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FUNKY EUROPE – A CONCEPT BASED ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF THE EU AND CROATIA

Abstract:

The reason why we have chosen to write about 'Funky Europe' is that such a theory enlightens the new concept to understand the European Union. It started upon the prediction and found that in the latest developments of the both the EU and Croatian communication strategy a core concept is missing. They both are in an evident phase of development, aiming to close the democratic deficit gap and inform their citizens in order to educate them, as the major reason for this gap is the lack of knowledge. However, the analyses have shown that both lack the enthusiasm as they rely purely on technical steps. Without a vision, materialized through all possible sorts of concepts, this gap is difficult if not impossible to bridge only by citizens themselves. Therefore, the concept of Funky Europe aims to resolve this gap by employing studies on cultural theories, political communication and media. The concept is based on Swedish professors' analytical studies of media influence which emphasised the need for *infotainment*. Funky Europe is a possible solution of the problems currently facing the EU and Croatia, the next-in-line EU member which will hold an informative campaign before the membership referendum. Only time will show how the EU and Croatia will approach its difficulties.

Keywords:

communication, media, cultural theories, *infotainment*, Funky Europe

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, the very beginning had been spectacular. After two world wars, years of depression, unification was followed by peace and unprecedented development in the history of Europe. That process culminated in 2004 when Europe, divided by the Iron Curtain, re-unified. Most of the European countries are today unified. What is still missing is the Southeast of

Europe. But peace and stability are now taken for granted, enthusiasm for enlargement is gone, though it was proven that only enlargement is the best option for spreading liberal democracy.

Europeanisation is a process often metaphorically portrayed as bicycling. The reasons for that are plenty. Fifty years after important economic, technological and legal developments have taken place, the EU has been taking shape through crises and consensus. Every period brought about new challenges, which were not dealt with at the same speed. However, the today's problem is democratic deficit, something all agree upon. On the other hand, this is not the last problem the EU is facing.

Croatia is facing a new type of problem today. Also, through its perspective and the Europeanization process, the new problems are encompassed by a democratic deficit comprised of three components: knowledge deficit, enthusiasm deficit and leadership deficit.

As stated, all three pitfalls are related and one is consequential of the other. The lack of knowledge is a product of the lack of information, which is a product of disabling policies. On the other hand, the lack of knowledge is detrimental to the lack of enthusiasm. Normally, the lack of leadership is seen as either a combination of the lacking knowledge and enthusiasm, or a product of a post-modernism, characterised primarily with fragmentation. These problems should be tackled through their convergence point of communication.

Structured communication provides information and makes a leader communicable to the public. It is also the prerequisite for combating the striking problem of the lack of knowledge. On the other hand, when knowledge is provided, knowledge nomads are free to know, go, do and be exactly whoever they want to be,¹ true representatives of a free democracy. Therefore, it is not striking that the primary goal of each EU communication strategy is providing information.

EP elections make the gap evident and show that citizens are generally not interested in the EU matters. The same was shown with rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty. In the UK, people voted more on the last episode of the TV-show 'Survivor' than in the EP elections.

Huge communication networks make our world and its leaders more transparent. Metcalfe's Law suggests that the value of a network is proportional to the square of the number of people using it. Comparing it to partnership, it means that having a partner is worth not twice but four times as being alone.

Most research, surveys and evaluations show that all major problems are interrelated and, as a platform, converge in communication. That is the reason why the Commission President, Mr. Barosso, after the rejection of the Constitution, subscribed himself to this new challenge and stated that fighting democratic deficit is a priority. In the first place, he reorganised the Commission to have its DG Communication from March 2006.

A combination of lack of enthusiasm and lack of knowledge is not surprisingly increasing the democratic deficit. Experiences show that citizens' voice was very well heard when they judged the EU actions by rejecting the Constitution.

This article examines the problem assuming that the essential point where all other problems meet is - communication. If communication really is the essential problem, it might answer our questions on how to address another crisis which the EU encounters.

Could we, by using the most transparent communication, enjoy the truly funky Europe?

If communication shows itself, practically and theoretically, to be the central coin of all other actions, it is not surprising that all the actions after the rejection of the Constitution

1. Ridderstrale, Jonas and Nordstrom, Kjell A., Karaoke Capitalism - Management for Mankind, Pearson Education Limited, Stockholm, 2004, p.17

were centred on it. The question arising from this centrality of communication relates to the combination of two interfering and intrinsic categories of political communication and political culture. Those two in combination constitute the basis for a proposed concept posing the first research question: if communication is central for solving the EU democratic deficit, should not then political communication and political culture give an answer how to solve the problem?

The second research question centres on communication, and poses hypothesis that the current EU communication strategy is aware of all the problems and is in its infancy embracing them all, but the one it is missing is an approach. If these prove to be true, the central research question would ask whether concentrating on their common pitfalls is a solution for these gaps.

Our proposal is that they lack the appropriate conceptual approach. If that turns out to be the case, could a different approach be justified in a form of a Funky Europe concept? A basis for answering this question is *infotainment*². It proposes 'Funky Europe' as a patch for bridging common pitfalls, a concept based on a Swedish newly realized know-how in political communication and post-modern cultural studies.

I FUNKY EUROPE AS A CONCEPT

The term funky is meant to mean – something we rather enjoyed, which is widely adopted. Within the time, the word funk and its adverb funky gained a lot of different connotations, namely all standing for something positive, amiable, especially to young, representing something that is clearly and pure transparent and what is originally diversified in its flavour of specialness.

On the other hand, in the book Funky Business funkiness is defined as mania for information and power of choice³.

For an introductory note, the origins of the term *funk* are found in a musical style. It is said that funk de-emphasizes melody and harmony, and brings rhythm which often consists of quite complex sounds, and in which every instrument plays a different melody, while all sounds fit together like a puzzle. Therefore from its origins its metaphor is adjustable to be transferred onto Europe.

The main variables⁴ of the research came in pairs. Those are politics and media, ideals and culture, unity and diversity, knowledge and information, individual and collective. They all together form a basic matrix and show the true nature of a formally recognized birth of a European kaleidoscopic culture.

The variables are shown as a bicycle metaphor to emphasise the time relevance on the one side and on the other side they are forming basic points for further reflection. This is a matrix of a Funky Europe concept:

2 The term *infotainment* has been coined to describe material where informative elements are embedded in entertainment and, conversely, entertaining elements are introduced into essentially informative material.

3 Ridderstrale, Jonas and Nordstrom, Kjell A., Funky Business, Differo d.o.o., Zagreb, 2002, p. 48

4 It should be noted that many other intervening variables (i.e. EU citizenship, transparency, supranationalism or inter-governmentalism, deepening and widening of the EU) may be and indeed are occurring. For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on the main variables.



This symbol is not just to emphasise its function in relation to this research. It goes beyond. When the bicycle is imagined to move, it mirrors the nature of the European culture showing its diversity. When a wheel is stopped and any point of its concentric circle shows the unity of a sample.

McNair states that students of political communication are confronted with fundamental epistemo-methodological problems familiar to all effect researchers because the effect of a particular message cannot be identified and measured in isolation from other environmental factors influencing an individual.⁵

Communication⁶ is most easily defined as a two-way flow of information. Communication as a notion stands as a congruent and essential transmitter between all variables in concern. That is why this article deals with such a basic notion, yet so theoretically and basically standing undefined.

It must be understood that at the EU level the debate on communications is neither legalised nor harmonised, nor theoretically elaborated yet.

II JANUS FACED COMMUNICATION: GENERAL OVERVIEW AND CONCEPT DELINEATION

2.1. A TECHNICAL FACE: POLITICS - POLITICAL COMMUNICATION - MEDIA

The EU objective still remains as the one proclaimed by Jean Monnet: "We are not trying to unite States, we are trying to unite peoples."⁷ From its commencement in fifties, the EU was a combination of political and economic aims, though primarily launched as a political union in order to secure peace. No matter in which terms we define it, it is impossible for the politics to be

5 McNair, Brian, *An Introduction to Political Communications*, Routledge, London-New York, 1999, p. 30

6 Communication theory remains young field of inquiry and as interrelates to other disciplines one can not find a consensus on communication across disciplines.

7 EU website, http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1945-1959/foundingfathers/monnet/index_en.htm, 25 September 2011

detached from communication: ever since the origins of political entities, those who governed needed to transmit their messages to the governed ones.

In today's democracies it is a well known fact that effective democracy needs effective communication. Surveys show that most European citizens know very little about EU, and many feel they have no say in its decisions. That makes the gap that needs to be closed, and part of the solution is better communication. Therefore in the case of the EU, political communication should be its central objective of presenting the EU affairs to its citizens.

In political communication system, political and media organizations are involved in the course of message preparation in 'horizontal' interaction with each other.⁸

McNair defines political communication as *purposeful communication about politics* incorporating:

1. all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors aimed at achieving specific objectives;
2. communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists, and
3. communication *about* these factors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics.⁹

Another theoretician of political communication, Liesbet Van Zoonen, "believe(s) that popularization of political communication should be seen as an attempt to [...] regain the necessary sense of community between public officials and their publics."¹⁰

During the 1980s, there was increased enthusiasm between politicians about the possibilities of using media as vehicles for presenting policies to the public. Lord Young, when British Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, claimed that government's "policies are like cornflakes, if they are not marketed they will not sell."¹¹

Yet, communication science literature suggests that the media is the most important link between politics and citizens. Secondly, more than two-thirds of EU citizens consistently identify the media in general and television in particular as their most important source of political information. Third, a whole strand of research has emphasised the centrality of media to the notion of a 'European public sphere'. Therefore, being a prerequisite for all and interfering with all other branches, communication is crucial.

2.2. A HUMAN FACE: CULTURE - IDEOLOGY AND IDEALS

Stated political and economical emphasizes of the Europeanization process poses a question whether the EU can build itself without a social and cultural pedestal. EU is historically enormously rich, from its traditions to cultures - formally recognised only in 1992 Maastricht Treaty.

The European citizen needs to identify himself with the EU politics. As a consequence, a political culture must reinforce itself with the most recent developments.

8 Blumer, Jay G. and Gurevitch, Michael, *The Crisis of Public Communication*, Rutledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 11-12

9 McNair, Brian, *An Introduction to Political Communications*, Routledge, London-New York, 1999, p. 4

10 Street, John, *Mass media, Politics and Democracy*, Palgrave, London, 2004, p. 186-187

11 Franklin, Bob, *Packaging Politics Political Communications in Britain's Media Democracy*, Edward Arnold, 1994, p. 4

Raymond Williams, the most prominent theoretician of culture, calls culture "one of the two or three most complicated words in English language. He suggests three broad definitions: (1) "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, (2) a particular way of life, whether of a people, period or a group, and (3) "works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity".¹²

The French Foreign Minister and one of the EU Founding Fathers, when proposing what the EU represents, during his 9 May 1950 speech, said: "World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it."¹³ Luckily enough, today there is no need to fight for peace, and generations can enjoy the Europe's founding fathers' efforts, but at the same time are calling us to tackle the modern problems at our best, and as proposed by Robert Schuman – by creative efforts!

"Ideals are usually part of an ideology. Morality is usually part of ideals. Ideologies, in relation to what theories abound, often include or are premised on some ideals. But they are much more than that. Ideology is part of epistemology, a way of knowing and understanding reality and partly a programme for changing that reality to achieve certain goals".¹⁴

A definition of ideology is associated with the early work of Roland Barthes, a cultural theorist who argues that ideology operates mainly at the level of connotations, the secondary, often unconscious meanings that texts and practices carry, or can be made to carry.

In the end, that is what all European law is – a reification of a legitimised opinion of those who govern emerging from their societal and cultural prism. "To deny a mobilising force of ideals is folly",¹⁵ especially as the EU was led by peace, prosperity and supra-nationalism in its phases, as has been suggested by Weiler.

By the Treaty's proclamation of aiming to bring closer the citizens of Europe, the EU wishes to preserve a cultural diversity and that brings the funky matrix on (and "it"). However, this research has a two-fold goal in relation to the EU: to show the EU's ideological current pitfalls and methodological strength in the communication strategy by introducing the new generations' values and ideals underlying the Funky Europe metaphor.

III ANALYSIS OF EU COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The EU's new approach to communication is adjusted to the level of citizens' knowledge of the EU. That has been proclaimed as a strategic responsibility of the Barroso Commission.

This new strategy has its general approach encompassing seven vectors. Those are political commitment in the first place, professionalism, orientation on demand, efficiency in better co-ordinated European Institutions and Member States, with better planning and continuous evaluation.

12 Storey, John, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture - A Reader*, Pearson Education Limited, Edinborough, 2006, p. 1

13 EU website, Declaration of May 1950, http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/decl_en.htm, 2 March 2007

14 Weiler, J.H., *The Constitution of Europe: Do the New Clothes Have an Emperor and Other Essays on European Integration*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1999, p. 239

15 *Ibid*, p. 240

The main elements of new strategy are: Action Plan, Plan D¹⁶ and White Paper¹⁷. Action Plan is a paper and the basis for most of the projects European Commission is undertaking. The Commission's Action Plan enumerated these principles: listening, communicating and going local.

Going local does not concern the spread of the brand or logo, but the knowledge. Therefore, that spills over on education and boosting networks, the EU's focus now, and leaves the citizens to perceive it on their own. MS decently do their jobs of informing the EU¹⁸, while the opposite very much depends on individual MS's and on the will of their media.

Furthermore, the tools for European Commission external information and communication are the Spokesperson's service, Eurobarometer, Europe by satellite, CR's in Member States, Internet, publications, Europe Direct¹⁹ call centre and Europe Direct information relays and networks. For example, the Commission's Eurobarometer surveys have been analysing the general public opinion since 1973 and conducted qualitative studies, but quantitative surveys are still missing.

Additionally, there are 35 representations in MS including eight regional offices. MS's representatives are tasked to represent and support the work of the Commission. They have to inform the national states public on Commission policies and visa versa.

Established headquarters in each MS are also tasked on their own – they communicate within themselves the necessary information, and they get it but what, to what extent depends purely on freedom of media and its citizens' willingness to get which kind of information.

On the other hand, the most common way the European Parliament communicates is through press releases at Committee stage, sometimes press conferences, briefings and press releases at plenary stage, and press conferences after important votes. However, journalists and news editors still consider EP's activities and representatives peripheral. Organizational body in the EP is DG Information and EP communication strategy has different target groups.

In the European Council the Working Group on Information is competent in communication. Its role is to examine EU's information policy and communication strategy, to assess ways to increase Institutions' transparency and openness, to provide access to documents and to promote inter-Institutional co-operation. It is composed of 27 MS delegates, representatives of Council's General Secretariat, and representatives of the Commission. Meeting agendas contain a list of topics and references to discussion-related documents. It principally meets twice a month.

Concluding on EU communication strategy, the Commission has networked with MS parliaments on EU issues, the EP and the Council are slowly becoming aware of its importance.

A good communication strategy depends upon three factors: networks, priorities and concept. Apart from the overall development, one of three crucial aspects of communication, as defined by Mr. Markopoulotis, is missing. Greece is an example: "€100b were given to Greece for development and citizens are still loosing confidence! There is something wrong. The thing is about the concept!"²⁰

16 Plan D is a 3D plan for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate. It was established after the "no" votes in France and the Netherlands.

17 On 1 February 2006, the European Commission adopted a WP on European Communication Policy. It covers a broad sphere of not only communication but also of people, which means that stakeholders and decentralised management of policy delivery are its two other goals.

18 Robert Fitzhenry, Head, EPP-ED Press Services, The EP, Interview, Brussels, 29 March 2007

19 The Europe Direct is information relays of a network of over 450 contact points in all Member States with the objectives to inform and advise citizens, to give the feedback about citizens' concerns about the EU.

20 Georgios Markopoulotis, DG Communication, Head of Unit, Communication Planning and Priorities, Interview, Brussels, 8 March 2007

Therefore, the emphasis should be on the concept, which I am proposing in the funky way to increase citizens' interest in the EU.

3-1. IN SEARCH FOR LEGAL BASIS

So far, the Treaty does not grant any concrete competence on communication. Two proposals are still floating in the air – whether Article 167²¹ or Article 352²² TFEU (ex Article 151 and 308 TEC). Namely, using Article 352, the Treaty could be amended to establish a specific legal basis or it could emerge from culture vested Article 167. The decision will greatly influence the EU's further development and the communication expertise.

However, interpretation of the legal basis is found as an analogy of the case law within international public law – EU law competence clash regarding the promotion of human rights in the field of development co-operation with the third countries.²³ Analogy with communication debate lies in this line – HR are in conformity with the primary law²⁴ and with general principles²⁵. The analogy is important in the sense that choosing the legal basis mostly depends upon the political will, namely, as agreed by Koen Lenaerts, a judge at the Court of Justice²⁶, it legally can use both bases.

The question on legal basis will be solved sooner or later, as there is the overall will and need to do so. The chosen one would rather tackle the essence of communication and culture, and consequently influence future understanding of the European public sphere, European common culture, and the identity of the European citizen. Everything stated shows the debate's touchiness and the political will, consensus, common approach and concept to be played to satisfy all other categories. It is left to the EU, MSs and citizens to interact and find the solution, but, following legal basis, it is clear that culture and communications are both fundamental and Treaty-vested, no matter which competence in the end will be decided for.

21. C83/47, OJ of the European Union:

1. The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
2. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:
 - improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,
 - conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
 - non-commercial cultural exchanges,
 - artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.

22. *Ibid.*, 1. If action by the Union should prove necessary, within the framework of the policies defined in the Treaties, to attain one of the objectives set out in the Treaties, and the Treaties have not provided the necessary powers, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, shall adopt the appropriate measures. Where the measures in question are adopted by the Council in accordance with a special legislative procedure, it shall also act unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

23. Portugal v. Commission (C-268/94, 1996), Yusuf and Al Barakaat International Foundation v. Council and Commission (T-306/01, 2005) and the Opinion 2/94, 4 December

24. Art. 2, 3, 6 TEU, analogically relevant for communication

25. Communication related ones are transparency and principle of sound administration.

26. Koen Lenaerts, Judge at the Court of Justice, Institute for European Law, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Interview, Leuven, 5 March 2007

3-2. CROATIAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGY: A CASE STUDY

In the Republic of Croatia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration coordinates information activities regarding European integration.

Communication strategy aimed at informing the Croatian public about the European Union and preparations for EU membership entered into force on 16 of February 2006, after its proclamation in the Croatian Parliament. The main objective of the Croatian communication strategy's new approach is to strengthen existing activities and expand to new ones as it is adapted to involve the whole public sphere and target groups.

Though Ministry is maximally proficient, more attention should be given to the new concept and approach of information-spreading in order to fill the gap that Croatia also faces between its citizens and politics. The intervening variable of knowledge also exists, no matter EU membership is the "North star" for the Croatian Government. Therefore, Croatian communication strategy aimed at informing Croatian public about the EU and preparations for EU Membership still lacks its concept as the EU does.

Former MFAEI Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic expressed the need for media co-operation as she stated that after politics media have the similar role in order to educate and therefore improve communication with citizens. "After the media, the spill-over role lies with civil society and faculties."²⁷ Also, the interview with Maria Asenius²⁸ suggested that it would be positive for Croatia to change the concept of work and to adapt to the requirements of each situation.

An informative campaign will start 6 months before the Membership Referendum and the communication will be based on mainstream information. The Government will firstly develop general communication subjects, whereas they will afterwards be adjusted to specific target groups and needs.

27. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, Interview held at the Opening of the Croatian Consulate in Bruges as a Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, 3 April 2007, Bruges

28. Maria Asenius, DG Enlargement, Deputy Head of Cabinet, Cabinet Rehn, Interview, Brussels, 28 March 2007

IV MEDIA AND THE EU OR THE EU V. MEDIA

The communication science literature suggests that media is the most important link between politics and citizens. It also emerges from the analysis so far made that the emphasis of both the EU and Croatian communication strategy is on the media, on dependability on media.

A communication strategy must be developed and put into practice, which is aware of the principles used by the media to engage people's interest.²⁹ Moreover, researches of the media role indicate that the EP and the Council are under-represented in the press coverage of EU affairs. Several studies on reporting about the EU have suggested that EU politics and EU officials are inaccessible, which may translate into limited visibility in the news. Truly, without the personalization of political debate and discussions, political accountability remains invisible and EU citizens can hardly build a sound opinion on what happens at the EU level.

John Fiske stated that the post-modern media no longer provides secondary representations of reality but it affects and produces the reality that it mediates. On the other hand, conventional wisdom of the EU visibility has been to produce a low output in media profile, with the little public debate and scrutiny, and that amounted to „no-news-is-a-good-news“ policy.

The visibility of EP elections matters. Information about key democratic moments such as elections in the news is a pre-requisite for enhancing public awareness and possible engagement in EU politics. Moreover, the EU, faced with challenges of legitimacy and unclear structures for political accountability, is dependent upon media coverage to reach its citizens.

However, the higher amount of broadcasted news does not immediately lead to the conclusion that a higher interest and support will occur. What it implies though is the rise of awareness.

EU affairs need to be presented in a communicable story but „the news that come across are boring and almost encourage people to change channel“.³⁰

Analyses show that the EU is invisible in the news, that the EU is faceless and that the EU news when occurs is negative. After 50 years of its existence and prominent economic and political development, it is still considered as a faceless project by its citizens.

It follows that also in terms of its officials, the EU is faceless. Given the power of an institution such as the European Commission, it is amazing how absent its officials are in the television coverage of EU affairs. The coverage conveys the impression that EU politics is decided upon by anybody, but definitely not by EU officials. EU coverage resembles a play that goes on without its protagonists. Theorists of modern drama would not hesitate to call it absurd, scholars of the EU would probably term it stepwise degradation of EU politics in television coverage.

If a lively and viable Europe depends on vivid media, as most recent studies evoke, that fact should make scholars, politicians, officials and citizens think.

Of course, television is in the hands of the MSs and the public sphere on EU matters is only emerging in few international elitist media and definitely not in the mainstream TV coverage. However, this problem becomes more and more prominent.

Understanding media clarifies understanding of the opinion leaders. For example, Al Gore's movie on climate change made more impact on the general public than all MEP's political work.

²⁹ De Vreese, Claes, *Communicating Europe*, Foreign Policy Centre, London, 2003, p. 8, <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/89.pdf>, 10 May 2007

³⁰ Peter, Jochen and De Vreese, Claes H., *In Search of Europe: A cross-National Comparative Study of the European Union in National Television News*, The President and the Fellows of Harvard College, 2004, p. 11

Formulating judgments about policies depends upon “first, information and second, the opportunity and skill to convert this information into coherent assessment”³¹

It is to conclude that the goal should be increasing media attention and generating public debates as much as possible. But those changes do not go without the institutional reforms and changes of mindset.

V SWEDISH RESEARCHES POSSIBLY DO KNOW-HOW

Politics is medialized and that influences post-modern political communication and campaign.

The Democratic Audit of Sweden published in June 2006 its researches on the role of media, with emphasis on elections for the Riksdag in 2002 and in 2006, in order to make a contribution to underlying changes that have occurred in representative democracy.³²

In Sweden the weakening of the parties' ability to generate opinion has left a vacuum that journalists and media helped to fill so that the communicative deficit fell. In DAS 2006 the post-modern media are said to have features of the medialization of politics and the need of political marketing.

Also, a strong co-relation is found between mistrust in politics, little knowledge of politics and low exposure to political information in mass media.

Moreover, “politicians are dependant on support and votes of citizenry. Citizens in turn are influenced by decisions and promises that politicians control. The media's influence depends on the extent to which politicians and citizens communicate indirectly. The media are dependent on readers, audiences and subscribers. Citizens in turn, depend on the media for the information, current debate and entertainment”. That mutual dependency³³ was described through Swedish research as „triangle drama“ shared by all European modern campaigns in European democracies. As part of their service to democracy the media are to inform citizens, scrutinize those in power, and make it possible for people to form their own opinions on issues.

The ideal coverage offers the information that people need in a way which arouses interest and inspires enthusiasm about the political journalism.

If a journalist assigns too much priority to the information, the coverage may end up looking as overloaded and unattractive. When media chooses to broaden the coverage by reducing the amount of information and emphasizing excitement and entertainment values, the result is dramatization of the events.

Striving to combine information and coverage may lead to the development of new genres and changes in established ones. So emerged *infotainment* where the old boundaries between information and entertainment have become fluid.

Increasingly, politics and politicians inhabit other genres besides traditional news and election campaigning. Popular culture media, for example, conveys images of politics and politicians to their citizens.

³¹ Street, John, *Mass media, Politics and Democracy*, Palgrave, London, 2001, p. 186

³² Soren Holmberg, Olof Petersson, Monika Djerf Piers, Jesper Stromback, Lenaart Weibull, Report from the Democratic Audit of Sweden 2006, *Media and Elections in Sweden*, SNS Forlag, 2006

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 44

The mixture of political information and entertainment in many popular journalistic genres may instead once again make politics „popular“ - in more than one sense of the word.

There are indicators that popular culture is gradually becoming politicized for example with shadow campaigns. They involve activities and celebrities and they inject politics into films, music, etc. This increasing politicization of popular culture is another change that is expanding the bounds of political debate, both as regards participants and content.

Entertainment and „personalities“ in media has left an imprint on politics - politics is popularised, popular culture politicized.

Politics, and particularly communication of politics to the public, begins to offer more of these experiences in tune with the concerns of popular culture, or it becomes increasingly alien to the preoccupations of majority of the public, and the democratic deficit grows.³⁴

In Sweden, this has influenced a number of issues. Namely, the conversational tone and the medialized tempo became faster. It emerged out of desire to produce programs that catch viewers' and listeners' attention and that have a strong coverage. It is reflected in a more popularised and critical tone, and in reliance on humorous and entertaining elements.

Attention to public affairs programming has declined, whereas viewing of television drama and entertainment has increased in all MS. „Among the channels' output, entertainment is the most popular.“³⁵

The political communication system stands on the threshold of yet another period of fundamental change. The new challenges made by lighter style of journalism, Internet's revolution and political blogs pose new challenges for politics.

International comparative research shows that medialization of politics is a universal phenomenon, although reservation is necessary with regard to the political journalism in countries in southern Europe where, as a Swedish research found, party-media ties are still quite strong, which is present in Croatia as well. However, as seen, a change is definitely underway in all MSs and Croatia as well.

However, as stated in communication strategies, it is always to adapt to special circumstances of a concrete period. No matter the direct transferability of the Swedish approach, it is interesting to at least take it into consideration both in Croatian case.³⁶

VI THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF FUNKY EUROPE CONCEPT

The concept is made of horizontal analysis based on previous content analysis. It goes to the matrix Europe's ideals, therefore touches upon the EU institutions and citizens at the same time. „Governance describes a process of decision-making by which decisions are implemented. Therefore, attention is paid to formal and informal actors involved in the decision-making and implementation processes.“³⁷ But politics and governance have their scope as well limits. And it is

34 Richards, Barry, The Emotional Deficit in Political Communication, Political Communication, Volume 21, Number 3, July-September 2004, p. 339-352(14), p. 340, 10 May 2007 <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/toutledg/upcp/2004/0000021/0000003/art0009>

35 Ibid, p. 38

36 Croatian Communication Strategy of 2006 was prepared on an analysis of the cases of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

37 Erztugal, Ebru, Local Development Strategies in the EU- the case of LEADER in Rural Development, PhD, KULeuven University, p. 2

up to all actors in the process to catch up with a novel concept and attitude appropriate to post-modern times.

A starting point in any attempt to define popular culture is to say that popular culture is simply the culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people. Good popular culture is able to re-establish the relationship between performer and audience.³⁸

We find that a Funky Europe concept is the only solution if Europe wants to keep and stay in touch with people, who are judging the EU and its policies in a rather black and white manner.

For Jean Francois Lyotard³⁹ the post modern condition is marked by crisis in the status of knowledge in Western societies. Theory and academic discourses are confronted by wider, unsystematized, popular networks of cultural production and knowledge. But only open and transparent communication can foster open and transparent thinking.

Hence, Jean Baudillard claims that we have reached a stage in social and economic development in which „it is no longer possible to separate economic or productive realm from the realms of ideology or culture, since cultural artefacts, images, representations, even feelings and psychic structures have become a part of the world of economics....“ - from a society based on production of things to the one based on the production of information.⁴⁰

This is the first time in history that culture in those terms has entered institutions themselves. As the EU is comprised of different cultures, traditions and nationalities, values and beliefs and is still working towards the same goals, it shows the splendour of its kaleidoscopic beauty, and its uniqueness. In order to preserve this, the EU must work on its cultural logo, an easily recognizable evocation for people to close the gap, which will certainly not happen in one day.

Appropriate activities should be taken into consideration in the EU institutions and realized in full by careful preparation. Similar to that, John Fiske „sees popular culture as a site of struggle, but while accepting the power of the forces of dominance, it focuses rather upon the popular tactics by which these forms are coped with, are evaded or are resisted. Instead of tracing exclusively the processes of incorporation, it investigates rather that popular vitality and creativity that makes incorporation such a constant necessity. Instead of concentrating on the omnipresent, insidious practices of the dominant ideology, it attempts to understand the everyday resistances and evasions that make that ideology work so hard and insistently to maintain itself and its values. This approach sees popular culture as potentially, and often actually, progressive, and it is essentially optimistic, for it finds in the vigour and vitality of the people evidence both of the possibility of social change and of the motivation to drive it.“⁴¹

Complementary ingredient for 'Funky Europe' is, as argued by Paul Willis with the case for what he calls *grounded aesthetics*⁴², the process through which ordinary people make cultural sense of the world: „the ways in which the received natural and social world is made human to them

38 Storey, John, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture- An Introduction, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 41

39 Ibid., p. 118

40 Storey, John, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture - A Reader, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 390

41 Storey, John, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture- An Introduction, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 158

42 Grounded aesthetics is a creative element in a process whereby meanings are attributed to symbols and practices and where symbols and practices are selected, reselected, highlighted and recomposed to resonate further appropriate and particularised meanings. Messages are not now so much sent and received as made in reception. Sent message communication is being replaced by made message communication. Such dynamics are emotional as well as cognitive. There are as many aesthetics as there are grounds for them to operate in.

and made, to however small degree, controllable by them⁴³. So the democratic legitimization itself lies in paying attention to this cultural sense of the world.

This article strived to inform on new possible directions and opportunities, and track the ongoing metamorphosis. As none of the changes ever came instantly, it is a step by step process that will eventually result in progress. The direction detected long ago will thus finally reach a point where the union of Europeans will be felt by all those connected with it, and it will be a sign that a process of living and enjoying a truly funky Europe has started.

CONCLUSION

This article pointed out a number of critical views on communicating Europe. It has been stated that communication strategy was too much of a technocratic one, therefore an interdisciplinary research has been conducted so as to refresh the formal, institutional and uncreative strategy via enlightening means other than technical and technocratic ones.

The Funky Europe concept with its matrix emerged from the analysis by stating that cultural content must be attached on communication channels in order to mirror the true nature of the EU, and if information is clear and transparent in content, then the communication channels are represented in a funky way.

The EU lacks originality in visibility and capability for making attractive relations towards their citizens. Citizens miss its enthusiasm and fear of its cold formality. Analyses show the EU lacks originality that goes beyond communication and data analysis.

So it can be concluded that the EU should be more funky. It would thereof benefit and it would be also contributing to full transparency and adding values. In terms of transparency, the trend might be described as „It is the first time in history that propaganda and reality are becoming friends“⁴⁴. The conclusions that might be drawn from the course of the analysis are as follows:

- Funky Europe matrix
- The EU communications lacks a concept
- Croatian communication strategy is in a need of a concept as well
- Media are the most influential tool for reaching to the citizens
- Education is correlated to communication strategies
- Kaleidoscopic culture is emerging
- Popular culture is most desirable
- Infotainment is a post-modern requirement
- Swedish example is applicable to the EU and Croatia as well
- Networking as a necessary condition⁴⁵
- The bottom-up approach⁴⁶
- “European face” both on institutional and citizens’/local levels⁴⁷

43 Storey, John, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture – A Reader, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 569

44 *Ibid.*, p.11

45 Proved by networking results from LEADER support and partnership between rural areas and the exchange of achievements, experience and know-how between all parties concerned.

46 The bottom-up approach has been EU’s solution since Delohre’s times.

47 The local-level population needs to see itself as actively participating in selecting, rejecting, making meanings, attributing value, resisting. Therefore, EU citizens must teach each other to know, to politicize for, to recognize the difference between different versions of reality, and to know that each can require a different politics.

A funky way of a communication strategy which is clear, substantial, fast, culturally empathic, e-motional⁴⁸.

So if that concepts’ approach is taken and approved of, then each official would freely serve as a rolling stone towards accepting changes on the one hand and on the other, citizens would also become more receptive. That would bring on simultaneous work, giving the EU a face, whereas still each person will have the possibility to preserve his/her uniqueness and individuality. I propose that to be the European ideal, well diversified and well post-modern. And by doing such changes enthusiasm is stimulated and generated, and the EU can keep on bicycling in full power.

The EU needs audacity in these post-modern times just to „be itself“ so that EU crisis can be surmounted. „A task is to find ways which do not fall victim to disabling tendencies of, on the one hand, a dismissive elitism, and on the other, a disarming anti-intellectualism.“⁴⁹

A trend already started and will continue in the growth of „increasingly vocal“ generation which being able to choose its attitude in any given set of circumstances, but most importantly, with the satisfaction and pride of being all different in the unified Europe.

The emperor is getting dressed in communicational terms!

48 Emotional communication is the one that excite, energize and trigger enthusiasm. Research in neuroscience now suggests that the brain’s limbic system, which governs our feelings is much more powerful than the neocortex that controls intellect.

49 Storey, John, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture- An Introduction, Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 172

GLOSSARY

3D	Democracy, Dialogue, Debate
AP	Action Plan
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CR	Commission Representations
DAS	Democratic Audit of Sweden
DG	Directorate General
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
HR	Human rights
LEADER	Leader Community Initiatives
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFAEI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration
MS	EU member state
OJ	Official journal
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TEC	Treaty of European Community
TEU	Treaty of European Union
WP	White Paper

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FUNKY EUROPA - KONCEPT ZASNOVAN NA NAJNOVIJEM RAZVOJU KOMUNIKACIJSKIH STRATEGIJA EUROPSKE UNIJE I HRVATSKE

Sažetak

Razlog za odabir rada na temu "Funky Europa" je taj što ova teorija otkriva novi koncept razumijevanja Europske unije. Započela je na predvidanjima i pronašla da u najnovijem razvoju komunikacijskih strategija kako Europske unije tako i Hrvatske bit koncepta nedostaje. Obje su očit u fazi razvoja s ciljem popunjavanja praznine demokratskog deficita i izvješćuju svoje građane kako bi ih poučili; glavni uzrok ovoj praznini je nedovoljno znanje.

Međutim, analize pokazuju da u oba slučaja nedostaje entuzijazma budući da se oslanjaju isključivo na tehničke korake. Bez vizije, materijalizirane kroz različite koncepte bit će teško ako ne i nemoguće popuniti ovu prazninu od strane samih građana. Stoga je cilj koncepta "Funky Europa" rješavanje ove praznine primjenom studija o kulturološkim teorijama, političkoj komunikaciji i medijima. Koncept se zasniva na analitičkim studijama švedskih profesora o utjecaju medija koje naglašavaju potrebu za tzv. *infotainment* (prezentiranju informacija na zabavan način). "Funky Europe" je moguće rješenje problema s kojim se suočavaju i Europska unija i Hrvatska kao sjedeća u nizu članica Europske unije koja će održati informativnu kampanju prije referenduma o članstvu u EU. Samo će vrijeme pokazati kako će EU i Hrvatska pristupiti poteškoćama.

Ključne riječi: komunikacija, mediji, kulturološke teorije, *infotainment*, *Funky Europa*

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FUNKY-EUROPA: EIN AUF REZENTEN ENTWICKLUNGEN IN KOMMUNIKATIONSSTRATEGIEN DER EU UND DER REPUBLIK KROATIEN BERUHENDES KONZEPT

Zusammenfassung

Der Grund für die Auswahl von «Funky Europa» zum Thema dieses Beitrags liegt in der Auffassung, dass diese Theorie ein neues Konzept des Verstehens von EU erleuchtet. Die Theorie beruht auf der Voraussetzung, die auch bestätigt wurde, dass es in neuesten Entwicklungen im Bereich der Kommunikationsstrategien sowohl in der EU als auch in Kroatien an einem wesentlichen Konzept mangelte. Beide befinden sich offensichtlich in einer Etappe der Entwicklung, und beide haben sich zum Ziel gestellt, das Defizit der Demokratie nachzuholen und ihre Bürger zu informieren und zu eduzieren, weil mangelnde Kenntnisse grundlegende Ursache für dieses Defizit sind.

Die Analyse zeigte, dass es beiden am Enthusiasmus fehlt, da sie sich ausschließlich auf technische Schritte verlassen. Ohne eine konkrete Vision, die durch alle möglichen Konzepte realisierbar ist, wird es für die Bürger besonders schwer oder sogar unmöglich sein, dieses Defizit allein zu überbrücken. Aus diesem Grunde ist das Ziel des Funky-Europa-Konzeptes, dieses Defizit durch Gründung der Studien für Kulturtheorien, politische Kommunikation und Medien zu lösen. Das Konzept gründet sich auf den von schwedischen Professoren durchgeführten analytischen Studien des Einflusses von Medien, die einen Bedarf an *infotainment* (Information+ Vergnügen) zum Ausdruck brachten. «Funky Europa» ist eine mögliche Lösung für die Probleme, mit denen die EU und Kroatien zur Zeit konfrontiert sind – insbesondere Kroatien als der nächste Mitgliedsstaat, der eine Informationskampagne vor dem Referendum über seine EU-Mitgliedschaft durchführen sollte. Die Zeit wird zeigen, welchen Ansatz die EU und Kroatien zur Lösung dieser Schwierigkeiten gewählt haben.

Schlüsselwörter: Kommunikation, Medien, Kulturtheorien, *infotainment*, Funky Europe