

Voltmer, Katrin

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## Structures of diversity of press and broadcasting systems: The institutional context of public communication in Western democracies

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FS III 00-201

**Structures of diversity  
of press and broadcasting systems:  
The institutional context of public communication  
in Western democracies**

Katrin Voltmer

Berlin, March 2000

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung gGmbH (WZB)  
Reichpietschufer 50, D-10785 Berlin,  
Telefon (030) 25 49 1-0

*Author's address:*

Dr. Katrin Voltmer  
Otto-Suhr-Institute of Political Science  
Free University Berlin  
Innstraße 26  
14195 Berlin  
Tel.: +49-30-83 85 50 43  
Email: [voltmer@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:voltmer@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

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## **Abstract**

In modern democracies, the media are a key actor in the political process. They are the main source of information from which citizens draw their knowledge about political matters. From the perspective of the rationality of public opinion building the principle of diversity is regarded as the central norm to evaluate the performance of the media. This paper focuses on the structural aspects of media diversity. The assumption is that the institutional structure eventually affects the quality of information communicated to citizens. The objective of our study is to establish a macro-analytical framework of the diversity principle. We elaborate indicators and typologies for empirical evaluation, which are then taken to classify the media systems of advanced Western democracies (OECD countries). The empirical analysis captures the period between 1970 and 1990 (press) and 1980 and 1990 (broadcasting) when the media were undergoing rapid economic and technological changes with considerable consequences for the structure of diversity.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Im modernen demokratischen Prozess kommt den Massenmedien zunehmend eine Schlüsselrolle zu, da sie die wichtigste Informationsquelle sind, aus der die Bürger ihr Wissen über Politik beziehen. Unter dem Gesichtspunkt rationaler Meinungsbildung kann Vielfalt als die zentrale Norm zur Beurteilung der Leistungen der Medien angesehen werden. Im vorliegenden Papier werden die strukturellen Aspekte von Medienvielfalt untersucht, da angenommen wird, dass die institutionellen Arrangements letztendlich die Qualität der Information beeinflussen. Ziel der Studie ist es, einen makro-analytischen Ansatz des Vielfaltprinzips zu entwickeln. Wir stellen empirische Indikatoren und Typologien vor, auf deren Basis die Mediensysteme entwickelter westlicher Demokratien (OECD-Länder) klassifiziert werden können. Die empirische Analyse umfasst den Zeitraum zwischen 1970 und 1990 (Presse) bzw. 1980 und 1990 (Rundfunk). In dieser Periode waren die Medien tiefgreifendem ökonomischen und technologischen Wandel unterworfen mit weitreichenden Folgen für die strukturelle Vielfalt von Mediensystemen.

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## **Country abbreviations**

|     |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|
| A   | Austria                  |
| AUS | Australia                |
| BEL | Belgium                  |
| CAN | Canada                   |
| DEN | Denmark                  |
| FIN | Finland                  |
| FRA | France                   |
| GER | Germany                  |
| GRE | Greece                   |
| ICE | Iceland                  |
| IRE | Ireland                  |
| ITA | Italy                    |
| JAP | Japan                    |
| LUX | Luxembourg               |
| NET | The Netherlands          |
| NEW | New Zealand              |
| NOR | Norway                   |
| POR | Portugal                 |
| SPA | Spain                    |
| SWE | Sweden                   |
| SWI | Switzerland              |
| TUR | Turkey                   |
| UK  | United Kingdom           |
| USA | United States of America |

*Katrin Voltmer*

## **Structures of diversity of press and broadcasting systems: The institutional context of public communication in Western democracies\***

### **1 Introduction**

In modern democracies, the mass media have become a key actor in the political process. For most citizens the media are the main – if not the only – source of information from which they learn about political matters. Individual political opinion-building and voting decision are largely based on information the media provide about the course of the government and the proposals made by political parties (Neuman 1986). Political actors also rely on the mass media to reach their goals. The media enable them to monitor the social environment and to communicate with the citizenry. Specifically during electoral campaigns, political parties become more and more dependent on the mass media for mobilizing public support (Noelle-Neumann 1982; Kennamer 1992). Given the central role the media play in the democratic process, their structure and performance have vital implications for the viability of democracy.

In this paper we will focus on the structural conditions under which the mass media produce and distribute political information. Institutional arrangements are a major precondition of the media's democratic performance as they may promote or constrain their ability to provide complete and reliable information. Our analysis starts with a theoretical discussion arguing that from the viewpoint of democratic norms diversity is to be regarded as the central structural feature of media systems. In a next step, macro-analytical indicators of diversity in press and broadcasting are developed to describe the empirical variations between media systems in Western democracies. Finally, different dimensions of structural diversity will be used to construct typologies by which media systems can be classified.

The macro-analytical comparative approach, as it is pursued in this paper, is still a rather underdeveloped field in media research. More than twenty years ago, Blumler/Gurevitch (1975) initiated the discussion on the benefits of the comparative approach for studying political communication. They pointed to the necessity of concepts of system characteris-

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\* This paper is a preliminary version of a chapter to be published in: Hans-Dieter Klingemann (ed.): *Political Structure and Political Performance: Macro-Analyses of the OECD Countries, 1945-90*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (forthcoming). The present version has been finished in 1997 and incorporates the academic discussion up to that timepoint.



tics to be developed as a basic tool of comparative media research. More than ten years later, Gurevitch/Blumler (1990) revised the field. While the interest in comparative research has increased considerably among students of mass communication, there is still a lack of a common core of theoretical concepts and empirical indicators specifying the central structural dimensions of the mass media. This deficit is reflected in a volume compiling various comparative studies in media research (Blumler/McLeod/Rosengren 1992). Although presenting highly interesting analyses, most of the articles do not systematically employ comparative concepts and make only intuitive assumptions that the macro-structural context explain the empirical results.

However, taking account of the institutional arrangements of public communication is a promising strategy to deepen the understanding of the conditions and consequences of mass communication as it allows for a more valid testing of hypotheses (McLeod/Blumler 1987; Mayer 1989; Dogan/Pelassy 1990; Calvert 1993). For example, behavioral research on media effects often reveals contradictory results that can hardly be generalized in a meaningful way (McGuire 1986). Comparative analyses that control for context variables would provide the opportunity to specify under which particular structural settings certain patterns of media performance and media effects take place (Schmitt-Beck 1998).

This paper aims at contributing to the development of theoretical concepts of media structures and their empirical measurement in comparative political communication research. In addition, the general conceptualization of the mass media as an actor of the intermediary system that links citizens with the political system, may promote the integration of media studies and comparative politics.

### *Theoretical considerations*

## **2 Mass media and democracy: Diversity of information and democratic choice**

The media are multifunctional serving not only political, but also economic and cultural needs. Therefore, the theoretical framework of the analysis is of crucial importance to the definition of the structural characteristics by which media systems are to be described and classified. Each of the various societal processes the media are involved in may imply different definitions of concepts and indicators. In this analysis, basic assumptions about the media's role in the democratic process serve as a theoretical point of reference. Economic structures and technological developments of the media, which are the focus of a number of other macroanalytical studies (Rogers/Balle 1985; Dyson 1986), will only be considered so far as they affect the democratic role of the media.

In the following, we will briefly discuss functionalist and normative theories of democracy to understand the specific role of the media in the democratic process and to identify the structural arrangements that are relevant to the democratic performance of the media.

In their structural-functional approach, Almond and Powell (1966) discuss the political communication function along with interest articulation and interest aggregation as constituting the intermediary system of politics. Although each of these functions is performed by communication, the authors argue that in the course of societal differentiation and modernization political communication has emerged as a specialized function which is mainly performed by the mass media. According to Almond (1960:47), mass communication allows "a free flow of information from the society to the polity and, in the polity, from political structure to political structure. It also makes possible an open feedback from output to input again." Other authors refer to this encompassing communication function as the general linkage function of the media (Gurevitch/Blumler 1977; Alger 1989).

The media's political communication function is based on specific capabilities and performance qualities. First, the mass media have developed techniques and professional procedures which enable them to collect and process large amounts of information and distribute it to all participants of the political process. Second, media communication is expected to represent the whole range of political standpoints and to give access to all political actors who aim at addressing the public. Therefore, Almond (1960) describes media communication as "generalistic" in contrast to the "particularistic" mode of communication of political parties or interest groups. Usually, this characteristic is referred to as media diversity. Since generalistic, or diverse, information comprises all relevant opinions, it can be transmitted across the boundaries of particular interests arising from antagonistic economic or cultural conditions. Media systems that are characterized by a high degree of diversity are considered to be a public forum where the exchange of arguments and collective deliberation takes place.

Another confirmation of media diversity being a central structural characteristic of the democratic process can be drawn from Dahl's normative theory of democracy. In his general conceptualization, Dahl (1979; 1989) distinguishes between the "criteria of procedural democracy" and democratic "institutions." Democratic criteria are the indispensable standards without which a political system could not be regarded as democratic. Democratic institutions are the preconditions that are necessary to satisfy the normative criteria. Dahl (1989:222) defines five fundamental criteria of democracy: voting equality, effective participation, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda, and inclusion; and seven institutional preconditions: elected officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative information, associational autonomy. "Alternative information" points to a media system that comprises diverse sources or sup-

pliers of information. In addition, the institution of alternative information implies that "citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information" and that "alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law" (Dahl 1989:221). While all democratic systems provide sufficient legal protection of the democratic communication process, usually by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom of the press (Breunig 1994), diversity, i.e., the plurality of the sources of information, is still regarded as a vulnerable value that needs to be supported by particular formal arrangements (Blumler 1992).

The crucial importance of alternative information is underlined by the fact that Dahl classifies this "institution" as a precondition for the realization of all criteria of procedural democracy, except voting equality. In other words, a wide range of democratic standards cannot be achieved without a pluralistic mass media. According to the notion of the citizen as the ultimate sovereign of democratic decision-making, alternative information is particularly necessary to satisfy the criterion of "enlightened understanding" since it provides the citizens with "opportunities for discovering and validating ... what his or her preferences are on the matter to be decided" (Dahl 1979:105). The "enlightening" effect of diversity is usually derived from its competitive nature. The assumption is that none of the different viewpoints in the political contest can claim final prevalence and, therefore, any viewpoint has an equal and legitimate right to public debate. Classical liberal theory of freedom of speech draws on the metaphor of the "marketplace of ideas." In this approach the competition of opinions is regarded as a procedure to discover the best solution to a specific problem in a specific situation (Kelley/Donway 1990; Braun 1990; Hayek 1969). The confrontation of opposing viewpoints enables citizens to compare the relevant pros and cons and make choices according to their own interests. As diversity gives all relating viewpoints access to public consideration, it is also assumed to promote tolerance and to restrain parochial decisions (O'Neill 1990).

In our discussion of the concepts and indicators of diversity we will take Dahl's emphasis on the citizen's capability to "enlightened" understanding as a reference point, although the mass media are certainly an important source of information for political leaders as well. While Dahl's theory refers to the individual citizen, Page/Shapiro (1992) argue that it is the citizenry as a whole, or the public as a collective actor and its collective rationality that counts in the democratic decision-making process. Both approaches have different implications for the preferred structure of diversity.

It needs to be emphasized that these normative considerations should not be confounded with the empirical appearance of mass communication. Undoubtedly, the empirical "marketplace of ideas" reveals considerable limitations in yielding complete information as opinions do not have equal chances to become publicly articulated. In this paper normative

assumptions serve as a theoretical justification for preferred structural features of media systems that can be expected to make democratic opinion-building more likely. They also provide a yardstick by which empirical variations of diversity can be evaluated (McQuail 1991a, 1991b; Rosengren 1991; Voltmer 1999).

### **3 An analytical framework for the study of diversity in media systems**

An analysis of media diversity has to distinguish between structural and performance characteristics (McQuail 1992). Structural diversity refers to the institutional arrangements in which mass communication takes place. Performance diversity refers to the output, i.e., the information the media are actually producing, which is usually measured by means of content analysis. Our analysis focuses on the structural aspects of media diversity. The relevance of structural diversity derives from the assumption that it is closely related to performance diversity in that particular structural conditions of media systems guarantee or, at least, foster the production of a diverse and generalistic information quality, whereas other institutional settings impede the public representation of a broad plurality of political viewpoints. Media systems that range high on the various dimensions of structural diversity are assumed to provide citizens with a kind of information that meets the requirements of "enlightened" participation better than systems with a low degree of structural diversity. However, for the purposes of the present paper it is not possible to test empirically for the relationship between structural and performance diversity.

In the following, we will suggest a typology of structure which serves as an analytical framework to identify the main features of structural diversity in media systems.

#### *3.1 Categories of structure*

In general terms, structure is defined as the interrelations amongst the elements of a system. The range of possible interactions between the elements of social systems is limited both in terms of the exclusion of and the preference for certain actions which are defined by rules (Sills 1968; Reimann et al. 1985).

Media systems are constituted by two *types* of structure, namely formal and informal structures referring to different kinds of rules as their origin (Easton 1990; Fuchs 1993). The formal structures of media systems are binding rules that are set by law. Since they are imposed by various forms of authoritative regulations and incentives, they result in highly stable and predictable patterns of interaction. Informal structures are based on procedures and role expectations, the most important of which are organizational goals and professional norms concerning the selection and presentation of information. Informal structures

are not prescriptive in nature and less stable in time than formal structures. In our typology we follow Easton (1990) who defines empirically observable patterns of interaction as informal structures, regardless of whether they are the consequence of existing rules or not. Further, the diversity of media systems is constituted by two classes of *elements*, namely actors and opinions. Actors refer to the media that participate in the political communication process, their respective strength and the variety of formats. Opinions refer to the political viewpoints represented and supported by the media.

Relating types and elements of the diversity structure of media systems result in a typology as is shown in *Figure 1*. The categories of the dimensions will be discussed in the following sections.

*Figure 1:* Typology of diversity structure

| Elements of structure | Types of structure   |  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
|                       | Formal   | Informal   |
| Actors                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal regulation of institutional setting (constitutional guarantees, logic of operation, ownership control)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional standards, economic goals</li> <li>• Empirical pattern of quantitative diversity (competition of actors/structures)</li> </ul> |
| Opinions              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal regulation of content (obligation to balance)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editorial policy</li> <li>• Empirical pattern of content diversity (internal/external diversity)</li> </ul>                                 |

### 3.2 Types of diversity structure

#### 3.2.1 Formal regulation of goal orientation

The formal structure of media systems is shaped by different bodies of legal regulation. On a general level the constitution formulates basic rights and responsibilities of the participants in public communication. On another level, the central goal orientation of the media is determined. In addition, specific problems of the media are regulated on subordinate levels of law. The latter two areas of formal regulation are of particular importance for the structure of diversity.

Civil law and administrative law are the most common legal frameworks by which the general logic of operation of the media is determined. They are based on alternative principles of how diversity is to be achieved. The central instruments of regulation are the speci-

fication of the dominant goal orientation, the allocation of resources, and the mode of supervision implying the degree of possible political interference. Although some countries have established formal structures that comprise a mixture of the instruments of both legal frameworks, civil and administrative law will be discussed here as ideal types of formal media structures.

Media operating within the framework of *civil law* are subjected to the logic of the market. Since they usually draw their financial resources from economic profit, their central goal orientation is governed by commercial interests. The liberal model of the "marketplace of ideas" is closely interrelated with competition on the economic marketplace, assuming that public welfare results from the actions of individuals each pursuing his or her own interests. Civil law constitutes a strong protection of the media against state intervention, leaving the enforcement of quality standards widely to self-regulation. Basically, media under civil law are conceptualized as instruments of their owners to give public voice to their own viewpoints instead of serving common goals. However, it is disputed among jurists to what extent private media may exclusively pursue their own interests without taking the public interest into account. For example, constitutional legislation in Germany argues that media freedom is bound to the commitment to public interest (Bamberger 1986; Ricker 1983). In the USA, the Supreme Court has strengthened the public's "right to know" against the individual interests of a newspaper (Lively 1991; Lowenstein/Merrill 1990)

*Administrative law* imposes the principle of social responsibility upon the media (Siebert/Peterson/Schramm 1963; Lowenstein/Merrill 1990). In this formal arrangement the media are obliged to serve the public interest rather than pursuing their own economic or political goals. Further, information is seen as a public good that should be available to all citizens regardless of their social or economic status. The social responsibility model has been established as a counterweight to commercial media operating under civil law in order to compensate for possible imbalances in the political communication process. To safeguard the media from market competition they are typically financed by license fees. Under administrative law the discretion of the media to follow a particular bias is restricted to ensure that all citizens receive complete and diverse information. For this reason, the media are supervised by the state or by governing bodies which control their functioning according to their prescribed goals.

### 3.2.2 Informal rules: Professional standards and editorial policy

Informal structures can be divided into rules that apply to the entire media system and those that structure the actions of individual media organizations. *Professional standards*

constitute the identity of the system and are generally accepted. They enable the media to process large amounts of input and to produce a highly standardized output. Among the professional rules news factors can be regarded as the most important ones. They structure the selection of news according to indicators of relevance (Galtung/Ruge 1965; Schulz 1976). Further, Tuchman (1972) describes strategies of objectivity the media employ in order to deal with contradictory truth claims. Since news production takes place under conditions of extreme uncertainties and time restrictions, it is impossible for the media to decide which interpretation of reality is correct and which is not. The procedures of objectivity comprise the rule of pairing each statement with another, opposite one, thus protecting the media from potential criticism.

Individual media often develop an *editorial policy* which establishes a stable and consistent pattern of selecting and interpreting political information. These media restrain the ubiquitous validity of professional rules in favor of particular political preferences. McQuail (1992:189ff.) describes partisanship as a variant of news practice that claims its specific legitimacy besides objective, or neutral media information. He argues that editorial preferences of media contribute to diversity as they allow the citizens to choose between substantially different sources of information.

Usually the editorial policy is oriented at particular political parties and their ideological programs. Seymour-Ure (1974) calls this correspondence "press-party parallelism" which may be based on either a close loyalty or a more general ideological correspondence of a newspaper with a political party. An example for close parallelism is the party press that functions as a mere mouthpiece of a party. Party organs have almost disappeared as the audience regards them of low credibility and does no longer accept the narrow range of information. In contrast, media that are committed to a general ideology rather than a particular party preserve their financial and editorial autonomy and may frequently even oppose actual positions of ideologically close parties. Especially media that reconcile complete and diverse news reporting with clear editorial preferences provide citizens with meaningful information that reduces the contingencies of political opinion-building. Ideological parallelism may even be an economically reasonable strategy as in a competitive market situation a distinguishable product may bind audiences with similar preferences (Noam 1991).

### 3.2.3 Empirical interaction patterns

The empirical interaction pattern of the elements of media systems is partly the result of the rules that are stipulated by formal legislation or the self-regulation of the media; partly it emerges from the economic or political goals of the individual media actors. Since the

interaction pattern refers to the distribution of and the dynamic between the media actors of a given system and the opinions that are communicated it will be described in more detail in the discussion of the elements of structure.

### 3.3 *Elements of diversity structure*

#### 3.3.1 Diversity of actors: The quantitative dimension

Since diversity is basically a quantitative feature from which the possibility of choice emerges, the number of actors is central to the evaluation of media diversity. The minimal condition of diversity is the existence of at least two alternatives from which citizens can choose. Thus, diversity is assumed to be the higher, the more sources of information are available in a media system. However, quantity is not an end in itself. Rather, the dynamics of competition evolves from the interaction between different actors and its consequences for public opinion-building accounts for the perception of a large number as being a structural quality. Competition is assumed to increase the quality of the performance of the media as each aims at gaining as much audience support as possible by producing a kind of output that is more attractive than that of the competitors.

Although the amount of actors is a necessary condition, it is not a sufficient feature of media diversity. A high number of "the same" would not allow meaningful choices on the part of the citizens. The emphasis is therefore on significant differences between the media, or, as Dahl (1989) puts it, on "*alternative* sources of information" (italics: K.V.). Several forms of variety that make a difference are discussed in the literature, amongst which ownership is usually regarded as the most crucial one (Picard et al. 1988; Lacy/Simon 1993; Rager/Weber 1992). Like many other economic branches, the media industry is characterized by growing concentration. With more and more media outlets being under the control of a few financially powerful companies the mechanisms of competition in public discourse are at risk to be jeopardized. It is feared that as a result of concentration the quality of information and the range of opinions will be restricted. In addition, the increasing internationalization of media companies is a severe impediment to transparency and political control of ownership structure. Therefore, a main goal of formal regulation is to preserve the viability of the "marketplace of ideas" by enhancing, or at least maintaining, the number of independent media.

Another important aspect of diversity is constituted by alternative forms of financing and control. Depending on whether the media are assigned to civil or administrative law, they develop different goal orientations that would shape the quality of their output. Again, the degree of diversity is assessed by the quantity of alternatives. A system that comprises both



forms of formal arrangement provides more possibilities of choice than a monostructural system. Diversity is even higher when each of the structural alternatives consists of more than one actor.

### 3.3.2 Diversity of opinions: The content dimension

The diversity of opinions refers to the content, specifically the different viewpoints in political conflicts which are conveyed to the citizens. In the context of democratic opinion-building the diversity of opinions is the ultimate dimension of the diversity concept. As a structural feature content diversity refers to the media's general policy of information processing, rather than the actual reporting (McQuail 1992:170ff.). It is a stable long-term program that guides the selection of news and the choice of preferences in political conflicts (Epstein 1974; Shoemaker/Reese 1991). Diversity of opinions in a given media system is then the result of the editorial policies of the sum of the individual media which constitute the system.

The degree of content diversity can be described empirically by the distribution of opinions in a media systems. The range and the variety of opinions indicate the plurality of political alternatives represented in the system. The balance of opinions points to the chances of opposing viewpoints about getting access to the audience. Balanced media systems yield equal coverage of competing alternatives, thus allowing citizens to consider both sides in political conflicts.

Diversity of opinions can be achieved by different structural principles. In the literature it is distinguished between external and internal diversity as the basic patterns of content diversity (McQuail/van Cuilenburg 1983; McQuail 1986; Hoffmann-Riem 1990). Each of these patterns provides specific opportunity structures for "enlightened" decision-making. In the following the two principles of content diversity will be discussed as ideal typical concepts which would not be expected to be found as pure empirical patterns.

*External diversity* is constituted by a plurality of media actors each of them representing a particular part of the entire spectrum of political opinions. Although the model of external diversity permits individual media to be systematically imbalanced, it is assumed that diversity emerges from the interaction of these actors on the aggregate level of the entire media system. In their editorials, externally diverse media reveal clear preferences in favor of one side of the political conflict. Frequently, the selection of news is also structured by these preferences. Consequently, externally diverse media aim at particular segments of the citizenry that support similar positions. The pattern of external diversity is most likely to be found under the formal conditions of civil law since it allows the media owners to pur-

sue particularistic goals which may imply the support of certain political parties or ideologies.

For the individual citizen the availability of alternative political viewpoints is limited as long as he or she does not acquire information from several different sources. Consequently, information serve mainly the confirmation of existing beliefs rather than a consideration of different alternatives. Under the conditions of external diversity the requirements of rational opinion formation are primarily met on the level of citizenry as a collective actor rather than that of the individual citizen.

*Internal diversity* is realized by any individual medium of a system each covering the whole spectrum of the existing political viewpoints. Internally diverse media exercise a balanced mode of news selection. In their editorials, they either support various standpoints or are generally reluctant to express own preferences. Historically, internal diversity is a relatively recent pattern of news media. Specifically in Europe, most print media had close ties with political parties until the first decades of the 20th century. However, economic constraints and the broad acceptance of professional standards like objectivity and news values have strengthened the trend towards internal diversity (Schudson 1978). In contrast to newspapers, the latitude of broadcast media to support particular political positions is often limited by political regulation. In addition, economic constraints drive television towards a policy of attracting large audiences usually resulting in internal diversity.

Internal diversity is a structural condition that makes alternative political viewpoints accessible on the level of the individual citizen. As it confronts the recipient with opinions he or she may not share, internal diversity supports processes of "enlightened understanding" and the consideration of competing arguments. However, some authors point to possible disadvantages of a kind of information that does not give any hint for preferable positions. McQuail (1992:188) argues that equal coverage of contradictory viewpoints may contribute to political indifference and "the withdrawal from value commitments;" and Wattenberg (1986) relates the growing volatility of the American electorate to the predominance of neutrality in mass communication.

### *Empirical analysis*

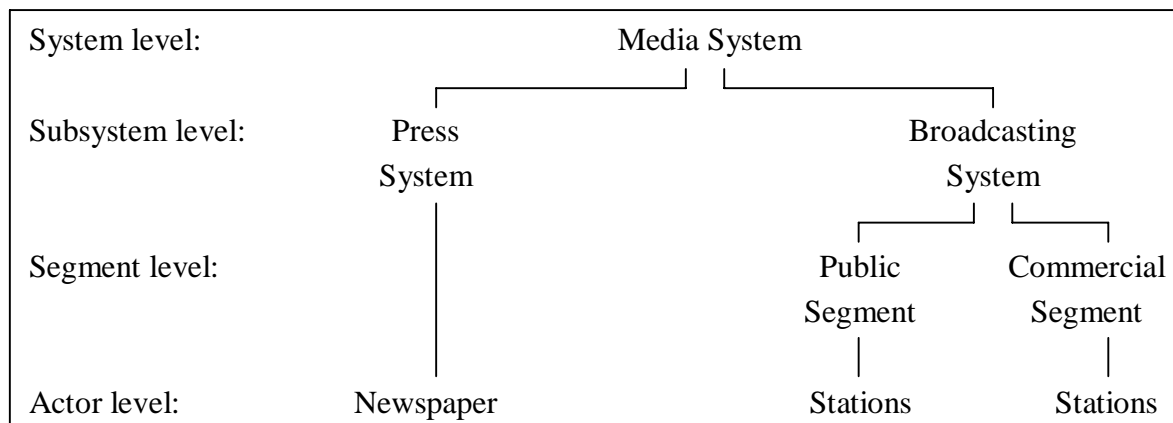
## **4 Design and operationalization**

To analyze diversity empirically the heterogeneous institutional structure of media systems has to be taken into account. First, it has to be differentiated between the *levels* on which media diversity is measured and evaluated. Second, the *units* of analysis have to be specified.

#### 4.1 Levels of analysis

As McQuail/van Cuilenburg (1982) point out media diversity is to be conceptualized on three levels, namely the macro-level, i.e., the entire media system, the meso-level, i.e., the subsystems of press and broadcasting and its subordinate segments, and the micro-level, i.e., individual media actors. *Figure 2* gives an overview of the levels of the analysis.

*Figure 2:* Levels of analysis



The distinction between press and broadcasting refers to the very nature of the respective medium types determining the specific mode of production, distribution and consumption. Both subsystems operate under different formal frameworks which constrain the possible structures of diversity. Due to the specific institutional conditions of press and broadcasting, particular indicators of diversity for each of the subsystems are to be defined.

#### 4.2 Units of analysis

The smallest unit of our empirical analysis is the actor, specifically the media organizations as collective actors rather than individuals like owners or journalists. In order to describe media diversity at the meso and macro levels, the actors are aggregated to subsystems or the entire system. However, the operationalization of what can be regarded as actor is not totally self-evident. Our specification relies on the following three conditions: First, only the dominant type of media actors in each subsystem is considered in order to keep the analysis feasible. Second, media actors are defined from the perspective of citizens and of the discernible alternatives from which they can choose. Third, only those media actors that produce and distribute within the national context are included into the analysis. The reason is that, in spite of the increasing internationalization and globalization of mass

communication, the structure of media systems is still primarily the result of the decisions of national governments.

According to these conditions, the *actors of press systems* are specified as follows:

First, daily newspapers are considered to be the dominant type of actors. This type of print media reaches nearly the entire citizenry and is central to the processes of political learning and political opinion-building. Weeklies are not taken into account because of their relatively low coverage, although they often serve as opinion leaders with considerable impact on their readers.

Second, from the perspective of the citizen titles are the discernible alternatives. We do not consider publishing houses, because these entities are not the primary objects of choice for the ordinary citizen. Moreover, newspaper titles can be regarded as actors because each outlet has an autonomous staff and delivers a product of a specific style, profile, and audience orientation. One might argue that publishing houses, not titles, are the relevant actors because they ultimately decide on the general editorial policy. However, research on the effect of ownership change on political reporting and commentary did not find a clear relationship (McCombs 1988). While some publishers may use their papers to spread their standpoints, most of them act according to an economic rather than a political logic. In addition, the growing prevalence of professional standards that emphasize news values and objectivity is an effective barrier against the ideosyncrasies of individual owners.<sup>1</sup>

Third, foreign newspapers are not considered as part of a particular press system because they are produced outside the national context. With respect to the area of coverage within a country our analysis includes regional as well as national newspapers. In principle, each newspaper, although it may have a particular regional center, is available all over the country and thus theoretically serves as alternative source of information for the citizens.

Using the same logic as has been applied to define the dominant type of actors in press systems, we take television as the dominant type of *actors in broadcasting systems*. Television reaches virtually the entire citizenry and plays an exceptional role in political opinion-building. In contrast, radio is mostly confined to certain regions of the country and is therefore not included in our analysis.

Second, we define stations as the discernible alternatives from which citizens can choose. Even if several stations belong to one broadcast organization, they produce alternative programs. Like newspaper titles, stations have an autonomous editorial staff and are characterized by a specific profile in terms of style, programming, and sometimes political orientation. For the most part, stations are identical with channels, which are technical

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1 However, the cases of Silvio Berlusconi and Rupert Murdoch demonstrate that under certain circumstances media owners may decide to directly intervene into public opinion affairs.

means of transmission. However, channels and stations differ empirically when several actors use the same frequency.

New transmission techniques like cable and satellite offer broader access for a number of additional actors. At the timepoints of observation in most countries, however, programs distributed by these new transmission technologies were still not available for the majority of the population. Therefore, we will not include them systematically in our analysis.

Broadcasting differs from press with respect to the area of coverage and regional availability. In contrast to newspapers, regional broadcasting stations are not principally available all over the country. For this reason our analysis includes only television stations with national coverage, i.e., those which can be received by at least three quarters of the population.

Third, more than in press systems national borders become increasingly irrelevant to broadcasting. However, since we compare the structure of national media systems we include only those stations that are produced and distributed within a national broadcasting system.

### 4.3 Data base

There exist only a few longitudinal data collections that cover a wide range of media systems. Since the present study aims at encompassing advanced Western democracies that are organized in the OECD, most of the data presented here have been generated for the first time. The data sets of our empirical analysis are compiled from the following sources:

Data on quantitative aspects of diversity of *press systems* can be found in the Statistical Yearbook, published by the UNESCO (annually), as well as in the publication "World Press Trends," edited by the Fédération Internationale des Editeurs des Journaux (FIEJ, annually). The latter also provides detailed information on press laws, especially on ownership regulation.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, data on content characteristics of single newspapers have been generated. These data were mainly drawn from Banks' "Political Handbook of the World" (annually). This handbook provides concise information about the political orientation of the main newspapers of each country. We regard this classification as a substitute for a content analysis of the newspapers. The information drawn from Banks was extended and checked by several other handbooks (Western Europe 1989; Ostergaard 1992; see section 5.3).

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2 Other comparative studies, so Kurian (1982), do not generate own data but take the statistical information from the UNESCO Yearbook as well. Erdmann/Fritsch (1990) have undertaken a comparative study which relies on own enquiries, mainly a survey of national editor associations. Although these data may be of higher reliability, we use this study only as an additional data source because the selection of countries is confined to twelve European countries and to one time point.

The data set on content diversity is confined to the ten most important newspapers of each country, operationalizing importance by circulation rates. This restriction seems to be a reasonable procedure. Extending the analysis to more than ten newspapers does not yield a considerable gain in the proportion of the total circulation covered. The ten largest newspapers represent the entire press system quite well. On the average, they cover more than half of the total size of the press systems (1990: 60%; 1970: 55%). The coverage varies between 100% in systems with ten or less than ten newspapers (Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg), and 16% in the press system of the United States which comprises more than 1,600 newspapers. Countries for which information on political orientation is missing for more than 20% of the coverage of the most important newspapers, are excluded from the analysis of content diversity. The analysis of press systems covers two time points: 1970 and 1990.<sup>3</sup>

The data set of *broadcasting systems* is based on country studies compiled in various handbooks (Browne 1989; Hans-Bredow-Institut, annually; Noam 1991; Rosen 1988). Information on formal regulation and on quantitative diversity of stations given in these studies was coded according to our indicators of diversity. UNESCO's Statistical Yearbook and the handbook on "The Media Scene in Europe" (STERN 1991) that primarily serves as an information service for the advertising industry, were used to supplement information on quantitative aspects of diversity.

In order to capture change in broadcasting systems, we compare the situation in 1990 with that in 1980, which is shortly before many countries began to introduce dual broadcasting systems, allowing the coexistence of public service and commercial television stations.

## 5 Structures of diversity in press systems

A comprehensive analysis of all aspects of diversity as have been presented in Figure 1 would go far beyond the limits of the present study. We confine the analysis of press systems to the formal regulation of actors, and the dimensions of quantitative and content diversity.

### 5.1 Formal regulation: Goal orientation and ownership

Without exception, press systems of Western democracies are subjected to civil law, allowing print media a high degree of independence from any political interference. The

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3 It has to be mentioned that the political regimes of Greece, Portugal and Spain were not yet democratic in 1970, Turkey experienced a military dictatorship. While this may not have an impact on the quantitative dimension of diversity, it probably has on content diversity.

formal arrangement implies that print media have to survive under economic competition, but are free to choose any editorial policy. Since in contrast to most public broadcasting systems the press market is characterized by a large number of suppliers, external diversity is tolerated assuming that one-sidedness or restricted coverage of individual papers would be balanced on the aggregate level. Although there is a broad consensus about newspapers being expected to serve a function in the public opinion-building process (Lichtenberg 1990), no regulations exist to enforce such expectations.

As far as formal regulations exist, they mainly refer to the ownership structure of print media. The main objective is to promote competition and to prevent the concentration of opinion power, thus maintaining the viability of a free "marketplace of ideas." The most frequent policy instruments aim at influencing the subsequent ownership structures: composition, i.e., limitation of the shares of publishing companies; transparency, i.e., prevention of silent partners; concentration, i.e., limitation of multiple ownership within the press system; and cross-ownership, i.e., limitation of multiple ownership between press and broadcasting. *Table 1* shows the extent to which these instruments are applied in OECD countries.

Cross-ownership is the most often regulated aspect in order to keep the two subsystems of the media system apart. 16 out of 21 countries exert this kind of control. The next frequent aspect of ownership control is transparency (11 countries), followed by concentration (9 countries) and composition (6 countries). Adding up the four instruments of ownership, control indicates the intensity of regulation in each of the countries. The average level of regulation is 2.0. It is highest in France, Greece, Italy and the U.K. where all four instruments are applied. Most countries control only one or two aspects of ownership.<sup>4</sup> Portugal is the only country that does not impose ownership regulation at all.

Besides regulation of ownership structure, newspapers are subjected only to minimal content regulation referring mainly to libeling and the observation of moral norms. Specifically, there exists no regulation that obliges individual print media to act according to internal diversity and to represent the whole spectrum of the political contest.

Since the formal structure of press systems is based on the concept of external diversity, the following analysis investigates the extent to which the empirical structure meets the underlying expectations. In particular, we will analyze the quantitative dimension of diversity which is perceived as a precondition of the diversity of opinions; further, we will examine whether the particular editorial policies of individual newspapers are balanced on the system level.

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4 Especially the Scandinavian countries try to control the structure of the press system more by support instruments (tax and tariff reductions, direct subsidies) rather than restrictive measures (see FIEJ 1993).

Table 1: Ownership regulation in press systems (1990; sorted by sum of regulations)<sup>a)</sup>

| Country  | Composition | Transparency | Cross-Ownership | Concentration | $\Sigma$ |
|----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|----------|
| POR      | -           | -            | -               | -             | 0        |
| BEL      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| DEN      | -           | +            | -               | -             | 1        |
| FIN      | -           | +            | -               | -             | 1        |
| LUX      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| NET      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| NOR      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| SPA      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| SWE      | -           | -            | +               | -             | 1        |
| A        | -           | +            | +               | -             | 2        |
| GER      | -           | -            | +               | +             | 2        |
| IRE      | -           | +            | -               | +             | 2        |
| JAP      | +           | -            | +               | -             | 2        |
| SWI      | -           | +            | -               | +             | 2        |
| USA      | -           | -            | +               | +             | 2        |
| AUS      | +           | +            | +               | -             | 3        |
| CAN      | -           | +            | +               | +             | 3        |
| FRA      | +           | +            | +               | +             | 4        |
| GRE      | +           | +            | +               | +             | 4        |
| ITA      | +           | +            | +               | +             | 4        |
| UK       | +           | +            | +               | +             | 4        |
| $\Sigma$ | 6           | 11           | 16              | 9             |          |

n.a.: ICE, NEW, TUR.

a) Dotted line: average intensity of regulations (2.0).

-: No regulation.

+: Regulation exists; counted only when exceeding normal economic regulation.

Source: FIEJ 1992.

## 5.2 Diversity of actors: Quantity of newspapers and concentration

As we have pointed out earlier (see section 3.3.1), competition on the "marketplace of ideas" is a precondition of the citizens' opportunity of choice. All press systems, even those of very small countries, meet the minimal requirement of choice, i.e., consist of at least two alternative newspapers. However, while the minimal condition of diversity is unequivocal, it is impossible to specify the optimal number of newspapers. Thus, the comparison of countries provides us with a picture of the relative degree of quantitative diversity, rather than categorizing of press systems as being diverse or non-diverse.

There exist various indicators to describe the diversity of press systems (Woldt 1992). Table 2 presents four basic measures, namely the absolute and relative numbers of news-



papers, the absolute and relative circulation (density): The absolute number of newspapers is a simple indicator of the amount of alternatives from which citizens can choose – at least theoretically. In this respect, the press system of the USA with some more than 1,600 outlets offers by far the highest degree of diversity, whereas Luxembourg with five newspapers forms the bottom of the distribution, followed by Iceland and Ireland. Obviously the absolute amount of newspapers is not independent from the size of a country and its population. Therefore, the relative number of newspapers per one million inhabitants is a more adequate measure of diversity in press systems. This indicator rates Iceland as the press system with the highest degree of relative diversity, whereas the USA is now located somewhat below average. At the low end of the distribution Japan is the extreme case with only one newspaper title for every one million people. Quantitative diversity is also far below average in all Romance countries. In general, a high degree of diversity can usually be found in smaller countries, specifically the Nordic countries, though there are several small countries with low diversity as well, for example Ireland and Portugal. Presumably, diversity of press systems is determined by various cultural factors as well as the distribution system and the number of subscribers, which cannot be followed up here in more detail. Generous support by state subventions certainly contributes to press diversity in Scandinavian countries as well.

Another indicator of diversity refers to the concentration of circulation. It is seen as the prevailing structural problem of press systems because it limits competition on the "marketplace of ideas" and strengthens the potential of single actors to dominate public opinion formation (Klaue/Knoche/Zerdick 1980; Picard et al. 1988; Rager/Weber 1992). In the right-hand part of Table 2 the measure of absolute circulation indicates the size of a country's entire press market which is contested by the existing actors. Newspaper density, measured by the average circulation per newspaper, is taken as an indicator for the degree of concentration.<sup>5</sup> Again, the extreme case is Japan with an average of 580,000 copies per newspaper. Japan is the only country where the main newspapers publish two editions per day, with the largest reaching a daily circulation of more than 14 million copies. The high density of the UK's press system is mainly due to the predominance of large tabloids which account for about half of the daily total circulation. On the other hand, the press systems of Turkey and Portugal are characterized by a very low density. It can be assumed that a strong regional press contributes to a high degree of diversity, whereas systems with strong national, metropolitan-based newspapers reinforce concentration. However, specific groups of countries which would reflect area-specific cultural conditions cannot be identified.

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5 This indicator is commonly used in press statistics although it does not take the specific distribution of concentration, i.e., the strength of single actors into account.

Table 2: Quantitative diversity in press systems (1990)

| Country | N of newspapers |                        | Circulation            |                                     |
|---------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|         | Absolute        | Relative <sup>a)</sup> | Absolute<br>(in 1,000) | Relative <sup>b)</sup><br>(density) |
| A       | 25              | 4,47                   | 2,706                  | 108,200                             |
| AUS     | 62              | 4,11                   | 4,200                  | 67,700                              |
| BEL     | 33              | 2,32                   | 3,000                  | 90,900                              |
| CAN*    | 107             | 4,12                   | 5,993                  | 56,000                              |
| DEN     | 47              | 8,97                   | 1,810                  | 38,500                              |
| FIN     | 66              | 13,33                  | 2,780                  | 42,100                              |
| FRA     | 79              | 1,34                   | 11,792                 | 149,300                             |
| GER*    | 315             | 5,21                   | 20,677                 | 65,600                              |
| GRE     | 117             | 11,69                  | n.a.                   | n.a.                                |
| ICE     | 6               | 20,00                  | n.a.                   | n.a.                                |
| IRE     | 7               | 2,26                   | 591                    | 84,400                              |
| ITA*    | 76              | 1,27                   | 6,093                  | 80,200                              |
| JAP     | 125             | 1,02                   | 72,524                 | 580,200                             |
| LUX     | 5               | 13,16                  | 143                    | 28,600                              |
| NET*    | 86              | 5,83                   | 4,592                  | 53,400                              |
| NEW     | 35              | 10,64                  | 1,100                  | 31,400                              |
| NOR     | 85              | 19,76                  | 2,588                  | 30,450                              |
| POR     | 24              | 2,59                   | 390                    | 16,250                              |
| SPA     | 102             | 2,61                   | 3,200                  | 31,400                              |
| SWE     | 107             | 12,68                  | 4,499                  | 42,100                              |
| SWI     | 94              | 15,05                  | 3,063                  | 32,600                              |
| TUR     | 399             | 8,12                   | 4,000                  | 10,000                              |
| UK      | 104             | 1,82                   | 22,494                 | 216,300                             |
| USA     | 1,611           | 6,86                   | 62,328                 | 38,700                              |
| Mean    | 155             | 7,50                   | 10,935                 | 86,110                              |

a) Number of newspapers (titles) per 1 million inhabitants.

b) Average number of copies per newspapers (titles).

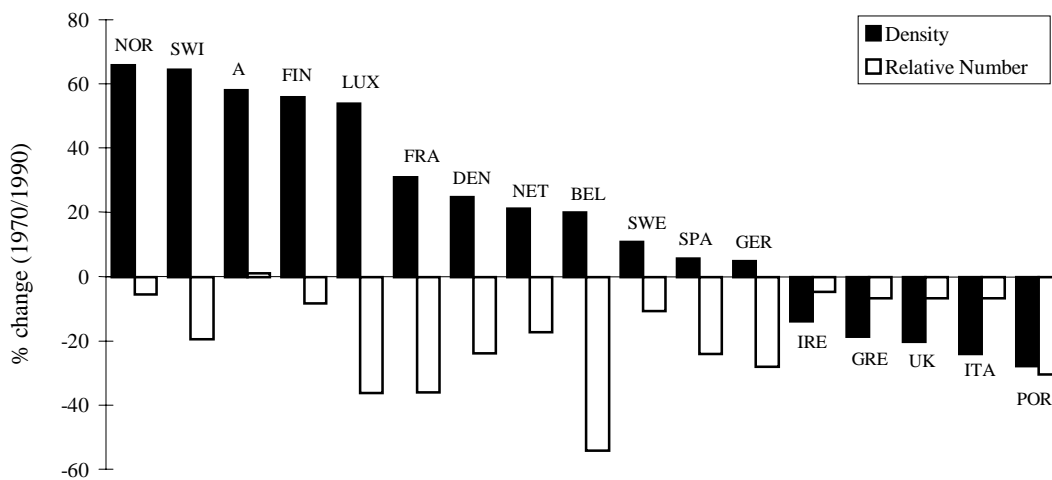
\*) Figures from 1988 or 1989.

Source: UNESCO 1990; author's calculations.

In the last two decades most press systems have experienced a considerable growth in total circulation. This trend can be explained by increasing cognitive involvement of citizens which involves the consumption of political information becoming a stable routine in everyday activities. The average growth rate of the total circulation between 1970 and 1990 in the OECD is 21.6% and varies between 0.3% (USA) and 74% (Norway). Exceptions from this trend are the southern European countries (France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal), the U.K. and Ireland. In these countries circulation decreased by an average of 18.5%, ranging from 2.3% (France) to 47.5% (Portugal). Changes in circulation rates can be distributed in

two different ways. On the one hand, gains and losses may result in increasing or decreasing numbers of actors. In this case, the degree of competition would not be affected, yet there would be a higher or lower range of choice. On the other hand, the additional or diminished demand can be distributed to the existing actors, thus leading to a change in concentration, while the pattern of choice remains constant. *Figure 3* demonstrates the changes between 1970 and 1990:

*Figure 3:* Change of quantitative diversity in press systems: Relative number of newspapers and density



n.a.: ICE, TUR.

Source: UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook; author's calculations.

A development to the disadvantage of quantitative diversity clearly dominates the picture as fewer actors count for growing circulation rates. There is virtually no country where additional actors were able to enter the system. Instead, in most countries increasing concentration goes along with a decrease of choice. Only in six countries concentration has diminished, although this trend was not accompanied with an increase of choice either.

Two important problems of press concentration cannot be explored in more detail in the framework of our study, namely regional monopolies and chain ownership. The first problem is closely related to the opportunity structure of choice. Regional diversity is important because information about the immediate environment is the basis of a good deal of citizens' participation. In their study of the economic diversity of the press, Erdmann/Fritsch (1990) examined the regional supply with newspapers in twelve Western European countries. Taking all countries together, there are only 37% of the regions which provide choice

between at least two newspapers, 40% offer only one newspaper, and in 23% of the regions there doesn't exist any paper at all. Whereas single-paper regions lack the opportunity of choice, zero-paper areas mean that even the availability of information is restricted, especially about local politics. Choice between alternative sources of information at regional level is the prevalent structure only in Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Germany, of which the two Nordic countries offer an extraordinary situation with more than 90% of the regions providing at least two newspapers.

The second problem refers to takeovers of smaller newspapers by powerful media concerns, thus jeopardizing the dynamics of competition although the existing titles may persist. Sanchez-Taberner (1993) investigated the market shares of the largest publishing houses in Western European countries. It turns out that up to two-thirds of the press market is controlled by only two companies.

### 5.3 *Diversity of opinions: Ideological balance*

Since there exist no content regulations restricting the editorial policy of newspapers, content diversity is left to emerge from the interactions of the individual actors of press systems. The more newspapers pursue the policy of internal diversity, the higher is the probability that the whole spectrum of relevant political opinions is represented in the system. On the other hand, a large number of partisan newspapers does not necessarily guarantee diversity on the system level as is expected by the concept of external diversity. The reason is that most of these papers may support similar viewpoints resulting in an imbalanced diversity structure. In the following we analyze the extent to which press systems are characterized by internal diversity. In addition, it will be examined whether the particular biases of externally diverse newspapers are balanced on the system level.<sup>6</sup>

Our analysis of content diversity is based on coding the editorial policy of the ten most important newspapers of a country (see section 4.3). Coding was performed as follows: Newspapers that Banks' "Political Handbook of the World" classifies as "neutral" or "independent" were assigned to the category "internal diversity." "External diversity" was coded when newspapers were reported as being committed to a particular ideology or political party. In a second variable the direction of the political orientation was coded according to a left-right scale, using the same categories which have been developed in the "Comparative Manifesto Project" to classify political parties (see Volkens 1992). The scale consists

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6 This approach does not consider whether the distribution of preferences in press systems represents the actual opinions in society. The extent to which the press system covers the existing opinions could only be assessed on the basis of a comparison with external data, e.g., comparing the ideological spectrum of the press system with the ideological spectrum of the party system, or with survey data on political orientations of the citizens.

of six points which refer either to the commitment to a particular party or to a general ideological orientation:<sup>7</sup>

- 1 "far left" = Parties: Communists; general ideology: extremely leftist, communist
- 2 Parties: Socialists, Social Democrats, Labor Parties; general ideology: leftist, liberal (USA)
- 3 Parties: Liberals; general ideology: liberal, moderate
- 4 Parties: religious parties, Christian Democrats; general ideology: center, religious
- 5 Parties: Conservatives; general ideology: conservative, rightist, monarchist
- 6 "far right" = Parties: Nationalists; general ideology: extremely rightist, nationalist

In order to check the reliability of Banks' classifications we compared them with similar assessments in other handbooks, namely "Western Europe 1989" and Ostergaard (1992). These additional sources allowed us to compare the classifications of 102 newspapers. In 74 cases (73%) the left-right placement was identical with Banks; in five cases (5%) it was similar, i.e., the placement deviates only by one point on the six-point scale; in 23 cases (23%) we found divergent classifications. Ten of these divergent cases were classified by Banks as neutral whereas the other sources reported a political bias; in eleven cases the reverse pattern was found; two cases were placed differently by Banks and the other sources, i.e., deviated two or more points on the left-right scale. In sum, 78% of the titles were classified into an identical or similar category, indicating a high reliability of Banks' classifications.

*Figure 4.1* locates the OECD press systems according to their position on each dimension of diversity. The dimension "internal diversity" indicates the proportion of circulation provided by newspapers which each represent the whole range of political viewpoints. The dimension "external diversity" indicates the degree of balance between biased newspapers. The mean left-right distribution of the externally diverse papers is weighted by their respective circulation size.<sup>8</sup> The more the value approaches 3.5 as the mean of the scale, the more the press system is balanced. Values higher than 3.5 indicate imbalance in favor of right orientations, while values lower than 3.5 indicate a dominance of left orientations. The dotted line in the figure indicates the expected normative optimum. The underlying assumption is that overall diversity can be achieved either by a high proportion of newspa-

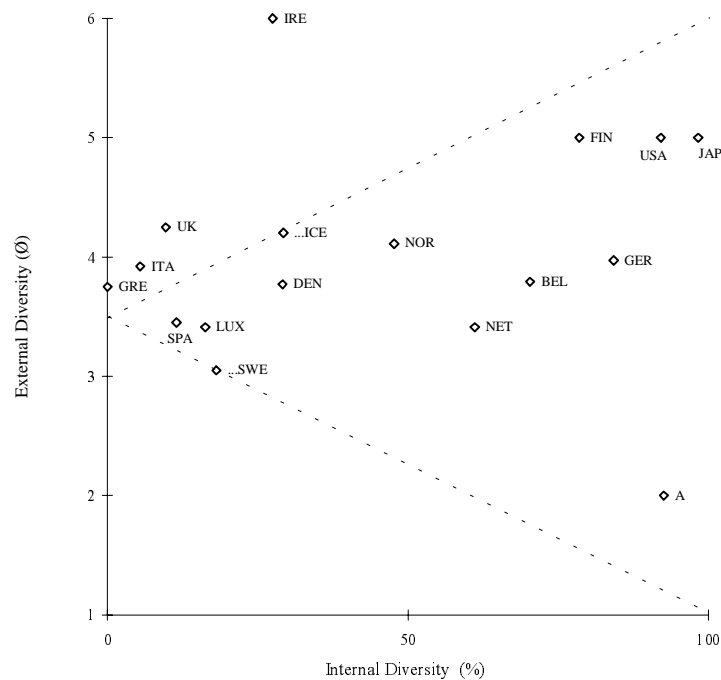
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7 We do not distinguish between party commitment and general ideological orientation which may indicate different degrees of exclusiveness with regard to opposing viewpoints.

8 The measure is similar to the "center of gravity" in comparative research on party systems (Gross/Sigelman 1984).

pers reporting according to the principle of internal diversity, or by an equal weight of differently biased newspapers. The higher the proportion of internal diversity the more tolerable is the one-sidedness of single newspapers; but balance becomes crucial with raising degree of external diversity.

Figure 4.1: Content diversity in press systems: Internal<sup>a)</sup> and external<sup>b)</sup> diversity (1990; ten most important newspapers)



n.a.: AUS, CAN, FRA, NEW, PRO, SWI, TUR.

a) Percentage of the circulation of neutral newspapers.

b) Weighted mean of political orientation (1 = far left, 6 = far right).

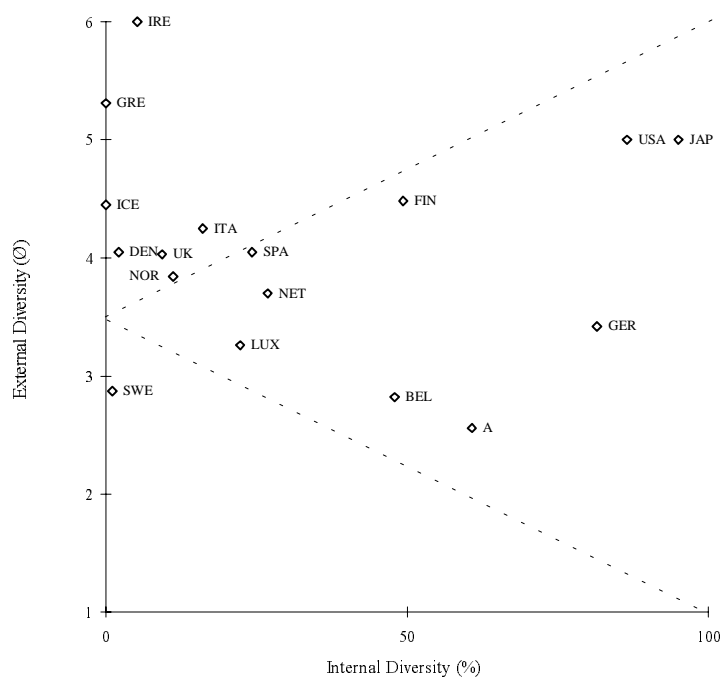
Source: Banks (1990), author's calculations.

The empirical findings show that most of the countries are located within the normative optimum of diversity. Seven of the 17 countries considered are dominated by the structure of internal diversity, whereas in ten countries external diversity accounts for more than half of the circulation. Most of these press systems meet the expectations of complementary biases, with Spain, Luxembourg and Denmark showing an almost perfect balance between left and right ideological orientations. Sweden and Iceland are located on the left and right borderline respectively. The press systems of four countries, Greece, Italy, the U.K. and Ireland, reveal a considerable lack of content diversity. In all of these countries rightist viewpoints are overrepresented. An extreme case is Ireland where only a relatively small proportion of the newspapers is devoted to the principle of internal diversity and all of the

externally diverse papers support extreme right or nationalist positions. Greece, too, is an extreme case in that none of the ten most important newspapers pursues the policy of internal diversity.

Figure 4.2 demonstrates the change that has taken place in the last two decades. In 1970, far fewer press systems achieved diversity through internal diversity, and more systems were extremely imbalanced.

Figure 4.2: Content diversity in press systems: Internal<sup>a)</sup> and external<sup>b)</sup> diversity (1970; ten most important newspapers)



n.a.: AUS, CAN, FRA, NEW, PRO, SWI, TUR.

a) Percentage of the circulation of neutral newspapers.

b) Weighted means of political orientation (1 = far left, 6 = far right).

Source: Banks (1970), author's calculations.

In order to obtain an overall measure of balance the distinction between internal and external diversity is omitted in Table 3. Neutral newspapers were assigned to the mean of the left-right scale. In 1990, nine of 17 countries achieve a very high or high degree of balance with less than .10, or .20 respectively, points of deviance from the center of the left-right scale. Most of the observed deviant cases favor right positions. The press systems of Greece, Norway, Finland, Italy, Iceland, the U.K. and Ireland show considerable dominance of rightist orientation, whereas Sweden is the only country whose press system clearly supports leftist viewpoints. Comparing the scores of 1990 and 1970 confirms that

balance in nearly all press systems has improved over time. Improvement is especially high in countries with originally extreme imbalances, while due to a ceiling-effect countries with high balance in 1970 have undergone less change. Minimal exceptions from this general trend can be found in Germany, Italy and Norway, and a clear decline of diversity has taken place in the United Kingdom. The deterioration in the United Kingdom can be put down to the fact that most of the tabloids with growing circulation rates reported in favor of conservative ideologies and, in addition, one of the largest tabloids has shifted from the left towards the right.

*Table 3:* Overall balance in press systems (1970, 1990; circulation of most important newspapers, sorted by deviance in 1990)

| Country | 1990               |                        | 1970               |                        | 1970/1990                        |
|---------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
|         | Mean <sup>a)</sup> | Deviance <sup>b)</sup> | Mean <sup>a)</sup> | Deviance <sup>b)</sup> | Change of deviance <sup>c)</sup> |
| SWE     | 3.13               | -0.37                  | 2.88               | -0.62                  | -0.25                            |
| A       | 3.39               | -0.11                  | 3.13               | -0.37                  | -0.26                            |
| LUX     | 3.42               | -0.08                  | 3.31               | -0.19                  | -0.11                            |
| SPA     | 3.46               | -0.04                  | 3.94               | 0.44                   | -0.40                            |
| NET     | 3.47               | -0.03                  | 3.65               | 0.15                   | -0.12                            |
| JAP     | 3.55               | 0.05                   | 3.58               | 0.08                   | -0.03                            |
| BEL     | 3.58               | 0.08                   | 3.14               | -0.36                  | -0.28                            |
| GER     | 3.58               | 0.08                   | 3.49               | -0.01                  | +0.07                            |
| USA     | 3.62               | 0.12                   | 3.70               | 0.20                   | -0.08                            |
| DEN     | 3.69               | 0.19                   | 4.04               | 0.54                   | -0.35                            |
| GRE     | 3.75               | 0.25                   | 5.31               | 1.81                   | -1.56                            |
| NOR     | 3.82               | 0.32                   | 3.80               | 0.30                   | +0.02                            |
| FIN     | 3.82               | 0.32                   | 4.00               | 0.50                   | -0.18                            |
| ITA     | 3.90               | 0.40                   | 3.93               | 0.43                   | +0.03                            |
| ICE     | 3.99               | 0.49                   | 4.45               | 0.95                   | -0.46                            |
| UK      | 4.18               | 0.68                   | 3.98               | 0.48                   | +0.20                            |
| IRE     | 5.08               | 1.58                   | 5.87               | 2.37                   | -0.79                            |

n.a.: AUS, CAN, FRA, NEW, SWI, POR, TUR.

a) Weighted mean of left-right scale (1 = far left, 6 = far right; neutrality = 3.5).

b) Degree and direction of deviance from mean of left-right scale (minus = deviation towards left).

c) Decrease in deviance (= higher balance), +: increase in deviance (= lower balance).

*Source:* Banks, 1970, 1990; author's calculations.



#### 5.4 *Typology of press systems: Diversity of actors and opinions*

What are the central dimensions to classify press systems of Western democracies? Due to the low degree of formal regulations, we suggest a typology of press systems that draws on informal structures, specifically the empirical pattern of quantitative and content diversity. This classification may also shed some light on the relationship between concentration and diversity of opinions which is disputed among media economists. The concern about quantitative diversity originates from the presumption that as a consequence of growing concentration and monopolization the range of opinions that enter the public agenda will become more and more limited. However, previous empirical analyses show a rather ambiguous relationship between the two dimensions of diversity (Entman 1985; Hale 1988; Staab 1986). Some authors even argue that concentration contributes to content diversity because large audiences force newspapers to cover a wide range of viewpoints. In addition, the quality of information may be higher with large companies because their financial capacity allows them to invest in new technologies and a wide network of correspondents (McCombs 1988). However, even though the spectrum of opinions may be covered sufficiently, ownership concentration is regarded responsible for growing standardization of media content at the expense of cultural pluralism (Humphreys 1996:66ff.).

*Figure 5* presents the classification of press systems according to the dimensions of quantitative and content diversity. Note that this figure is based on the most important newspapers only. The mean of the distribution was taken to differentiate between low and high degree of diversity. Japan and the United Kingdom were assigned to a specific category ("very low"). These two countries were excluded from the calculation of the mean because the 18 Japanese and British newspapers count for more than half of the circulation of the 153 cases considered and would have distorted the classification of the other countries.

The cells of the main diagonal in *Figure 5* represent the prevailing assumptions about the relationship of quantitative and content diversity. It is supported by nine out of 17 countries. High concentration and low balance (see upper left cell), which can be regarded as the worst case, is found in two countries (United Kingdom and Italy). Seven countries reveal the ideal situation with both high quantitative and high content diversity (see lower right cell). The other two cells represent the counter-arguments. Five countries show that a high degree of quantitative diversity may guarantee citizens' opportunity to choose between different sources of information, but does not necessarily provide access to alternative political viewpoints. All Nordic countries, except Denmark, and Ireland fall into this category. On the other hand, the press systems of three countries are highly balanced in spite of high concentration. In sum, the distribution of countries does not show a clear pattern of relationship. It can be assumed that both dimensions of diversity vary independently

from each other. Variations of content diversity may be caused by specific aspects of the political culture, e.g., the cultural hegemony of an ideological bloc, historical associations between the press and political parties, or the journalistic culture, rather than the economic structure of the media industry.

*Figure 5:* Typology of press systems: Quantitative diversity (density) and content diversity (balance) (circulation of the most important newspapers, 1990)

| Content diversity <sup>a)</sup> | Quantitative diversity <sup>b)</sup> |            |   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|---|
|                                 | Very low                             | Low        | High  |
| Low                             | UK                                   | ITA        | FIN<br>ICE<br>IRE<br>NOR<br>SWE             |
| High                            | JAP                                  | GER<br>USA | A<br>BEL<br>DEN<br>GRE<br>LUX<br>NET<br>SPA |

n.a.: AUS, CAN, FRA, NEW, SWI, POR, TUR.

a) Overall balance; differentiation between low/high according to mean of deviance (0.31).

b) Density; differentiation between low/high according to mean of circulation without JAP and U.K. (265.525; low density = high quantitative diversity).

## 6 Structures of diversity in broadcasting systems

Achieving diversity in broadcasting systems is much more problematic than is the case in press systems. This is mainly a consequence of the particular technological and economical features of broadcasting. For most of its existence, television was faced with a tight scarcity of transmission capacity. In contrast to paper as the physical transmission facility of the press, the availability of frequencies was considerably limited. In addition, the economic constraints of broadcasting are a serious impediment of diversity. The production of television programs is characterized by high costs which are entirely independent from the number of consumers. Thus, the entry barrier for new actors is extremely high, and only a few actors can survive on a national market. For these reasons, many media economists

regard broadcasting as a "natural monopoly" (Owen/Wildman 1992; Garnham/Locksley 1991; Seufert 1994)

To safeguard a minimum of quantitative diversity, broadcasting has been subjected to extensive regulation. The main instrument is the allocation of transmission facilities by a license system by which concentration processes and the qualification of suppliers can be controlled. Besides technological and economical rationales for regulation, political reasons play an important role as well (Hoffmann-Riem 1996; Humphreys 1996). More than the press, policy makers regard broadcasting as a powerful instrument in the political process. Therefore, broadcasting has been submitted to several content-related regulations, in particular to carry through internal diversity.

### *6.1 Formal regulation of goal orientation*

In contrast to the press, broadcasting can be assigned either to civil or administrative law. Especially in Europe public-service orientation and regulation by administrative law has been the initial conception of broadcasting. The same holds for Japan that adopted the BBC model after World War II. On the other hand, the US broadcasting system represents the market-oriented model which is dominated by actors primarily pursuing commercial interests.

Broadcasting in *public-service systems* is supposed to act primarily in favor of the common welfare. The main objective of public broadcasting is to promote societal integration by serving as a public forum where different interests can be articulated. Coverage of the entire country, representing minority interests, providing comprehensive information, and supporting the national culture are further tasks imposed on public broadcasting (Blumler 1992; Katz 1989; Scharf 1990). Since public tasks are usually regarded as incompatible with commercial goals, public stations are taken out of economic competition. Thus, administrative law is usually the legal framework of public broadcasting, although it is not the only possible arrangement. For example, Swedish public broadcasting is organized as a joint-stock company, the shares of which are held by interest groups, publishing houses, and commercial enterprises. In principal, the crucial criterion for classifying broadcasting stations as "public" is the non-profit construction of the organization and the commitment to the public interest (Sepstrup 1989).

In *commercial systems* broadcasters act as economic entrepreneurs pursuing the main goal of profit-making. In order to maximize audiences, private broadcasting adapts to the needs of the "median viewer" (Noam 1991:45ff.). However, even under civil law broadcasting is obliged to some extent to observe public service standards. In contrast to the press, the observation of standards is not left to self-control by the private broadcasters.

Instead, supervisory bodies, which are accountable to parliament or government, exert control to assure quantitative diversity as well as diversity in programming and political content. Due to the increasing prevalence of deregulative policies, numerous countries have minimized, in some cases even eliminated public service-oriented obligations. The remaining constraints then refer to incenses, economic structure (concentration, foreign ownership), advertising regulations and basic moral standards.

## 6.2 *Structural diversification*

Since quantitative diversity, i.e., the maximization of the number of actors, is structurally limited in broadcasting systems, many countries aim to extend diversity by "structural diversification" (Hoffmann-Riem 1996:285). This can be achieved in two ways, namely by establishing the coexistence of public and commercial goal orientation, and by implementing commercial elements in the public sector. Both alternatives will be discussed in the following sections.

### 6.2.1 Dualization and quantitative diversity

From the early 1980s onwards, more and more originally pure public broadcasting systems lost their monopolistic position. The structural change towards dual systems was driven by technological innovations like cable and satellite as well as the broadening of the terrestrial spectrum by which the scarcity of transmission capacities could be overcome to a large extent. In most cases dualization took place by new actors entering the system, whereas the transformation of public into commercial stations, like in France, was the exception.

In addition, dualization opened up competition in broadcasting systems which hardly existed before. The optimistic assumption is that the confrontation of alternative logics of broadcasting results in a dynamic where each segment is forced to strengthen its advantages and to minimize its failures. Thus, public and commercial arrangements are regarded as complementary structural elements each compensating for their respective deficits. The main problem of public service broadcasting stems from the high degree of supervision which makes it specifically vulnerable to political interference, be it by the government like in France, or political parties like in Germany and Italy. In these countries, political actors dominate decision-making in the supervisory boards of broadcasting organizations which frequently leads to instrumentalization, or at least to a higher inclination of television to serve the communicative interests of those in power. In addition, the lack of market mechanisms often results in bureaucratic inflexibility and inefficiency. In contrast, commercial broadcasting is vulnerable to economic interests that drive its pro-

gramming towards mainstream taste and the marginalization of political information. Since entertainment attracts the largest audiences, commercial television usually devotes only a minimum of time to news and background information; at the same time, tries to avoid controversial issues. Therefore, commercial broadcasting might be the adequate arrangement to broaden quantitative diversity, but can be assumed as being less efficient with respect to content diversity which is central to public debate and political opinion-building.

However, critics of deregulation doubt whether competition will prove to be the benevolent invisible hand stimulating broadcasters to improve their performance to the end that public television becomes more efficient and audience-oriented, and commercial television increasing the quality of political information. On the contrary, competition in a dual system may even deteriorate quality as public television in particular is compelled to convergent programming and the adaptation to the entertainment preferences of the "median viewer" (Schatz 1994; Pfetsch 1996).

*Table 4* shows the structural change of broadcasting systems that has taken place between 1980 and 1990 when the technological and formal preconditions for commercial broadcasting have been broadened. The number of countries with dual broadcasting systems at national level has doubled during the decade under observation. The most notable gain in quantitative diversity has occurred in the commercial segment. The number of national commercial stations increased from 10 to 24. But stations operating under the logic of public-service orientation are still the majority. While the commercial segment is characterized by dynamic growth, the public segment seems to be saturated with two stations being the median number of actors. The exceptions with more than two stations are typically countries with a high degree of cultural segmentation, like Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The three cases where the number of public stations has increased are systems which consisted of only one station before. France is the only country that has reduced the number of public stations.

*Table 4:* Number of broadcasting stations (1980, 1990; national level, terrestrial distribution)

| Country           | 1980   |            | 1990   |            |
|-------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
|                   | Public | Commercial | Public | Commercial |
| A                 | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| AUS <sup>a)</sup> | 1      | 3          | 1      | 3          |
| BEL <sup>b)</sup> | 4      | 0          | 4      | 2          |
| CAN               | 2      | 1          | 2      | 1          |
| DEN               | 1      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| FIN               | 1      | 1          | 2      | 1          |
| FRA               | 3      | 0          | 2      | 3          |

Table 4: (cont'd)

| Country           | 1980   |            | 1990   |            |
|-------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
|                   | Public | Commercial | Public | Commercial |
| GER               | 3      | 0          | 3      | 2          |
| GRE <sup>c)</sup> | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| ICE <sup>d)</sup> | 1      | 0          | 1      | 0          |
| IRE <sup>e)</sup> | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| ITA               | 3      | 0          | 3      | 3          |
| JAP <sup>f)</sup> | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| LUX               | 0      | 1          | 0      | 1          |
| NET <sup>g)</sup> | 9      | 0          | 9      | 0          |
| NEW               | 2      | 0          | 2      | 1          |
| NOR               | 1      | 0          | 1      | 0          |
| POR               | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| SPA               | 2      | 0          | 2      | 2          |
| SWE <sup>h)</sup> | 2      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| SWI               | 3      | 0          | 3      | 0          |
| TUR               | 1      | 0          | 2      | 0          |
| UK                | 2      | 1          | 2      | 2          |
| USA               | 1      | 3          | 1      | 3          |
| Σ                 | 52     | 10         | 54     | 24         |

- a) The second public channel, SBS (Special Broadcasting Service) covers only the main urban areas.
- b) Due to the cultural segmentation, none of the channels is distributed country-wide. Each of the two linguistic groups (Dutch-speaking Flemish, French-speaking Walloons) is served by two public and one commercial station.
- c) Commercial broadcasting is only allowed at subnational level. However, two stations have expanded to nearly nationwide coverage.
- d) In 1990, there existed two private stations which were only available by pay-TV.
- e) The commercial station, TV3, which started in 1990, is not counted here because it ceased already in 1991.
- f) Commercial broadcasting is only allowed at subnational level. Due to network-building of the commercial stations, Japan meanwhile has a de facto dual system.
- g) The nine public stations are broadcasting on two (1980) and three (1990) channels. The private stations RTL4 which is producing in Dutch is being transmitted from outside the country.
- h) The commercial station TV3 which is producing in Swedish is being transmitted from outside the country.

The first steps towards dualization often took place at subnational level and by exploiting new transmission technologies like cable. *Table 5* gives an overview over these aspects of quantitative diversity, although it does not fall into our general approach which focuses at national level and on terrestrial transmission. Note that due to incomplete data and high fluctuation on the subnational and cable market it is impossible to assess how many citizens actually benefit from this form of diversification. Especially Italy and the USA reveal an abundance of private stations at subnational level. But also the public segment has ex-

panded quantitative diversity by regional and local stations. Cable facilities are utilized by public and commercial actors alike, although a good deal of the capacities provided by cable is used to transmit programs which are produced outside the country.

*Table 5: Diversification of broadcasting systems by subnational and cable stations (1990)*

| Country | Regional and local channels |            | Cable channels       |            | Cable Households (%) |
|---------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
|         | Public                      | Commercial | Public <sup>a)</sup> | Commercial |                      |
| A       | -                           | -          | +                    | -          | 25.0                 |
| AUS     | +                           | ++         | -                    | -          | -                    |
| BEL     | -                           | -          | +                    | -          | 88.9                 |
| CAN     | ++                          | +          | n.a.                 | n.a.       | 78.8                 |
| DEN     | ++                          | -          | -                    | -          | 59.0                 |
| FIN     | -                           | -          | -                    | +          | 42.3                 |
| FRA     | -                           | -          | +                    | +          | 1.5                  |
| GER     | -                           | ++         | +                    | +          | 24.8                 |
| GRE     | -                           | +          | -                    | -          | -                    |
| ICE     | -                           | -          | -                    | -          | -                    |
| IRE     | -                           | -          | -                    | -          | 48.9                 |
| ITA     | -                           | +++        | -                    | -          | 0.4                  |
| JAP     | -                           | ++         | -                    | -          | 18.0                 |
| LUX     | -                           | -          | -                    | -          | 63.3                 |
| NET     | -                           | -          | -                    | -          | 79.5                 |
| NEW     | n.a.                        | n.a.       | n.a.                 | n.a.       | -                    |
| NOR     | ++                          | -          | -                    | -          | 33.3                 |
| POR     | -                           | -          | -                    | -          | -                    |
| SPA     | -                           | +          | -                    | -          | 3.0                  |
| SWE     | -                           | -          | -                    | +          | 29.4                 |
| SWI     | -                           | +          | +                    | +          | 69.1                 |
| TUR     | +                           | -          | -                    | -          | -                    |
| UK      | +                           | -          | -                    | ++         | 1.4                  |
| USA     | +++                         | +++        | -                    | ++         | 55.1                 |

a) Most of the public cable channels are coproductions with other countries.

-: None.

+: < 10 stations.

++: 10 - 100 stations.

+++ : < 100 stations.

*Source:* OECD 1993; Noam 1991; Hans-Bredow-Institut 1992.

### 6.2.2 Modes of financing and the strength of public-service orientation

To modify the conditions of financing is the main instrument to achieve structural diversification within public service systems. As Blumler/Nossiter (1991:5) point out financing is a key feature of broadcasting because it "correlate(s) with different broadcasting purposes." Three basic forms of revenue sources exist which can be related to a continuum between political accountability on the one hand and market orientation on the other hand:

*State subsidies* closely link broadcasting to the interests of the government. Broadcasting systems that rely on subsidies are highly vulnerable to political interference as the amount of available resources is directly dependent on political decisions. However, establishing a subsidy system is not only driven by the motive of instrumentalizing the media. Especially in less wealthy countries, where the income of the population is relatively low, the state often takes the responsibility for public communication.

*License fees* are the most common financial resource in public-service systems. They are paid by viewers for the availability of programs, thus creating "a mutual sense of responsibility between broadcaster and audience members" (Head 1985:213). License fees are intended to keep broadcasting independent from both state and market influences, thus enabling broadcasters to produce comprehensive information which covers minority standpoints as well as critical commentary (Blumler/Brynin/Nossiter 1986). However, since it is usually the parliaments that decide on the fees, they can easily be used to exert political pressure. In addition, it is criticized that there is no direct relationship between output and consumer demand, frequently resulting in paternalistic and elitist programming policy (Garnham/Locksley 1991).

*Advertising revenues* implement market mechanisms into the process of public communication. The main objectives of commercial financing is to increase the independence of broadcasters from political pressure and to make programming more responsive to viewers' demands. However, as the underlying logic of advertising revenues is to sell the attention of as many viewers as possible to the advertiser the relationship between broadcaster and viewers is an indirect one at best.<sup>9</sup>

The combination of modes of financing diversifies their respective incentives and risks. In order to give public broadcasting more autonomy and to stimulate economic competition, state subsidies or license fees are supplemented or even replaced by advertising revenues. The more public stations are financed by advertising the more their activity is assumed to be shaped by the commercial goal orientation. Although they are not allowed to make profits, they participate in the market and, thus, are inclined to produce mass-attracting programs to maximize advertising incomes. After dualization the conditions of

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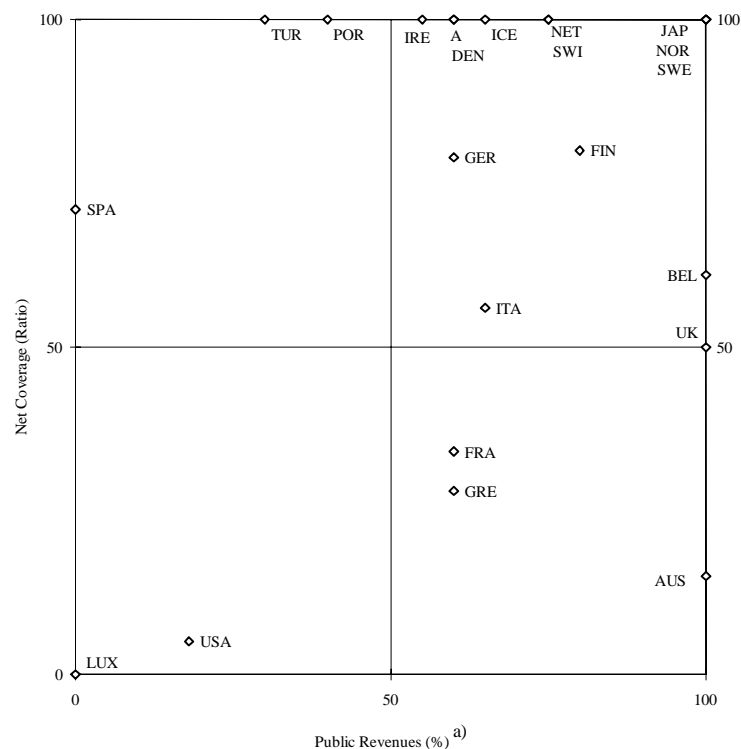
9 A direct relationship between consumer and broadcaster only exists with pay-TV which therefore is often preferred by proponents of pure market structures in broadcasting (see Brittan 1991)



public broadcasting systems that rely on mixed revenues have changed fundamentally. Public stations have now been drawn into fierce competition with commercial stations for advertisements. Since the advertising market has not grown correspondingly and public stations still have to observe various restrictions, they have lost a considerable amount of their revenues.

In *Figure 6* broadcasting systems are classified according to the strength of their public-service segment. One dimension shows the extent to which public stations are financed by public revenues, i.e., state subsidies and/or license fees.<sup>10</sup> The remaining portion of 100% is commercial revenues. The second dimension specifies the relative size of the public-service segment. For this purpose the mere number of actors is not a sufficient indicator because the amount of their audiences varies. Analog to the circulation of newspapers, net coverage is taken as a measure of the size of public broadcasting instead. The remaining portion of 100% is the net coverage of commercial stations.

*Figure 6:* Strength of public-service orientation in broadcasting systems (1990; national level)



n.a.: CAN, NEW.

a) State subsidies and/or license fees.

Source: Hans-Bredow-Institut (1992); STERN (1991); author's calculations.

10 In Greece, public broadcasting is partly financed by a compulsory tax on electricity.

The four quarters of the figure represent typical constellations of broadcasting systems according to the prevalence of public-service orientation: The upper right quarter comprises systems which are unequivocally dominated by the public-service orientation as most, if not all television coverage is provided by public stations which in addition are mainly, if not completely financed by public revenues. In 1990, most of the OECD countries (13) fall into this category. Broadcasting systems in the lower left quarter are characterized by the adverse structure, namely the dominance of commercial goal orientation. Only two countries are located in this part of the figure. In the USA, public television is confined to a very small audience and draws its financial resources mainly from other than public funding, mostly from donations by commercial companies. Luxembourg does not have a public broadcasting at all. The two other parts of the figure represent ambiguous structures. The upper left quarter contains three broadcasting systems with an extensive public-service segment which is only poorly supported by public funding. On the other hand, the public service segments of the three countries located in the lower right quarter, though constricted to less than half of the national coverage, are extensively financed by public revenues.

The cases are not evenly distributed across the two-dimensional space. Rather, 16 of the 22 countries considered are located at the borderline of the figure, indicating that structural diversification has been confined to one dimension only, i.e., either dualization or a mixed mode of financing. In eight of these cases national television is exclusively provided by public-service stations, whereas public revenues are to varying degrees supplemented by advertising. Three countries have established a dual structure with the coexistence of public and commercial stations, but exclude public broadcasting from competition by full non-commercial funding. With regard to this combination the United Kingdom is the only case which perfectly balances both logics. The strict separation between the two segments has obviously contributed to their viability and stability. The Spanish broadcasting system is unique in that its public segment is completely financed by advertising. Since it is also exposed to competition with commercial stations, it can be hypothesized that in the long run it will largely lose its public-service character. Only four countries reveal homogeneous structures on both dimensions with Japan, Norway and Sweden representing pure public-service systems and Luxembourg as a pure commercial system occupying the other extreme point.

In sum, the classification shows that in 1990 public-service orientation was still the dominant logic of broadcasting. Due to the growing pressure caused by economic competition and globalization, public broadcasting has moved towards the commercial logic of operation during the last years. At the same time, even the legitimacy of the license fee has

been questioned which may result in a new conception of the political and cultural role of public broadcasting and eventually its marginalization (Kleinsteuber/Wiesner/Wilke 1991).

### 6.3 *Diversity of opinions*

There is almost no variation with regard to different forms of content diversity in broadcasting systems. For the most part television stations are committed to internal diversity either by formal regulation or by an economic strategy.

The forum function of public-service broadcasting naturally requires internal diversity. This holds all the more as the limited number of actors makes balanced complementarity of biases rather unlikely. There are only two exceptions where external diversity has been established in public broadcasting systems. In the Netherlands, political interests are organized according to the principle of "pillarization," i.e., societal life and intermediary institutions are vertically segmented, especially along religious denomination and social class. Pillarization is applied to the organization of broadcasting as well. Fixed time apportionments are allocated to each of the main groups to broadcast their own programs. There exist nine different broadcasting organizations which transmit their programs on three channels. Air time is allocated according to the groups' support in the population.<sup>11</sup> Another externally diverse system is Italy where on the basis of an informal agreement each of the main political parties, the Christian Democrats, the Socialists and the Communists, is granted privileged access to one of the three channels of RAI.<sup>12</sup> Internal diversity can also be regarded as being restricted where the government intervenes into broadcasting programming. This applies to Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. In these countries government frequently interferes in political reporting by giving direct instructions or banning particular news items and opinions.

In some countries commercial broadcasting is formally bound to observe internal diversity as well. In Germany, for example, commercial television is only conceded external diversity or special interest programs if there exist at least three nationwide general private programs. In the USA, the so-called Fairness Doctrine expected US broadcasting to observe internal diversity by giving balanced coverage to all sides of a conflict and providing

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11 The broadcasting organizations are allied with religious groups (Evangelicals, Catholics, Protestants) as well as political ideologies (Liberals, Social Democrats). Three are neutral. Support of one of the broadcasting organizations is indicated by subscription of their program magazines (Brants/McQuail 1992).

12 After 1990, the breakdown of the Italian party system inevitably affected the ideological structure of broadcasting.

equal time to political candidates.<sup>13</sup> The crucial diversity problem, however, that arises with commercial broadcasting is mainly the diversity of programming rather than the diversity of political opinions. Several program analyses which compare the performance of commercial and public stations clearly show considerably lower amounts of political information in commercial station output, thus making political information less available to viewers (Sonnenberg 1990 for EU countries; Krüger 1992 for Germany).

#### *6.4 Typology of broadcasting systems: Formal diversity and diversity of actors*

Several efforts have been undertaken to formulate typologies of broadcasting systems. Although these typologies have contributed to specify basic structural characteristics of broadcasting systems, they often are unsatisfactory in that they lack systematic categorization or empirical applicability.

The best-known typology is that of Siebert/Peterson/Schramm (1969). The authors distinguish between "four rationales of the media," defined as authoritarian, libertarian, social-responsibility and totalitarian models. This approach is widely used in comparative media studies, but has also been criticized for several reasons (Lowenstein/Merrill 1990:163ff.; Nimmo/Mansfield 1982). The main objection is that the definition of the four types confound normative expectations and empirical manifestations. It mainly draws upon philosophical derivatives about the functions of the media in society, but also argues with institutional arrangements like ownership. In addition, the concepts are only of limited utility for empirical comparisons. Since the types are constructed on the basis of invariable categories rather than on dimensions, they do not capture the broad variation that exists within each of the types. As a consequence, authors referring to Siebert/Peterson/Schramm simply group media systems into geo-political areas like Western World, Third World and Communist World (Martin/Chaudhary 1983).

Wiio (1983) offers three highly abstract four-fold typologies. This approach goes far beyond the Siebert/Peterson/Schramm typology as it systematically relates basic structures of media systems to each other. The categories of the typologies are receiver system and message system, ownership and control, and the right to receive and the right to send, which are then classified as "open/close," "public/private" and "individual/societal." However, the resulting types do not offer significant gains. Two of the typologies result in virtually identical types as with Siebert/Peterson/Schramm. Another one merely distinguishes between press and television on the one hand, and broad country groups (western, commu-

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13 The Fairness Doctrine has been abrogated in 1987, mainly because of formal reasons concerning its legal status (Hoffmann-Riehm 1996:246ff.). Undoubtedly, the then dominant political philosophy of deregulation has contributed to this decision.

nist, developing countries) on the other hand. In addition, it remains dubious whether and how Wiio's dimensions can be applied empirically.

Brants/Siune's (1992:104) typology of broadcasting systems aims directly at empirical classification, though it is less well developed theoretically. The authors distinguish between "pure public," "mixed revenue," "dual system," and "pure commercial." These categories which are constructed as one-dimensional variations compound in fact two different dimensions, namely formal structure and the mode of financing. Thus, dual systems, whose public segments are entirely financed by public revenues, and those, which are not, cannot be differentiated. As we have pointed out earlier (see section 6.2.2), these different structural conditions are of crucial importance to the viability of public broadcasting.

The following typology of broadcasting systems combines two dimensions of diversity, that is formal and quantitative diversity. The dimension of *formal diversity* classifies the goal orientation as it is constituted by institutional arrangements. The categories refer to the question of whether or not the citizens can choose between different goal orientations, i.e., public and commercial interests. A monopolistic structure comprises only one of the goal orientations, whereas a competitive structure consists of both, thereby facilitating choice. The dimension of *quantitative diversity* relates to the question of whether or not citizens can choose between different actors within one of the segments of the broadcasting system. A monopolistic structure, where only one actor exists, provides no opportunity for choice, while a competitive structure comprising alternative actors does.

Figure 7: Typology of broadcasting systems

| Formal diversity <sup>a)</sup>   | Quantitative diversity <sup>b)</sup>                      |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | Monopolistic<br>in public/in commercial<br>segment        | Competitive                              |
| Monopolistic<br>• public service orientation<br>• commercial orientation | Public hegemony<br>Commercial hegemony                    | Public multitude<br>Commercial multitude |
| Competitive  | Limited multiplicity with he-<br>gemony within segment(s) | Open multiplicity                        |

a) Number of formal goal orientations; monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

b) Number of actors (television stations); monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

Figure 7 shows the four-fold table resulting from the formal and the quantitative dimension of diversity. Three of the cells define variations of diversity which differ according to the extent of possible choices: "Multitude" of choice is provided by a system consisting of

only one goal orientation, but competing actors. The type of "limited multiplicity" defines systems which consist of both goal orientations, but do not provide diversity of actors within segments. "Open multiplicity" offers most opportunities of choice as it consists of both goal orientations and within each of which more than one actor. In contrast, the upper left cell defines a non-choice structure where "hegemony" exists both in the formal and in the quantitative dimension of diversity.

*Figure 7.1:* Classification of broadcasting systems: Formal and quantitative diversity (1990, national level)

| Formal diversity   | Quantitative diversity                             |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Monopolistic<br>in public/in commercial<br>segment | Competitive  |
| Monopolistic<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public service orientation</li> </ul> | ICE<br>NOR   | A<br>DEN<br>GRE<br>IRE<br>JAP<br>NET<br>POR<br>SWE<br>SWI<br>TUR |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commercial orientation</li> </ul>                     | LUX  | -  |
| Competitive  | AUS<br>USA   | CAN<br>NEW<br>FIN  |
|  |  | BEL<br>FRA<br>GER<br>ITA<br>SPA<br>UK                            |

*Figure 7.1* classifies the broadcasting systems of the OECD countries according to this typology. The classification includes stations that operate at national level and cover at least three-quarters of the population (see Table 4). In 1990, almost all broadcasting systems (21 countries) offer at least a minimum of choice. About half of them (10) confine competition to stations operating under the logic of public-service goal orientation. Therefore, their diversity structure can be classified as "public multitude." Another 11 countries have established dual systems; six of them are classified as the "open multiplicity" type,

indicating a diversity structure with optimal choice opportunities, whereas in five dual systems diversity is limited to one of the two segments as no competition exists between similar actors. The remaining three countries where no choice opportunities exist are Iceland and Norway with the hegemony of a single public stations and Luxembourg with the hegemony of a single commercial station.

Taking subnational diversity and cable television into account (see Table 5), we would obtain different classifications in some cases. Norway has established a number of regional public stations and would therefore move from "public monopoly" to the "public multitude" type of diversity. In Iceland, two commercial programs are distributed as pay-TV which are not considered in Figure 7.1 because this mode of distribution systematically restricts the general availability of programs as well. Considering these two additional actors, diversity in Iceland's broadcasting system would be classified as "limited multiplicity." Thanks to subnational diversification and/or cable technology, Japan, Sweden and Switzerland are in fact dual systems and would fall under "open multiplicity." For the same reasons, Australia, Canada and the USA would move from "limited" to "open multiplicity." However, in many cases the opportunities of diversification have merely been used to expand diversity within the existing formal structure. This applies to Austria, Denmark and Turkey where the number of public stations has been increased. Considering the developments since 1990, broadening the "multitude" of choice turned out to be merely a transitional stage in the evolution towards dualization in these countries.

A comparison with 1980 demonstrates the fundamental change that has taken place in broadcasting systems. *Figure 7.2* classifies OECD countries before technological innovations and deregulatory policy facilitated diversification. In 1980, public service was clearly the dominant formal arrangement of broadcasting. However, most public systems (14) had at least an established quantitative diversity, thus falling into the type of "public multitude," whereas four systems were restricted to a monopolistic structure. Five countries had already established dual systems, although none of them achieved "open multiplicity." These cases of early dualization are quite remarkable because multiplicity has been accomplished before it was supported by technological developments. Finland and the United Kingdom, after starting with public broadcasting, established a commercial segment already in the formative years of television. In these countries, particular institutional arrangement and a high degree of regulation in both segments have protected especially the viability of the public segment up to now. In contrast, Canada and Australia established dual systems from the beginning. While they basically favored broadcasting as economic enterprise, they added a public sector in order to substitute for anticipated shortcomings of commercial television. In the United States which in principal prefers commercial broad-

casting, the delayed introduction of a public segment as well as the lack of supportive policies may be seen as a reason for its marginality.

*Figure 7.2:* Classification of broadcasting systems: Formal and quantitative diversity (1980, national level)

| Formal diversity                             | Quantitative diversity                             |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Monopolistic<br>in public/in commercial<br>segment | Competitive  |
| Monopolistic<br>• public service orientation | DEN<br>ICE<br>NOR<br>TUR                           | A<br>BEL<br>FRA<br>GER<br>GRE<br>ICE<br>ITA<br>JAP<br>NET<br>NEW<br>POR<br>SPA<br>SWE<br>SWI |
| • commercial orientation                     |  | LUX  |
| Competitive                                  | AUS<br>FIN<br>USA                                  | CAN<br>FIN<br>UK   |

## 7 Diversity of media systems: Towards a typology

Press and broadcasting are usually discussed separately, thus ignoring that media systems are built up by both subsystems which interact with each other. Generalized statements on the media that are based on findings on the performance and effects of television fall short as long as they do not take the particular performance and effects of the press into account, and vice versa. However, the different constraints under which press and broadcasting are operating make it immensely difficult to integrate both parts of the media systems both theoretically and empirically.



In the following we suggest tentative typologies of media systems that encompass both subsystems. For this purpose we will draw upon the dimension of quantitative diversity and the dimension of content diversity. Since there is no variation with regard to formal diversity in press systems, it does not make sense to take this dimension into account. Relating press and broadcasting provides us with a general picture of whether a particular diversity structure dominates the entire media system or whether limitations of diversity are confined to only one of the segments.

The combination of measures of diversity in press and broadcasting systems requires a fairly abstract approach. Thus, the classification distinguishes between low and high levels of diversity. *Figure 8.1* classifies media systems according to the dimension of quantitative diversity.

*Figure 8.1:* Classification of media systems: Quantitative diversity (1990)

| Press system <sup>a)</sup> | Broadcasting system <sup>b)</sup>             |  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
|                            | Low   | High   |
| Low                        | A<br>IRE<br>JAP<br>NET<br>POR                 | AUS<br>BEL<br>CAN<br>FRA<br>GER<br>ITA<br>SPA<br>UK<br>USA |
| High                       | DEN<br>ICE<br>LUX<br>NOR<br>SWE<br>SWI<br>TUR | FIN<br>GRE<br>NEW  |

a) Number of formal goal orientations; monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

b) Number of actors (television stations); monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

The classification shows the extent to which alternative information sources exist in press and broadcasting systems. The degree of quantitative diversity in press systems is indicated by the relative amount of newspapers using the mean of the distribution to distinguish between low and high levels. Broadcasting systems are classified according to whether or not there exist more than one actor operating under more than one formal goal orientation. A

low-choice structure is represented by the two types of hegemony and multitude, whereas multiplicity, both limited and open, is taken as a high degree of choice.

The media systems of eight countries are characterized by the same structure in both subsystems with five countries (Austria, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal) revealing severely restricted diversity, whereas only three countries (Finland, Greece, New Zealand) achieve an optimal structure combining a high degree of quantitative diversity in both press and broadcasting. However, the diversity structure of most media systems (16) is ambiguous. In most Nordic countries, a low degree of quantitative diversity in broadcasting coincides with high diversity in the press system. In contrast, especially the Anglo-Saxon and the southern European countries provide choice in broadcasting systems mainly, while press diversity is limited.

In *Figure 8.2* media systems are classified according to content diversity. For this purpose we draw upon the dimension of internal diversity because this structure of political information is a better guarantee of the availability of all relevant political opinions than external diversity. For press systems we specify whether the circulation of the ten most important newspapers committed to internal diversity falls below or above the overall mean of neutral circulation. Broadcasting systems that are dominated by external diversity and/or are subjected to direct government interference are classified as being of low content diversity.

*Figure 8.2:* Classification of media systems: Internal diversity (1990)

| Press system <sup>a)</sup> | Broadcasting system <sup>b)</sup> |   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
|                            | Low                               | High  |
| Low                        | GRE<br>IRE<br>ITA<br>SPA          | Den<br>ICE<br>LUX<br>SWE<br>UK              |
| High                       | NET                               | A<br>BEL<br>FIN<br>GER<br>JAP<br>NOR<br>USA |

n.a.: AUS, CAN, FRA, NEW, SWI, POR, TUR.

a) Number of formal goal orientations; monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

b) Number of actors (television stations); monopolistic = one, competitive = more than one.

Seven of the 17 countries for which we have complete information reveal the optimal structure of a high degree of internal diversity in both subsystems. On the other hand, four countries represent the worst case of the entire media system being characterized by a low degree of internal diversity. The performance of these media systems in providing a broad range of opinions as basis for the citizens' "enlightened" decision-making can be assumed to be limited. In five media systems a low degree of internal diversity in the press system is compensated by the broadcasting system, while the press system in the Netherlands counterbalances the segmentation of the broadcasting system.

A comparison of Figures 8.1. and 8.2 shows that the structure of quantitative diversity does not necessarily parallel the structure of content diversity. In Japan and Austria, we find a pattern of high content diversity in both subsystems together with low quantitative diversity. If we assume the availability of alternative viewpoints as of higher importance to rational opinion-building than the number of alternative information sources, this structure may be regarded as sufficient, albeit not optimal. From this perspective the situation in Greece where a large number of actors does not provide content diversity appears to be less supportive for the democratic process. Analog structures of quantitative and content diversity exist only in two countries with Ireland as the worst case providing limited diversity in both subsystems, and Finland revealing an optimal diversity structure in both press and broadcasting. Finally, the media system of the United Kingdom has to be mentioned. In this country diversity is mainly guaranteed by broadcasting while the press system is characterized by deficits on both diversity dimensions.

## **8 Conclusion**

The objective of this paper was primarily a systematic one. It aimed at identifying central structural characteristics of media systems and at operationalizing these concepts in a way that can be applied to empirical comparative analyses. We have argued that diversity be a central characteristic of democratic public communication because it enables citizens to deliberate contesting political alternatives and make intelligent choices. On the basis of this normative perspective, we differentiated two general dimensions of diversity the empirical variations of which are assumed to affect the political communication process.

In a first step we distinguished between formal and informal types of diversity structure. The formal structure of the mass media refers to the variety of institutional arrangements imposed by legal regulation which constrain the possible behavior of newspapers or television. The informal structure refers to the empirical interaction pattern between the constitutive elements of mass communication. These elements make up the second dimension of diversity structure. It is distinguished between quantitative aspects of diversity, referring to

the variety of actors, and content diversity, referring to the plurality of opinions which are represented in a system. Content diversity was further differentiated into internal diversity that is based on the principle of neutrality, and external diversity resulting from media outlets each of which supporting different political ideologies. Since press and broadcasting perform under very different economic and technological constraints, specific operationalizations and typologies of the general concepts of diversity have to be developed.

As there exists only little formal regulation of the press, the analysis focussed on the empirical pattern of quantitative and content diversity. With respect to quantitative diversity in press systems we draw upon the relative amount of newspapers and the density or concentration. The results show considerable differences between OECD countries with extreme cases of concentration on the one hand (Japan, France, U.K.) and, on the other hand, high variety of actors especially in small countries. The comparison over time (1970/1990) reveals a uniform trend in all countries with a more or less enormous decrease in quantitative diversity in spite of growing circulation rates.

To measure content diversity of press systems the ten major newspapers of each country were classified according to their editorial program. Neutral or independent newspapers were classified, following the principle of internal diversity. This structure of diversity guarantees best comprehensive information about the political debate, although the evaluation of contesting standpoints is largely left to the individual reader. In externally diverse systems the representation of the whole range of opinions is expected to emerge on the system level as the aggregation of single actors. At the same time, the information received by the individual reader might be restricted. Although internal diversity is usually presumed to be the preferable pattern of media diversity, newspapers pursuing a coherent ideological program serve an important orientation function in the process of public opinion formation as they provide readers with interpretive cues of how to organize the information (Voltmer 1997). The empirical analysis shows that most press systems dominated by external diversity constitute a sufficient balance between left and right outlets. There are only few exceptions, such as Ireland whose press system is clearly distorted towards the right, and the U.K., Italy and Greece which reveal a moderate lack of balance. Over a time period of twenty years (1970/1990) internal diversity has become the prevalent structure in Western press systems.

The suggested typology of press systems relates quantitative diversity and content diversity. It distinguishes between the highly problematic type with restricted diversity on both dimensions (Italy, U.K.), and the optimal constellation of both high quantitative and content diversity (seven countries). The two other categories are ambiguous types that establish diversity only on one of the dimensions. Since the comprehensive representation of

opinions is the ultimate goal of diversity, the restriction of content diversity (three countries) is less tolerable than the restriction of quantitative diversity (five countries).

The structure of broadcasting systems is much more determined by formal regulation than it is with press systems. The basic alternatives are assignment to administrative or civil law which imply the prevalence of a particular goal orientation, namely public-service orientation devoted to the public welfare on the one hand, and commercial orientation primarily seeking economic success on the other hand. Since each of the formal settings is assumed to entail specific shortcomings, a large number of countries have established structural diversification by dualization, i.e., the coexistence of public and commercial broadcasting segments, or the combination of regulative instruments, notably modes of financing. As a consequence, quantitative diversity has considerably increased between 1980 and 1990 at national level. In addition, we specified the particular strength of public-service orientation in broadcasting systems measuring the net coverage and the amount of public subsidies. It turns out that only very few countries stick with unequivocal structural arrangements, being either pure public-service systems (three countries) or pure commercial systems (Luxembourg). All other countries have accomplished internal differentiation by particular diversification. However, in the overwhelming number of countries public-service orientation is the prevalent mode of broadcasting. In only four countries this orientation plays a marginal role. The case of the British broadcasting system has to be mentioned as it represents a perfect balance of both goal orientations.

The suggested typology of broadcasting systems relates formal and quantitative diversity. The guiding question is whether alternative goal orientations and/or alternative actors exist from which citizens can choose to satisfy their information needs. The combination of the two dimensions of diversity results in four types, namely public/commercial hegemony, public/commercial multitude, limited multiplicity and open multiplicity, which can be regarded as a continuum of the degree of diversity. In 1990, 13 countries were classified in the two lower categories, with three broadcasting systems still remaining monopolistic. Eleven countries fall into the higher categories, six of which having achieved open multiplicity.

Usually press and broadcasting are studied separately although conclusions drawn from analysis of one of them frequently refer to "the media." We finally developed two typologies of media systems as a whole, relating the dimensions of quantitative diversity and content diversity of press and broadcasting systems. The classification according to quantitative diversity shows a complementary structure in most of the media systems: the restriction of diversity in one of the subsystems is counterbalanced by a high amount of outlets in the other subsystem. With respect to content diversity, we find four media systems that do not offer a sufficient range of political viewpoints in any of the subsystems. In all

other media systems we find either an optimal structure or a situation where at least one of the subsystems meets the expectations of diversity.

In our analysis we could not address the question of how structural differences of the media system affect the actual output of the media and eventually the attitudes and behavior of individuals. Several authors have hypothesized about the consequences of the macro-structural context of public communication on political behavior. Wattenberg (1986) assumes neutrality of media information to be the main reason for the increasing volatility of voters. He argues that neutral reporting that confronts voters with opposing viewpoints without providing consistent interpretations contributes to the erosion of belief systems. However, Wattenberg's study is exclusively based on American data. Therefore, we do not know about the precise causal relationship and whether the findings can be generalized across countries. Our classification of media systems according to the structure of content diversity enables us to choose contrasting contexts of information diversity deliberately. With this kind of theoretically guided selection of countries at hand Wattenberg's hypothesis could be tested in a more systematic way.

With respect to broadcasting systems, our findings show considerable differences in the extent to which television stations are committed to public or commercial goals. An interesting question of future research would be how political actors – parties, interest groups, or governments – try to get access to the citizens in different contexts of public communication. It can be assumed that political actors tend to institutionalize professional public relations as a permanent task of their organizations when they are confronted with a broadcasting system dominated by commercial goal orientation, whereas they can rely on easier access chances in a public-service context.

In general, our analysis of the structure of diversity in press and broadcasting systems has identified information environments which offer different opportunities of public deliberation and individual opinion formation. Precise knowledge of the specific structural arrangements with regard to media diversity is an indispensable basis for future comparative research as it allows for purposeful selection of cases to investigate the performance and consequences of mass communication.

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Forschungsschwerpunkt III "Sozialer Wandel, Institutionen und Vermittlungsprozesse"

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