



Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
Fakultet političkih znanosti

Mila Marina Burger

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IDENTITETA U ERI DIGITALNE  
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prof. dr. sc. Zrinjka Peruško

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Faculty of Political Science

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# **NATIONAL IDENTITY NEGOTIATION IN THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS ERA**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Supervisor:  
Professor Zrinjka Peruško, PhD

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## SAŽETAK

U ovom doktorskom radu predstavljen je tripartitni model nacionalnog identiteta razvijen na temelju modernističkih, etnosimboličkih i drugih novijih pristupa naciji i nacionalizmu (Smith, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1993; Gellner, 1997; Anderson, 2006; Billig, 1995) i senzibilizirajućeg koncepta medijizacije (Lundby, 2014; Bolin, 2014; Livingstone i Lunt, 2014; Peruško, 2019; Kopecka-Piech i Bolin, 2023) odnosno duboke medijizacije (Hepp, 2020) koja započinje s digitalizacijom, kako medija tako i cijelog niza svakodnevnih ljudskih praksi početkom 21. stoljeća. Srž ovog modela je u tome što, kao prvo, definira nacionalni identitet kao dinamičan proces pregovaranja (Wodak, 2015) koji se odvija svakodnevno između više razina aktera a kao drugo, postavlja medije kao ravnopravne aktere u tom procesu, zajedno s političkim i drugim institucijama te različitim vrstama elita i narodom. Predloženi tripartitni model nacionalnog identiteta testiran je kroz studiju slučaja (Yin, 2007) o uvođenju eura kao službene valute u Republiku Hrvatsku. Kao, danas, članica Europske unije, Hrvatska je od proglašenja samostalnosti 1991. godine izložena procesu europeizacije (Špehar i Pepić, 2019) tako da je suvremeni hrvatski nacionalni identitet interpretiran kroz prizmu utjecaja europskih interesa i identiteta čije ishode promatramo u svim zemljama članicama (Radaelli, 2000; Risse, 2010). U prvom dijelu, studija kroz izlaganje povijesne i političke situacije tri spomenute razine opisuje hrvatske preduvjete i okolnosti ulaska u eurozonu dok u drugom dijelu prikazuje rezultate empirijskog istraživanja provedenog na primjeru suvremenog hrvatskog nacionalnog identiteta kroz analizu korpusa metodom kognitivnog mapiranja (Axelrod, 1976; Van Esch et al., 2016). Istraživanje je dalo odgovor na pet istraživačkih pitanja i dokazalo opravdanost predloženog modela nacionalnog identiteta. Kao ključni akteri koji sudjeluju u identitetskom diskursu prilikom uvođenja eura u Hrvatsku pokazao se, uz političke institucije, javni medijski servis HINA koji je omogućio velik utjecaj političke razine na medijsku te dominaciju građanske dimenzije nacionalnog identiteta i europeizacije kao paradigme kako na političkoj tako i medijskoj razini. Na razini naroda pokazalo se da je nacionalizam dominantna politička paradigma odnosno etnička dimenzija nacionalnog identiteta. Analizom je također dobiven vizualni prikaz suvremenog hrvatskog nacionalnog identiteta s obzirom na zastupljenost njegovih dimenzija na pojedinoj razini tripartitnog modela.

**Ključne riječi:** nacionalni identitet, nacionalizam, kognitivno mapiranje, europeizacija, digitalna komunikacija, medijalizacija, nacionalni narativi, uvođenje eura

## SUMMARY

This doctoral thesis introduces a novel, tripartite model of national identity research based on modernist, ethnosymbolist and other contemporary approaches to nation and nationalism (Smith, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1993; Gellner, 1997; Anderson, 2006; Billig, 1995) and the sensitizing concept of mediatisation (Lundby, 2014; Bolin, 2014; Livingstone i Lunt, 2014; Peruško, 2019; Kopecka-Piech i Bolin, 2023) and deep mediatisation (Hepp, 2020) that started with the digitalisation of media as well as digitalisation of a whole range of everyday human practices at the beginning of the 21st century. The proposed model primarily deals with a better understanding of national identities found in modern day democracies.

There are a few presumptions to this approach. Firstly, the national identity is considered to represent a fluid, dynamic mental construct being negotiated through discursive practices on an everyday basis (Wodak, 2015) between several different levels of political and social actors. Secondly, the model considers media to be egalitarian actors in this process of national identity negotiations (Deutsch, 1953; Breuilly, 1993; Gellner, 1997; Anderson, 2006; Billig, 1995; Malešević, 2019), together with political and social institutions as well as various types of elites and the people. Thirdly, this approach presumes that these levels of national identity negotiations reflect narratives of each group of actors and that the national identity appears and is being reproduced as a consequence of these narratives or discursive practices, in interpersonal communication and the media (Billig, 1995; Malešević, 2019; Wodak et al., 2009). Another group of actors that can be added to this model, depending on the particular case where it is being applied, is the international community that can also influence the particular national identity negotiations. Namely, as a member of the European Union today, Croatia has been exposed to the process of Europeanisation since declaring independence in 1991 (Špehar and Pepić, 2019). In this doctoral thesis, even though international community as a level of discursive practices hasn't been separately included in the empirical analysis, contemporary Croatian national identity has been interpreted through the prism of the influence of European interests and identity, the outcomes of which we observe in all European union member states (Radaelli, 2000, Risse, 2010).

The proposed tripartite model is tested using a case study (Yin, 2007; Creswell, 2007) of introducing the euro as the official currency in the Republic of Croatia. In the first part, the

historical and political context of the three above mentioned levels of national identity negotiations is outlined, following Hroch's (2006) model of small nation-formation. Media system is elaborated according to Hallin and Mancini's media system typology (2004) applied to the Croatian case by Peruško, Vozab and Čuvalo (2021), while the level of the people is considered based on theories of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 1993). In the second part of the study, the results of an empirical research of contemporary Croatian national identity using the advanced cognitive mapping as a qualitative method of content analysis (Axelrod, 1976; Van Esch et al., 2016) are put forward. In fact, cognitive mapping enables extracting ideas from texts, speeches, institutional documents and media reports by using the relationship between concepts as a unit of analysis (Axelrod, 1976) and has been used for studying intangible factors in a structural fashion (Van Esch, 2016 et al.) to analyse public policies (Van Esch, 2014; Princen & Van Esch, 2015; Van Esch & Snellens, 2022), political attitudes (Mansell et al., 2021), decision-making in politics (Axelrod, 1976), international relations (Young and Schafer, 1998) and news consumption (Boukes et. al., 2020). However, a limited amount of literature until now can corroborate that cognitive mapping has been used for national identity research (Stone, R. & Young, M., 2009). Each individual today is exposed to data and information received from the environment, of which a part of is ignored and dismissed while part of is selected and semantically interpreted and then saved into a cognitive map. This map helps people navigate complex tasks and cognitive issues, such as collective identities and this research suggests that on the collective level, there are also cognitive maps that, keeping certain elements as constants and depending on the input, with time evolve and gradually change. This is the reason why cognitive mapping has been chosen as the method applied in the empirical part of this research.

The research has proven the use of the proposed national identity model to be justified and gave answers to five research questions: what types of actors participate in the identity discourse during the euro introduction in Croatia and have any influential actors belonging to a level that isn't envisaged with the proposed tripartite model appeared? What actors are crucial in the mediatised Croatian national identity negotiations? What mediatised narratives are there in the period of euro introduction and is there any difference between the narratives of particular actor-based levels? Are the concepts in narratives of particular actor-based levels linked to the ethnic, civic or cultural national identity dimension? What is the role of the media in the identity narratives formation?

When deliberating on the ideal type of national identities of modern democracies, we actually deliberate on the representation or dominance of its civic, ethnic and cultural dimension, as outlined by Kohn (1944) and Kymlicka (1995). Data gained from the cognitive mapping method in this research allowed identifying dominance of these dimensions on each of the actor-based levels as well as determining the dominant discourse type on each of the actor-based levels, notably, europeisation, nationalism and cosmopolitanism that were found suitable for the particular case of Croatia.

Research findings show that the key actor participating in the identity discourse during the euro introduction in Croatia is, together with political institutions, the public media outlet and government-owned news agency HINA that enabled the influence of the political level on the media level and had a crucial role in intermedia agenda-setting (Heijkant et al., 2019). Research findings also suggest prevalence of the civic dimension of national identity and europeisation as the dominant discourse type and political paradigm on the political and the media level. Nationalism appeared as the dominant discourse type and political paradigm on the level of the people corresponding to the ethnic dimension of the national identity. The analysis also allowed a visual display of the contemporary Croatian national identity, as defined by the dominance of its dimensions on the particular actor-based level of the tripartite model, relevant for this particular political context.

To further develop this innovative model that could advance the understanding of the national identity ideal type, this type of experiment and visualization should be repeated several times on a different corpus and database. Fundamentally, the tripartite model gives space for understanding of national identity as a phenomena not restricted only to its national territory, but this depends strongly on the type of content and sources analysed.

**Key words:** national identity, nationalism, cognitive mapping, europeisation, digital communication, mediatization, national narratives, euro introduction