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Chapter 3

Between Segmentation and Integration:

Media Systems and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe

Sabina Mihelj

It does not take much to show that the contemporary media landscapes in Eastern and Western Europe alike are not congruent with the physical geography of nation-states. The media systems of individual countries are typically segmented along cultural lines, and are often characterized by significant regional variation. In many cases, two or more distinct, sometimes territorially circumscribed and even linguistically diverse media systems coexist within the same state. Europe’s ‘stateless nations’ – the Catalans, the Welsh, the Scots – are tuned into a ‘dual’ communicative sphere, one limited to the nation itself, the other encompassing the whole state population (Schlesinger 2009). In countries such as Switzerland, Belgium or Bosnia and Herzegovina the internal segmentation is so pronounced that it seems difficult to see what, if anything, ties the different sub-state spheres of communication together (Bašić Hrvatin et al. 2008). Even in culturally most homogeneous states, the unity of communication, culture and polity is continuously disrupted by satellite television and the Internet, as well as by the flows of transnational migration and diasporic media (e.g. Kosnick 2007).

In comparative media research, these diverse patterns of cultures, states and media spheres remain largely invisible. For most authors, the only unit of analysis is the nation-state, and even if they do acknowledge that such an approach has its drawbacks, they abstain from addressing the relationship between media systems and cultural
diversity in a sustained manner (e.g. Hallin and Mancini 2004: 71–2). However, the problem does not lie simply in using the nation-state as the main unit of analysis. Much more decisive is the neglect of culture and social structure as autonomous factors involved in the shaping of mass communication systems. There is of course no denying that recent research made considerable progress in clarifying the relationships between the modern media and their broader economic, political and social environments and abandoned the narrowly normative focus of early theorizing in this area (see in particular Esser and Pfetsch 2004, Hallin and Mancini 2004, Christians et al. 2009). Still, the vast majority of this recent wave of comparative media research remained limited to the dynamics of either media-politics or media-economy, examining issues such as the level of politicization or political parallelism in the media sector (e.g. Pfetsch 2001), regulation of media content and ownership (e.g. Harcourt 2006), or the impact of commercialization on the nature of news coverage (e.g. Benson and Hallin 2007). In contrast, issues pertaining to cultural and social factors and their impact on the functioning of media systems receive scant attention.

In short, existing comparative studies of media systems treat the media primarily as political and economic actors involved in the formation and circulation of political ideas and economic capital. Yet modern media are far more than that. As James Carey (1989) reminds us, mass communication is aimed not only at the transmission of messages in space, but also at the maintenance of community in time. While imparting information about the political process or promoting goods, the media also shape and consolidate a particular view of the world and a specific form of belonging and exclusion. News, as Michael Schudson argues, should not be seen only ‘as the raw
material for rational public discourse, but as the public construction of particular images of self, community, and nation’ (2003: 69). It follows from this that media systems can be analysed and compared not only with regard to their relationships with the political and economic systems but also with respect to how they engage in community-formation.

One of the key issues to address when examining the involvement of the media in community-building is its relationship to cultural diversity. How do different media systems respond to ethnic and cultural diversity within modern states? What consequences do different approaches to diversity have, particularly for majority-minority relationships and minority participation in democratic processes? These questions cut to the core of contemporary political debates across the West, and are often stimulated by concerns over the alleged failure of integration policies and the alienation of minority populations. For obvious reasons, much of the public and scholarly debate on these issues is normative in character and aimed at evaluating existing policies. Often, solutions that seem to work in one context are assumed to be universally applicable everywhere and are exported as part of democratization packages to social and political environments that may have entirely different needs.

This chapter initially steps back from the normative debate by providing a comparative analysis of available approaches to cultural diversity within the media and the forces that shape them. Instead of looking for a universally valid solution, the chapter sheds light on the historical processes and the demographic, political and economic factors that have contributed to the development of contrasting ways of dealing with diversity, in particular contexts. Once we appreciate these multiple and
diverse causes, we may be in a better position to understand why certain policy
solutions fare better in some contexts rather than others. Only then might we be able to
start asking questions about the steps needed to ensure that the media can make a
positive contribution to culturally diverse societies.

The first section of the chapter examines the key historical processes that have
necessitated the congruence of polity and culture, and thereby stimulated the rise of
nation-states and national public spheres. Despite these processes, cultural diversity is
not incompatible with modern states. As historical evidence demonstrates, states have
developed a variety of different strategies for dealing with cultural diversity within their
borders; while some of these involved the eradication of difference, others were
premised on its accommodation. A similar diversity of approaches can be found in the
realm of media policy, and the second section of the chapter proposes to distinguish
between two main approaches: one involving the development of a segmented media
system, the other aimed at establishing an integrated media system. The third and main
section of the chapter turns to examining the key domestic and international factors that
influence the way a particular state deals with the mediation of cultural difference.
While the analysis focuses on selected Central Eastern European states, the analytical
framework used has wider applicability.

**Responses to Cultural Diversity: Eliminate or Accommodate?**

At first sight, the systemic requirements of modern political and economic systems
seem to militate against cultural diversity within states. A modern economy requires a
mobile population – mobile both socially, in the sense that its members can move across
different social occupations and strata, as well as geographically, meaning that they are
capable of migrating, should the needs of the occupation so require, from one end of the state to the other. The basic prerequisite for such mobility is a common mass culture, shared both territorially, across all regions and locales of the state, and socially, across different social strata – in short, a national culture that coincides with the limits of the polity (Gellner 1983). It is this shared culture that allows the members of industrialized societies to understand the requirements of their occupation wherever they go, and perform their duties regardless of the region or social environment they find themselves in. Furthermore, shared mass culture also facilitates the growth of commerce, providing the pool of common cultural references to be drawn upon when selling products on a large scale.

The union of polity and culture seems necessary also for the functioning of modern political systems. While earlier forms of political power followed hereditary lines of succession and derived their legitimacy from divine sources, the rule of the modern state was perceived as legitimate only in so far as it was based on the will of ‘the people’ (Bendix 1964). Although the definitions of ‘the people’ could differ, they invariably involved a degree of shared culture, at least in the sense of a common commitment to the democratic political process. This common cultural ‘glue’ proved necessary also for the functioning of modern, functionally differentiated state bureaucracies (Breuilly 1994). It is only such complex, internally differentiated yet unified state apparatuses that could appropriately service the needs of modern societies. Due to profound shifts in the nature of social organization, these needs could no longer be satisfied by poly-functional corporate institutions acting on behalf of religious congregations, guilds or local communities but demanded large-scale, function-specific
organizations such as schools, political parties, retail industries and media systems, all of which needed a cohesive bureaucratic framework to operate in a concerted manner.

In short, it is not difficult to see why it makes sense to assume that modern states are internally homogeneous and treat them as nation-states. Yet this would mean mistaking what is essentially a political ideal for an accomplished fact. While many modern states have indeed embraced the nation-state ideal as the sole legitimate model of socio-political organization, the persistence of cultural heterogeneity, fuelled by migration flows, have prevented this ideal from being translated fully into reality. We should also keep in mind that the homogenizing processes unleashed by the rise of modern economy and politics often encounter resistance, sometimes provoking disintegration rather than integration. From the centre, the introduction of a common culture and language may well be seen as ‘unification’, yet when observed from the periphery, the same process can be interpreted as ‘cultural invasion’ and ‘linguistic assimilation’ of non-dominant groups and languages, and may lead to the strengthening rather than weakening of cultural differences (Burke 2004: 167; Hroch 2006: 28).

It is instructive to look at the ethnocultural composition of modern states to appreciate just how far most of them are from the nation-state ideal. In 1971, when the term ‘nation-state’ was already well-entrenched in everyday talk, political debate and scholarly discussion, only about a third of all the states in the world contained a nation that accounted for more than 90 percent of the total population (Connor 1978). Four decades later, little has changed. As a result of the break-up of multinational socialist federations, the total number of would-be nation-states increased, and most of the newly formed states are nationally far more homogeneous than their socialist predecessors. Yet
the vast majority still contain at least one significant minority, and only few have a core nation that exceeds 90 percent of the total population. This is not to say that the nation-state is not a powerful political ideal or that it did not exert influence in its own right. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the nation-state is only one of the available modern responses to cultural diversity, and that even when adopted, it remains an unfinished project (Chernilo 2007).

In other words, cultural diversity is here to stay and modern states have no other choice but to cope with it. Historically, states have responded to the challenge of diversity in a variety of ways. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the full range of these different strategies before looking specifically at those that are most common in contemporary Europe. John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (1993) proposed to distinguish between two broad categories of ethnic conflict regulation. The first includes policy options aimed at eradicating or at least minimising difference, ranging from genocide and mass population transfer to secession or partition and different forms of assimilation or integration. The other comprises strategies for ‘managing’ difference, such as various forms of territorial autonomy including federalism, different types of non-territorial (or cultural) autonomy including consociationalism, and the establishment of hegemonic control or ‘majority rule’, whereby one ethno-cultural group assumes control over others and makes any challenge to its authority unthinkable.

Many of these strategies are of course considered illegitimate and indefensible, and the vast majority of contemporary observers and policymakers tend to advocate one of the following options: federalism or territorial autonomy; consociationalism or
cultural autonomy; integration or assimilation. Most of the countries in Western Europe have adopted either a federal structure (Belgium, Austria, Germany) or granted selected minorities regional autonomy (Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Finland, Portugal, Denmark), while Eastern European countries have largely opted for a form of integration or assimilation, or a limited level of cultural autonomy, though cases of consociational power-sharing exist as well, for instance in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia (cf. Liebich 2007: 36; Bieber 2004).

Mediating Cultural Diversity: Between Integration and Segmentation

A compatible range of responses to cultural diversity can be found also in the realm of mass communication. Much as in the case of state building, the ideal of cultural homogeneity was a goal pursued by media policies in many countries, but this proved impossible to achieve and sustain over the long term. The construction of internally homogeneous communicative spheres, congruent with state boundaries, had to give way to more complex configurations of culture, state and communication. Looking at the media landscape of contemporary Europe, we can distinguish between two main types of responses to cultural diversity: one involves the establishment of a segmented media system, divided along ethno-cultural lines, while the other aims at integrating provisions for different cultural groups into the mainstream media system (Table 3.1).

[Insert Table 3.1 here, portrait]

Table 3.1 Media systems and cultural diversity

A segmented media system typically comprises one or more parallel, fully-fledged media systems, complete with the periodic press, radio, and television as well as internet websites, each catering for a particular ethno-cultural group. Consequently, the
quantity and range of minority content tends to be relatively large. Audience preferences vary significantly with ethnicity, which creates commercial incentives for ethnically-specific media content even if its production is not directly encouraged by the state. Typical examples of such media systems can be found in long-established multinational and multilingual media systems such as those of Switzerland and Belgium, but also in more recently ‘devolved’ Western democracies such as the United Kingdom and Spain. For instance, the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation established its three national transmitters – French, German and Italian – in the early 1930s, later adding regular programmes in Romansch, with an analogous development taking place in the realm of television from the late 1950s (Erk 2003). Belgian broadcasting history is similarly linguistically diversified, and resulted in separate radio and television services for the three main language communities: Flemish, French and German (Jongen et al. 2005).

Examples of segmented media systems are found also in Eastern Europe. For example, the broadcasting landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina is clearly along ethnocultural lines. Audience preferences largely follow the ethnic key as well (Jusić and Džihana 2008). Media systems in Estonia and Macedonia fit the same pattern. Each includes a range of public and commercial broadcast media aimed respectively at Estonians and Russians, and Macedonians and Albanians. In both countries, audience research confirms that ethnicity remains a key factor affecting media use (Vihalemm 2006; Šopar 2008: 128–32).

Integrated media systems differ significantly from the ones just surveyed. Here, minority content is provided primarily within the framework of mainstream or majority
media, for example in the form of daily or weekly broadcasts of special programmes, often in minority languages, aimed at members of individual ethnic or cultural minorities. Separate minority media do exist, but are mostly limited to print publications and websites, or to very narrow, local audiences. The range and quantity of minority content is comparatively small and mostly publicly funded. A typical example of such a media system can be found in Sweden, where broadcast minority content is produced mostly within the framework of the Swedish public broadcaster, the public access ‘open channels’, the non-commercial community radio stations, and to some extent also within commercial local television (Camauër 2002: 15–21). Although the latter two technically constitute separate minority media, their reach is far too limited to generate anything resembling a segmented media system. On the whole, minority media rely primarily on state subsidies and the degree of commercialization is low (Camauër 2003).

The broad contours of the German media system are similar, although the provision of media programming for its largest, Turkish, minority has been growing steadily over time. In particular, the media landscape in Berlin has become increasingly segmented, with not only a host of Turkish-language minority publications but also separate commercial radio and TV channels broadcasting in Turkish twenty-four hours a day. However, survey data suggest that German Turkish audiences, especially younger and middle-aged ones, prefer a mixed diet of both German and Turkish media, which indicates that the ethnic segmentation of media markets remains limited (Mushaben 2008: 75). Also, apart from Turkish media, minority media produced in Germany are
limited primarily to print publications and to weekly or daily programmes produced by
publicly funded multicultural broadcasters (Raiser 2002).

A few qualifications are in order before we proceed. First, most media systems
include elements of both the segmented and the integrated system. This is due to the
fact that minority media provisions usually differ significantly from group to group. As
the case of German Turks in Berlin attests, it is possible for a semi-segmented media
system to exist at local level, despite the fact that the state-wide media system is
predominantly integrated. Vice versa, segmented media systems will typically also
include a layer of ‘integrated’ minority programming within mainstream media, directed
at more recently formed immigrant communities. For instance, different branches of the
Belgian public broadcasting system sporadically produce weekly or monthly ethnic
minority programming aimed at Moroccan, Turkish, Italian and other minority
audiences, and some programming of similar kind is occasionally offered also by
commercial broadcasters (Ormond 2002: 103–6).

Towards an Explanation: Factors Affecting the Mediation of Cultural Diversity in
Central and Eastern Europe

How can we explain these diverse approaches to the mediation of cultural diversity in
Europe? What are the key factors that can help understand why a segmented media
model is adopted in one case, while an integrated model prevails in another? A useful
starting point is provided in Bernd Rechel’s (2009: 5) overview of domestic and
international factors influencing domestic minority policies in Eastern Europe.
Domestic factors include ethnic composition, minority representation, historical
legacies, nation-building and use of nationalism by political elites, state capacity, party
constellations and popular attitudes toward minorities. Among international factors
Rechel lists kin states, the EU and various other international inter-governmental
bodies, including the Council of Europe, NATO and the UN, as well as international
nongovernmental organizations and bilateral actors.

Since media systems form integral parts of every society, many of the factors
influencing the shaping of domestic minority policies will also have an effect on the
structure and functioning of media systems. Often, this influence will be exerted
through minority policies themselves, for instance in cases where a state amends its
minority provisions as a consequence of foreign intervention or mediation, and these
new provisions include e.g. minority media subsidies, quotas for minority participation
in media governance, or a certain level and type of support for particular minorities. At
other times, the influence will not be dependent solely on policy changes. For instance,
the size and structure of the minority population is likely to be an autonomous factor
regardless of legal provisions.

Comparative research on political communication suggests that larger media
markets are more likely to be compatible with external pluralism, i.e. with a range of
different media outlets reflecting different opinions (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 47–8). In
contrast, smaller media markets tend to be characterized by internal pluralism, i.e. by
different points of view being represented within each individual media institution, or
suffer from a lack of pluralism. We can therefore expect that larger minorities will be
capable of sustaining a greater range of minority media, and thus potentially give voice
to a wider array of minority opinions, even without support from the state. In contrast,
smaller minorities will be more dependent on state funding and unless that is
substantial, will probably have access to a limited range of minority media, which in turn will be more likely to provide a rather homogeneous portrayal of the minority and its views.

In addition to factors listed by Rechel we should include a number of those that are of particular importance to the media sector. Especially in cases where the minority population is large, the presence of kin-state media is likely to play an important role in the shaping of the media system. If the popularity of satellite television among minority audiences is provoking anxieties over integration, as for instance in the case of Turks in Germany (Aksoy and Robins 2000), its presence may stimulate greater levels of state support for domestically produced minority media. At the same time, however, the presence of satellite channels can also make it harder for domestically produced media to attract audiences and generate sufficient advertising revenue. Other important international factors include international civil society organizations interested in promoting freedom of expression and information, such as the International Federation of Journalists, Reporters Sans Frontiers or the Open Society Institute with its Media Program. Finally, we should also take into account factors internal to the media system, such as the availability of appropriate distribution networks for minority media, technical equipment, and trained minority journalists and media producers. Figure 3.1 provides a schematic overview of these various factors.

**Figure 3.1 Factors affecting the mediation of cultural diversity in Central and Eastern Europe.**

[Insert Figure 3.1 here, portrait]

Adapted from Rechel 2009: 5
To examine the relative influence of each of these factors, we will look at seven Central and East European countries: Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland and Slovenia. While Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia and Macedonia all have a segmented media system, the media systems of Poland and Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria are predominantly integrated. However, in the latter three, there is some evidence of a segmented system developing for particular communities at local level. In the case of Slovenia, a fairly wide range of Italian language media exists, including a TV and radio channel as well as several print publications, all limited to the coastal region, and sustained and funded in collaboration with neighbouring Croatia (Petković 2006: 676–8). In Bulgaria, some evidence of local segmentation is evident in the province of Vidin, where a Roma TV station was established in 1998 (Zlatev 2006: 250). In Hungary, a separate Roma news agency has operated since 1995, and a local radio station targeting the Roma population was established in Budapest in 2001 (Bauer, T.A. and Vujović 2006: 352–5).

The selected countries vary significantly with respect to many of the factors that are thought to affect the mediation of cultural diversity (Table 3.2). The remainder of this section examines each of the factors to assess how important its influence is in determining the responses to cultural diversity within the media system.

Table 3.2 Factors affecting the mediation of cultural diversity – country by country comparison

[Insert Table 3.2 here, landscape, over two conjoined pages]

Notes and sources:

(1) CD – consociational democracy, ED – ethnic democracy, LD – liberal democracy

(2) and (3) Eurobarometer (2008), data from 2007
(4) 10-year average (1999–2008) based on International Monetary Fund data

(5) and (6) Based on absolute figures provided in EUMAP 2005: 169–70 and 174 respectively

(7) Council of Europe – European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), status as of January 2009

(8) Council of Europe – Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM), status as of January 2009

Political Factors

The characteristics of the political system – the type of democracy, the prevailing approach to cultural diversity, and the specificities of minority legislation – seem an obvious place to start. As we have discussed the different approaches to cultural diversity earlier, for the purpose of this analysis we will retain only the most basic distinction between: (a) strategies aimed at integration or assimilation; and (b) strategies based on accommodation, which include either consociationalism or some form of territorial autonomy. Some analysts find it important to distinguish between integration and assimilation, arguing that the former involves recognition and accommodation of cultural differences within common institutions, while the latter is intent on developing a culture-blind state infrastructure (e.g. Kymlicka and Norman 2000: 14). It is indeed true that important differences exist between the two strategies. However, for the purpose of this chapter, this distinction is of marginal importance, and we will therefore treat the two strategies under a common heading.

A closely related aspect of the political system to consider is the type of democracy, or more precisely, the relative balance of individual and collective rights within the democratic system, as evident from citizenship legislation. Literature on the topic distinguishes between four types of democracy: (a) liberal democracy, which
recognizes only individual rights, (b) multicultural democracy, which recognizes
collective rights but avoids their political institutionalization at sub-state level; (c)
consociational democracy, which recognizes collective rights as well as institutionalises
them, and does so equally for all groups involved; and (d) ethnic democracy, which also
recognizes as well as institutionalizes collective rights yet gives only one of the groups
– the majority – full collective rights, while other groups are not recognized at all or are
guaranteed a more limited range of collective rights (Smooha 2004). In terms of
approaches to cultural diversity, liberal, multicultural and ethnic democracy are likely to
be compatible with a strategy of integration or assimilation, while consociational
democracy by definition involves a strategy of accommodation.

In the early 1990s, all of the seven countries in our sample shared at least some
features of ethnic democracies. The privileging of one ethnic group was not
immediately visible from the key citizenship laws or constitutional documents
themselves but typically surfaced in constitutional preambles, requirements for
naturalization, special provisions for co-ethnics living abroad, etc. (cf. Hayden 1992,
Liebich 2007: 24–31). Two of the countries also opted for solutions that effectively
deprived many minority members of citizenship: Russians in Estonia and former
Yugoslav immigrants in Slovenia (Järve 2004; Zorn 2009). Still, none of the countries
was able to consolidate fully its ethnic democracy. In the case of Bosnia and
Herzegovina and Macedonia, internal conflict and ethnic cleansing provoked
international intervention, ultimately leading to the adoption of consociational
democracy (cf. Bieber 2004). Estonia, Slovenia and Bulgaria all gradually improved the
level of minority protection and offered an extended range of cultural rights to
minorities that were initially excluded from such provisions. As a consequence, they all approach what Smooha describes as the ‘improved ethnic democracy’, i.e. an ethnic democracy within which minorities are accorded a higher level of collective rights, including a degree of political representation (Smooha 2004: 34)

In Poland and Hungary, the features of ethnic democracy were relatively weak already in the early 1990s, and largely limited to special provisions for co-ethnics in neighbouring countries. Hungary also introduced a comprehensive system of minority protection in 1993, which offers its traditional minorities both self-government and cultural autonomy (Vizi 2009), while Poland introduced a similar system in 2005. It should, of course, be noted that both countries limit minority rights to groups specifically defined in legislation, and that the discrimination against the Roma in Hungary continues. Apart from that, however, both countries come close to the ideal type of liberal democracy, and it is therefore appropriate to treat them as liberal democracies with elements of ethnic and consociational democracy.

It certainly appears that there are some clear parallels between media systems and political systems: a segmented media system seems more likely to appear in consociational democracies and countries that have opted for a strategy of accommodation, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. However, this does not apply in the case of Estonia, where a segmented media system is in place within the context of a unitary state. Also, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that institutionalized forms of autonomy or power sharing in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia came only after a segmented media system was already in place. We can thus conclude that segmented media systems are indeed more likely to be found in
countries that adopted consociationalism, federalism or territorial autonomy, yet that these particular forms of diversity management do not constitute a necessary condition for the development of a segmented media system.

While political factors cannot explain the variation between the two types of media systems, they can be useful when accounting for variation within each of them and, in particular, when explaining the unequal support provided for different minority groups within the same state. Particularly important in this respect are minority policies and especially the official definitions and categorizations of minorities in a particular country. Most countries in the sample grant minority rights only to a limited number of minorities, which tend to be categorized as ‘traditional’ or ‘autochthonous’. Most of these minorities were created by the shifting of borders and incorporation of ethnically mixed territories rather than by immigration and are seen as being entitled to a greater range of minority provisions.

For instance, Poland’s Minority Law, adopted in 2005, recognizes 13 minorities, distinguishing between those who have an external homeland – Germans, Belarussians, Ukrainians, Russians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Jews, Armenians, Czechs, Tatars – and those who do not – Roma, Karaites, Łemkos (Vermeersch 2003: 177n). While ethnic minorities are granted linguistic and cultural rights, national minorities also enjoy special electoral rights, including a lower electoral threshold (Dembinska 2008: 921). Most importantly, the law does not recognize the country’s largest minority, the Silesians, since its language is considered insufficiently distinct (ibid.: 922). Also left without recognition are the more recently established immigrant minorities, such as the Chinese and the Vietnamese.
The situation in Poland is far from unique. Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia also provide more support for designated ‘traditional’ minorities than the more recently established immigrant communities (Zorn 2009, Vize 2009, Čićak and Hamzić 2006, Bieber 2004). Bulgaria does not recognize ethnic minorities per se, but only ‘citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian’, which effectively prevents the recognition of those groups – such as Pomaks – who may regard themselves as a separate ethnic group yet do not share a separate language (Rechel 2007: 355–6). Among the seven countries, only Estonia grants cultural autonomy equally to all minorities larger than 3000, though even in this case, this right is extended also to specified historical minorities that were fairly large in the past but whose numbers have subsequently fallen below the specified threshold (Lagerspetz 2007: 92–3).

Demographic and Historical Factors

Among demographic factors, the size and structure of minority population is particularly important. As evident from Table 3.2, states with largest minority populations, composed of one or more proportionally large ethnic groups (Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Estonia), have segmented media systems, while those with ethnic minority populations smaller than 20% of the total population (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria), have integrated systems. Countries whose media systems come closest to the ideal-type integrated media system (Hungary and Poland) are also the ones with smallest minority population. We can provide two explanations for such patterns. First, a larger minority population is more likely to constitute a sizeable enough media market to sustain commercially viable media. Second, a large minority
group can provide an electoral base for parties seeking to promote an ethnic or multicultural agenda, and seek the institutionalization of minority rights, including provisions for minority media.

Of course, minority size alone cannot always explain why specific minority groups are served by a greater range of media outlets than others. For instance, in Slovenia, one of the smallest minorities (Italians) has access to the greatest range of media outlets, including a TV and radio channel, while the three largest minorities (Croats, Serbs, Bosnians) only have a handful of designated print and on-line outlets (cf. Petković 2006). Similarly, Bulgaria’s large Turkish minority, numbering over 740,000 members, has a rather limited array of media resources, and no separate domestically produced broadcast media (cf. Zlatev 2006: 245–53). As indicated earlier, an important factor that helps explain such instances are the countries’ minority policies, and in particular their established ways of categorizing minorities and granting official recognition. In addition, however, we need to take into account historical factors and legacies, in particular, the trajectories of nation-building and the treatment of minorities during the socialist period, the presence of recent inter-ethnic conflicts, and the persistence of ethnic prejudice engendered by them. These are often at the root of both demographic characteristics and minority policies as well as media systems’ characteristics. Let me briefly demonstrate this for the cases of Bulgaria and Slovenia.

Bulgaria has maintained independent statehood since 1908, yet remained ethnically highly diverse well into the second half of the twentieth century. While initially encouraging cultural diversity, communist Bulgaria later adopted an increasingly assimilationist policy that involved forced adoption of Bulgarian-sounding
names and the outlawing of public expressions of Muslim faith. The assimilationist campaign escalated in the 1980s, and provoked a mass exodus of Bulgarian Turks in 1989 (Rechel 2008: 333–4). These extreme forms of ethnic assimilation were later condemned, yet the Bulgarian political mainstream was reluctant to institute any form of protection for minority cultures, and the post-communist constitution even expressly prohibited the formation of ethnic parties. In this context, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, whose main electoral base was the Turkish minority, was forced to keep its minority demands at a minimum (Rechel 2008: 334). The idea of introducing radio and TV broadcasts in ethnic minority languages as part of mainstream media programming also encountered strong public opposition, and was realized only in 2000 (Nancheva 2007: 381). In sum, although the size of the Turkish population suggests favourable conditions for the establishment of a domestic minority media market, recent ethnic tensions, popular prejudices, and the continued exclusion of ethnic minorities qua minorities from the political process, have prevented its establishment.

A similar conclusion can be reached for the case of Croat, Serb and Bosnian minorities in Slovenia. While they are numerically considerably larger than the Italian and Hungarian minorities, the prejudices formed during the 1980s and exacerbated by the armed conflict in 1991 presented an important obstacle to improvements in the area of minority protection and integration (cf. Komac 2005: 215–28). In contrast, the provisions for the Hungarian and Italian minority, introduced during the socialist period, remained virtually unchanged despite the small size of both populations. One of the reasons for that was the desire to secure protection for co-ethnics abroad, which originally emerged in the Cold War context, but persisted also after 1989. For instance,
support for Italians in Yugoslavia was expected to be matched by similar measures for Slovenians in Italy (cf. Troha 2003). Another important factor was Slovenia’s accession to the EU, and in particular Italy’s initial attempts to block accession negotiations (Repe 2005). In this context, Slovenia was very keen to prove its commitment to minority protection, and thus demonstrate its compliance with ‘European standards’ (e.g. Polzer et al. 2002).

As is evident from the cases of Bulgaria and Slovenia, the trajectory of nation-building and the presence of recent conflicts can exert an important influence on the shaping of minority provisions, and through that on the development of minority media. Intensive nation-building, aggressive assimilation policies and armed conflicts are likely to create a lasting legacy of negative attitudes and prejudice. These can be easily exploited by political elites long after conflicts have ceased, and forced assimilation measures have been abandoned. The importance of the trajectory of nation-state building is confirmed when we look at the cases of Hungary and Poland. Both have enjoyed independent statehood considerably longer than most other countries in the sample, and underwent a comprehensive process of ethnic simplification and ‘unmixing’ already in the first half of the twentieth century (Brubaker 1996: 84–103, 156-60). In contrast, Macedonia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Estonia all achieved independent statehood only in the early 1990s. While Bulgaria also achieved independence relatively early, the last wave of ethnic simplification occurred only in the 1980s, and its consequences are still felt today. In such a context, quick changes seem unlikely, unless they are accompanied by a strong steer from international actors or neighbouring countries. This is likely to occur only in cases of prolonged ethnic
conflicts that threaten to destabilize the wider region, as in the case of the 2001 tensions in Macedonia and the 1992–95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Economic Factors and Popular Attitudes

As mentioned earlier, popular attitudes can act as a major impediment to changes in minority provisions. For example, although the new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe have adopted anti-discrimination measures to secure equal opportunities for minority groups and thereby contribute to their social inclusion, implementation is lagging behind due to ethnic prejudices and lack of public awareness of anti-discrimination policies (Schwellnus 2009). These circumstances have an effect also on the implementation of policy measures aimed at introducing or enhancing support for minority media. In Bulgaria, for instance, public pressures delayed the introduction of minority language programming on mainstream broadcast channels (Nancheva 2007: 381). Judging from opinion polls in five of the seven countries included in the sample, shared stereotypes are most likely to affect the mediation of cultural diversity in Bulgaria and to a somewhat lesser extent in Slovenia, Estonia and Hungary, where substantial proportions of the populations feel uncomfortable with Roma neighbours and members of a different ethnicity being elected to the highest political positions (Table 3.2).

Popular attitudes are believed to be decisive especially in the case of provisions for recently established immigrant minorities. According to some authors, xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants are among the key factors responsible for the lack of public discussion on immigration and weakly developed integration policies in Central and Eastern Europe (Wallace 2002: 618–21). A good case in point is Slovenia, where a
A public opinion survey revealed that over 60% of the interviewees were opposed to recent immigrants having their own newspapers, radio or TV channels, while at the same time over 68% believed this was entirely appropriate for the ‘autochthonous’ Italian and Hungarian minorities (Komac 2005: 228).

Similarly, public opposition and resistance from local officials and populations have proved to be a major obstacle to effective implementation of Roma policies across the region (Guglielmo 2004: 45–6). Although Roma media in the region have quickly proliferated, and there is evidence of enhanced public awareness and acceptance of Roma populations, stereotypes persist. The rise of Roma stars in mainstream popular culture, including song contests and TV reality shows (Imre 2009), provides a case in point. The new image of the Roma promoted by these cultural forms is fairly positive, yet it also continues to perpetuate the long-held stereotype of the Roma as exotic, colourful and innately musical beings, completely unsuited for participation in the serious matters of a nation’s politics and economy.

Finally, the mediation of cultural diversity is influenced also by economic factors, which can easily obstruct the production and distribution of minority content even in cases where adequate legislation is in place and popular attitudes are favourable. It is probably not a coincidence that Bulgaria, where minority media are dependent primarily on private donors rather than advertising or public funding, is also among the countries with the lowest per capita gross domestic product, advertising expenditure, and public TV funding (Table 3.2). All other countries with integrated media systems – Slovenia, Poland and Hungary – have considerably greater per capita rates of both public TV funding and advertising expenditure, as well as gross domestic product. It is
these economic factors that make it possible for their minority media to rely primarily on public funding, and for minority content to appear predominantly within publicly funded broadcast programmes rather than commercial ones. Furthermore, lack of advertising revenue can also help explain some of the characteristics of Roma media across the region, in particular their reliance on private donors and public funding. In this case, however, the lack of advertising revenues is not a consequence of low advertising expenditure at national level but rather derives from the low purchasing power among the Roma, which means advertisers are reluctant to advertise in Roma media (Gross 2006: 485).

International Factors

As other chapters in this volume demonstrate, media systems are increasingly organized on a transnational level, and affected by transnational regulatory pressures, ownership structures and cross-border media flows (see Downey, Harcourt and Štětka, this volume). These factors have an impact also on the mediation of cultural diversity. As with domestic factors, demography and history play a key role also at international level, and are particularly visible in the influence exerted by kin-states and their media. The triadic relationship between kin-states or ‘national homelands’, nationalizing states and national minorities is of crucial importance for the dynamics of ethnic politics in the region (Brubaker 1996) and it is reasonable to expect that it will have its counterpart also at the level of mass communication. Indeed, all countries with segmented media systems in our sample are also those in which the presence of kin-states and kin-state media is, or at least recently was, seen as a threat to national integration (e.g. Kolar-Panov 1997, Vihalemm 1999: 46).
Arguably, concerns over kin-states and their media were among the factors the
prompted the development of more comprehensive national integration policies, and
fuelled support for domestically produced minority media that would counteract the
allegedly harming effect of kin-state media. In Estonia, anxieties over the possibility of
a conflict with Russia or the Russian-speaking inhabitants of the country were an
important issue in parliamentary debates after 1997, when ethnocentric concerns slowly
gave way to the formation of an official integration policy (Langerspetz 2005: 21–22).
The shift from fear and exclusion to acceptance and integration occurred also within the
realm of the media. The new integration programme, adopted in 2000, gave rise to
several media-related activities, including integration-related training of journalists and
editors, professional training for Russian-speaking journalists and media producers, the
promotion of integration-related media coverage, and media monitoring (Langerspetz
2005: 30–1).

It is often argued that international political actors played a key role in
stimulating changes in minority provisions in postcommunist Central and Eastern
Europe. Yet, similarly as with domestic political factors, the influence of international
political actors alone cannot explain why a particular country is likely to develop a
segmented rather than an integrated media system. Two of the three countries with
segmented media systems (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia) have recent
experience with international mediation in inter-ethnic conflicts, which led to the
adoption of the Ohrid Agreement in Macedonia in 2001, and the signing of Dayton
Accords for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995. In both cases, the agreements reached
also laid the foundations of the new media policies. However, as argued earlier,
segmented media systems were in place already before the agreements were reached and in fact prior to the escalation of conflicts. Rather than being an outcome of political factors alone, be it domestic or international, the segmented character of media landscapes arose gradually out of an interaction between political, demographic and historical factors. The same can be said for Estonia, where a segmented media system exists in spite of the lack of explicit international intervention.

One can of course argue that other, indirect international political pressures were more decisive in the shaping of the region’s media systems. The European Union is particularly often mentioned in this context, along with the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CE). The requirements for minority protection, set out in the European Commission’s Agenda 2000, triggered domestic policy changes in several countries: most new policy initiatives related to minorities were introduced after 2000 (Vermeersch 2003: 21–2). The EU has also been successful in raising awareness of the plight of the Roma: the repeated requests for improvements appearing in the official reports on candidate countries prompted the formulation of a range of new policy solutions (ibid.: 22–3).

In a similar vein, the OSCE’s High Commissioner on National Minorities was instrumental in issuing early warnings and prompting diplomatic activities aimed at resolving majority-minority tensions before they escalate. In Estonia, for instance, HCMN advice played an important role in initiating the shift from exclusion to integration in the 1990s (Langerspetz 2005: 22). The Council of Europe, on the other hand, contributed to the standardization of minority policies through its European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) and the Framework Convention
for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM). In Bulgaria, the adoption of the FCMN in 1999 led to the introduction of the term ‘minority’ into the country’s postcommunist legislation (Rechel 2008: 338). For a country that long denied the existence of national minorities, and granted rights only to ‘citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian’, this was certainly an important symbolic change.

On the whole, the involvement of these intergovernmental bodies in the accession process has certainly contributed to important shifts in public discourse, to greater public awareness of cultural diversity, and to a noticeable standardization of minority legislation across the region. However, we should be wary of overstating the impact of these changes. The basic shape of minority policies and media systems in Central and Eastern Europe was formed already in the early to mid-1990s, before the EU accession process started in earnest. While the EU did insist on some changes to minority legislation, none of the countries was denied entry due to minority discrimination. This happened even in cases where the European Commission had been well informed of the situation, as in the case of Slovenia’s reluctance to confer citizenship rights to long-term inhabitants – immigrants from former Yugoslav republics – who were deleted from the register of permanent residents in 1992 (Zorn 2009: 221).

Also worth noting is the rather patchy implementation of international minority provisions. For instance, although Slovenia has signed and ratified the ECRML and the FCPNM, the remit of both is limited to traditional minorities and to some extent to the Roma community, and does not extend to recently established immigrant groups (Zorn 2009: 214). An important reason for this lies in the lack of enforcement mechanisms.
Even in cases where the adoption of international acts is legally binding, the lack of effective monitoring and enforcement measures meant that policy changes make little difference on the ground (Sasse 2009). Furthermore, the guidelines provided by intergovernmental bodies are often rather vague, and allow for significant variation in interpretation and implementation (cf. Vermeersch 2003: 9).

If intergovernmental bodies such as the EU, OSCE and CE were contributing primarily to public awareness and policy shifts, international civil society organizations seem to have been instrumental chiefly in prompting changes at the level of the day-to-day functioning of media systems. This is visible in the case of the Open Society Institute, the Soros Foundations Network and similar organizations that provide assistance to minority outlets, support journalism and media management training in areas of cultural diversity and human rights, and conduct monitoring of media legislation and content. Such support appears to be of particular importance in countries with weakest economies, where the availability of public funding for minority media is scarce, as is the case in Bulgaria, Macedonia and BiH (Bauer and Vujović 2006). The situation is especially acute in countries where low advertising expenditure and low economic productivity are coupled with highly fragmented media markets and a plethora of minority media, which suffer not only from a lack of funding but also from a low level of independence and professionalism. A good case in point is Macedonia (Spasovska 2006: 367–9).

On the whole, we can conclude that with the exception of kin-states and their media, international factors played an important though largely secondary role in shaping the mediation of cultural diversity in the region. The fundamental shape of
media systems – namely the development of segmented as opposed to integrated systems – was largely decided by domestic factors. Intergovernmental bodies and international civil society organizations were influential mostly in sensitizing the public to issues of cultural diversity, prompting policy changes at micro-level, and providing financial, technical and training support to minority outlets.

Conclusions

To sum up, the analysis of the chosen seven cases suggests that the choice between the integrated and the segmented media model is affected primarily by the ethnic composition of the domestic population, historical factors such as the trajectory of nation-state building, the presence of recent inter-ethnic conflicts, and the presence of a kin-state and kin-state media that are perceived as a threat. A segmented media system is most likely to develop in states with large minority populations that have not made much headway in nation-state building, have recently experienced high-intensity inter-ethnic conflicts, and border kin-states with cross-border media that are perceived as a threat. Political factors – be it domestic (e.g. democracy type) or international (e.g. accession to the EU) – do play a role, but their influence is limited and secondary, and always operates in conjunction with historical and demographic factors. In other words, political factors do not affect the overall structure of the media system as a whole (integrated vs. segmented), but rather contribute to gradual changes to existing arrangements, be they based on integration or on segmentation.

These results have important implications for some of the vexing normative dilemmas of cultural diversity and mass communication, especially those concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of segmented and integrated media systems.
To many observers, the fragmentation of national media landscapes, fostered by the growth of minority media outlets, poses a threat to the quality of public deliberation. In their view, the centrifugal forces of ‘public sphericules’ prevent us from engaging in a sustained discussion of shared interests beyond cultural, social and ideological differences, and from debating competing solutions to common problems (Gitlin 1998). Culturally segmented communication is seen as particularly harmful in the context of societies already riven by deep-seated suspicions and hostilities between culturally distinct groups. In such cases, separate minority outlets are believed to exacerbate rather than alleviate existing fissures, and threaten civic bonds and solidarities (e.g. Snyder 2000: 180). Instead of addressing the communicative needs and interests of culturally diverse audiences via segmented spaces of communication, we therefore ought to seek ways to integrate these audiences into the same, nation- and state-wide communicative sphere.

Other commentators argue that the social impact of a culturally segmented mass communication is not necessarily so grim, and that the particularism of minority media does not automatically involve a rejection of universalism or a retreat from the wider public sphere (Siapera 2010: 106–10). Sometimes, minority media provide a safe space inside which a marginalized minority can search for ways to improve its present situation – as was the case with some of the historical African-American newspapers (Herbst 1994: 71–9). Rather than being an obstacle to public deliberation, a segmented media landscape can therefore contribute to the formation of more integrative and inclusive public spheres. Also, the integrative, cross-cultural media programs are not always the panacea they are believed to be. Successful multicultural programmes are
often driven by commercial imperatives, and as such, they are compelled to downplay
cultural differences and controversial issues and focus instead on lifestyle choices and
individual experiences (cf. Leurdijk 2006). As a consequence, the programmes they
produce will probably make only a limited contribution to the development of civic
virtues and sensibilities that are essential to the functioning of a multicultural

Yet if the choice between segmentation and integration is affected primarily by
demographic and historical factors rather than political will alone, then such normative
debates appear somewhat futile – unless we are prepared to resort to political measures
designed to eradicate cultural diversity. Rather than contemplating the pros and cons of
an integrated as opposed to a segmented media system, we should therefore look for
ways to assess and improve the quality of public deliberation in each of the two systems
separately.

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