These channels of media content and consumption have not yet been properly analysed or researched. If European media researchers and sociologists were to examine these channels more closely they would be able to develop a more adequate picture of ideological undercurrents in European societies.

Last but not least, we need to pay more attention to the content on Internet-enabled channels such as YouTube or Jaman. Chris Anderson's *The Long Tail: How Endless Choice is Creating Unlimited Demand* (2006) remains the single most important text on this issue. Analysing the ways in which the new

Internet-based technologies are transforming distribution patterns in the creative industries, Anderson shows that for the first time in history, blockbusters and niche productions are on an identical economic footing; that they are equally worthy of production from a distribution point of view. This is so because of what is known as the "Long Tail" effect: each niche production might only attract a relatively small number of sales but if this is multiplied by the large number of niche products, the result is a viable economic profit margin for the distributor.

New niches

The age of the blockbuster and of normal channels of broadcasting is over. In the new Internet economies of the Long Tail and Web 2.0, it is possible to make niche products commercially viable, as long as the range of media on offer is properly understood and utilised.

The number of people involved in niche creativity and the demand for alternative content is growing. As Anderson puts it: "Demand shifts toward the niches, the economics of providing them improve further, and so on, creating a positive feedback loop that will transform entire industries – and the culture – for decades to come."

An increasing variety of studio-produced films are available on the Internet for downloading, alongside a huge range of alternative independent international offerings. Long before many of the Japanese manga animations were available on DVD in European stores, one could watch every episode of popular series such as "Full Metal Alchemist" or "Nodame Cantabile" or "Death Note" on YouTube and other similar sites.

These sites carry music video clips not only of popular Western artists but also of a large number of alternative foreign singers, such as the Turkish mega star Arkan or the Hungarian rapper L.L Junior. The Internet has made these and other artists tremendously popular.

Much of the content of many of the new social networking sites has been spontaneously contributed by users, often in open breach of copyright restrictions. Some large media corporations, like Viacom, have insisted on the withdrawal of copyrighted content. Others have realised that the tremendous outreach potential of these new social networks by far surpasses the potential loss of sales of copyrighted content. So long as users keep returning to the Internet there is a captive audience for advertising.

While corporations ponder what stance to take in relation to the new channels, many new artists and context providers are jumping on the bandwagon in an unprecedented move to reach out to audiences. Jaman, for instance, is a Silicon Valley based enterprise that engages in online access and downloading of feature films. It promptly licenses content from international cinema and makes it available to global audiences via its unique Internet service.

It is no longer possible to ignore the importance of this fourth vital circuit of cultural distribution, as more and more audiences turn to the Internet. It is becoming the major and the first truly global content provider. We Europeans are yet to master this competitive, comprehensive environment in which our cultural products are being made available on an equal footing with the cultural outputs of countries that have not traditionally been our direct competitors, such as India's Bollywood entertainment or martial arts, animation and super violent thrillers from East Asia. With the growing importance of Internet distribution and cyberspace word-of-mouth publicity in the context of new virtual commu-

nities, these vernacular but vibrant channels of transnational dissemination are likely to proliferate in the coming years.

Dina Iordanova is a professor of film studies at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She is a leading expert on European film, with a particular focus on the cinematic traditions of Eastern Europe as well as transnational film industries. She has written about international film and international media for numerous publications.

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1. These include Rey Chow, who talks of the 'diasporic tactics of intervention'; Fredric Jameson, who discusses the 'geopolitical aesthetic'; Paul Gilroy, who writes on the 'Black Atlantic'; and the duo Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, who focus on media messages and the inter-cultural flows of images as transformed by cultural globalisaton.
2. Including Janet Harbord, Pam Cook, Atom Egoyan and Ian Balfour, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie, French media sociologists Michelle and Armand Mattelart, and media anrthopologists like Faye Ginsburg and Brian Larkin.
3. See Balio, Miller et al., Wasko, MacDonald and Wasko, Wyatt.
4. See Pendakur, Desai, Dudrah, Kaur, Sinha and others.

Malta, TVM, News


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Poland, TVP1, Wiadomości


















1. Lithuania: VTV, TV3, Zinios, 18.45, Newsreader: Rokas Petkevičius
2. Slovakia: TV Markiza, Televízne Noviny, Newsreaders: Rastislav Zinty, Marianna Durianova
3. Italy: RAI, telegiornale 1, Newsreader: Monica Maggioni
4. Portugal: RTP1, Telejornal, 20.00, Newsreader: José Alberto Carvalho
5. Latvia: LTV, Panorama, Newsreader: Sandra Zviedren
6. Germany: NDR, Tagesschau, 20.00, Newsreader: Jan Hofer
7. Bulgaria: bTV Novinite, 19.00, Newsreaders: Ani Salich, Juksel Kadriev
8. Sweden: TV4, Nyheterna, Newsreader: Bengt Magnusson
9. Czech Republic: ČESKÁ TELEVIZE, Udalosti, Newsreaders: Iveta Toušlová, Bohumil Klepetko, Photo: Jaroslav Hodík
10. Austria: ORF, Zeit im Bild, Newsreaders: Tarek Leitner, Danielle Spera, Photo: ORF/Ali Schafler
11. Netherlands: NOS, Journaal 20.00, Newsreader: Sacha de Boer, Photo: NOS/Leendert Jansen
12. Estonia: Kanal 2, Reporter, Newsreader: Olaf Suuder
13. Ireland: RTÉ One, Six One News, Newsreaders: Sharon Ni Bheolain, Bryan Dobson
14. France: Télévision Francaise 1, TF1, Le Journal, 20.00, Newsreader: Patrick Poivre d'Arvor
15. Spain: RTVE, Telediario, 21.00, Newsreader: Lorenzo Mila
16. Malta: Television Malta - TVM, News, 20.00, Newsreader: Joe Dimech
17. Poland: TVP1, Wiadomości, Newsreader: Małgorzata Wyszyńska
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19. Hungary: RTL Klub, Hirado, Newsreader: Istvan Szello
20. Cyprus: CyBC1, News at eight o'clock, Newsreader: Emilia Kenevezou
21. United Kingdom: BBC, Ten O'Clock News, Newsreader: Huw Edwards, Photo: Jeff Overs
22. Luxembourg: RTLTélé Lëtzebuerg, de Journal, 19.30, Newsreader: Frank Goetz
23. Denmark: TV 2 Nyhederne, Newsreader: Per Christiansen
24. Finland: YLE, TV-uutiset, Newsreader: Matti Rönkä, Photo: Yleisradio
25. Slovenia: Televizija Slovenija, Odmevi ,Newsreader: Slavko Bobovnik
26. Greece: NET1, NET-Eidiseis, 21.00, Newsreader: Maria Choukli
27. Belgium: VRT, Journaal, Newsreader: Martin Tanghe, Photo: Vrt Lies Willaert,

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CULTURE REPORT

Progress Europe

We have the euro and we have open borders. But every attempt so far to establish a pan-European journalistic media has failed. The more Europe grows, the more serious are the ramifications of the absence a European-wide media as a democratic watchdog. And the less we see of Europe in the media, the greater the distance becomes between Brussels and EU citizens. What can the media do to promote more discussion about European democracy, and to awaken curiosity as well as more contention and critical debate about Europe? This is the theme of this Culture Report – the work of 21 authors from 11 different countries.