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Reimagining the Nation: Mass Media and Collective Identities in Europe.

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Introduction

"The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism".
Eric Hobsbawm (1990: 182-3)

In the conclusion of his *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Eric Hobsbawm asks whether the world history of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century will be written, as that of the nineteenth century could be, in terms of 'nation-building'. He does not think so. Does this mean the "withering away of the nation?" (Hannerz, 1996: 81). Benedict Anderson in an equally famous book *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* argues the opposite: "Nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (Anderson, 1983: 12). And he continues: "But if the facts are clear, their explanation remains a matter of longstanding dispute. Nation, nationality, nationalism -- all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse. In contrast to the immense influence that nationalism has exerted on the modern world, plausible theory about it is conspicuously meagre" (Anderson, 1983: 12-13).

One notices a shift from political and economic perspectives to a more cultural or anthropological definition of the nation. Therefore, some authors, like Tran Van Dinh, distinguish between a *'nation-state'* and a *'nation'*: "A nation-state is a political, economic, and military organisation while a nation is a community characterised by cultural cohesion and communality of identity" (Van Dinh, 1987: 109). It may be fair to state that "the traditional nation-state, the fruit of centuries of political, social and economic evolution, is under threat" (Horsman & Marshall, 1994: IX).

Ernest Gellner (1987) elaborates on the distinction made by the anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown between *structure* and *culture*. 'Structure' is defined as "the relatively stable system of roles or positions, and the tasks and activities allocated to them, which really make up a society" (Gellner, 1987: 12). By contrast, 'culture' is defined as "the system of tokens which, in the idiom of one society or another, constitute the signals by means of which these various roles, positions, or activities are brought to the attention of its members" (ibid.). In other words: "Culture mirrors structure -- but not always in the same kind of way. There are radically different ways in which the system of tokens and signals (culture) can be related to the system of roles or positions constituting a society" (Gellner, 1987: 13). However, Gellner argues, the problem of nationalism obliges us to investigate both ways: "We have to ask what kind of structure it is which does, and does not, lead to a self-conscious worship of culture, no longer mediated by an externalised Sacred, *and* to the compulsive standardisation of culture within the poli-

tical unit. To answer that question we need to operate with the Radcliffe-Brownian structure-culture opposition" (Gellner, 1987: 27-28).

The discussion becomes more complex when we introduce the role and place of *communication*, be it face-to-face and mediated, interpersonal and mass, or formal and informal. Historically, communication has played a crucial role in processes of formation and maintenance of nations and has been central in the homogenisation and creation of national cultures and identities. The role of communication in these processes has been complex. It ranged from constituting frames of shared interpretation, public debate and collective action, to standardising cultural resources and publicising definitions of the situation which reified and naturalised national communities.

Therefore, nowadays the *interrelationship of culture, nation and communication* is being considered as the key theme in the study of collective identities and nationalism (see, e.g., Schlesinger, 1993; or Rutten & Hamers-Regimbal, 1995). It is the aim of this special issue to assess this interrelationship and to contribute to a discussion of its assumptions.

I. Culture and Nationalism

The present-day world, in general as well as in its distinct regional and national entities, is confronted with *multifaceted crises*. Apart from the obvious economic and political crisis, one can also refer to social, ideological, moral, ethnic, ecological and security crises. Since the demarcation of the First, Second and Third Worlds is breaking down and the cross-over centre-periphery can be found in almost every region and nation, there is a need for a new understanding of issues like *(cultural) identity and nationalism*.

The above is directly related to a perspective on culture. Raymond Williams (1981) once said that it is one of the two or three words that are the most difficult to define. According to Michael Thompson (1990) two families of definitions vie for supremacy. One views culture as composed of values, beliefs, norms, rationalisations, symbols, ideologies, i.e., mental products. The other sees culture as referring to the total way of life as a people, their interpersonal attitudes as well as their attitudes.

What exactly constitutes a culture, or different cultures? In my opinion, cultures have indistinct peripheries, and they shade off into one another in a quite indefinite way. We do not always recognise a culture when we see one. Cultures can overlap, absorb, encompass, and blend. They can be differentiated according to environment, custom, social class, world-view or *Weltanschauung* (Servaes, 1989b). The tendency is to think of another culture as somewhat foreign or exotic, as existing outside of one's national borders. However, some intranational communications can be far more cross-cultural than international communications. Often, for instance, as argued by Robin Hodess, Julian Thomas Hottinger and Bart Kerremans, there exists an easily discernible cultural gap between the ruling political elite and the public opinion in many nations. In other words, culture varies with the parameters through which we choose to look at it.

The meaning of concepts and symbols, as well as the use of language, as such, is culture bound. Marjan Malesic describes how, following the total disintegration of the previous political system, the new national governments in the former Yugoslavia began with (re)organising the collective memory of their respective peoples: first, they established new iconographies of their authority (mar-

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kedly different flags, national anthems, uniforms, street and place names). The next phase involved the much more complex process of reinterpreting history. "It is through this ever resurgent experience of the most important events defining their national history that the various States are endeavouring to establish a linearity of the national memory for future generations. Whereas the previous regime had formulated a collective memory based on rituals linked with the communist party, the new States reached far back into history to found their own respective collective memories: Serbia, for instance, to the fourteenth century and the Battle of Kosovo" (Malesic, infra).

In this sense, cultures can be defined as *social settings* in which a certain reference framework has taken concrete form or has been institutionalised. It orients and structures the interaction and communication of people within this historical context. Culture has material and immaterial aspects which are part of a certain way of life, passed on and corroborated via socialisation processes (e.g., school, mass media, religion) to the members of that society. "In the cultural sphere national identity is revealed in a whole range of assumptions and myths, values and memories, as well as in language, law, institutions and ceremonies. Socially, the national bond provides the most inclusive community, the generally accepted boundary within which social intercourse normally takes place, and the limit for distinguishing the 'outsider', The nation may also be seen as the basic unit of moral economy, in terms both of territory and of resources and skills" (Smith, 1991: 143-144).

II. Fragmented Identities

Benedict Anderson's notion of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983) emphasises the centrality of the idea that nationhood exists as a *system of cultural signification*. "Culture is no longer understood as what expresses the identity of a community. Rather, it refers to the processes, categories and knowledges through which communities are defined as such: that is, how they are rendered specific and differentiated" (Donald & Rattansi, 1992: 4). In such communities culture must be seen as the unintended result of an interweaving of the behaviour of a group of people who interrelate and interact with each other. "'Imagining' communities is a lengthy process of forging links between social groups, of inventing community and suppressing differences, of establishing the context in which the members of the community under construction can develop common experiences, and interpret past experiences in similar ways. It involves the organisation of collective memory - and thus, of collective forgetting - and of the rituals and institutions that support such projects... In other words, *imagination* involves creating economies of truth, processes of making sense of the raw material of social experience or, in fact, creating this very social experience through discursive practices", states Spyros Sofos in his contribution to this special issue. In other words, dixit Marc Raboy: "People are called on to choose their affiliations and categories of identification -- to mould an identity as it were".

From this perspective, nationhood is at the point of intersection with a plurality of discourses related to geography, history, culture, politics, ideology, ethnicity, religion, materiality, economics, and the social. Therefore, the *discourse of nationhood* can best be understood in relation to boundedness, continuities and discontinuities, unity in plurality, the authority of the past, and the imperatives of the present.

It moves along two important axes: *space and time*. In terms of the space axis, the dominant question is territorial sovereignty; in terms of the time axis, the central question is the velocity of history, the continuity with the past. The way these two axes interact produces results that bear directly and challengingly on the problematic of nationhood.

There was a time not so long ago that the media landscape and cultural identity were congruent. But today's electronic communication environment allows for disconnection of medium and geography. "Cyprus in this regard represents the extraordinary contrast of medieval warfare functioning with a mental set of territorial control while it's foreign and cross cultural identity functions in the non-geographic realm of electronic space", argue Gary Gumpert and Susan Drucker. The 'Green Line' in Cyprus, an artificial barrier erected by humans, gives testimony to a belief that ideas and words can be severed and intercepted by walls of concrete, barbed wire, and sandbags. It is an archaic notion that historically has never held up and will certainly not withstand the power of modern communication technology. In other words: "What is important to bear in mind is that the manifold issues related to these axes are man-made and not natural givens. They are human constructs seeking the status of the natural" (Dissanayake, 1994:IX). Therefore, Marc Raboy convincingly shows that in the age of globalization it is entirely possible to live in the centre of Montreal and consider oneself 'Québécois' or 'Canadian', independently of one's linguistic or ethnic origin. "But the evolution towards various forms of *cultural métissage* or hybridisation make a certain confusion inevitable. It also means that self-determination has given way to interdependence." Therefore, most authors in this issue assume that nationalism is no longer strictly a movement of liberation from external oppression, it is also an expression of domination of a local majority over its dependent minorities.

Though Wimal Dissanayake borrows heavily from Anderson, he is not blind for his conceptual weaknesses: "That it (Anderson's theory, JS) pays inadequate attention to the materialities and overlooks discontinuities of history; it also gives short shrift to the political character of nationhood and the role ethnic loyalties and religious affiliations may have played in the construction of nationhood" (Dissanayake, 1994:xii). Though identity and nationalism usually arise from statehood and citizenship, it may also precede the existence of a state and emerge from culture and ethnicity, as shown in the case of Cyprus. Therefore, Dissanayake complements Anderson's thinking on nationhood with the contributions of a number of other contemporary thinkers: Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Giddens, and Partha Chatterjee. He acknowledges that their diverse formulations and theorisations of nationhood only serve to underline the complex and contested discursive terrain that it undoubtedly is, and concludes that 'national identity' needs to be discussed at *four* interconnected levels: the local, national, regional, and global.

Similar positions have been taken by other contemporary analysts of these processes (see, for instance, Friedman, 1994; Hannerz, 1996; Miller, 1995). In this issue most of the articles tend to look at the problem from either a national or a regional level. Except for Mary Connolly who starts from a local perspective.

Various cultures also manifest different and fragmented identities. There are at least two possible ways of conceiving of *cultural identity*, as presented by Stuart Hall (1996), Jorge Larrain (1994), and others: one essentialist, narrow and closed, the other historical, encompassing and open. The former thinks of cultural identity as an already accomplished fact, as a 'product'. The latter conceives cul-

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tural identity as something which is being produced, always in 'process'. Furthermore, the term cultural identity refers to two complementary phenomena: on the one hand, an inward sense of association or identification with a specific culture or subculture; on the other hand, an outward tendency within a specific culture to share a sense of what it has in common with other cultures and of what distinguishes it from other cultures (for an elaboration, see Servaes, 1989a).

Therefore, central to *national identity* is its distinctiveness, the emphasis on similarities among the members of the group and dissimilarities with those outside the group. The 'other' is often perceived as the aggregate of internal and external opposition, in the form of an imaginary 'enemy'. Roza Tsagarousianou argues that internal dissidents and political adversaries are therefore transformed into national enemies as the achieved simplification of the 'political' does not allow room for diversity and difference within the framework of national politics (see also Keen, 1988). (Bart Kerremans shows that this is not typical for national identities as such but common to all kinds of identities.) Consequently, according to Marjan Malesic, the main task of the media is to transfer, and to create, two different sets of images of one's own nation: one intended for internal use (the 'we - image') shared by all members of the same national community, exclusive of all others; and the other group of images from outside, i.e., the outsider's perception of one's own nation.

On the basis of findings of cultural anthropology, Antonio Pasquali (1980) attempts to redefine the *concept of national culture*. This means a concept generic in itself, sometimes with the ideological and sometimes with utopian implications, and even, at the extremes, with reactionary connotations. The concept of 'national culture', in order to be operative, he contends, must accept the following conditions: First, the recognition of equal dignity for all cultures must, before anything else, follow the acceptance of the very existence of the so-called cultures that themselves have their own ratio cognoscenti in the national framework. Second, culture is a global and patrimonial concept that includes, in its essential forms, values that are abstract, ill-defined, but transferable. The alienation of a culture always proceeds from the abstract to the concrete, and in this operation, the mass media play an essential role. Third, there is an apparent contradiction between the universalism of our time, favoured in its lower and authoritarian forms as manipulated cosmopolitanism by the mass media, and the emergence of the concept of 'nation'. This conception must be assumed to be positive because it will allow the formerly underprivileged to reach a critical mass that will make it possible for them to act as real interlocutors. In this case Pasquali foresees the concept of nation will be destined to play an important role in the formulation of the future laws of international communication (see also Alleyne, 1995).

The above perspective fundamentally undermines the claims and comforts of culture and community understood in terms of a normative identity and tradition, whether that of nation, religion, or ethnicity. It is the linking thread that runs through the various articles collected together here.

III. Nationhood, History, and Mass Media

The study of popular media formats like news, movies or soap operas enables us to understand better the *dynamics of modernisation* and social change taking place (Allen, 1995; Casmir, 1995); Corcoran & Preston, 1995; Dissanayake, 1994; Drummond, 1993; Thompson, 1995; Weymouth & Lamizet, 1996). As dis-

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cussed, the term 'nationalism' admits of a ***multiplicity of meanings*** related to such issues as territoriality, power, identity, subjectivity, ideology, truth, symbolisation, and narrativity. Though the relationship between identity and nationalism is ridden with paradoxes, it is also at the heart of the narrative of cultural modernity. This means that any investigation into this topic situates us at the centre of some of the vital and invigorating debates taking place within the domain of modern cultural studies.

We can then move to an exploration of the relationship between (national) media and nationhood. In most countries mass media are used strategically to reinforce the ***myth*** of the unitary nation and to interpolate the textual subjects as willing members of the nation. "The power-wielders in any society strive to enhance their base by making use of all available media of communication at their disposal, and surely film is one of them. Many filmmakers willingly participate in this effort of hegemony. However, there is a constant interplay between centripetal and centrifugal forces taking place within the national-space" (Dissanayake, 1994: xvii). This 'interplay' or tension between nationhood and cultural identity enables us to understand the contours of this phenomenon at both the textual and industrial levels of the mass media.

For instance, Roza Tsagarousianou illustrates how the Greek mass media have been playing a significant role in the processes of reproduction and reinforcement of ethnocentric and nationalist discourse, as they have been sustaining 'official' representations of Greece as being a nation under threat from its neighbouring states and a sense of societal insecurity among Greeks. These representations have been crucial in the formation and maintenance of public attitudes regarding both ethno-religious minorities within Greece, and ethnic and religious groups in neighbouring countries. Also Marjan Malesic and Spyros Sofos in their contributions show how the creation of a series of moral panics and the cultivation of specific narratives and memories of nationhood and the suppression of others, Serbian and Croatian state-controlled and pro-government media aided by the media of nationalist groups and organisations reinforced nationalist definitions of the situation and definitions of community. In fact, they posited the national community in opposition to enemies, or informed the imagination of the nation they addressed as a ***community under threat***. This particular modality of imagination of the national community is premised on processes of simplification of the political field into two opposing camps, or the positing of an irreconcilable antagonistic relationship between the 'people', or the 'nation' and its 'other'. In fact, the positing of this binary political and social division not only simplifies the political field, but also entails the maintenance of some sense of homogeneity within the ranks of the community in question as it unifies it on the basis of establishing a relation of equivalence among its constituent elements.

However, as argued by Mary Connolly, the mass media can also be extremely effective in persuading the public to deconstruct the unified narrative of nationhood by focusing on the diverse elements that go to form it as well as by urging the public to take a second look at certain well-accepted positionalities. This idea of ***counter-memory*** is particularly effective in an historical perspective. However, the relationship between nationhood and history is complex, multifaceted, and often ambiguous and contradictory. Therefore, one needs to focus on questions of narrative positioning, rhetorical strategies, ideological and institutional affiliations, cultural roots, plurality of perspective, tactics of self-empowerment, discontinuities of evolution, and problems of representation as ways of understanding the production of history in all its complexities. Therefore, "the transition

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to democratisation and peaceful coexistence cannot rest merely on signing and implementing peace accords and adopting western-style liberal-democratic institutions; it requires a radical transformation of the public spheres of the former Yugoslav societies that would enable alternative social (including, but not restricted to ethnic) identities and solidarities to be negotiated and forged, and non-ethnic notions of citizenship to flourish" (Sofos, infra).

The articles in this volume seek to examine from different geographical and conceptual vantage points this interrelatedness of the construction of nationhood, the understanding of history, and their representation in media texts.

IV. Ideology and Mass Media

The reproduction of any social organisation entails a basic correspondence between processes of 'subjection' and 'qualification.' This basic social functioning of *subjection/qualification* involves three fundamental modes of ideological interpolation. Ideologies impact and qualify subjects by expressing to them, relating them to, and making them recognise: (a) what exists and what does not exist (i.e., a sense of identity); (b) what is good and bad (i.e., normalisation); and (c) what is possible and impossible (i.e., a logic of conservation versus a logic of change).

The ideology of the nation-state is nationalism. Welcomed by some as liberative, by others, among them Albert Einstein, as "an infantile sickness. It is the measles of the human race" (in Dukas & Hoffman, 1979: 38).

Roza Tsagarousianou argues that the Greek mass media have been reinforcing the binary divisions between 'good' and 'bad' which prevail in popular consciousness and in the nationalist imaginary promoted and sustained by certain institutional actors in Greece. These divisions play a significant role in the maintenance and strengthening of obstacles to the formation of a pluralistic social and political map, as the imperative of national unity which they have been promoting consistently dissimulates structured inequalities, and displaces representations of 'difference'. In her contribution also Marjan Malesic arrives at similar conclusions for the Serbian mass media.

Ideological interpolations are made all the time, everywhere, and by everybody. However, ideological interpolations tend to cluster at nodal points in the ongoing social process, which one could call ideological institutions, or apparatuses, and which are both discursive and non-discursive. They are forms of behaviour that are crystallised on the basis of social acceptance into more-or-less standardised self-evident routines and which can work as both negative-repressing and as positive-liberating. On the basis of the media and cultural representations, Roza Tsagarousianou argues that nationalist discourse incorporates apparently contradictory strategies which deny with consistency the existence of the 'enemy'. Through the demonisation of the 'other' and the restriction of the possibilities of recognising internal complexity and plurality, the mass media have contributed to the construction of national identity in such a way that it is decoupled from freedom and plurality.

Ideologies do function in rational as well as irrational, in conscious as well as unconscious forms. The latter, unconscious aspects are, in my opinion, more important though often overlooked (Servaes, 1981). Joseph Campbell (1988) called them 'myths' or 'dreams' in the sense that a dream is a personal myth, and a myth is the public dream of a society. "Great myths serve to knit a people toge-

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ther through a commonly perceived vision of the future", states Malesic. Myths are therefore culture-bound creations of the human mind and spirit: "National cultures are structured around myths which explain the origins of the particular grouping, their specific national identities and their concepts of national destiny. Such national mythologies seek in grounding in broader cosmic myths, and thus gain a sacred, timeless character. Myths function more at the unintentional, symbol level, defining that what a national society is trying to become. Mythological functions are likely to be especially strong at times of national crisis, rapid change or external threat" (White, 1988: 19-20).

The mass media are then considered institutions by which the new meaning systems are transmitted in a ritual manner in a community. Mass media like television, cinema or the press thus fulfil the role of the *tellers of myths* and stories. The culture of a nation is interpreted as structured around myths that can be both cosmic and national. They function on a non-intentional, symbolic level and only come to the surface at times of national crisis, rapid social change, or exterior threat. In my opinion, the best, and until now most powerful example of such an analysis is undertaken by the Colombian researcher Jesus Martin-Barbero (1993). He eloquently describes the process in which the narrative discourse of media adapts to the popular narrative tradition of myth and melodrama, and the way audiences learn to recognise their collective cultural identity in the media discourse. Martin-Barbero analyses this mediation process in a historical perspective and elaborates on the chemistry which takes place between the processes of media production and the daily routine of media consumption in the context of the family, the community and the nation in Latin America: "Over the last few years a Latin American movement, dissolving pseudo-theoretical issues and cutting through ideological inertias, has opened up a new way of thinking about the constitution of mass society, namely, from the perspective of transformations in subalternate cultures. Communication in Latin America has been profoundly affected by external transnationalisation but also by the emergence of new social actors and new cultural identities. Thus, communication has become a strategic arena for the analysis of the obstacles and contradictions that move these societies, now at the cross-roads between accelerated underdevelopment and compulsive modernisation. Because communication is the meeting point of so many new conflicting and integrating forces, the centre of the debate has shifted from media to mediations. Here, mediations refer especially to the articulations between communication practices and social movements and the articulation of different tempos of development with the plurality of cultural matrices" (Martin-Barbero, 1993:187).

This perspective goes beyond the *'agenda setting'* approach, which has been presented by Robin Hodess. Though it is correct to state that media define not only the terms but the parameters of politics, and therefore take part in the setting of the political agenda, this remains a limited view on the interrelationship between media and politics. The research on 'agenda-setting' has convincingly shown that people may not think *what* they are told by the media, but they do think *about* what they are told. Therefore, media have undoubtedly a legitimating effect. However, there is more involved, as argued by Jesus Martin-Barbero. Dennis McQuail (1992) among others, points to the functional ambivalence of communication, which he claims can in fact either serve to weaken or to strengthen social cohesion. He distinguishes between two kinds of cohesive function generated by the *mediation process*. The first relates to the symbolic representation of national events, people and institutions, and the second to the creation of social-relational meanings or, as he puts it, "to a sense of belonging to a signi-

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ficant social group and to the capacity to enjoy an authentic and personally valued culture" (McQuail, 1992: 75).

V. Missing Issues and Perspectives in Research on 'Europe'

Overall, Robin Hodess argues, political science study of the European Union (EU), whether supranational, national, or sub-national in focus, and whether concentrated on elites or issues of legitimation, has failed to acknowledge the *influence of media in European integration*. "Given the essential function of news media in defining and legitimating the sphere of politics and in shaping the political climate, it is possible to conclude that media merit more attention within the field of political science", suggests Hodess. This oversight is linked to the lack of attention in EU theory to public opinion and the notion of citizenship, Julian Hottinger adds. The explanation for this 'oversight', long prevalent within political science, was that the general public was not interested in foreign policy.

Establishing trends in media opinion on Europe, both authors argue, could help to explain the climate in which both elite and public opinion have been formed. Media studies could provide a critical bridge between the examination of European integration at the elite and general public levels. Therefore, incorporating public debate -- which often means news media debate -- as a contributing factor in European integration takes into account both elite and general public levels of analysis, a perspective which is necessary in the evaluation of Europe's progress since the mid-1980s. "While it is not possible to prove a causal link between news formation, content, and public opinion, the investigation of the role of the media in West European integration points toward a new, and until now, missing emphasis in EU studies: the centrality of public discourse, including media discourse, to the future of the integration project" (Hodess, infra). Moreover, these authors claim, that opening up the issue of the role of media in European integration complements other recent research within political science about the ability of the European Union to operate democratically. This would almost automatically lead to more *social anthropological studies* of identity complexes in 'Europe', as advocated by Sharon MacDonald (1993) and Staffan Zetterholm (1994).

The European media space should be more than an arena for the formulation of (media) policies, as seems to be the case nowadays. (Such an observation becomes very obvious if one would read one of the general overviews on 'Europe', see. e.g., Pinder, 1995.) Therefore, a discussion on *normative media theories* could provide a useful starting point for forming categories of analysis for political scientific consideration of the role of media in EU politics. Robin Hodess proposes a framework of analysis for such an exercise. She presents two broad conclusions drawn from normative theory: (1) that media function either as watchdog on or mouthpiece for government, and (2) that media are national and linked to the modern nation-state.

In communication sciences one usually refers to the book by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) for an interpretation of this issue. These authors started from the assumption that "the press always takes on the coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially it reflects the system of social control whereby the relations of individuals and institutions are adjusted" (Siebert, 1956:1-2). Referring to special political science models, these authors discerned four normative press theories: the authoritarian, the Soviet-communist, the liberal, and the social responsibility theory.

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These four press (or better media) theories since then have been regularly discussed and modified: a dependency model and democratic-participatory model were added.

The critique was that the classic models are based on, on the one hand, a too restricted (Western) description of concepts like 'freedom', 'democracy', and so on, which allow little or no generalisations; and that, on the other hand, reality often doesn't comply to the principles defined in philosophical terms.

Therefore a threefold but integrated distinction with an economic, a philosophical, and a more culturalist-anthropological dimension was proposed. The above mentioned thesis, which was Siebert's starting point, was never questioned though. Because as with the former, these authors also think that "media systems are, of course, closely related to the kinds of governments in which they operate; they are, in essence, reflective and supportive of the governmental philosophy. When viewed in this way, it is possible to say that all press systems are enslaved -- tied to their respective governmental philosophies and forced to operate within certain national ideological parameters" (Merrill, 1979: 153) (for more details, see Servaes, 1989c).

Conclusion

"Ce qui importe dans la vie et le devenir de la culture européenne, c'est la rencontre fécondante des diversités, des antagonismes, des concurrences, des complémentarités, c'est-à-dire leur dialogique".
Edgar Morin (1990: 150)

In this issue, the focus has been on strategies of construction or deconstruction of the 'nation' through historiographical, anthropological and linguistic works and the dissemination of the definitions they produce through the mass media.

The underlying argument was that the 'nationalisation' of communications or, more generally, of the universe of public discourse, is not an exclusively Balkan, or 'Southern' phenomenon, as it is often indicated by commentators succumbing to the 'irresistible' orientalist logic that has been awakened by the various forms of interethnic conflict and war in the Balkans. Indeed, it could be argued that it is also characteristic of 'Western' European and other 'non-oriental' societies. Moreover, it is important not to overlook the role of religion and the reinterpretation of history, or -- in more general terms -- 'culture' in this context.

I believe that the empirical and theoretical material and the issues addressed in this issue do not simply advance our understanding of what has been happening in the European arena in some sort of abstract academic sense. They certainly serve to emphasize some of the many ways in which the interrelationship of culture, nation and communication can be reconsidered -- not only in Europe, but globally.

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Summary: **Reimagining the Nation: Mass Media and Collective Identities in Europe**

The interrelationschip of culture, nation and communication is one of the key themes in the study of collective identities and nationalism. In this opening article to this special issue this interrelationship is being assessed. The article aims to contribute to a discussion of the assumptions on which the above interrelationship is built.

It is argued that nationhood is at the point of intersection with a plurality of discourses related to geography, history, culture, politics, ideology, ethnicity, religion, matriality, economics, and the social. The discourse of nationhood can best be understood in relation to boundedness, continuities and discontinuities, unnity and plurality, the authority of the past, and the imperative of the present.

Contributions of a number of contemporary thinkers (Benedict Anderson, Wimal Dissanayake, Ernest Gellner, Sutart Hall, Eric Hosbawm, anthony Giddens, among others) are incorporated in this article in order to underline the complex and contested discursive terrain that nationhood undoubtedly is. It is concluded that various cultures also manifest different and fragmented identities.