

# (Re)thinking Cultural Diversity and the Media

## 1.1 The Crises of Multiculturalism

When, in January 2009, Barack Obama was inaugurated as the forty-fourth President of the United States, the first mixed-race person to hold such a post, an infectious jubilation spread across the world. Surely now, people thought, everything is possible. If in the USA, where slavery and discrimination are still part of living memory, a non-white man can be elected president, then justice and equality for all is within our grasp. Others still might raise a question: surely now, they might say, what is the point of any talk of discrimination and racism? The very election of an African-American president shows that racism and discrimination, if they even exist, play only a small part in the success of an individual. Surely now, some people might argue, the case is won: all ethno-cultural groups are equal, and success or failure is a matter of individual ability. Whatever the wider significance of this historic victory, the vocal comments on Barack Obama's ethnic background are a testament to the continued importance and special status of ethno-cultural diversity.

While Obama's electoral victory represents for some a significant victory for cultural diversity, other recent events have triggered a more polarized and spiteful reaction. Specifically, the post-9/11 world saw attacks on multiculturalism unprecedented both in numbers and ferocity, with the world's media providing social analysis and comment, a platform for politicians attacks, as well as behaving as political actors in their own right. "The veil of multiculturalism has been lifted, revealing parallel societies where the law of the state does not apply," argued the German magazine *Der Spiegel* following the Madrid 2004 bombings. "Adopt our Values or Stay Away, says Blair," read a *Daily Telegraph* headline at the end of 2006. In 2005, the decision of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* to publish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed provoked a major crisis with wide ramifications, including the loss of life. In March 2008, the BBC's "White Season" promised to look into the ways in which immigration is marginalizing the British white working class; although more nuanced than it sounds, "White Season" ended up framing immigration as responsible for the increasing marginalization of whites. A documentary called *The Poles Are Coming* (BBC, 2008) succeeded in "racializing" Polish workers, presenting Eastern European

immigration in terms of an invasion. In the meantime, heated debates, civil and uncivil exchanges, and occasionally even ferocious attacks are encountered in various online environments, including discussion fora, listservs and blogs.

Only a few years ago, at the peak of identity politics in the 1980s and 1990s, difference was celebrated, with people claiming special status as members of distinct cultural groups, with states drafting policy that protected diversity, respected cultural difference, and created a space in which minority cultural and religious practices could be practiced alongside the dominant ones. So what happened? How did these celebrations of diversity turn sour? Georgiou and Siapera (2006) attributed this backlash against multiculturalism to three sets of reasons: firstly, to the failures of existing policies to deliver equality and justice for all social groups; secondly, to the pressures of neoliberal globalization, which push nations to an ever-increasing competition with other nations for scant resources and vanishing wealth; thirdly, to the post-9/11 geopolitical situation, which prioritized questions of security over all other issues, including those of equality and justice. Whatever the root causes of the backlash against multiculturalism, one thing is certain: that diversity and difference are once more becoming signifiers of problems, tensions, conflict, and friction.

In a surprising, and worrying, agreement across the political spectrum, both conservative and liberal/left-wing commentators have attacked multiculturalism, effectively blaming cultural diversity for current social ills. Segregation, inter-community violence, alienation, as well as high unemployment, strain on welfare services, and insecurity have all been blamed on cultural diversity, and on the increasing flows of immigration. The left critique of multiculturalism accuses it of focusing on cultural difference at the expense of continued material inequality that corresponds to class rather than cultural divisions (Malik, 2005; see Siapera, 2006b). This has the effect of eroding the basis for social solidarity and leading to (ethnic) group enclaves, which are segregated from the rest of society, and which, furthermore, are undemocratically ruled by unelected community leaders (Alibhai-Brown, 2000; Malik, 2005). In these terms, multiculturalism is problematic, according to its left critics, because it shifts the focus from demands for equality for all and places it on particularistic demands for special treatment. Moreover, in its politically correct extreme, multiculturalism is responsible for censorship and the destruction of free speech. In the end, these particularistic demands, if met, destroy democracy as we know it, since democracy can no longer be about equality before the law, free speech, state neutrality, and so on. Rather, multicultural democracy appears a contradiction in terms, since it is premised on the creation of separate rules for separate groups that ultimately create inequality and oppose the rule of the many.

The left-wing theorist Slavoj Žižek (1997a) argues that multiculturalism must be seen as the “cultural logic” of multinational capitalism. This is because multinational capitalism relies on a superficial acceptance of difference in order to be able to expand across the world. But for Žižek, multiculturalism is a kind of racism, because it is premised on a distant respect for other cultures, understood as enclosed, “authentic” communities, thereby rejecting all those who question and criticize other cultures as intolerant, creating thus a vantage point from which to claim superiority. It is, in other words, a privileged and patronizing position that on the one hand empties cultures of all their contents and on the other barely disguises its support for globalized capitalism. For Žižek (1997a: 45), the problem is that multiculturalism does the ultimate

service for capitalism by rendering invisible and normal the economic backdrop against which all struggles take place, globalized capitalism:

[t]he problematic of multiculturalism – the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-worlds – which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as universal world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of the contemporary world.

In these terms, Žižek's point is that multiculturalism, and its intellectual supporters, hide the true nature of globalized capitalism and deflect any struggles against it. The proper left response, therefore, is to move away from a celebratory acceptance of all cultures and to take sides against capitalism and its homogenizing forces. This ultimately involves a rejection or perhaps more accurately a politicization of difference. This means that difference is not to be neutralized through a superficial acceptance, but it must fight against all those who seek to control and subjugate it, as well to detract from the goal of "universal emancipation," which involves actual resistance both against global capitalism and fundamentalisms of all sorts.

"When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun" is an infamous statement by Josef Goebbels, the Nazi Minister for Propaganda. Indeed, this statement, also quoted by Žižek in the above article, is an eloquent summary of the right-wing critique of multiculturalism. Conservative critics of multiculturalism find in it the basis for discrimination against "whites" or the majority culture, which leads some to assume a defensive ethnocentric position, fighting against all other identities. Shohat and Stam (2007: 124) summarize the right-wing critique in seven points: (1) multiculturalism is seen as benefiting minorities against the general interest; (2) multiculturalism is a recent phenomenon; (3) multiculturalism is anti-Western; (4) multiculturalism is a separatist movement; (5) multiculturalism is "therapy for minorities" or "underdog history," therefore not relevant for all society; (6) multiculturalism anachronistically imposes politically correct ideas and concepts on educational curricula; (7) multiculturalists are either puritanical "party poopers," who seek to impose a politically correct version of events on everybody, or irresponsible hedonists, ready to accept and try everything. From a conservative perspective, therefore, multiculturalism ends up victimizing the silent majority, the "white man," who becomes marginalized and whose needs are considered no longer relevant. Indeed, to some extent the BBC "White Season" repeats this notion of disregard of the needs of the white majorities.

Right-wing politicians and commentators repeat and amplify these points. Some see in multiculturalism the seeds of the destruction of society, continued violence, and loss of unity. The British Conservative politician Enoch Powell delivered his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968, in which he claimed, quoting one of his constituents, that "in fifteen to twenty years the black man will have the whip hand over the white man." And in the best-known passage, he argued that the Race Relations Bill passed at the time meant that "immigrant communities can organize to consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens, and to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see 'the River Tiber foaming with much blood.'" More recently a number of right-wing parties have arisen on a xenophobic platform in several countries,

such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National in France, Jorg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party, the Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang in Belgium, the Australian One Nation Party, and the Italian Lega Nord, to name but a few. All these political parties assume a critical stance against multiculturalism considering that it disadvantages the locals and promotes division and unfairness. The political position of such parties is a defensive, protectionist one, with policy proposals including curbs on immigration, repatriation of immigrants, and an end to all policies favoring culturally diverse groups. Their ultimate solution to the "problems of multiculturalism" is therefore to get rid of diversity and return to the (imaginary and illusionary) unity of the past.

Attacked by both right- and left-wing theorists and commentators, multiculturalism's days seem numbered. But, perhaps, to paraphrase Mark Twain, rumors of multiculturalism's death have been greatly exaggerated. Most of these critiques hinge on the precise definition of multiculturalism. For many of its critics, multiculturalism is turned into a straw man, accused of all sorts of issues, often quite contradictory: for instance, how can multiculturalism be blamed both for privileging minorities and for minority violence against majorities? Presumably, if minorities were favored they would not harbor any resentment leading to riots and similar violence. How can it be blamed for the erosion of social solidarity in favor of particularistic cultural identities, when any society that hears and meets groups' demands is by definition solidaristic, in the sense of understanding and supporting such claims? It seems that multiculturalism is all things to all people, lacking a precise definition, which leads to constant misunderstandings and critiques. Shohat and Stam (2007) argue that multiculturalism's right-wing critics purposely distort and misrepresent multiculturalism in their attempt to return to some kind of imaginary unity and harmony. But equally, left-wing critiques betray a similar mourning over lost utopias, which are linked to the inability of the left to form a convincing and mobilizing critique against global capitalism. But, argue Shohat and Stam, scapegoating multiculturalism and denouncing difference will not strengthen the left; nor will it lead to the demise of global capitalism.

In his impassioned defense of multiculturalism Paul Gilroy (2006) argues that the permanent crisis of multiculturalism shows a kind of post-imperial melancholia. Rather than acknowledging the violence and injustices involved in colonialism, post-imperial countries such as Britain are in denial. The gap that was left when empires dissolved, along with the pressures of globalization, has led to a loss of identity, which in turn has been associated to anxiety and feelings of loss. Post-imperial identity is, for Gilroy, constructed on the basis of guilt and denial, but also "in opposition to the intrusive presence of the incoming strangers who, trapped inside our perverse local logic of race, nation, and ethnic absolutism, not only *represent* the vanished empire but also refer consciousness to the unacknowledged pain of its loss and the unsettling shame of its bloody management" (p. 101). Attacks on multiculturalism therefore reveal this underlying logic: it is "them," the strangers, the foreigners, those different from "us" who are responsible for "our" loss of identity, harmony, and unity. Notwithstanding this melancholic post-colonial identity, Gilroy points to examples of "multiculture in action," of ordinary multiculturalism as the lived experiences and everyday encounters between identities in urban multicultural centers. This everyday conviviality of multiculture is the antidote to post-colonial melancholia, argues Gilroy, and it shows that beyond policy, beyond official, intellectual, or party-political responses to the so-called crisis of multiculturalism, in the end lived experiences and encounters between

different people set the agenda. And this agenda is not necessarily a negative one, but rather one marked by ambiguity, uncertainty, and unpredictability. Multiculture is the term adopted by Gilroy to refer not to the regulation of difference through policy and its ideological underpinnings, as in multiculturalism, but to the sum of the various cultural differences in all their unruly complexity, their antagonisms, and their conviviality. In the context of this book we shall adopt the term cultural diversity to refer to this, since “multiculture” might appear to be a neologism that mystifies further rather than allowing for a careful examination of the relevant issues.

Who is right? Should we adopt Gilroy’s optimism, or Žižek’s critical stance? Should we follow calls for renewal, or dismiss multiculturalism as *passé*? Perhaps more than anything, the ongoing debate shows the continued relevance of multiculturalism. The continued “crisis” of multiculturalism represents the need to keep on thinking and reformulating our ideas of cultural diversity, togetherness, identity, and difference. And in these terms, this book constitutes another moment in the continuing debate on the relevance of difference. Its main contribution is located in the following two arguments. Firstly, that cultural diversity, which includes identities, and experiences of, and encounters with, difference, is always-already *mediated*, that is, constructed, (re)-presented, and experienced through the media of communication. Secondly, this mediation points to a double bind in cultural diversity: on the one hand, the mediation of cultural diversity is involved in efforts to produce and subsequently control a certain version of it; on the other hand, this very mediation undermines such efforts by inserting a degree of instability, thereby keeping open the processes of mediation. The second argument in the heart of this book is that this play between control and instability is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the debate on multiculturalism to remain open and vibrant. The following section will explain and elaborate further on these arguments, while the final section will explain the structure of the book.

## 1.2 The Mediation of Cultural Diversity

To understand the relevance of the media, we have to turn to socio-historical theories that looked into the characteristics and specificity of contemporary societies. Social theorists from Max Weber to Anthony Giddens understand and define the current historical phase in which the world finds itself as modernity. Modernity is often seen as the historical period starting as early as the fifteenth century, which is characterized by processes of increasing rationalization, secularization, and individualization. In short, modernity is the phase in which humanity entered when it began criticizing and seeking to shape the world based on reason and rationality rather than on tradition and spiritual belief. The German sociologist Max Weber understood modernity as the “disenchantment of the world,” that is, as the shift from a world ruled by superstition, dogmatic religious beliefs, and “magic” towards a rational society, ruled by reason alone.

But modernity is itself evolving. Thus, the British theorist Anthony Giddens defines late modernity as a dynamic process, no longer exclusively relying on the means-ends instrumental rationality described by Weber, but rather on reflexivity, or the “regularized use of knowledge about circumstances of social life” (Giddens, 1991: 20). In other words, contemporary societies are characterized by their attempts to steer and guide themselves through producing and applying new knowledge. This reliance

on knowledge and information is also highlighted by Ulrich Beck (1992), who argues that modernity has entered a phase of reflexive modernization: contemporary societies, argues Beck, rely on knowledge and information, on the basis of which they subsequently evolve. The same emphasis on knowledge, information and communication is found in Manuel Castells' work (1996) on the network society. According to Castells, we are witnessing a new shift within modernity precipitated by the new information technologies; the network society can only function on the basis of information and communication that is produced and disseminated by new, digital, technologies. If, therefore, we accept the main premises of these theoretical perspectives, the role of the media is a fundamental one: as disseminators of information, as platforms for communication and to an extent even as producers of new knowledge. In these terms, current societies rely heavily on the media.

But here we want to take this argument further. The media's role is not merely as transparent tools of information and communication. Much more crucially, they form an integral part of modernity, present from its very start, and developing alongside it, and giving it its current shape and form. This argument draws on John Thompson's work on media and modernity.

For Thompson (1995) the media, mainly in their widely disseminated print or electronic form, are involved in the transformation and reordering of social relations, especially those regarding publicness and visibility, as well as self-understandings and identities. For Thompson, the media have fundamentally transformed social interaction through creating a new type, that of mediated interaction. Specifically, mediated quasi-interaction, as Thompson calls it, has certain defining characteristics: rather than being dialogical, it becomes monological; and rather than addressing one person, it addresses infinite others; in addition, this type of interaction extends in time and space, in contrast to face-to-face oral interaction, which disappears the moment it is uttered. The rise of this type of (mass-) mediated social interaction, and the relative power it offers to communicators, can be linked to the rise of powerful and globalized media corporations. The production and distribution of symbolic goods by such corporations enters and therefore alters communication flows in society.

In these terms, following Thompson, nothing can any longer be the same since it is (also) mediated, that is subjected to the processes and specificities of the media. Visibility, or publicness, the ways in which things, people, and issues become visible to others, goes through the media: these can only be visible from the angles or perspectives selected by the media; they can be visible to millions of people or conversely become invisible; and their publicness is monological or uni-directional, in the sense that the spectators and their reactions are themselves not immediately visible. Tradition, or the ways in which we relate to our past, is also transformed or "removed," as Thompson puts it: it is not destroyed by the ultra-modern media, but rather moved from its original contexts, reinvented with some parts of it acquiring more importance than others, and used for different purposes. The self, finally, which Thompson, following Giddens, understands as a reflexive construction, is constructed on the basis of symbols, and new knowledge encountered in the media. The broader point that Thompson makes is that these transformations have fundamental and radical implications on how lives are lived, selves are formed, and politics is conducted in contemporary societies.

It follows, therefore, that cultural diversity is also mediated. By the term cultural diversity we understand the sum of the various kinds of difference – ethnic, "racial,"

or cultural, including their intersections or co-articulations with gender and sexuality, and also the debates, controversies, and conflicts, as well as the conviviality, warmth, and solidarity, associated with these. We understand, and interact with, cultural diversity, and we construct our cultural identities (also) in and through the media. This is not to say that face-to-face or personal encounters with others play no part in such interactions and constructions. However, we want to insist that these encounters do not take place in a vacuum; rather, in a media-saturated world, all these encounters are more or less mediated – that is, not determined, but interactively (or for some dialectically) influenced by the dynamic associated with the media. In these terms, we cannot apprehend diversity in a direct manner – if this was ever possible – but rather only through the ways in which it is mediated.

But what does this mediation precisely entail? Very schematically, the mediation of cultural diversity accepts that cultural diversity necessarily traverses the processes associated with the media. And these include processes of production and circulation, construction and representation, as well as reception and use. In other words, cultural diversity is (re)produced and distributed through the media, which construct and represent it in certain ways, and which are in turn received and put to use by audiences. This, we should clarify, does not mean that cultural diversity only exists because of the media. Rather, following Thompson, we want to suggest that, while cultural diversity is historically and politically produced, the media reappropriate it, dislodge it from its original contexts, and transform or “re-moor” it. In other words, the media resignify and attach certain meanings and significance to cultural diversity which then become entrenched and widely used. Subsequent encounters and interactions with cultural diversity may then mobilize such mediated meanings, or at least use them for orientation. However, this emphasis is somewhat one-sided in that it attributes all the power to the production part of mediated communication, overlooking the dynamism of the contexts of its reception and use. We need therefore an understanding of mediation that allows for its dynamism, or, as Roger Silverstone (2005) put it, for its dialectic character to emerge.

More specifically, it is clear that the mediation of cultural diversity is involved in attempts to contain it and control its meaning and significance. And to an extent such efforts are successful. This is because, in contexts of mediated communication, the relationship between communicators, producers, and receivers is uneven and asymmetrical, with producers having more power than receivers. However, and this is a crucial point, this power is not absolute, and control of mediated cultural diversity is not total. In contrast, receivers or audiences of mediated cultural diversity can and do openly contest its representations. Or, they also misinterpret them or appropriate them in unexpected and unpredictable ways. Such unpredictable interpretations and uses end up influencing subsequent reproductions of mediated cultural diversity. Moreover, the boundaries between producers and consumers of mediated cultural diversity are not always as clear cut: consumers can also become producers themselves, while producers are always also consumers of mediated cultural diversity. At the same time, the processes of mediation take place in a certain historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political context, which in turn feeds into them, and contributes to the mediation of cultural diversity. All these become sources of instability and introduce disruptions and tensions in the mediation of cultural diversity, which then must be understood as dynamic and unpredictable. Perhaps the best way to understand this

mediation is to think that it involves, on the one hand, attempts to control and contain cultural diversity. These may influence the debate, shape policy decisions, and affect self-identities and understandings: they may, in other words, change and mould cultural diversity in certain ways. On the other hand, such efforts are variously met with resistance, acceptance, differential appropriation, unpredictable use, and so on, all of which feed into subsequent mediations and reproductions of cultural diversity: these end up shaping and influencing cultural diversity as well, even if their relationship is asymmetrical. In short, mediation involves a constant tension between control and/or containment of cultural diversity and defiance, opposition to, but also negotiated acceptance of, such efforts.

Understanding the ways in which cultural diversity is mediated, therefore, is necessary for understanding its centrality, significance, and importance for contemporary societies. At the same time, however, mediated cultural diversity is always in a tension both between control and its opposition, as we argued above, but also within its constituent components, that is, between different identities and ideas, practices and beliefs, as we saw in the previous section. There is no easy way, no straightforward criteria by which to determine what is more just, fairer, better for all involved. In these terms, it is crucial to allow for these tensions, disagreements, and conflicts to take place; it is crucial, in other words, for the debate on cultural diversity (or multiculturalism) to remain open to new challenges and ideas, as any closure would end up imposing unnecessary and problematic limits. From this point of view, the constitutive tension in processes of mediation is a necessary condition for this debate to remain open, since it is a dynamic process that cannot be controlled by any of those involved. Does it suffice, however? Since mediation forms the structural backdrop of this debate, its actual substance or contents cannot be determined by such structural processes. Thus, much more is needed for the debate to take place in ways commensurable with the democratic principles of inclusion, equality, and freedom. In particular, each of the constitutive processes of mediation, which include production, representation, and reception, have to be examined in detail and assessed on the extent to which they operate on the basis of democratic principles. Such an assessment must pose questions such as: to what extent are production processes inclusive of cultural diversity? Or, which kinds of representations of cultural diversity are more conducive to thinking and questioning alterity and sameness, identity and difference? Or, finally, to what extent do audiences' interpretations of mediated cultural diversity contribute to the continuation of the debate? These are some of the questions that we will approach in this book. However, before approaching such questions we need to understand and contextualize cultural diversity in historical, empirical, and theoretical and normative terms. The next section will detail the structure of the book and explain the role and arguments of each chapter.

### **1.3 The Structure of the Book**

Understanding multiculturalism as the effect of the processes that constitute difference points to the need to examine how difference is constituted. As a second step, we need to examine the variations in the constitution and management of difference across the world: what types of multiculturalism do we encounter in different



countries? How do different countries across the world deal with difference? How do the various nations that comprise the world treat different communities and groups found in their territories? What are the factors that can explain the variation in this treatment? More importantly, how should we address the questions raised by cultural diversity? What kind of policy is the fairer for both majority and minority cultures? Chapters 2, 3 and 4 will address some of these questions, by looking first at the way in which cultural diversity has been historically produced by the rise of the nation state and nationalism (Chapter 2). Thus, the rise and rise of the nation-state (Mann, 1997) is a contentious issue, which has led to a heated debate on the origins, nature, present, and future of this form of socio-political organization. Chapter 2 will therefore discuss the various theories of the nation and nationalism, questioning them as to their implicit position on the role of the media, and assessing them on the basis of how much room they leave for cultural diversity to flourish. Chapter 3 will then map the specific multicultural trajectory that different countries have followed. We will look at the specific policies developed and applied in different countries in their quest to deal with difference. The main premise and argument here is that different historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts produce different ways of dealing with difference, both informal, which we can refer to as “practices,” and formal, institutionalized ones, which we can refer to as “policies.” This variation in policies and practices reflects ongoing tensions both within nations as well as between nations and the pressures of globalization. While Chapter 3 describes the different existing approaches to multiculturalism and cultural diversity, Chapter 4 focuses on theoretical and normative approaches: it asks: how ought we to treat cultural diversity? What kinds of approaches offer both theoretical clarity and political solutions to these issues?

More specifically, to understand the production of multicultural practices and policies, as well as theories and politics, we need first to trace the production of the nation itself. Why? Because, to speak of multiculturalism – critically or not – presumes the existence of its converse: mono-culturalism, or in other words, the existence of nations understood as homogenous cultural and political entities. It is clear that, if we speak of difference, we presume sameness and identity – one cannot exist without the other. At least since the days of Hegel and his master and slave dialectic, we know that identity presumes, and is reflected in, difference, and vice versa. In producing identity, in thinking about who *we are*, we must engage with the question of who *we are not*, and with the boundaries set around our selves and our group. In tracing therefore the history and practices of multiculturalism across the globe, we have to begin with the nation.

While in theoretical, abstract, terms the nation is an empty form, its actual history betrays its rootedness in European modernity. It is within European modernity that the nation state found its most explicit articulation as well as its political application. From there – and then – onwards, the history of the nation is in many ways the history of the expansion of Europe, or more broadly the “West.” In these terms, the history of multiculturalism entails the beginnings of Europe as a pastiche of nation-states, their expansion, colonization, and conquest of overseas territories, and the rise of globalization. The practices of accommodating difference, of thinking about difference per se and its role within a nation, reflect these historical contexts, as well as the historical, political, and socio-cultural particularities of specific territories.

Taking these into account, Chapter 3 will discuss the concrete multicultural practices encountered across the world. Beginning with Europe, it looks into the various

ways in which different European nations have dealt with difference. The specific nations we will treat here in more detail include the UK, France, and Germany; the former two represent former colonial powers, while Germany's specificity is located both in its historical past, its involvement in the two world wars, and its reliance on immigrant labor to accomplish its industrial "miracle." We will subsequently discuss the ways in which "immigration countries" have developed in accommodating difference – the specific countries discussed include Canada and the US. Thirdly, a discussion of multicultural practices needs to look at those countries that are "constitutionally different," that is countries in which difference has been there explicitly since their very foundation. The focus here will be on two countries, India and Nigeria.

What conclusions might we draw from this discussion? Firstly, that the question of accommodating – or repressing – difference is as complex and vexed as the question of difference itself. History, politics, culture, and for some even biology emerge as explanatory factors of the many routes followed by people and nation-states in their quest to deflect tensions, and to provide solutions to perceived or actual problems brought about by the existence of difference. It follows, secondly, that it is very difficult to produce a simple model of an ideal multicultural policy to be adopted by all. The problems, tensions, and accommodations of difference are specific to specific contexts, and to the extent that this variation exists, it requires different and specific ad hoc solutions. This, however, must not be taken to mean that "anything goes" as far as multicultural policies are concerned, or that different policies and practices are of equal value. Indeed, the question of how to assess these policies looms large over this discussion.

This issue will be dealt with in Chapter 4, which will discuss the different theoretical and normative models that developed in order to justify and explain multiculturalism. Must we always accept difference, even to the detriment of our identity? Should we privilege differential treatment over equality? How can we retain unity faced with a variety of incompatible practices, ethics, and customs? In the end, how can we resolve these dilemmas? This chapter will critically review the different answers offered by different theoretical and political perspectives. The main argument in this chapter is that the dilemmas of multiculturalism call not for a permanent resolution, but for a constant reflection on the problems faced, along with a realization that there are no "final solutions." At the same time, none of these theories actually considers the mediation of cultural diversity and its role in the multicultural dilemmas. Overlooking the mediation of cultural diversity results in oversimplified positions and to an overall inability to deal with the complexity of contemporary multiculturalism.

The task of theorizing the relationship between the media and cultural diversity is undertaken in Chapter 5. Specifically, this chapter discusses the various ways in which the relationship between the media and society has been conceptualized, and, within these, the room and role allocated to cultural diversity. The critical review of various positions concludes with a discussion of a theory of the mediation of cultural diversity. Theoretically, this involves an understanding of the role of the media as directly, and dialectically or at least reciprocally, involved in all aspects of contemporary socio-cultural, political, and economic life. Following upon and developing further arguments by Jesus Martin-Barbero (1993) and Roger Silverstone (2005), this chapter argues that the media influence and shape institutions, structures, ideas, beliefs, and so on, and are in turn influenced by these. The exact forms that this mutual and

reciprocal influence takes are always unstable and unpredictable. As we argued in the previous section, when it comes to the mediation of cultural diversity, the media (re) produce, distribute, and represent cultural diversity, thereby to an extent controlling the ways in which it is understood, and shaping its significance and role in society. At the same time, however, audiences can and do respond to such attempts in ways that feed back into the mediated reproduction and representation of cultural diversity. In empirical terms, a theory of mediated cultural diversity means that we need to study all kinds of processes involved in this mediation. This includes production, representation, and reception. The remaining chapters of the book attempt to do just that.

Chapter 6 discusses the production of cultural diversity, beginning with the ways in which it is theorized, and discussing various studies and findings as well as various practices and policies adopted by media organizations. The conclusion here is that the production of cultural diversity is differentially shaped by political economic and organizational factors as well as by conscious and reflexive efforts to remove barriers for participation of cultural minorities in media production. An implicit argument involved here is that, if there were more minority media professionals, then mediated cultural diversity would end up being fairer and more accurate. Chapter 7 examines this argument by looking at minority or diasporic media, and their role and specificity. Not surprisingly, minority media are controversial: do they make a positive contribution to multicultural democracies, or do they actually contribute to the fragmentation of the public sphere, resulting in further ghettoization and the break-up of society? Chapter 7 discusses the various arguments and positions, concluding that from a mediation point of view, these media must also be seen as dialectically involved in socio-political processes. This further implies that their contributions cannot be a priori determined, but rather examined on a case by case basis.

The question of representation is found at the heart of any discussion on the media. But what is precisely its role and significance? What exactly, to quote Stuart Hall (1997), is the work of representation? Chapter 8 looks at the various theoretical propositions that sought to explain the role and function of representation. It argues that, within a theory of mediation, the work of representation must be seen as dynamically involved in the control of cultural diversity, but also in opposition to this control. Representation must therefore be understood as involved in the containment, control, and domination of cultural difference; but it also actively involved in the subversion, questioning, and rejection of such efforts. In these terms, an account of representation needs to show how it works, how it can be effective both in containing cultural difference and in subverting such efforts. This tension in the work of representation is captured by a performative approach, which shows that language and representation must rely on the one hand on the repetition and reproduction of the same meanings, images, and symbols, but in different contexts. These contexts, in turn, disrupt and destabilize these meanings, attaching new ones in ambiguous and unpredictable ways. In this manner we can explain the dynamism of representations, the ways in which they are replicated and persist over the years, but also their shifts and changes.

Chapters 9 and 10 describe the various representations, adopting the term “regimes of representation,” to denote the structural similarities and force of the various representational systems. Chapter 9 discusses the racist, domesticated, and commodified regimes of representation of cultural diversity, showing the ways in which they seek to

### Box 1.1 Some definitions

**Cultural diversity:** the existence of groups with their own unique, culturally (as opposed to individually or biologically) derived characteristics (see Parekh, 2002). Such groups may share some commonalities of origins, histories, and traditions, and systems of beliefs and practices. In this case we can speak of “ethno-cultural groups,” to point to the specificity of this kind of difference. Parekh (2002) refers to this ethnically mapped difference as communal diversity. This is the kind of diversity that will be at the centre of this book.

**Multiculturalism:** refers to the acceptance of this kind of plurality in society and to the need to rethink the ways in which societies function in order to accommodate and serve difference.

**Media and mediation:** these point to the centrality of the media in late (or for some post-) modernity, and to the necessity of understanding the ways in which cultural diversity is co-constituted in and through the media.

dominate, contain, and exploit cultural diversity. Typically, these regimes are seen as emerging out of majority or mainstream media. Chapter 10, in contrast, discusses two regimes that emerge out of cultural diversity itself, the essentialist and alternative regimes. Both are seen as contributing to the destabilization and disruption of the previous regimes, but both are encountering conceptual and political problems. However, the work of representation is incomplete until it is pinned down in its contexts of reception.

Chapter 11 spells out the various ways in which people receive, consume and use mediated cultural diversity. It traces the ways in which people’s background, conceptualized in terms of Pierre Bourdieu’s social capital, leads to different interpretations of the same representations. It further follows the productive ways in which encounters with the media construct identities, while finally, it discusses the active interventions by which audiences have sought to hold the media accountable for their actions. The chapter concludes with an argument in favor of keeping open existing, and creating new, channels for communication between media and their audiences.

While Chapter 11 concludes the cycle of mediation, which includes production, representation, and reception, the advent of the new media introduces new elements and perhaps shifts in the mediation of cultural diversity. Chapter 12, the final chapter in this book, examines the relationship between the internet and cultural diversity. This chapter argues that, while the internet blurs the lines between production, representation, and consumption of cultural diversity, it is still useful to retain these terms for analytical purposes. Examining then online production, representation, and use, it concludes that the key process for the online mediation of cultural diversity is use: both private and personal, public and political it allows for the continued contestation of identities and claims, as well as for the creation of new commonalities and a new commons. On the other hand, caution should be exercised here, as the possibilities offered by the internet are not necessarily always actualized.

In all these chapters, the tension between control/containment of cultural diversity and responses to these remains central. This, we argue is the main tension of mediated

cultural diversity, which acts like a motor, taking cultural diversity to new and unpredictable places. Because of this tension mediated cultural diversity remains dynamic, and any resolutions to its dilemmas remain temporary. Equally, however, all these chapters pay full attention to the institutional, structural, and historical factors that affect cultural diversity and its mediation. Mediation does not take place in a vacuum and neither does it uni-directionally determine the world around it; rather, it, too, is reciprocally (or dialectically) influenced by the historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic context. Studying mediated cultural diversity entails a study of this, the broader context within which mediation takes place. Just as Karl Marx argued that men make history in circumstances they have inherited from the past, mediated cultural diversity produces and is produced in a context shaped, but ultimately undetermined, by history, politics, economics, and socio-cultural factors.