

MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES

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INTRODUCTION: THE SAMPLE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Our discourse analysis of media reporting on three minority groups, i.e. Muslims, Roma and gays and lesbians, covers the period of February 2006. During this month, the media were fully occupied with texts dealing with cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad and the resulting response, putting media texts¹ addressing this minority at the top of the list in this group. Another topic that contributed to the coverage of Muslims was President Janez Drnovšek's intention to mediate in the conflict between the government and the rebel groups in Darfur. The construction of a mosque in Ljubljana, which in the past was the topic that generated most reports on Muslims and Islam, was relegated to the background during the period analyzed here, with only a few reports dedicated to this issue.

The event that generated several reports on Roma was the adoption of the so-called umbrella law on Roma representatives in the National Council. Other sporadic reports dealing with this target group looked into the life of Roma and related issues.

Compared to these two minority groups, gays and lesbians occupied the fewest media texts, most of which were related to *Brokeback Mountain*, an Oscar front-runner depicting the life of two gay cowboys.

This study report is divided into two parts. In the first we present a statistical analysis of the sample. For all media texts, we identified the author, the type of text and the interlocutor. In the case of the print media, we also took account of any graphics accompanying the text analyzed. The statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS software.

The second part of the report presents a discourse analysis of the texts in the sample. The methodological postulates used were those of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1992), the founder of this approach, emphasized that media texts reflect and represent social entities and relations, while also construing and constituting them. Since language and ideology stand close together, a systematic analysis of the language of media texts (written or spoken), says Fairclough, can reveal the systems of repression inside specific social structures. Fairclough understands

1 "Media text" is here used as a generic name denoting various types of printed and broadcast reports, including feature stories, interviews, news briefs, reports, reportages and so on.

discourse or the use of language, whether written or spoken, as a form of social practice, meaning that there exists a two-way, dialectic relationship between a specific discursive event and the situation, institution or social structure constituting the framework of that event. In other words, a discursive event is co-shaped by the situation, institution or a social structure within which it appears and, in turn, it influences and reshapes its own social framework, that is, the situation, institution or social structure. Discourse is therefore socially constituted, and in turn, it constitutes the situations, the objects of knowledge and identities of people and groups.

Several theoretical and methodological approaches have developed within CDA, with the main differences among them being the extent to which they observe the historical perspective in discourse analysis, their understanding of the relationship and mediation between the text and the social, their orientation towards predictability and reproduction of a specific discursive practice in contrast to the analysis of creativity and innovation, their interpretation of discursive events and the like. Since CDA, much like any other form of discourse analysis, is primarily an interpretative and qualitative sociological method, the existing methodology of discourse analysis does not provide any “recipes”, or verifiable, exact methodological rules. The results and conclusions of research are therefore inevitably the individual interpretation of the researcher. Despite this, CDA lays down several principles (cf. Fairclough, Wodak, 1997, Wodak, 1996), of which we observed three in the first place:

- a. The nature of power relations in modern society is largely linguistic and discursive in its essence. An important question that emerges in this connection is who has access to the media, whose “voice” is heard and whose is left behind. With respect to power relations, discursivity is significant in relation to three issues, i.e. the reproduction of power through discourse, the power over discourse and the power of discourse.
- b. All common sense assumptions within a discourse are in their essence ideological. An ideology not only involves the issue of representation of social reality, but it also (or primarily) constructs identities, particularly collective identities (in our example, that of the Roma, Muslims, gays and lesbians).
- c. Racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic and the like discourses are forms of media texts that have specific effects

on and implications for the real world. These are primarily manifested as categorization of or discrimination against specific social groups and the legitimization of the practices of power-holders. Accordingly, the main task of CDA as an anti-discriminatory, political scientific practice is to disclose power relations and the implicit within the text. Critical linguists particularly emphasize that their research work is essentially political rather than an end in itself. The task of critical linguists is not only to describe, but to explain how a discourse is shaped through power relations and ideologies, how it influences social identities, social relations, the systems of knowledge and value.

Our research subject is therefore concerned with the media presentations of selected minorities and the question of who speaks, what and how they speak, whose views and interpretations are reproduced by media discourse, which implicit (common sense) assumptions about the target groups underlie these media texts, and which discriminatory/intolerant practices are given legitimacy. Much like the CDA methodology itself, in analyzing media texts we theoretically drew on Foucault's (2001 [1969]) understanding of discourse as constituting a particular subject, i.e. the members of specific minorities in our example. "Discursive constitution" of subjects means that the minority groups that are the subject of our analysis exist only within a specific discursive field (e.g. media), which has realistic implications for these groups; media representations in fact co-create the image of these groups and thereby contribute to a greater or lower tolerance towards minority groups. We should add here that there does not exist a direct causal relationship between a discourse on a specific subject and the attitude of wider society towards that subject or a group of individuals, despite the fact that the media are frequently described as the sole source of "hostility, stereotypes and intolerance" with respect to minority groups. However, this criticism overlooks the fact that interposing between the reader/viewer of a media text and the text itself is interpretation. And for this same reason, a discourse analysis, too, is ultimately (and inevitably) an interpretation. This is not to say that the media cannot (or do not) reproduce specific images, nor that the subjects of their representation, the "products of discourse", are entirely powerless. Foucault asserts that resistance is contained in the very idea of power, meaning that wherever power is being exerted (e.g. through

discourse) there exists the potential for resistance. Discourse does not simply translate systemic domination into language. Rather, it is precisely discourse because of which and for which these battles are fought.

Foucault's work does not provide a clear methodological concept ready to be applied to studies of mass media, yet his concept of discourse and the discursive nature of subjects can nevertheless be used as a theoretical framework for discourse analysis. Foucault's argument that power produces the framework of knowledge, one that is perceived as truthful, helps us to understand power that operates through mass media and produces the subject, in our example the Roma, Muslims, gays and lesbians. Power is closely connected with the media.

When studying discourses as understood by Foucault, the primary target of analysis is the set of statements about a specific subject that mediate knowledge about that subject. In other words, discourse analysis looks at how the language testifies to the existence of a specific phenomenon, primarily concentrating on the rules guiding the presentation of a phenomenon, meaning rules that, in turn, disqualify other and different ways of thinking. Foucault further argues for caution when considering the question of how the knowledge about a specific subject obtained credibility and came to be accepted as the truth about that subject during a specific historical period. It is also necessary to take into account the subjects that personify a specific discourse and institutions. Hall (1993) holds a similar opinion, saying that those who are not directly involved in the shaping of norms and definitions within problematic areas of political life are primarily dependent for their "working definitions" on agents, institutions and channels that have access to power and are the primary means of signification. Mass media are certainly among these. As Alwood (1996) says, the media suggests convenient solutions when the society is faced with a new problem. Hall further warns against being excessively complacent towards the media. We are not mental *tabulae rasae*, so despite all, the media cannot instill in us meanings and interpretations. But they do have the integrating, explanatory and legitimate power to shape and define political reality, particularly in unprecedented, problematic or threatening situations. What is involved here is an act of organizing social reality that has not existed before, or re-shaping the meaning of existing tendencies in such a way that the resulting new relationship is presented as a so-

cially acceptable form, while the incapacity to accept such a relationship is denoted as a social deviation.

Our study of media reporting on Muslims, Roma and gays and lesbians tries to illuminate the question of how media discourse constitutes these subjects, i.e. the members of these groups. To put it differently, we were interested in how, when and in what ways the Roma, Muslims, gays and lesbians enter the media space and what the media-created images of these groups are. We were interested in who speaks, when and how. In so doing we tried to define and categorize the ways in which these groups enter the media texts and to put our findings into the context provided by previous research in this field (Bošnik, 2002, Pašić, 2002, Kotnik, 2003, Dragoš, 2003, 2004, Erjavec, Hrvatinić, Kelbl, 2000, Kotnik, 2002, Petković, 2002, 2003, Urh, Žnidaršič-Demšar, 2005, Cigler, Bukovec, 2006, Kuhar, 2003, Tratnik, 2000, Velikonja, 2001, 2004, Greif, 2001). In selecting the minority groups for our study, we were guided by the existing studies mentioned above.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE

Our sample included 15 media. The clips were provided by the company Kliping d.o.o. which used selected key words or topics (e.g. gays and lesbians, Muslims, the Roma) to identify relevant texts. The analysis covered eight print media: *Delo* (212 000), *Dnevnik* (180 000), *Dolenjski list* (68000), *Družina* (157 000), *Mag* (46 000), *Mladina* (99 000), *Murski vestnik* (74 000) and *Večer* (191 000) and four broadcast media (Radio Slovenia (1 210 900), *Radio Ognjišče* (58 900), *Televizija Slovenija* (1 1018 400) and *POP TV* (1 111 500)². In the case of the broadcast media, we monitored only news programs, or more accurately, the afternoon news program on *Radio Ognjišče*, *Druga jutranja kronika* (second morning news) and *Dogodki in odmevi* (the main news program) on *Radio Slovenija*, *Dnevnik* (prime time news program) and *Odmevi* (10 o'clock news) on *Televizija Slovenija*, and *24 ur* prime time news on *POP TV*. Four commercial radio stations were also included: *Radio Antena*, *Radio Center* and *Radio City*. On the 22nd and 24th of February, *Radio Antena's* and *Radio City's* programs were monitored around the clock, while *Radio Center's* program was monitored around the clock only on February 22, 2006. These three commercial stations are not included in the statistical analysis of the sample presented later in the text, since they constitute a special type of media production analyzed at the end of this report.

During February 2006 these media featured or broadcast 249 texts dealing with issues relating to Muslims, Roma, gays and lesbians. The majority of these media texts were concerned with Muslims (78%), followed by Roma (16%), and gays and lesbians (6%).

FIGURE 1 – DISTRIBUTION OF MEDIA TEXTS BASED ON THE TOPIC
(IN ABSOLUTE VALUES).

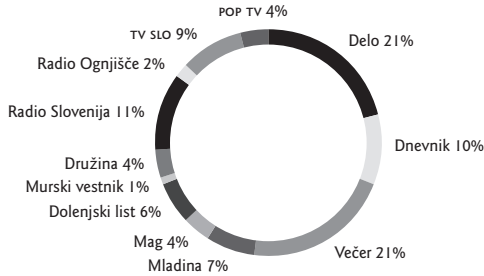


The majority, i.e. somewhat more than 66% of texts analyzed were featured by the print media, while the remaining

² Numbers in brackets show the reach of the specific media. This information was provided by the Kliping d.o.o, media monitoring and analysis service. *Murski vestnik* and *Dolenjski list* are regional newspapers covering the region with a large Roma population. All other media analyzed here have the national coverage.

34% were broadcast. The greatest number of media texts relevant to our analysis appeared in *Večer* (53), followed by *Delo* (52) and *Radio Slovenija* (27), and the smallest number on *Radio Ognjišče* (6) and in *Murski vestnik* (3).

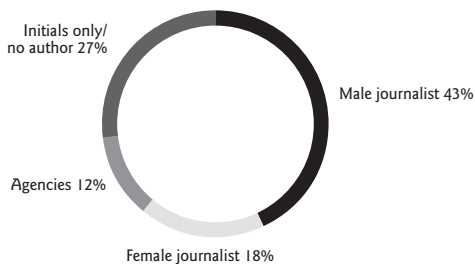
FIGURE 2 – THE SHARES OF MEDIA TEXTS BY MEDIA SOURCE.



Contrary to the frequently heard conclusion that women have come to dominate the journalistic profession, our analysis shows that most of the media texts featured by the print media were written by male journalists (43%) and only a smaller share by women (18%). Undoubtedly, this statistic does not disprove the assumption/fact stated above, but what it does show is that media topics are gendered. The discrepancy is particularly obvious if we concentrate on the topic of Muslims, the group that was “politically exposed” during the period observed, given that half of the reports in our sample were produced by male journalists, with women contributing just slightly more than 14% of texts. The remaining texts comprised agency news, or media texts by unknown authors, or texts signed with initials only.

The graph below shows the shares of male and female authors in the print media (N=184).

FIGURE 3 – THE AUTHORS OF MEDIA TEXTS IN THE PRINT MEDIA.



The disproportion in gender representation becomes even more conspicuous when we add broadcast media and look at the gender of interlocutors, although this does not mean that the print media are characterized by more gender-balanced reporting. The statistical analysis shows that the interlocutors or authors of media texts were mainly men (89%), with women accounting for only 11% of the group.

FIGURE 4 – THE GENDER OF THE INTERLOCUTOR BY THE MEDIA TYPE.

	PRINT MEDIA	RADIO	TELEVISION
Male interlocutor	88.0%	89.6%	91.7%
Female interlocutor	12.0%	10.4%	8.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In 249 media texts, there appeared 390 interlocutors who were invited to give a statement or whose words were quoted or recapitulated.

FIGURE 5 – THE GENDER OF INTERLOCUTORS BY THE MEDIA TYPE.

Television	19.7	1.8
Radio	11.0	1.3
Print media	58.2	7.9

Generally, politicians account for the greatest number of both male and female interlocutors appearing in media reports, and the same can be said of our sample. As far as politicians are concerned, the male to female ratio was balanced: there were 45% male politicians and 47% female politicians featured in media reports. This balance may be mainly attributed to the fact that the media in question frequently featured foreign female politicians, since for Slovenian politicians this ratio is 14% to 9% in favor of male politicians.

MUSLIMS

"The modern, secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with contemporary democracy and freedom of speech, where you must be ready to put up with insults, mockery and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price.... we are on our way to a slippery slope where no-one can tell how the self-censorship will end. That is why *Jyllands-Posten* has invited members of the Danish editorial cartoonists union to draw Muhammad as they see him."

(*Fleming Rose*, *Jyllands-Posten's* editor)

"The publishing of the cartoons of *the* Prophet Muhammad in Denmark definitely has a context without which it is not possible to understand the anger of the crowds. If we turn a blind eye to this context, our blindness will prevent us from seeing anything but simply another proof of their fundamentalism."

(*Borut Mekina*, *Večer*, February 16)

"European media reversed cause and effect: they were more indignant over Muslims' indignation than over the causes of their indignation."

(*Marcel Štefančič, jr.*, *Mladina*, February 27)

A number of analyses of the media representations of Islam and Muslims in Slovenia, mainly conducted after 9/11 (Bošnik, 2002, Pašić, 2002, Kotnik, 2003, Dragoš, 2003, 2004), show that the representation of this group is comparable to that of other minority groups. Particularly conspicuous is the "we-they" type of discourse, which ultimately boils down to Eurocentric or West-centric representations of Muslims and Islam. Bošnik (2002), who recapitulates the Danish study by Bashy Quraishy on media reporting on Islam, writes that the West created its own, western image of Islam that suits and matches the political and psychological needs of the west. Analyzing media commentaries about the construction of the mosque in Ljubljana, Kotnik (2003), too, draws attention to this fact, adding that in dealing with Muslims the media took freedom of speech to mean an "imperative in itself." On many occasions, the absence of the awareness that freedom of speech is delimited by the democratic principle of non-discrimination led to stereotypical media representations of Islam, with more

or less explicit incitement to religious intolerance also appearing from time to time.

The media's creation of a uniform image of Muslims (seen as a threat) and the equation of terrorism with Islam as a religion, both constituting conspicuous traits of the coverage of Islam to which the aforementioned studies drew attention, were also identified in the texts in our sample. This points to the complete disregard of the fact that Islam is a religion spread across sixty countries around the world with more than one billion followers, as Bošnik (2002) explains. "Muslims are not a uniform mass. They differ among themselves with respect to culture, the way of life, history, color, ethnicity, language, mentality, dress codes, social status, education and experience" (Bošnik, 2002:60).

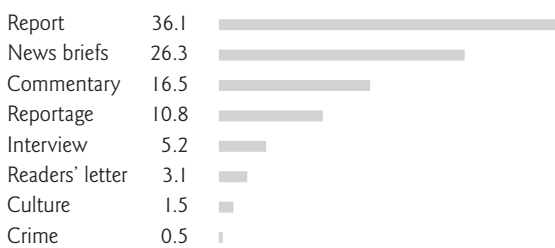
In his study of the media representations of Muslims covering the period from September 2001 to February 2002, Dragoš (2003) concluded that intolerance towards Muslims was not caused by 9/11 events, but that Islamophobia was present in Slovenia even before that. He argues that Islamophobia is created, or generated, primarily in the field of politics, and that the media operate as the reproducers of this intolerance. Although his analysis indeed showed that the coverage of Muslims in the print media was predominantly professional and that problematic or unacceptable texts were rare, these exceptions are not insignificant. Dragoš divided the media techniques generating intolerant discourse towards Muslims into three types: the humorous approach, stigmatization and dichotomization. The first type generates intolerance through ridicule and the second through stigma, even in examples in which Muslims are not a direct target, but where the content of stigma, although aimed elsewhere, is connected with Islam, Muslim extremists and the like. Dichotomization as a third technique denotes the selective and biased presentation of facts by means of which the desired image of reality is created (Dragoš, 2003:37-47). The majority of traits identified by past studies were also identified during our critical discursive analysis.

In February 2006, the media under analysis featured or broadcast 194 texts relating to Muslims. As has been established, this extensive media attention was a result of the controversy caused by the cartoons published in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*, which several months later led to a series of protests, debates on the separation of Church and state, freedom of speech and the like. The greatest number of texts connected with Islam was carried by *Delo*

(42), followed by *Večer* (38), Radio Slovenia (26), *Dnevnik* (23), *Televizija Slovenija* (20), *Mladina* (12), POP TV (10), *Mag* and *Družina* (8), *Radio Ognjišče* (6) and *Murski vestnik* (1). We should stress at this point that these media texts do not make up the “entire media production” concerned with this target group during the period observed. This especially holds true of *Radio Slovenija*, *Radio Ognjišče* and *Televizija Slovenija*, as these stations broadcast several news programs not all of which were included in our sample.

Islam is the subject treated in virtually all types of media reports, but since during the period observed this political question was at the forefront, Muslims were most often dealt with in news programs/reports and news briefs.

FIGURE 6 – REPORTING ON MUSLIMS BY THE MEDIA TEXT TYPE.



The cartoon episode and ensuing protests can be described, at least in some respects, as a form of media (and wider) moral panic. The concept of moral panic (Cohen, 1980 [1972], Watney, 1997, Weeks, 1999) denotes a short period during which a specific group of people or an event is defined as a threatening element, which leads to the adoption of extreme positions, in this example manifested as binary divides, e.g. between the civilized West and the uncivilized East, peace loving Catholics and fanatic, fundamentalist Muslims, through the notion of the clash of civilizations and the like. Such absolutist positions were further reflected in the frequent absence of the context of events. The early media coverage inadequately presented the reasons for the protests, providing only sparse information about Islam forbidding the portraying of the Prophet Muhammad. Only later did the media report how the Prophet was actually depicted (e.g. with a headdress shaped like a bomb etc.). A moral panic is also characterized by stereotyping of the “enemy,” who is presented as absolute evil. In the media texts analyzed here, the stylization and stereotyping

created the image of a Muslim as a terrorist, flag burning, screaming, herd-following and semi-civilized man. Such an image was reinforced by expressions borrowed from military discourse and those applied to natural disasters, here used to describe either the protests or Muslims themselves. So, for example, the media spoke about a “*storm*” among Muslims,⁴ about “*fire raging* across Muslim countries”,⁵ and the “*incendiary* response of the Muslim world”;⁶ Muslims were said to have “set fire”;⁷ the offence taken by the Muslim world was described as “spreading like *wildfire*”;⁸ the streets were “*flooded* with thousands of protesters”;⁹ journalists spoke of “the *avalanche* of protests”,¹⁰ “an Islamic storm”¹¹ and “the *tide* of protests”¹² that was not likely to recede soon. The media also made use of “military diction” referring to “*cultural war*”,¹³ “the cartoon *war*”¹⁴ and so on.

Based on these texts, our conclusion is that during the period observed Muslims were introduced into the media space through generalizations and “we-they” discourse. Apart from that, a large part of the coverage was not placed in context.

GENERALIZATION

One problematic language technique used by the media to report on minorities is generalization. This takes two forms:

- a. The attribution of stereotypical personal or behavioral traits to all members of a specific group. This usually involves negative stereotyping, although not necessarily (e.g. Toni was, as most gays are, very polite).
- b. The turning of the specific trait of some event/individual into a general characteristic of such an event type or a group. Here, the actions of individuals are attributed to the group as a whole (e.g. a media text covering a shooting that involved two Roma individuals generalized this act to the

3 All emphasis in quoted texts is by the author unless remarked otherwise.

4 *Delo*, February 9, 2006.

5 *Dnevnik*, February 9, 2006.

6 *Delo*, February 16, 2006.

7 *Dnevnik*, February 14, 2006.

8 *Večer*, February 20, 2006.

9 *Delo*, February 18, 2006.

10 *Družina*, February 19, 2006.

11 *Mladina*, February 20, 2006.

12 *Večer*, February 20, 2006.

13 *Mag*, February 15, 2006.

14 *Delo*, February 17, 2006.

entire Roma population by saying in the title: *Roma shoot one another*).

The reporting on Muslims contained both types of generalization, with the second one being more frequent, since acts of violence or protests staged by particular Muslim groups were reinterpreted as riots and protests whose protagonists were Muslims in general. This created the impression that violence was the most general trait of all Muslims, which by the same token suggests that the same is not characteristic of the group of which the author is a member.

For example, on February 19, 2006 *Radio Slovenija* reported as follows:

“The unrest in Libya that killed 11 people was followed last night by turmoil among *Nigerian Muslim believers* who burned Catholic churches. The death toll of the most violent protests reached 11, most of them Christian victims.”

Were all Muslim believers in Nigeria in the streets and were they all burning Catholic churches? Or was that the act of particular groups or individuals? How many people actually took to the streets? The report does not provide these answers, although it is deducible that the said criminal acts were not committed by all “Muslim believers in Nigeria”. Depending on the variant of discourse chosen, there are two possible effects a report may produce. In the example above (“Muslim believers in Nigeria burned Catholic churches”) the generalized image of Muslims portrayed as criminals is applied to the stereotyped image of the *Other* as a violent person (our opposite). The other possible variant, e.g. “*Several* Muslim believers in Nigeria burned Catholic churches”, would not delude one into generalization, although this effect cannot be completely ruled out.

We shall now make an absurd reversal making use of a local event of a few years ago when four secondary school students were discovered to have tortured and killed cats. Imagine that this event attracted international attention (as did the protests in the example above) and that the media reported it using the technique of generalization. The headlines would have read something like this: “Slovene students slaughter cats” or “Slovenes slaughter cats”.

Both examples would appear as absurd and nonsensical to Slovene readers, and by all means inaccurate and unfair to all who have not committed such acts. All Slovenes

would be blended into the image of cat-slaughterers, and it would become our (internationally) recognizable feature: the nation that slaughters cats. To extend this comparison, let us imagine what would have happened if the cats had been slaughtered by Roma students rather than Slovenes. The titles would have read: “Roma students slaughter cats” or “Roma people slaughter cats.” These would probably not appear to Slovene readers as absurd and disturbing as the titles mentioned above because what they say has nothing to do with Slovenes and, on top of that, Slovene readers can readily associate this act with the image of the Roma as reproduced by the media, political and similar discourses. We would not find it strange that Roma people slaughter cats, since this would be consistent with their general image as people who kill one another, steal, are lazy, uncivilized and the like.

By contrast, some authors proceeded cautiously and clearly defined (in numbers and descriptively) the protagonists of individual acts, thus avoiding generalization. Below are two such examples from *Radio Slovenija*:

“Several hundred Muslim protesters today demonstrated in front of the Danish consulate in the Philippines capital city of Manila, but there were no reports of serious riots” (*Radio Slovenija*, February 15, 2006).

“A group of armed Palestinians today broke into the EU office in Gaza in protest” (*Radio Slovenija*, February 2, 2006).

However, this type of wording was rare. The media spoke of “enraged Palestinians”¹⁵ who attacked the consular office of Germany, of protesting “Muslims around the globe”,¹⁶ a “violent response by Muslim crowds”¹⁷ and so on. The example below is particularly interesting because *Delo*’s journalist not only exploits the technique of generalization to attribute specific acts to all Muslim believers, but he also presents all Muslims as speaking with one voice. This creates the impression that Muslims are a uniform, undifferentiated group who all think alike:

“Muslims argue that the cartoons are insulting and blasphemous, since the Koran forbids the portraying of the Prophet Mohammad and God ... Muslims still demand more direct apology.” (*Delo*, February 2, 2006).

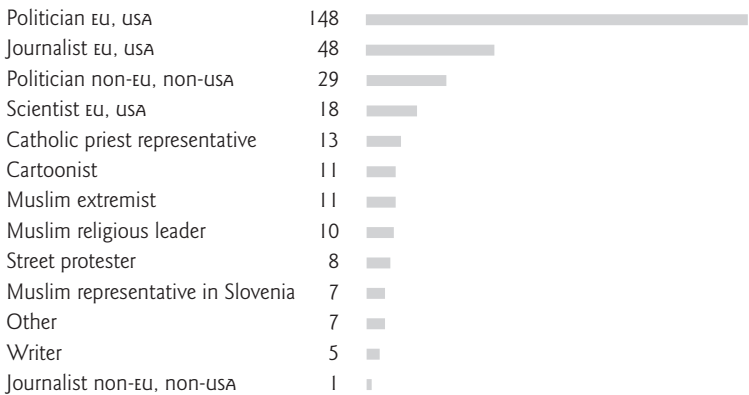
¹⁵ *Radio Slovenija*, February 4, 2006.

¹⁶ *Radio Slovenija*, February 2, 2006.

¹⁷ *Dnevnik*, February 7, 2006.

This was not the sole example presenting the Muslim voice as uniform. Furthermore, there was an obvious distinction made between “the voice of the Muslim world”, on the one hand, and western voices on the other, whereby western speakers were identified with their first and second names, job positions and the titles of media for which they work. The “Muslim voice” was frequently, although not always, non-defined, presented as a single opinion or view, and many times equated with the voice that is loudest or most radical. This is clearly confirmed by the table below showing who the persons behind 290 male and 26 female “voices” were, that is, who was given the opportunity to be heard during the period observed, either through quotation, recapitulation of their ideas or views, or through interviews. We also took into account the multiplication of “voices”, since certain speakers appeared several times, particularly Kofi Annan, Janez Drnovšek and Denmark’s PM Anders Rasmussen.

FIGURE 7 – WHO SPEAKS ABOUT MUSLIMS?¹⁸



Some journalists avoided the above-described generalization by using expressions such as “demonstrators” or “protesters” and avoiding attributes such as Muslim, Islamic, radical and the like. The homogeneous image of Muslims was also disrupted by an apparent heterogeneity created by introducing two distinct but seemingly internally homoge-

¹⁸ Into the category “Islamist extremists” we placed those speakers described as Islamist extremists by the media themselves, or the representatives of radical Islamist groups. Journalists and politicians with the “non-EU” or “non-US” denotation come from countries in which Muslims are the majority.

neous groups, that of European and non-European Muslims. Muslims living in Europe were represented as “more civilized and less violent”, while those living in other parts of the world were described as fitting the image of a Muslim holding the Koran in one hand and a gun in the other. The journalists therefore established internal differentiation by reproducing the “we-they” discourse, which in this case was based on the geographical location of Muslims. Since “we” of the western world includes Muslims as well, they were “purified” of the criminal images clinging to the Muslims of the non-western world. Here it is not possible to avoid the implicit assumption of this internal differentiation; Muslims living in the west have been “civilized” by the western world; hence they are better (more *western*).

So, for example, *Mag*'s journalist (February 15, 2006) concluded that “European Muslims were significantly more peaceful than believers in their homelands, which points to the increasing rift between Muslim emigrants living in the West and believers in African and Asian countries. The former have tasted democratic freedom in their new homelands, whose transfer to the Muslim world mainly failed.” The journalist here implicitly introduced the reproduction of the *Other* (a geographically distant *Other*), which was by the end of the text translated into the implicit reproduction of the *Other* in terms of identity. “And although they (Muslims living in Europe, note by R. K.) do not approve of violence in Gaza, Karachi or Beirut, they undoubtedly feel some satisfaction at the shock felt by the arrogant West.” Even though Muslims in the West have been peaceful, the journalist suggests that they are still “guilty”, therefore different from us, since they derive satisfaction from the violent response by other Muslims.

Delo's journalist, on the other hand, established a somewhat different differentiation (February 14, 2006) when she wrote that the media images showing “enraged crowds of bearded men” make it difficult for us to imagine that in these countries, too, “there are people, mainly the educated, whose emotions were not clouded by reason and whose view on these things differ from that of the majority.” Even here one should not overlook the implicit reproduction of the *Other*; that *Other* is still represented as someone whose emotions were “clouded”. The journalist managed to rise above generalization but at the same time she created new binary divides, where reasonable (Europeans (“we”) and

several Muslim intellectuals) are set against the non-reasonable (the major part of the Muslim world).

It should also be mentioned that media texts occasionally did stress that violent response to the cartoons should not be attributed to the entire Muslim world and that some Muslims held peaceful protests and condemned violent ones. The author of the commentary in *Dnevnik* (February 9, 2006) wrote that “numerous peaceful protests against publication of the cartoons [...] were submerged by the images of hooligans burning embassies more favored by the media.” It seems that it was precisely media commentators, in addition to scientists and cultural workers, who were most critical of the media representation of Muslims and who also warned against the generalization underlying the “we-they” discourse and the most exploited syntagm “the clash of civilizations.”

“WE-THEY” OR HUNTINGTON’S CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

One of the questions most frequently asked by journalists during the period of protests was whether this was a clash of civilizations. Furthermore, it was the subject most frequently discussed by various commentators and experts who were invited to explain the roots of the conflict. Regardless of the answer, it is clear that at least some media texts generated a discursive clash of two civilizations. As with other two groups analyzed here, the basic position taken by journalists in covering protests was the “we-they” position, that is, the Eurocentric position. It created the impression that there existed two homogeneous groups, Europeans and Muslims. Europeans were positively valued and positioned higher, while Muslims were negatively valued and positioned lower as the opposite pole with respect to Europeans. Such a representation is problematic not only because it represents Muslims as a homogeneous mass sending a uniform, fanatic religious message, but also because it represents the West as no less homogeneous. Yet the West’s view of the cartoons was by no means uniform; some defended the cartoons’ publication on the grounds of freedom of speech, while others were appalled.

The majority of the texts in these media still reproduced the well-known relationship between “us” and “them”, or “the Other.” The threat posed to Europe was projected onto “them”, and in the media it was expressed through stylized

and stereotyped images, or, as Aleš Debeljak (*Večer*, February 18, 2006) said, “the imaginary portrait of an unshaven Arab fighter who has no ethical qualms and mercilessly slaughters Christian civilians, holding the Koran in one hand and a gun in the other.” This image, appealingly called the “cartoon vision of Muslim societies” (*Večer*, February 18, 2006) by Laurent Hassid, was reproduced in various ways:

- a. *Through generalization.* (described in the previous section).
- b. In *Eurocentric discourse.* This stresses the differentness of the Muslim world and presents the Muslim world as incomprehensible, less civilized and fanatic; presumably its defining traits are “strange” non-European values, and it is the opposite of the West.
- c. Through the *victim discourse.* This presents Europeans/Christians as innocent victims of Islam, while concealing the fact that it was the West that frequently perpetuated violence against Muslims. The debates about terrorism make extensive use of this technique.
- d. Through the *discourse of threat.* This is a radicalized version of the two discourses mentioned above, and its main characteristic is that Europe is presented as a victim while its democratic values are also said to be threatened. The implicit trait of this discourse is a call for more intense resistance, since the Muslim world is interpreted as a conspiracy that wants to “take over and Islamize” the democratic European world.

Let us now have a look at several illustrative examples of this kind. In a sub-title in *Večer* (February 10, 2006), the journalist mentions the Slovenian President’s statement about the straining of relations between the Muslims and the west, or, in the journalist’s words, between the Muslim *world* and western *civilization*. This world vs. civilization image was additionally encouraged by emphasizing radical statements by particular violent groups, whose voice made its way into the forefront of media texts, thus drowning all other alternative voices. Another article carried by *Večer* on the same day (February 10, 2006) was entitled “Kilos of gold for a suicide” and the sub-title highlighted just one voice – the most radical one. “The Taliban allegedly offered one hundred kilos of gold to anyone who would kill those responsible for the publication of the cartoons, and five kilos to anyone who would kill a Danish, Norwegian or German soldier.” This stress on one voice leaves little room for other

voices. Below are further examples of the above-mentioned caricaturing of the Muslim world.

"In Europe, the Enlightenment, the bloody experience of religious war and gradual modernization in all areas consigned Christianity to the private sphere. State and religion are separated, and society is widely secularized. The extent, the intensity and the duration of Muslims' response to the cartoons confirms that things are different in Islam. [...] According to a certain view,¹⁹ the Arab regions are a kind of black hole located between the successful West and the fast developing East. They cling to a glorious past, live in a miserable present and seek an outside culprit for their own backwardness and stagnation." (*Delo*, February 17, 2006)

"[T]he fact is that traditionally circumspect, multicultural and "pacifist" Europe found itself in the grip of the fundamentalist revenge. It is pushed towards the clash of civilizations [...]" (*Dnevnik*, February 7, 2006).

"The perception of values in Islam is different from that in Christianity, and we should be aware of this." (*Večer*, February 11, 2006).

"Extremist Islam responded to the cartoons with violence, including the burning of Danish, German, French and other European flags. Isn't this equally insulting for us, Europeans?" (TV Slovenija, *Dnevnik* news program, a question posed by a journalist, February 4, 2006)

"Probably one part of the responsibility for the deeply rooted prejudices against Islam lies with Muslims themselves, because they did not make sufficient effort to convince us of the contrary?" (*Večer*, a question posed by a journalist, February 7, 2006).

"Muslims demand heads for the slightest insult, writing or cartoon; at any rate, in their view a believer is not worth much! If Muslims were to predominate somewhere, sometime, the first to go will be non-believer liberals, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren! That's where the heads would first roll, if there is no religion and bowing!" (*Družina*, a reader's letter, February 26, 2006)

"At this historical moment they [Muslims, note by R. K.] blackmail the west to cede geopolitical space to a new caliphate whose borders would be, given the wide interpretation of jihad philosophy, wherev-

¹⁹ The author does not explain to which view he refers or who its author is. Since he is aware that this description is stereotyped (and problematic), he transfers the burden of stereotyping to an anonymous author, while excluding himself (although he does mediate this description) as not being "responsible."

er a Muslim lives (meaning that our Constitutions would no longer be valid), and any prudent answer from our side will be interpreted as impotence, serving only as a justification of their pride in the holy war. [...] Our potentially weak answer, if it is too weak, will provide them with the reason for even more intense challenge and will boost negative self-confidence. Apologizing for every step they object to is senseless, since terrorists would be given new reasons. The problem lies in them, not in the cartoons." (*Mag*, February 22, 2006).

"Well, while the storm caused by insults to Christianity ends with the war of words, when Muslims are insulted it turns into violence, threats of death, boycotts, street unrests [...] [I]f we agree to respect their rules in their territories, then we expect *qui pro quo* [original emphasis]. If I, a non-Muslim woman, veil myself when walking the streets of the Arab world as a sign of respect for their culture, I expect their religion to have respect for the postulates of my culture that speak of freedom of speech." (*Mladina*, February 6, 2006).

The representatives of the Catholic Church, who account for 13% of all interlocutors, introduced a special aspect of the victim discourse. They indeed expressed sympathy for Muslims, but they also clearly stressed the distinction between us (Catholics) and them (Muslims). They pointed out that Catholics, too, were frequently the victims of such blasphemies, except that their response has never been so violent. The implicit assumption here is that Catholics, too, are victims, but that they endure such offenses in a more peaceful (civilized?) manner than Muslims. This position exhibits all the features mentioned above: generalization, victim discourse and "we-they" discourse. This type of discourse, in particular the generalization and the binary division into good Christians (victims) and bad Muslims (violent persons), became reinforced after some radical groups attacked Catholic priests and killed some of them. Below are some examples of this discourse.

"These cartoons are neither the first nor the lone instances in which journalistic freedom has transgressed the limits of good taste and sound reason. The only difference is that in most cases the targets were Christian symbols and that we, Christians, living in the west do not defend our identity in the same way as Muslims do." (*Dnevnik*, February 17, 2006.)

"It is puzzling how and why our liberals work towards the construction of the Muslim center in Ljubljana with such fervor and even impatience

(even Communists in the past were not like that). One is left with the impression that they do not know, or do not want to know, what it is all about. The only thing that is important for them is that it is not Christian or Catholic. [...] It is high time they became serious and gave more support to our side, the recently increasingly pacifist Christian religion, which does not force anyone into going to church or accepting religion, tries to be good to all, knows how to forgive even brutal offences, and – despite all material concerns – is still the main love.” (*Družina*, a reader’s letter, February 26, 2006)

“Islam’s essence and development have been different, so contrary to Christianity, it does not allow criticism of religion” (*Družina*, February 19, 2006).

“President Drnovšek has apologized to Muslims for the cartoons, but he has not apologized, for example, to Slovenian Christians for a similar offence, although he is our president and should stand up for his citizens in the first place” (*Radio Ognjišče*, February 17, 2006).

Despite everything, some media managed to rise above this type of debate, and although it is difficult to single out any particular one, *Večer* and *Mladina* seem to stand out. It is much easier to identify individual journalists who rejected this type of debate (which points to the absence of consistent editorial policy). For example, Marcel Štefančič jr. wrote for *Mladina* (February 20, 2006) the following:

“Many were quick to proclaim that what we see is the ‘clash of civilizations’. This, of course, is not true: it is the clash of two extreme right wings, or two fundamentalisms –eastern and western fundamentalism, or Muslim and Christian fundamentalism.”

THE ABSENCE OF CONTEXT

The absence of context is another trait of discursive media construction of reality during the period observed. Media reported on the response of Muslims as if these incidents and reactions had no background to them or historical context. Initially, the reports focused on Muslims’ violence, whereby Muslims were represented as shattering European values. Owing to the exceptional allure of sensationalism for the media, we cannot speak about sensibility or contextualization of events during the initial period of coverage when a Muslim was equated with an uncivilized radical. *Mag* (February 15, 2006), for example, wrote: “The

only God does not joke and especially does not tolerate jokes about him, *while his believers are not extremely particular about choosing targets.*”

During the following stage, which could be described as a the sobering up stage, the media established a dividing line between radical groups and other Muslims who felt offended but did not respond violently. During this second stage the cartoons were put into wider context, the media sought to explain the background to the events and in some cases the Eurocentric victim discourse was replaced by self-questioning about the attitude of the West towards Islam. So, during the second half of February there also appeared critical texts that provided a wider picture. This especially holds true of the print media, which featured more comprehensive and deeper analysis of the events, and to a somewhat smaller extent of broadcast media.

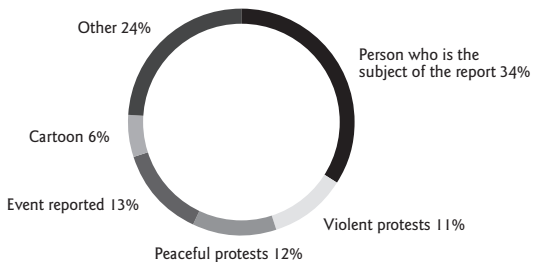
For illustration, let us mention the concluding part of the report included in the tv *Dnevnik* news program (February 2), in which the journalist asked: “What provokes more prejudice against Islam? These cartoons, or the cutting of hostages’ throats in front of tv cameras? Or suicide attacks on wedding guests?” Here, the journalist stressed acts that deserve our condemnation, but she also succeeded in reversing cause and effect: she actually justified our prejudice against Islam by pointing to violent acts, but swept under the carpet the fact that these acts came in response to other violent acts (e.g. the US military intervention in that part of the world). Therefore, by omitting/non-thematizing the context, the journalist became trapped in victim discourse and the legitimization of intolerance towards Muslims.

GRAPHICS

In the three main dailies (*Delo*, *Dnevnik* and *Večer*), the texts dealing with Muslims were featured on the front page ten times; the majority of texts about Muslims appeared on pages one to four of these daily newspapers. In weeklies, this topic occupied the central place (the highlight of the week, reportage etc.). Similarly, it received emphasis on television and radio, where it was featured during the first few minutes of the news programs (in contrast to issues relating to the other two minorities analyzed here, i.e. the Roma and gays and lesbians). However, as the analysis presented above shows, this does not mean that the voice of Muslims was at the forefront.

The statistical analysis showed that the issues relating to Muslims and Islam were most frequently discussed by European and US politicians. The ratio of western to Muslim representatives speaking about these issues was eight to two. However, a look at the graphics gives a somewhat different picture. While the media texts created the impression that all protests were violent, because of which countless Muslims “were absorbed” in the prevalent image of the extremist Muslim world, the pictures accompanying texts in the print media were somewhat more balanced.

FIGURE 8 – GRAPHICS IN THE PRINT MEDIA.



The pictures featured by the print media showed both peaceful and violent protests, with the latter depicting protesters burning the flags and consular offices of western states. However, despite these balanced graphics, violent protests seem to have made a stronger impact on readers because they were emphasized by the texts. In addition, the pictures of violent protests are also more memorable because violence attracts attention (and sells the paper/broadcast) and because they can be easily incorporated into the predominant image of the Muslim world depicted by the western media (and discourses) as “violent, uncivilized and extremist” and presented as the opposite pole of European civilization, pacifism and tolerance.

To sum up, media coverage of Muslims’ response to the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad created a picture of two internally homogeneous worlds by exploiting generalization and the “we-they” discourse. This type of binary distinction was easily incorporated into the deeply rooted image of the Muslim world that is identified with terrorism, and the West, which is civilized, innocent and, above all, *their* victim. Media frequently reported the reactions of Muslims as if these were isolated incidents without a wider

context, in this way making easier their incorporation into the stereotypical image of a Muslim with “the Koran in one hand and a gun in the other.” This image has been persistently reproduced by the media ever since 9/11, and its roots run deep in Europe. In order to constitute itself as a civilized world, Europe has always needed its opposite, an external “intruder.” Muslims were (and still are) a handy excuse for perpetuating this blind belief in one’s own superiority.

THE ROMA

Previous analyses of the media coverage of Roma in Slovenia (Erjavec, Hrvatín, Kelbl, 2000, Kotnik, 2002, Petković, 2002, 2003, Urh, Žnidaršič-Demšar, 2005, Cigler, Bukovec, 2006) reveal a largely uniform media image also confirmed by our research. It seems that no essential qualitative leap has occurred in the meantime; every media text about the Roma is motivated by some problem. Problems are the most frequent reason leading the media to cover this minority group, and particularly so if the problem turns into a conflict. Petković (2002:18) pointed out that in public debates about the Roma and in the media, “handy (racist) arguments imputing a specific (criminalized) cultural pattern and the (innate) social inferiority of the Roma people appear time after time.” The authors of the study about the discriminatory media discourse on the Roma (Erjavec, Hrvatín, Kelbl, 2000) arrived at a similar conclusion, saying that media representations of Roma focus primarily on those traits interpreted by the media as negative. Using generalization and stereotyping, Roma people are presented as culturally different (they are lazy and rely on social aid), deviant (stealing is presumably their inherent trait), and as being a threat to our cultural pattern and in turn to the majority population. The authors further established that the Roma only rarely appear in the media as individuals. A few years on, however, Petković (2002, 2003), who analyzed a parliamentary debate about elections of Roma representatives, found that the Roma voice was increasingly present in the media. She also concluded that in recapitulating the arguments put forward by politicians who reject the settling of the “Roma issue”, journalists increasingly drew attention to stigmatization and intolerance. Petković noted that this was “a new and positive aspect of the debate about Roma identity in Slovenia,” but she also pointed out that “journalistic practices and discourses that discriminate, criminalize and racistically proclaim Roma people secondary citizens also persist in the expected places” (Petković, 2003:69).

During the period analyzed in this research, the media featured 41 texts that were directly or indirectly concerned with Roma issues. National media covered the Roma primarily in connection with the adoption of a so called umbrella law about the Roma. The debate on this issue in the National Council was held on February 21. The major part of the media coverage, however, was carried by a regional

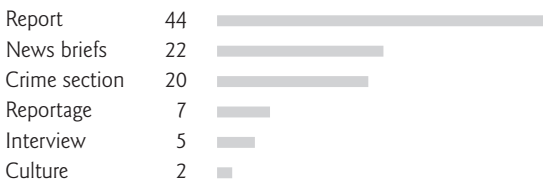
paper, *Dolenjski list*,²⁰ which regularly covers this issue in the section dedicated to local events. In February 2006, *Dolenjski list* carried the greatest number of texts about the Roma (14), followed by *Delo* and *Večer* (9 each). *Dnevnik*, *Mladina*, *Murski vestnik* and *Televizija Slovenia* carried two texts each, and *Radio Slovenija* featured only one. *POP TV*, *Radio Ognjišče*, *Družina* and *Mag* did not have reports covering the Roma during this month.

The analysis showed that the media most frequently employed the techniques of criminalization, problematization and stereotyping and “we-they” discourse when covering the Roma.

DISCURSIVE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE ROMA

The results of the statistical analysis of media texts dealing with the Roma clearly point to the manner in which Roma are introduced into the media space. Almost 20% of all texts about the Roma appeared in the crime section or were part of reports on criminal offences. Had this not been the time of the debate about the above-mentioned law, which placed Roma issues into the context of politics and contributed to an increase in the number of “reports” dealing with Roma issues, the media texts criminalizing Roma would have been predominant. The law-related debate also explains the placement of some of these texts on page two of the newspapers, although the greatest number appeared on pages three through six.

FIGURE 9 – COVERAGE OF THE ROMA BY THE MEDIA TEXT TYPE.



The texts that appeared in the crime sections presented Roma in three contexts: as participants in attempted murders, as traffickers or owners of illegal firearms and as those who threaten employees of the Center for Social Work. In none of these texts was a particular criminal offence attributed to an individual; rather, it was generalized to the Roma

²⁰ Dolenjska is a region with a comparatively large Roma population.

population as a whole. For example, the media reported that persons who were caught with illegal firearms had bought these “at a Roma settlement” (*Delo*, February 11, *Večer*, February 13, 2006). The very title carried by *Večer*, “Weapons were bought at a Roma settlement”, suggests a semantic leap deluding one into associating the entire Roma population with weapon trafficking. The same image was also encouraged by the interlocutors who appeared in these texts. The Interior Minister, Dragutin Mate, as *Delo* reported (February 2, 2006), “urged more frequent actions to seize firearms from the Roma.”

In news briefs appearing in the crime section, the authors frequently passed judgment on the Roma before any guilt was actually proven. For example, *Delo* (February 3, 2006) reported that during house searches at a Roma settlement, police officers confiscated a portable computer that “was allegedly obtained in a burglary.” It is interesting that “allegedly” is omitted in the sub-heading of the same text, so that it appears to have been confirmed that the portable computer had actually been stolen. “In Trebnje and in Črnomelj police officers found weapons, and in a Roma settlement they found a *stolen computer*, USB keys and mobile phones.” No arguments or explanations corroborating this assertion are presented. Once again, this pre-judgment perfectly matches the image of the Roma as criminals.

In the same text, the author says that certain goods were confiscated in other house searches (outside the Roma settlement, in Trebnje and Črnomelj), but this time she does not leap to the conclusion that these goods *could have been* stolen, but only stresses that the owners did not have owners’ registration. This discrepancy is obvious in the introductory part of the article where we find another interesting detail: when referring to Roma suspects, she uses the term “man”, but the other two suspects of non-Roma origin are referred to as “a citizen” and “a local.” We will return to this distinction (we-they, civilized-uncivilized) later in the text.

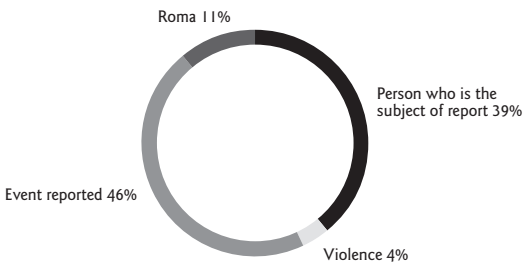
Similar prejudgments could be read in *Večer* (February 6, 2006) in a report about that same event. It says that “it is suspected” that the seized objects “were obtained through criminal acts.” The above-mentioned computer was described as “*having been obtained in a burglary.*”

An author identified only by initials and reporting for *Dolenjski list* on problems experienced at the Center for Social Work in Črnomelj, wrote that employees at this center were increasingly exposed to “insults from the clients.”

This is followed by a story about one of three male clients. When he learned that he was no longer entitled to receive social aid, he promised the social worker that he would “make a mess they will remember and reminded them that years ago he was involved in the shooting in front of the Črnomelj post office.” The author presented this story as an example or illustration of customers’ complaints and threats, but what is essential is that the person in question is not described as just one of the clients receiving social aid; instead, his main identity signifier is his ethnicity – a Roma client. This semantic transfer creates the impression that all the clients who threaten are Roma people without explicitly generalizing the story to the entire Roma population. The semantic leap from the general (insulting clients) to the specific (the story of a Roma man who was insulting) attaches a Roma face to the unspecified clients mentioned in the introduction to the text. This is by no means surprising, as it easily ties in with the image of the Roma as those who do not respect the law and behave aggressively. This image is additionally supported by the photo of a man taken from behind, in which a man is behaving violently and threatening some employee in an office. Although the man in the picture is definitely not the Roma from the story, the purpose of a picture is to create the illusion that it is the violent Roma mentioned in the text threatening an employee at the center for social work.

This said, it should be added that this graphic image was an exception during the period observed. Pictures accompanying articles about the Roma in the print media are not out of the ordinary; as a rule, they show the event reported or the interlocutor. A smaller number of photos depicts the “life of the Roma.”

FIGURE 10 – PHOTOS ACCOMPANYING MEDIA TEXTS
ABOUT THE ROMA.

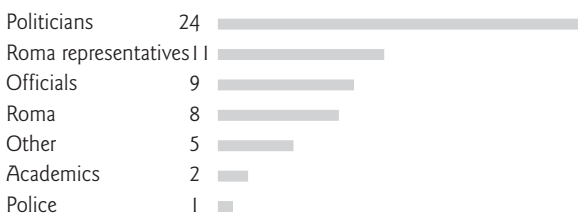


WE : THEY / CIVILIZED : UNCIVILIZED

“So there are two Roma settlements in the municipality, one in Lepovče and the other in Goriča vas, with an estimated 30 Roma people in each. ‘Other Roma people are socialized, they work and live in residential apartment blocks,’ says Majda Vrh” (*Delo*, February 24, 2006).

During February 2006, 45 male and 15 female interlocutors spoke to the media about the Roma. Janez Obreza, the director of the governmental office for nationalities, and Jožek Horvat Muc, the president of the Roma Union appeared most frequently. The table below shows whose “voice” (opinion, statement or answer) could be heard in the texts analyzed.

FIGURE II – WHO SPEAKS ABOUT THE ROMA?



Even though the Roma to non-Roma speakers ratio is 4 to 6, meaning better than in the case of Muslims, even in this example it is possible to say that media predominantly present the voices of those who are not part of the Roma community. Furthermore, this ratio would have been lower were it not for one comprehensive feature story about the Roma carried by the *Mladina* weekly in which statements were given by several Roma.

The interlocutors, much like the journalists, establish the division “we-they”. They project onto the Roma whatever is negative, different and uncivilized, while the identity of “we”, who are civilized, cultured and above all unproblematic, is established in relation to them, the Other. The “we” hence becomes a platform from which everything else is assessed and valued. The issue of media representation of the Roma does not differ from that of the other two groups analyzed here. The Muslims are seen as the opposite of the developed western world, while gays and lesbians are the opposite of the heterosexual world considered a standard and a norm, or of heteronormativity, to borrow

the term from Warner (1999), a post-structural queer theoretician. The logic of representation is obviously the same. It is the logic pointed out by Edward W. Said (1996) in his renowned study about “western views of the Orient.” The Roma as the Other forms in fact the implicit framework of all media representations, since they appear in the media as an “external problem” and as a community that is both inside and outside the wider (Slovene) community.

“In our municipality Roma owe 5 million for drinking water alone (although there are only 350 Roma); on the other hand they have mobile phones, expensive cars, guns and machine guns ...” (Jože Povšič, the director of the Komunalna municipal services, *Dolenjski list*, February 2, 2006).

“We do not have a Roma representative and we won’t have one! We gave them houses, electricity and water for free – students have to come by these things on their own. The term Roma is too nice for them – we have difficulties with Gypsies!” (Srečko and Rok from Ivančna Gorica, *Mladina*, February 27, 2006).

The “we-they” discourse is extensively present in media representations of the Roma depicting them as problematic citizens, with two problematic issues being most emphasized: the issue of education (educated Slovenes vs. uneducated Roma) and that of employment (employed (diligent, hardworking) Slovenes vs. idle (exploitative, lazy) Roma). It is interesting that such divisions are not generated by non-Roma interlocutors exclusively (for example, the mayor of Semič, Ivan Bukovec, maintained that the umbrella law on the Roma would “legalize idleness” and confer upon them rights without imposing obligations as well), but also by Roma themselves. For example, the President of the Roma Union of Slovenia spoke about the “weak working habits of the Roma” (*Delo*, February 22, 2006), although he also problematized the context by saying that another side of the problem is prejudice on the part of employers.

THE ROMA AS A PROBLEM

The most frequently used expression in media texts about the Roma is “Roma-related problems.” Accordingly, the Roma are most frequently presented as passive objects (not subjects) who represent a problem. There was only one exception during the period observed, in which the Roma

were not contextualized as a problem. That was the report on tv Slovenia (February 7, 2006) on the translation of Prešeren's poems into Romany. However, when introducing the translator, Rajko Šajnovič, the journalist presented him as an original character. In so doing, she did not use a directly expressed opinion, but rather a modified statement attributed to the entire Roma community ("Among his people he is known as an original character"). This type of modified statement is an integral part of the introduction of stereotypes into the media environment (Mitten and Wodak, 1993). In the example above it is used as a presentation of an exception that should confirm the majority image of the Roma as not (sufficiently) cultured people.

In the context of representing the Roma as a problem, they are "subjectivized" only when speaking about social aid. In this connection they appear as *active subjects* who take away money from the state, that is, from us.

"Unfortunately the existing legislation diverts Roma parents from sending their children to kindergarten, since if they keep the child at home their child's bonus is 20% higher, so they exploit this en masse" (*Dolenjski list*, February 9, 2006).

"In the past they used to scrounge, but now they don't have to do that, because they get aid from the municipality" (Ivanka Javornik, a citizen of Grosuplje, *Mladina*, February 27, 2006).

"That it [the Roma issue] is a burning issue is mainly the consequence of unemployment among the Roma, which is widespread because, among other reasons, we take excellent care of their social security" (Janez Drobnič, Minister of Work, Family and Social Affairs, *Dolenjski list*, February 2, 2006).

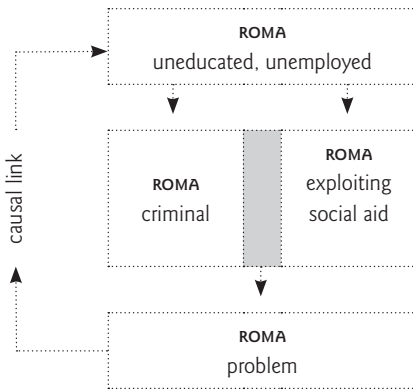
"And who will seek employment through public works when the social aid is higher than the payment for this type of work?" (Ivan Bukovec, the mayor of Semič, *Večer*, February 2, 2006).

It seems that media apply dual interpretational criteria when speaking about the receivers of social aid. The Roma people receive social aid, so "they" do not want to find employment and exploit this situation "en masse." This creates the impression that "we" do not exploit this same opportunity, although we could. A Roma man, as a receiver of social aid, is interpellated as an individual who exploits (and is therefore problematic), but this interpretation is not

applied when “we” are involved (or, this fact is not equally highlighted by the media, because it is overwhelmed by the (media) image of Slovenes as hard-working and as the opposite of the Other, i.e. the Roma).

Stereotyped media representations stick one to another and become reproduced in this way. Based on the material analyzed, the “sticking pattern” is as follows:

FIGURE 12 – THE “STICKING” PATTERN OF STEREOTYPICAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ROMA (IN THE WE-THEY CONTEXT).



To stay with the same metaphor, media reports on money invested in “the resolution of Roma issues” here function as a glue binding the images shown above. The information on money invested is not in itself problematic, but it “reacts” in the context of the above-presented pattern, since the already established image of the Roma as exploiters is compounded by information about the cost of the “Roma problems” underwritten by the state. This reaction is further supported by the method of introducing this information into the text. In the example below, the word ‘alone’ points up the size of the investment, which in turn, by the logic of null sum, says that the sum remaining for “us” must be smaller.

“This year alone the state will earmark around 314 million tolar for this purpose [improvement of Roma settlements, note by R. K.]” (*Večer*, February 22, 2006).

“350 million tolar of this year’s budget is earmarked for building infrastructure in Roma settlements, roads and even street lighting [...] From this source alone 46 million tolar is secured for the operation of these [Roma] associations.” (*Delo*, February 20, 2006).

To sum up, during the period observed Roma issues were part of the two basic thematic frameworks: crime and the debate on the umbrella law on the Roma. Within the former, the Roma were presented as perpetrators of criminal acts, whereby suspects were conflated with the community to which they belong, so the entire community was criminalized. It was an act of a priori criminalization, without proof or final judgment. The debate on the umbrella law in the National Council opened room within the media for a repeated consideration of “Roma problematic issues.” The framework of these media representations was the binary discursive relationship “we-they” implying the relationship “civilized-uncivilized.” “They” were constituted as a problem primarily in relation to the issues of education and employment, and to these images adhered images of the Roma as criminals and as exploiters of social aid. The majority of media texts problematized the Roma population without providing the context (as well), which strengthened the image of “them” as being outside our society (different from us) but also as being an internal problem.

GAYS AND LESBIANS

A study of print media coverage of homosexuality in Slovenia for the period 1970 to 2000 (Kuhar, 2003) indicated that, on the whole, the media coverage was favorable or at least neutral. During this period homosexuality was a marginal journalistic topic, and it is no different today. Accordingly, media generally do not engage journalists specializing in this area. It appears that during the period 1970-2000, this topic was handled by journalists who were sensitized to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, or who took a kind of humanistic approach to the issue. Not rarely, their reporting was patronizing, although with good intentions. Homosexuality was understood as excess, or an exotic behavior, and an attractive media topic. Tratnik (2000), for example, concludes that starting in the late 1990s representations of homosexuality began to shift to the realm of the entertainment industry dominated by personal and spectacular themes. Velikonja (2001:397) adds that “editorial policies concerning the issues of homosexuality are virtually consistent across the board in that there is no consistent editorial policy.” Accordingly, says Velikonja, one cannot say that the media is homophobic, but rather that the producers of media texts are such.

Despite this generally well-disposed attitude towards gays and lesbians, the analysis of the thirty years of media coverage of homosexuality (Kuhar, 2003) showed that media representations of homosexuality invariably left enough room for discourses that reproduced the stereotyped images of gays and lesbians. Furthermore, it revealed that homosexuality still caused uncertainty and uneasiness, frequently manifested as stereotyped media images that readily tie in with the readers’ picture of homosexuality and hence do not appear upsetting. It can be said that homosexuality enters the media world through five basic techniques. One is stereotyping, primarily the result of a rigid understanding of sexual patterns and relations between the sexes. Next is psychiatric discourse on homosexuality, which rests on the uncontested notion of the complementarity of the two opposite sexes. This medicalized approach, therefore, problematizes homosexuality (what is the cause of homosexuality?), while heterosexuality in media representations remains unchallenged, natural and consequently common sense. The sexualization of homosexuality, the third type of media representation of gays and lesbians, reduces gays

and lesbians to the issue of sexuality (this is particularly conspicuous in the accompanying graphics and photos). Next is secrecy, whereby homosexuality is presented as a secret that should be regretted and of which one should be ashamed. Even though this type of media representation was characteristic primarily of the 1970s and the late 1980s, it persisted into the 1990s, for example, within the Catholic weekly *Družina* (cf. Greif, 2001:389). Kuhar further concluded that during the 1990s increasingly normalized images of homosexuality began to enter the media. This indeed was a qualitative shift, yet not unproblematic. In fact, it was heterosexual normalization, or to put it differently, the media images of homosexuality have been fashioned on the acceptable model of heterosexuality so that they are not perceived as threatening. Homosexuality is therefore acceptable only if it is depoliticized and placed in the context of the spectacle, entertainment and the personal. The inclusion of gay and lesbian characters in comic programs/serials is a clear sign of this.

During February 2006, there were 14 media texts addressing homosexuality. The majority of these texts related to lesbian and gay cultural production, either books (reviews of the gay and lesbian book collections *Vizibilija* and *Lambda* published by Škuc), the exhibition entitled *Homocaust* dealing with the persecution of homosexuals under the Third Reich, or the big-screen gay image provided by *Brokeback Mountain*, at that time an Oscar front-runner.

Recently, issues concerning gays and lesbians have been (most) frequently addressed in the context of current political questions, primarily in connection with the debate on the law on registered homosexual partnerships. There were also several reports of this kind during the period analyzed, and these could not avoid the trap of the classical pattern for reporting on homosexuality in which the listing of pro and contra arguments (including the quoting of “juicy” (homophobic) statements by parliamentarians which frequently provided a platform for the reproduction of intolerance) is followed by the voice of “public opinion,” presented as the *alpha and omega* of the entire debate on the issue of registered homosexual partnerships. Here the media as a rule do not problematize the fact that intolerant public opinion on the issue of registered partnerships legitimizes intolerance and homophobia; one type of intolerance is used to justify another type. It seems that, with the help of media representations public opinion may quite arbitrarily create

definitions of and impose the limits on human rights. As Velikonja (2004) says, these media representations particularize the general, whereby the principle of universal equality as civil political culture is media-constructed as a particular opinion held by supporters of this legislation.

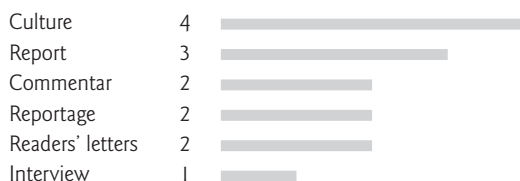
“The media, therefore, present as equal two options, one that expands the fund of rights, and another that reduces it. However, they do not emphasize this difference, but rather neutralize it, so they are responsible for the erosion of modern civil culture, which may have unpredictable and extremely destructive implications for social peace. (Velikonja, 2004:12).

In so doing, the media do not pay attention to the fact that this type of media particularization of opinions, which in a debate on human rights is expressed in the form of pro and contra arguments, contributes to the dangerous “weakening of the universality of law.” It is necessary to point out here that this type of particularization is especially illustrative because it appears only in relation to certain groups, that is, gays and lesbians, Roma and the like, while media representations of some other groups, although not unproblematic, are usually not “counter-balanced” by opposite opinions. For example, in debates about Jews, neo-Nazis are not invited to give their opinions. By contrast, media representations of homosexuality relating to current political issues are always accompanied by the opinion of the “other side”, ostensibly introduced for the sake of balance, but in reality supporting the implicit agenda that counts on excess as that which sells the media.

Even though it is possible to observe a qualitative leap in media representations of homosexuality – for example, homosexuality is no longer medicalized– the practice of presenting two opposing sides does persist. In the past, in medicalized contexts, the opposite side was represented by psychiatrists who asserted that homosexuality was a psychological disorder. Today, in the politicized context, the opposite side is represented by opponents of the law on registered partnership which, in their view, puts homosexual relationships on a par with heterosexual ones. Here one should not overlook the fact that their argumentation relies on the same platform as that once produced by psychiatry: homosexual partnerships are allegedly different “by nature” and hence they should enjoy (by the law of nature?) fewer rights.

The debate on registered homosexual partnerships is not limited solely to the legal aspect involving rights and obligations (it is not a debate on equality only), but goes beyond this. It seems that the debate on homosexual partnerships and even more so on homosexual families undermines traditional views on male/female and their relationship. It exposes these “foundations of western civilization” as not unproblematic and challenges these taken-for-granted assumptions. However, the said issues were not at the forefront of the media agenda in February 2006. This period was dominated by cultural issues related to homosexuality, with the coverage nevertheless adhering to certain typical media representations of homosexuality.

FIGURE 13 – REPORTING ON GAYS AND LESBIANS
BY THE MEDIA TEXT TYPE.



The greatest number of texts on gays and lesbians was carried by *Večer* (6), followed by *Mladina* (4), with *Delo*, *Dnevnik*, *Mag* and *Družina* featuring only one text each. Other media analyzed here did not carry any text about gays and lesbians.

For an illustration of typical media representations of homosexuality, we selected three media texts; the first two are reviews of *Brokeback Mountain*, one published in *Mag* (February 1) and the other in *Družina* (February 26, 2006); the third, featured by *Večer*, speaks about the everyday life of gays and lesbians. All three texts rely on secrecy, normalization and eccentricity as thematic frameworks for the media representations of homosexuality.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS A SECRET.
HOMOSEXUALITY IS NORMAL.

In media texts homosexuality is presented as secret in two ways. On the one hand, secrecy is manifested as the masking of interlocutors, gays and lesbians, who are introduced only by their first (imaginary) name, and, under-

standably, without a face (there is no picture of the interlocutor). On the connotative level, such a representation creates the impression of something shameful, concealed, dirty and unacceptable; such representations are, after all, encouraged by the interlocutors themselves, who strive to avoid media exposure by hiding “their faces.” The other level of secrecy is that of language. For example, the texts contain, or at least imply, the *identification of homosexuality with secrecy*. Previous studies of media representations of homosexuality (Kuhar, 2003) indeed showed that secrecy was predominantly characteristic of the 1970s and the early 1980s, but obviously, it persists. During the period analyzed here, it was particularly conspicuous because the story of *Brokeback Mountain* itself is built on the image of homosexuality as a secret and a shame.

Even though it may seem that the representation of homosexuality as a secret is exclusive of the normalization of homosexuality (homosexuals are not out of the ordinary/homosexuality is “normal”), in the media analyzed here these two representation techniques often appear alongside each other. *Mag’s* (February 1, 2006) review, for example, opens with the conclusions that cowboys in this movie are quite ordinary, that “there is nothing *unusual* about them, and that they are in no way *different* from countless other cowboys that still graze their herds across the expanses of North America.” But this has not prevented the author from entitling the review “A Secret from the Mountain.”

The review in *Družina*, on the other hand, places normalization in a different context. The author says that a modern movie must show something “fascinating, eccentric or simply ‘freakish’” to stand out from the average. The text hints at, and also represents, homosexuality as one such eccentricity, but it also adds that the stress lies on the normalization of homosexuality, albeit represented as problematic and threatening for the majority. The text adheres clearly to the “we-they” discourse, where “we”, heterosexual partners, is threatened, while “they” is the generator of that threat, which the author calls an “intensive gay campaign.”

“Gay culture does not want to remain on the level of a subculture but wants to break away from it and rise to the level of general culture by permeating all social pores [...] The movie in fact received nine nominations [...] All these awards and nominations obviously show that there is an *intensive gay campaign behind it*, which has led to its ban

in China.²¹ While last year it was the campaign for euthanasia that was at the forefront (Million Dollar Baby and The Sea Inside [...]), this year gay culture is on the agenda. The purpose is to promote it and put it on a par with heterosexual partnerships and hence normalize it" (*Družina*, February 26, 2006).

THE "WE-THEY" DISCOURSE,
OR I'M NOT A LESBIAN!

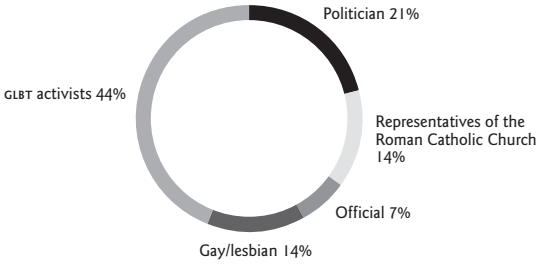
The "we-they" discourse is the constant trait of media representations of homosexuality. Journalists actually like to begin their texts by stressing that they themselves are not members of this group. The message is not only that theirs is an external view (and hence supposedly more objective), but it also conveys their fear (internalized homophobia?) of being identified as "one of them." So, for example, one author thus begins her text:

"Fortunately, all gays and lesbians who gathered at Media Nox this week are tolerant towards those of us who like the opposite sex and are called 'straight'" (*Večer*, February, 4, 2006).

An interesting difference with respect to two other minority groups investigated in this study has been observed in connection with the interlocutors chosen by the media authors writing about homosexuality. Although based on a limited sample, it is possible to conclude that at least during the period analyzed, it was gays and lesbians themselves, and GLBT activists in particular, whose voices could be heard. The ratio is six to four in favor of the representatives of gay and lesbian groups, but we should not neglect the above-mentioned problem of secrecy when identifying the interlocutors.

21 The logic used by the author is not clear, since he uses the banning of the movie in China as "proof" that the movie is part of an intensive gay campaign. However, if a conspiratorial gay campaign were really behind it, then it would probably be successful owing to the proverbial limitations of communist leaders.

FIGURE 14 – WHO SPEAKS ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS?



Similar to what we have concluded in connection with the Roma, graphics accompanying media texts on homosexuality are not exceptional in any respect. In most cases the pictures showed the title pages of gay and lesbian literature or images from *Brokeback Mountain*. Furthermore, there was no sexualization or secrecy in these graphics (homosexuals have faces), as in the past (cf. Kuhar, 2003).

COMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS

Our analysis included three commercial radio stations: *Radio Antena*, *Radio Center* and *Radio City*. We did not monitor their programs throughout February, but only during randomly selected 24-hour intervals. On February 22 and 24, 2006 we monitored the 24-hour program on *Radio Antena* and *Radio City*, and on February 22, 2006 that on *Radio Center*.

Intolerance and ridiculing of minorities most frequently penetrates the airwaves through the statements of listeners who send SMS messages which are then read, uncensored, by radio hosts, or read without reacting to the “problematic” parts of particular messages. *Radio City* includes a short program called “Your 30 seconds on air” advertised as an uncensored broadcast without restrictions. Although it can be said that these thirty seconds of airtime are insignificant, the broadcast and the editorial policy could be interpreted as being in contravention of Article 8 of the Mass Media Act that prohibits the dissemination of content inciting national, racial, religious, sexual or other types of inequality, or violence and war, as well as national, racial, religious, sexual or other type of hatred or intolerance. Non-selective reading of SMS messages, and even more so the advertising of the opportunity to appear on air “without restrictions” definitely cannot contribute to the prevention of intolerant discourse. On the contrary, it seems that this non-selectivity encourages intolerant messages. I’d like to mention at this point a positive example provided by *Radio Antena* (February 22), when the host decided to read the following message by one Jože: “What kind of radio is this? You turn the folk stupid and make fun of them. This is real ‘čefur’²² radio, shame on you!” The host made several comments on the message during the show and ultimately concluded: “Jože, here is one comment from the background...: they, čefurji, or we, čefurji, must live too. Čefurji, too, have their rights. Jože, go to sleep, Slovenia will be glad!”

The analyzed segments of programs on the three radio stations did not address Roma issues save for one short report on the Roma Act. Muslims were not at the forefront either. There was only one indirect reference (*Radio Antena*, February 22) when the host mentioned Hasan Ibn Sab in connection with the book entitled *Alamut*, prompting the other host to add “the name tells all.” Of all the groups stud-

²² “Čefur” is a derogatory term denoting people from ex-Yugoslav republics.

ied here, gays and lesbians were most frequently mentioned. References to them were included in SMS messages and they were the subject of live shows discussing relations between the sexes. In these examples, the discourse was frequently sexist, related to the implicit reproduction of the traditional gendered division of roles placed in the context of biological necessity, complementarity and nature. So in this context homosexuality appears as being contrary to the natural and therefore abnormal. It should be noted that in this case we are speaking not about a debate on homosexuality but about hints that created the impression of some kind of secrecy and indecency. Hints about homosexuality, predominantly homosexuality among men, were accompanied with laughter and smirking on the part of hosts; homosexuality apparently entertained listeners and made them laugh.

Below are several examples:

When announcing “Your 30 seconds on air,” the hosts at *Radio City* (February 22, 2006) hinted at homosexuality, and then made a jocular remark saying “something is not right here.”

Male host: “Your thirty seconds. I’ll be glad to hear from anyone who dials 290 290 or demonstrates some hidden talent, or praises a wife, a brother, a son, an aunt, a mother-in-law ... well... only rarely a mother-in-law, isn’t it ...”

Female host: “Husband, husband ...”

Male host: “Yes, preferably a husband.”

Female host: “Yes.”

Male host: “So, gentlemen, call us and your husband... no, something is not right here ...” (*Radio City*, February 22, 2006).

A similar outcome could be heard on *Radio Antena* (February 22) when the presenter read the news about the arrest of the film director Lee Tamahori. A hint at homosexuality, here combined with the transgression of the social gender schema, made the host laugh, and it was supposed to have the same effect on listeners.

“If you ever wondered what filmmakers do in the meantime, while not shooting movies ... Recently, the director of the movie ... the most popular James Bond movie *Die Another Day*, when was that ... some years ago ... in 2002, he directed *Die Another Day*. We speak about Lee Tamahori, he got three years probation and he will now perform community service. He engaged in various things during his spare

time and they caught him dressed in women's clothing offering to perform a sex act... can you imagine that ... a movie director in women's clothing and what was his year of birth? 1950, fine, yes ... well, he probably looked like an experienced woman. He was caught offering a sex act dressed in women's clothing. He was arrested on January 8 this year. He entered a car with an undercover policeman in it. Sexy Lee in women's clothing offered sex for money to the policeman. He got 36 months probation and was ordered to perform community service. So say the prosecutors from Los Angeles, and primarily his ... so this Lee Tamahori, a movie maker, will have to see that the parks in Hollywood look nice, will remove graffiti. Allegedly ... Interesting, isn't it ... I mean, it would be most interesting if someone took such a woman for sex, ... that would be interesting, hey .. I'd say that he charges a lot, the James Bond director, hey ... and probably this was not an ordinary sex act (laughter) a special one! (laughter)" (*Radio Antena*, February 22, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The elusiveness of media discourse and the shifting meanings of messages that may be interpreted in one way or another is what sets discourse analysis apart from more exact, more concrete, and perhaps more threatening, “products” of science. Texts have a specific meaning, but not an absolute one. Neither do they have just one “relative” meaning; one can say that there is a myriad of relative meanings that are shaped through interaction between the text (the picture, image, or message) and the recipient of that text, the reader, listener or a viewer. Verschueren (2000:136) concluded that the mental state of viewers, readers or listeners co-creates meaning as much as do the statements of speakers. However, while emphasizing that discourse analysis always ends with interpretation, and that it is therefore inevitably the individual interpretation of the researcher, two problematic conclusions may be drawn. One is that the “products” of other scientific analysis not concerned with meanings are objective, and the other that the shifting meanings of texts indicate that nothing “definite” can be said about media discourse. As to the latter, Hall (1997) indeed emphasized that the media cannot impose interpretations, meanings and views upon their consumers, since, as he said, we are not mental *tabulae rasae*. But despite this, he argues, the media have the integrating, explanatory and legitimate power to shape and define political reality, especially in unprecedented, problematic or threatening situations. The media then offer a “convenient answer” and an explanation of events that could be, and frequently is, received uncritically. As Luthar writes (1998), the media play an important role in legitimizing identities. Not only is our identity shaped on the basis of discourses and representations to which we are exposed, but we also establish the identity/image/picture of the Other through media (and other) discourses. This analysis once again leads us to the conclusion that the image mediated in this manner and reproduced time after time, is most often a one-dimensional image of a person, rarely contextualized, and fully determined by some fact of specific identity, for example, a Muslim, a Roma, a gay or a lesbian. The reduction of the image of a Muslim to an anonymous bearded protester, or a Roma to an uneducated receiver of social aid, or a gay or lesbian to the secrecy of his/her unusual love/sexuality, does not leave much space in the media world for any other perception of the Muslim

or Roma but as a problem, and a gay or a lesbian as someone with a problem.

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