Commentary and Debate Special Section Introduction: Defining media diversity

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Against the background of the current European competitive media landscape, the media are more and more compelled to legitimize their activities in their own national context as well as at a European level. Meanwhile, the nature of the media diversity in The Netherlands has changed tremendously; from a society divided along political and religious lines, it has evolved towards a multi-ethnic society. Hence, both the conceptualizing and operationalizing of media diversity from an academic as well as a media practical perspective prove to be hot topics.

An expert meeting was held at the Department of Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen in December 2004 in which the contours of media diversity in general and in The Netherlands in particular were explored. Institutional performance as well as program-related aspects linked to the notion of media diversity were discussed. Media diversity was explored from the angle of media economics (How many media actors are there? What about the competition? Is competition deadly or just healthy or somewhere in between?) as well as from the perspective of the program/format level (Is it more of the same? A lot of imports? What about criteria for quality, innovation? Does the public broadcaster make any difference?). In addition, the audience reception perspective (Are these media production and distribution trends followed by media use patterns?) as well as methodologically problematic aspects one encounters when measuring media diversity were assessed. What follows here is a selection of several most pertinent views on this complex topic. We welcome each critical insight from other geographical contexts which might stimulate the debate on measures of open and reflective diversity in the media.

Media markets and media diversity

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Media markets have been increasingly subjected to market forces, in the expectation that markets force media organizations to respond effec-