VARIA

EUROPEAN MEDIACULTURATION
AS
A MECHANISM OF EUROPEANIZATION

Andra Dina Pana[1]

This article designs the concept of European mediaculturation based on a two-layer model of Europeanization in order to reveal a mechanism of formation of the European culture and identity. European mediaculturation is a useful concept for researching national, European and transnational media with regard to European- value news for the European citizens.

The European Union (EU) is a complex of multicultural societies where there is a paradigm of convergence of European and national identities (Georgiu, 2001). In this article, I intend to explain a mechanism of the formation of the European culture which I call European mediaculturation as it is based on the media effects on the EU citizens in the search for their European identity. My theoretical framework comprises the media effects theory and the concept of media culture, as presented in the first section of this article.

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1   Docteur en Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication.

The necessity of a concept able to explain the role of the media in the Europeanization process, for which I design a model in the second section of this paper, has been highlighted by several academics. For example, Lamizet (1998) explains that the necessary political theory of mediatization is based on real strategies of exercising institutional powers and symbolic strategies of mediatized representations of a transnational belonging. It applies both to political territories of belonging (characterized as homogeneous) and to the symbolic spaces of representation and communication (characterized as hybrid). Moreover, Georgiu (2009) explains how the images define and give a meaning to realities, how the interpretations become more important than the facts, how the video-politics manages the state-citizenship relation, how a politician's public image is more important than his/her real political competence and how the value of a cultural piece must be also validated by its success in the media. Things work the same in the case of the role mass-media play in promoting the process of European integration, as Schifirneț (2009b) explains, or even in the tough way that Lits (2009) puts it: "Media discourse is *the best* (I made the emphasis) way to bring the European events closer to the public." This appears true when agreeing that ordinary citizens usually do not have first-hand experience of the EU, but they depend on mass-media coverage for information (Maier & Rittberger, 2008; Machill *et al.*, 2006). There is also empirical evidence that media has important effects on media consumers with regard to Europeanization. Maier & Rittberger (2008) use interviews and questionnaires to prove that "positive information about a candidate country generally causes an increase in support for accession whereas negative information leads to a decline in support for further EU enlargement." In the same way, Bruter (2003) uses two methods (the experiment and the questionnaire) to show the short term and long term impact of exposing to EU- related news and symbols on the support of the EU. He concludes that the media exposure has more long term effect than short term effect, although they are both substantial.

Is there a European-wide media culture? There are both Euroskeptical visions such as Van Noije (2010), Heikkilä & Kunelius's (2008), Gross's (2004), Kunelius's (2008), Machill & *al.*'s (2006) who empirically prove (with the help of interviews with journalists) that there is a lack of EU journalism whose positions are supposed to be simultaneously national and cosmopolitan. There are also optimistic visions, such as Delanty & He's (2008) who conclude on the basis of

discourse analysis that there is a growing Europeanization of the public discourse.

What are or should be the elements of the shared European media culture? Different academics and researchers give different answers to this question: Delanty& Rumford (2005) suggest EU creating frameworks for interpreting shared problems and a common agenda to guide disparate actors towards common goals, one of which being media seen as a facilitator of opinion and action, the link between the individual level and societal level. Heikkilä & Kunelius (2008) consider that the EU journalism should stand on both national and cosmopolitan positions. Lamizet (1998) considers that the solution for a homogeneous European media is the mediatization of the EU as a symbolic space, Downey & Koenig (2006) consider that the convergence points of the national media of different EU member states are the shared topics and the discursive frame and Castells (2009) highlights the importance of a homogenous message in the EU's media.

I intend to give my own answer to the questions raised in this paragraph in the third section of this article, as part of a new concept I design, the European media-culturation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the paper presents the contextualization of today's society. It also answers the questions related to the role of the media in the global and European societies. For Coman (2009, p.57), "media are the culture". For Castells (2009, p. 124), "the embryonic cosmopolitan culture nowadays finds the support of a media delivery platform".

Based on the concept of media culture "in which images, sounds, and spectacles help produce the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behaviour, and providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities" (Kellner, 1995, p.3), I conceptualize European mediaculturation as a mechanism used by media to promote Europeanization.

I also base my concept on the media effects theory (Maier & Rittberger, 2008; Neuman *et al.*, 1992; Semetko, 2004). According to the framing theory, the characterization of an issue, an event or an actor by the media influences the audience's attitudes, orientations, opinion on the topic. The priming theory explains why the audience uses the most recently obtained information to form an opinion on a topic. That

is why "media not only tell people what to think about, but also how to think about it." (Maier & Rittberger, 2008, p. 248). Mass-media are so powerful these days that Castells (2009) sees the necessity of a concept of media sphere that can explain the role played by mass media in the public sphere defined as the *locus* of the process of the opinion formation.

European mediaculturation is useful in explaining the occurrence of the European identity of a European citizen who is a consumer of news and media information, as well as a member of a community whose opinions and action are influenced by mediated information and personal experience (Semetko, 2004).

THE MODEL OF TWO-LAYER EUROPEANIZATION

In the pursuit of understanding the realities in the EU, I design a dual model of Europeanization. Starting from Ladrech's (1994, 2002) definition of Europeanization, I operationalize this concept as the reply given by different social actors to the pressure of the construction of the EU. I discriminate between two types of social actors: institutions and people. Firstly, the political elites of a country decide for their country to join the EU. The impact of this decision is the creation of the European-like institutions, the adoption of the *acquis* and of the common politics. These are the elements of the first layer of Europeanization, which is institutional and supranational. What is the reply given by the citizens to the political decision of European integration? To answer this question, I conceive the second layer of Europeanization as a cultural, identitary, transnational layer which can lead to the creation of the European culture. The elements of the two layers are presented in table 1.

First Layer	Second Layer
European citizenship (Painter, 2008)	European identity (Stråth, 2002), European awareness (Rumford, 2003)
23 official languages and the citizens' right to use their mother tongue while addressing the European instiutions	Individual and societal multilingualism (minority or regional languages, multicultural and cosmopolitan communities) (Pană, 2010a)
Multiculturalism and supranationalism: all national cultures are equally cherished and diversity is supported by top-down cultural politics of the EU	Cosmopolitanism and transnationalism: interculturality, cultural exchanges, mixing similarity and differences, multiple identities, no hierarchy of cultures, openness to other cultures
National values	Shared European values, European added value
Nationalism, national identity as a EU member (Georgiu, 2001, 2009b), *Europeaness* (Shore, 2000)	Europeanism (Shore, 2000)
Supranational institutions: the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Court of Justice in Haga, EUROPOL	Transnational institutions: networks of (political, economical, academic) elites, transnational parties (PPE), networks of national institutions
Political and economical homogenization: EMU, open coordination method, common policies, immigration policy, European decision-making process (Spichal, 2009), European Social Model	Social hybridization (Threlfall, 2003), civic participation at European level
The European Constitution, the Treaty of Lisbon	Constitutional patriotism (Habermas, 2001b)
The creation and the adoption of the European symbols: the flag, the anthem etc. (Foret, 2009)	The acceptance of these symbols by recognizing and using them
INSTITUTION (Burgess, 2002)	**IDENTITY** (Burgess, 2002)

Table 1. The two layers of Europeanization

What is the relationship between the two layers of Europeanization? Chronologically speaking, the institutional layer starts first as a result of the political decision of accession to the EU. The second layer asks for mechanisms of Europeanization. In the context of the enlargement policy of the EU, the institutional layer is under permanent construction. The supranational layer does not end its formation when the identity layer begins forming. Some elements of the second layer may appear prior to their counterparts in the first layer, which certainly catalyzes the occurrence of the first layer. For example, cosmopolitanism may be

experienced by the citizens of a candidate country and therefore their institutional integration in a multicultural society is smoother.

The first layer of Europeanization leads to homogenization of the EU while the second layer is a source of hybridization, in Tomlinson's (1999) terms. Table 2 and Table 3 list mechanisms and agents of homogenization and hybridization for both layers of Europeanization which Zielonka, (2007), Schifirneț (2008), Shore (2000) mention or search for.

Mechanisms of homogenization	Agents of homogenization
Compatibilization of the institutions	Supranational European institutions
The adoption of the *acquis*	Common policies
The creation of the common market and EMU	Euro currency

Table 2. Mechanisms and agents of Europeanization as homogenization

Mechanisms of homogenization	Agents of homogenization
European mediaculturation, the acculturation leading to the formation of European cultural identity by media	Mass-media (Maier & Rittberger, 2008; Schifirneț, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Beciu, 2007)
Elites' political decision-making, the coercitive process imposed by the EU to the member states (Schifirneț, 2009c)	Political discourse
Voluntary approach to the EU (Schifirneț, 2009c)	Cosmopolitan identity, Euroenthusiasm
The creation of the networks of transnational communication (Splichal, 2009)	Civil society
Transnationalism (Pană, 2010b)	Transnational practices: consumption of media released in different cultural spaces, migration, European-wide exchanges, intercultural experience, transnational business, mobilities
The creation of the functional European public sphere (Habermas, 2001a; Splichal, 2009; Cerutti, 2003)	Traditional and new media, civil society, the European public sphere (Habermas, 2001a, 2001b)
EU's global role	Common defense policy, enlargement and neighbourhood policies
Imitation and innovation (Schifirneț, 2009a)	European institutions, practices, media and political discourse, migrant workers (Schifirneț, 2009a), national policies of harmonization (Ladrech, 1994).

Table 3. Mechanisms and agents of Europeanization as hybridization

The mechanisms of Europeanization are relevant in different fields of sciences: European studies, economics, political studies, sociology, communication studies. The last mentioned is my domain of study, so the following section of this article will focus on the Europeanization process whose agent is the media.

THE CONCEPT OF EUROPEAN MEDIACULTURATION

I define European mediaculturation as the process within the EU taking place as a process of acculturation by media, which gives birth to a hybrid European culture characterized by a cosmopolitan European identity. In this section of the paper, I intend to explain the definition above and to design a model for this process.

Some academics and researchers whom I talked to about the concept I am suggesting in this paper contested the good use of the term "acculturation" for the process of Europeanization as acculturation is understood as the process that leads to cultural assimilation, what was the case of the immigrants and the American Indians in the USA, according to J.W. Powell who created the term in 1880. Still, the concept has suffered a change of meaning. I will bring several arguments in this debate.

To begin with, etymologically speaking, the word does not have a negative prefix, but it derives from the lat. *ad* (suggesting a movement towards the new culture, not a de-culturation) and the word "culturation" (which highlights its process-like features).

Then, acculturation is more recently defined as the set of phenomena which result from a continuous and direct contact between individuals coming from different cultures and whose cultural patterns change in different degrees (Cuche, 2010). Therefore, acculturation differs from the cultural change (which can have internal causes, too), from assimilation (which is the last phase of acculturation, leading to the total disappearance of the culture of origin), from diffusion (which is parallel to acculturation with the difference that diffusion does not automatically imply direct and continuous contact). There are three important features of acculturation which Cuche (2010) highlights: firstly, acculturation does not lead to cultural uniformization; secondly, acculturation never happens one-way only, and thirdly, acculturation

appears not as an occasional phenomenon with devastating effects, but as an ordinary way of evolution for every society.

My third argument lies in Chen, Benet-Martiez & Bond's (2008) model of acculturation which affects both the immigrants and the non-mobile people. The latter are affected through direct contact with immigrants and through transnational and European/global media exposure.

My final argument is supported by Frau-Meigs's (2006) use of the term "acculturation by the media" in the EU context. This author's motives for using this concept are: media hybridize genres, formats and contents throughout EU, they blur the borders between national and new cultural elements. Up to one point, the author explains, the cultural elements are in an asymmetric relation until the cultural hybridization happens.

The cultures of the European Union member states interact in the context of Europeanization. Their synchronies and non-synchronies mix during the intercultural communication occur both at individual level and societal or community level. As acculturations, these phenomena result when groups of nationals having different cultures come to continuous first-hand or mediated contact with subsequent changes in the cultural patterns of either or both groups. There are both societal and individual aftermaths of European mediaculturation, for example the occurrence of the mediated cosmopolitan citizenship (Cottle & Rai, 2008), but as political and cultural identity do not coincide conceptually (Cerutti, 2003), the aim of the European mediaculturation is to re-integrate the individual in a social context and to include the European "insiders" (Stråth, 2002). "As long as there is communication, though, some kind of exchange will take place, be it of converging or diverging consequences: realistic expectation may be that it has both and others, all at the same time." (Krossa, 2009, pp.259-260). The cultural changes are multidirectional, which solves the problem of the marginal cultures (Georgiu, 2009b). In this respect, all cultures involved in the process experience changes, unlike other acculturations happening during history.

Based on the model of acculturation designed by Neuliep (2009, p. 376), I design a model of European mediaculturation (Table 4). There are three main factors catalyzing the process: communication, environment/context, and individual predisposition. These factors work at three different levels: personal, community-wide, and European-wide.

Factors Affecting Cultural Adaptation		
Communication	Environment/Context	Individual Predisposition
Personal communication	(Physical and Mediated) Mobility	Multilingualism
Group/community communication	Cosmopolitanism, Transnationalism, Multiculturalism, Supranationalism	Intercultural experience
European-wide commu-nication	Exposure to (national, transnational, European) mass-media Involvement in the European public sphere	

Table 4. A model of european mediaculturation

Acculturation implies three-layer communication: personal, group/community, and European-wide communication. A citizen can make use of one to three of these communication options. Firstly, he/she can travel and take advantage of face-to-face personal communication opportunities or he/she can be a non-mobile transnational (Pană, 2010b) and use (new) media to interact with citizens of other European Union member states. Secondly, every citizen is a member of a group or community and its community/group can become involved in inter-cultural communication in the context of multiculturalism, transnation-alism, cosmopolitanism, supranationalism (for discrimination between these terms, see Pană, 2010b). Thirdly, due to the media explosion nowadays, one is surely exposed to different types of media, including transnational and European media.

The third column in table 4 shows that acculturation depends not only on the contexts the individual lives in, but on his personal predispo-sition, too. One's intercultural experience and linguistic abilities work as a catalyst of the acculturation process, as the collective consumption of mediated communication based on a common language creates and supports a feeling of belonging to a community (Anderson, 1991).

Based on the model presented in Table 4, I conclude that the European mediaculturation as an acculturation process happens under a three-condition framework: personal predisposition, communication opportunities, and pluralist societies.

As one can easily see while speaking about Europeanization, the reference to mass media is multiple, which emphasizes the role they play in the process of European mediaculturation. It is mass media

that can create and legitimate the changes resulted from the process of Europeanization. I find support in the academic literature for this point of view. For example, Carpentier (2009, p.409): "Citizens frequently participate in (semi-) collective mediated rituals and surround themselves with (carriers of) meaning which construct their imagined communities." The cultural, identity layer of Europeanization is being formed mainly by media because "it is the place of the maximum exposition in terms of consumption of information and because it is also the place where the narrative identities of a collectivity are being built." (Lits, 1998, p.24).

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of a media culture, the European identity emerges as a result of different mechanisms of Europeanization as hybridization, one of which is European mediaculturation, defined as the process of acculturation by media leading to the occurrence of the European identity. European mediaculturation stands on three pillars: communication, environment/context, individual predisposition, all three being looked from three perspectives: individual, community-wide and European-wide (Tabel 4). European mediaculturation is a process aiming at the European ordinary citizens experiencing the identity layer of Europeanization. The shared European media culture is based on some convergence points: journalistic practices, the European approach of the news, the interest in EU-related topics, transnational news.

The use of the concept of European mediaculturation is to offer a framework for researching media effects in the EU context. I suggest diverse research methods: discourse analysis, content analysis, interviews, and questionnaires. When combined with the dual model of Europeanization, one can consider the European mediaculturation is a useful tool in researching the identity level of Europeanization, more exactly, the emergence of the European identity through media. When I say media, I refer to both traditional and new media, as it is impossible to place the process of Europeanization out of the area of influence of the Internet.

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