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Exploring the Notion of the Europeanization of Public Spheres and Civil Society in Fostering a Culture of Dialogue Through the Concept of "Proper Distance"

Santrauka. *Idealus viešosios erdvės modelis tinkamas viešoms diskusijoms, kurių paskirtis – svarstyti, kaip kuriami geros visuomenės pagrindai. Ne mažiau svarbūs klausimai, susiję su tolygia visuomenės raida. Šiems svarstymams dažniausiai daro įtaką istoriniai įvykiai, nacionalinės raidos ypatumai. Šiuolaikiniai procesai, susiję su viešosios erdvės europėjimu, skatina klausti: su kokiomis kliūtimis susiduriama kuriant Europos viešąją erdvę, siekiant įtraukti į šią erdvę skirtingas Europos socialines grupes? Be to: koks žiniasklaidos vaidmuo kuriant pilietines kultūras Europoje? Norint suprasti žiniasklaidos vaidmenį kuriant pilietinę visuomenę, svarbu išsiaiškinti būdus, kuriais remiantis žiniasklaida ir piliečių dalyvavimas traktuojami atsižvelgiant į vėlyvosios modernybės sąlygas ir išsiplėtusią Europos Sąjungos erdvę. Europoje kultūrinį išskirtinumą lemia gyvensenos skirtumai, institucinės raiškos būdai, taip pat asmeninio ir grupinio identiteto formavimosi bruožai. Dewey (1939) suformuluota idėja, kad visuomenę kuria ir atkuria bendravimas, skatina tirti kultūrinės raiškos ir kitus dialoginius klausimus. Straipsnyje analizuojamas skaitmeninių priemonių ir tradicinės žiniasklaidos vaidmuo kuriant bendravimo ir dalyvavimo erdves. Pateikiami lyginamųjų Europos migracijos ir Europos mažumų bendruomenių tyrimų rezultatai. Atvejų studijos rodo, kad tradicinė žiniasklaida ir naujoji žiniasklaida skirtinguose kontekstuose panaudojamos skirtingai. „Tinkamo nuotolio" (Silverstone 2007) sąvoka leidžia įvertinti šiuos procesus ir analizuoti žiniasklaidos vaidmenį kintančioje Europoje. Tinkamo nuotolio idėja nusako svetingumą, atsakomybę ir pasitikėjimą medituojant viešąjį ir kasdienį gyvenimą. Tai leidžia kritiškai įvertinti dabartinės žiniasklaidos gebėjimą skatinti polilogą tarp Europos tautų, ugdyti pagarbą ir supratimą, kurti viešąsias erdves europinėse bendravimo ir besikristalizuojančių prieštaravimų aplinkose.*

Keywords: *proper distance, hospitality, public sphere, Europeanization, communication spaces.*

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *tinkamas nuotolis, svetingumas, viešoji erdvė, europėjimas, komunikacinės erdvės.*

1. Introduction

An ideal-type public sphere provides space for public debate regarding what makes for a 'good society' and for consideration of the issues involved in the development and sustainability of such a society. In general terms these debates are historically situated and understood, and current developments in the process of fostering an Europeanization of public spheres raise specific questions, such as: what are the obstacles for creating European public spheres that are inclusive for different groups in Europe? What is the role of the media in constructing civic cultures in Europe?

In this paper I discuss the context of Europeanization and an emerging media environment in relation to the dynamics of participation. In this paper, the author discusses case studies that on the one hand illustrate how minorities use the media for their communication and information requirements and on the other hand projects that facilitate participation in communication and representation in new media services. The paper then discusses Silverstone's (2007) call for a 'proper distance' in creating understanding and fostering dialogue in the media polis to analyse the way in which the media can play a constructive role in the Europeanization of public spheres.

2. Europeanization and the Public Sphere

The broad context underpinning the development of a European Public Sphere

(EPS) is a post-national globalising world (Smith and Wright 1999). In this situation some nation states and empires have broken up, which in some cases has generated sub-national conflict, and in other cases some existing nation states are reconfiguring into supra-national organizations within world regions (Rex 1999).

An example of supra-national reconfiguration is the European Union (EU). The EU has recently expanded with nations from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States joining Western European States in this endeavour. Key reasons for building such a world region include ensuring peace and cohesion across the states of Europe; combining to become a strong economic and political player in the global economy; and offering another perspective in international relations and (especially from a continental European view) as a counter to American hegemony[1].

However, Europe is not especially integrated, there is not a strong European identity or pan-European discourse. Furthermore, European political processes and European media are not well supported (Smith and Wright 1999). These characteristics combined with a weak European public make developing an EPS problematic. Europe, and any EPS, institutionally speaking, is segmented (Eriksen 2004; Petters and Sifft 2003). Segmentation is seen not only in the exclusiveness of national publics but also in the silos within the EU policy sector. Although this segmented sensibility of Europe is pervasive, there are

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[1] The role of Europe in world events is, however, highly debated, and the public debate between Habermas and Derrida illustrates the complexity of Europe's position and role (Borradori 2003).

instances that bring a sense of European commonality publicly to the fore. These are mainly episodic occurrences generated through cultural events or major political issues that make transient cross-European mass interests manifest, such as opinion regarding the 2003 Iraq war (Roche 2005).

Another area of European public sphere activity can be found in debates regarding structural change in the EU, which includes cross-European transformation in areas such as the EU's Single Market project (Roche Ibid.). Given these issues and dynamics the process of Europeanization is complex in both terms of substantive issues and cultural values as well as in terms of providing a communication environment that can facilitate engagement with European concerns.

3. Communication and Participation in the European Context

The re-configuration of alliances within the European Union is cultural as well as social, political and economic. The media play a role within these dynamics by reporting and representing European developments and debates. The media and media polis is also undergoing change through the development and popular use of digital technologies as well as de-regulation and increased commercialisation of the mass media.

In some liberal democratic nations commercialisation is undermining the provision of public service programming, and in post-communist countries it is opening up the media from strong centralised control. Digital media is widening the scope of communication beyond the core media institutions providing new spaces for communication and representation in cyberspace. Within these dynamics the provision of public service communication remains important in its role to inform and educate publics about national issues and international concerns.

This Reithianism legacy of public service, high standards, probity and high standards sees all viewers as equal (albeit open to criticism of being elitist) and is counter to free-market approaches that seek good returns on investments and seek to attract audiences for the advertising revenue. Nonetheless, the role of public service within the media seeks to enable public debate and participation in democratic processes (also see Habermas 1989; Calhoun 1992). Participation, however, is not just at the level of individuals and groups voicing their own concerns but is also one in which understanding between different social and cultural perspectives can be fostered in the development of an inclusive public life within the diversity of European social life.

Currently, the socio-economic and political context of participation is neo-liberalism, which posits the market as the most efficient mechanism for the distribution of resources, and one of ensuring individual freedom. This has implications for key institutions vested with the responsibility of building Europe within democratic liberalism, chiefly the European Parliament, the European Commission and European Council, as policy has to engage with the ideology of the market and address social cohesion, inclusion and social justice.

Within these dynamics, there is the rise of "different partial arenas of cultural and

social sub-politics – media publicity, judiciary, privacy, citizens' initiative groups and the new social movements…[that] add up to forms of new culture" (Beck 1992; 198). This is especially complex in the context of the diverse populace of the European Union, and any straightforward adaptation of either a universalistic argument or relativist argument regarding a public sphere for Europe struggles to address the issue of inclusion and participation in Europe in the context of a networked global economy (Borradori 2003).

The provision of information and communication, whether via the mass media or the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW), is important to facilitate dialogue regarding European concerns and to foster participation by the inhabitants of Europe. The media are influential in shaping public perceptions of events, public culture and civic space, for instance this can be seen in the ways in which community, identity and culture within European migration are played out in the media. To counter any established mainstream media bias within this context, minority media in the EU seeks to acknowledge the rights of ethnic minorities to have media in their own languages and to act as mediators between mainstream culture and minority cultures.

Both these aspects of minority media have the potential to contribute to the development of genuine multi-ethnic civil society (Silverstone 2005). These conditions – the

economic, social, and political with forms of participation in the means of communication give Europe its sense public culture. These conditions form grounded empirical situations in which different groups engage in varying degrees with European concerns and provide the basis for levels of participation. However, this raises the questions about the formation of European publics.

The quest for participation in Europe requires a European public, which raises the question of 'who are the Europeans?' Given the Western notion of *demos* as signifying (national) territory, common institutions, and a political community that binds people together, it is difficult to identify a clear sense of Europe and even more problematic is the difficulty of identifying Europeans. This is in contrast to national identities that are vivid, accessible, established, popular, and widely believed whereas European identity is lacks any of these attributes (Grundmann 1999; 133)[2].

In an effort to envisage the development of a 'European', some commentators identify with a progressive approach and envisage a 'New European', who has to be "as sophisticated as the merchants and courtiers of the Renaissance or the multi-national and multi-lingual inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe before Hitler and Stalin… S/he has to know foreign languages beyond the superficial and unreliable *koine*" (Picht 1993; 87). Within this framework, one approach put forward for developing a progressive European

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[2]   Another factor is that many ethnic sentiments persist and may become visible, as seen in the periodic revivals of national identities.

sensibility is through the humanistic ideal of inter-cultural training, especially if the aim is not a rejection of identity but addressing other identities in an open way (Grundmann 1999; 134).

However, the formation of identity is complex with actors having multiple aspects of identity, which they select and adopt in varying situations. Furthermore, although inter-cultural training underpins greater understanding it does not provide formal routes for participation in Europe. With regard to this issue, Weiler (1997) raises the link between identity, national citizenship and European citizenship. He points out that there is a flaw in the assumption that speaks of European citizenship in the same tones as national citizenship. He suggests a version of multiple *demoi* in which individuals see themselves belonging to two *demoi,* in which member state nationality and European citizenship are understood as being interdependent.

Logically, as Weiler (Ibid.) points out, one cannot be a European citizen without being a member state national. Weiler (Ibid.) sees a civilising aspect in his point, because: "the acceptance by its members that, in a range of areas of public life, one will accept the legitimacy and authority of decisions adopted by fellow European citizens in the realisation that in these areas preference is given to choices made by the outreaching, non-organic, *demos,* rather than by an in reaching one" (Weiler Ibid; 510).

Although, one difficulty of Europeanization is the ambiguity around the existence of a European public, nonetheless, the development of a public sphere within Europe is a prerequisite for public engagement in Europe. To achieve such a public sphere, Grundmann (1999) argues, involves two phases, first a synchronisation of key debates between national public spheres followed by homogenisation of national public spheres across European nation states.

Grundmann (Ibid.) sees this distinction as a way to build a public sphere for Europe. He does see problems in achieving synchronisation and homogenisation of national public spheres. First, he identifies that even though there are increased technological possibilities, there is no common media system. The difficulties in developing a common media across Europe include the heterogeneity of culture and language within Europe (de Swaan 1991; Groze-Peclum 1990).

A second barrier is the fact that news correspondents tend to be nationally aligned and are primarily interested in European topics that relate to their domestic policy agenda (Gerhards 1993), while member states tend to pursue a national line in European policy debates. Both these processes strengthen national discourses about Europe rather than fostering a European perspective on policy debates. A further dimension to this is that Member States by 'looking to Brussels' do not emphasize or focus primarily on other member states, which means that there is less crossing over of interests at national levels to form a European perspective. One of the outcomes of these dynamics is that they do not privilege the cultural diversity and the characteristics of participation and representation in the spaces of the media across Europe (Silverstone 2005).

4. Participation and Social Organisation of Space

Dewey's (1939) claim that society is realised through communication allows one to explore the question of cultural expression and dialogue in tracing the articulation of cultures within a changing Europe. Identity, belonging and trust are produced through networks of interactions and co-operation between networks (Wessels and Meidema 2007). As Bauman (1999) argues, the link between identity and understandings of belonging in late modernity is no longer obvious and given, rather it is something open and problematic, something which is to be achieved. The same holds for trust: it is no longer unconditionally given, but assessed in relation with notions of a risk-society (Beck 1992).

The interaction between social identity, institutional forms and participation is constructed and becomes situated through the social organisation of space (Werlen 1993). An aspect of participation is that actors, in forming social identities, creatively imagine space, and in so doing form locales, which act as sites of material and cultural resources for action. These locales can be situated and mediated, and comprise of grounded spaces, broadcast spaces, interactive digital spaces, and a combination of on- and off-line spaces. One of these spaces in contemporary society is the variety of 'communicative spaces'.

5. Communicative Spaces

The development of a multi-media communication environment is adding an extra dimension to the traditional broadcasting sector and the press. In theory, the development of new networks of information exchange and communication provides new spaces for public sphere activity.

Barney (2004), for example, points out that digital media provide a more convenient, generalised access to politically relevant information. Digital media have the potential to improve vertical communication between citizens and officials and foster horizontal communication amongst citizens thus expanding communicative spaces for public dialogue and deliberation. The development of digital services also encourages popular participation in democratic decision-making, such as online voting and deliberative opinion polling. Barney (Ibid.) argues that these developments have the potential to develop a "more inclusive and politicised public sphere than that mediated by existing, commercial mass media" (Barney Ibid; 134).

However, as Silverstone notes national media spaces are still dominated by mainstream, national and transnational broadcasters, internet service providers, and global search engines (Silverstone 2007; 81). These media spaces are shaped by a concentration of media ownership that emphasise popular forms of communication that only provide a minimum level of public service programming. Furthermore, the concentration of ownership is increasing homogeneity of programming, which is undermining the role of small programme suppliers who add diversity to the overall output (Harrison and Wessels 2005).

Nonetheless, in some new media projects non-media professionals and audiences-as-

users are shaping the production, content and participation in new forms of public communication and representation. These projects are generating communicative spaces that are pluralistic, engaging, associative and critical (Harrison and Wessels 2005). There is some mixing of forms that either, adapt existing media to new media formats or that change the production and consumption processes to produce new programming (Figure 1). The new communicative environment consists of mainstream mass media spaces as well as new media and minority media spaces. The ethos of these spaces is

'TRADITIONAL MEDIA'		THE PROCESS OF 'RECONFIGURATION'		'NEW MEDIA'
Social Relations		**Social Relations**		**Social Relations**
Mass and niche PSB		Networks		Individualisation and Choice
Origins mid-modernity		Origins late-modernity		Origins late-modernity
National and regional Broadcasting		Partnerships and nodes		Local, national and supra-national initiatives
FORMS		**FORMS**		**FORMS**
Broadcasting		Informate Eg. iDTV Community Networks Weblogs		Internet and WWW IS services Mobile phones Weblogs
		Automate Niche channels VOD PVRs Trad. Media Online		
USAGE	**USAGE**	**USAGE**		**USAGE**
National unity	Individual use of Mass media	Nodes of participation		Global networks of interests
Audience Fragmentation	Self-selection	Community of interests		Networks of interests

(Harrison and Wessels 2005)

Figure 1: Mapping the Social Relations of a New Public Service Communication Environment

important for a public sphere for Europe, in that they require "an ethic of hospitality conducted through proper distance so that different voices can be heard and engaged with" (Silverstone 2007; 81).

6. Media Polis and Contrapuntal Culture

Silverstone (2007) addresses the media polis as a potential space for mediating multiple voices. He argues that the movement of peoples within Europe produces a context where cultures co-exist as a source of tension and misunderstanding as well as a source of creative dynamism. The mobility of individuals and groups within Europe means that these actors have to balance identity and senses of belonging in spaces between home and host societies. In these situations individuals have to negotiate senses of self and place often in locations where there are a hybrid of cultural perceptions and mores within a latent 'in-between space' of established populations and influxes of strangers.

However, rather than seeing this space as an 'either-or' space, Silverstone (Ibid.) posits that these spaces are better understood as (nascent) 'both/and' spaces in terms of communication and the author would add, in terms of experience. Of course the experience of 'both-and' spaces is varied, with some situations more volatile and less supportive than others (Steinert and Pilgram 2007). For some commentators, this mix of cultures represents a form of cosmopolitanism, however, this contemporary situation of merely co-locating does not necessarily facilitate a progressive sensibility of the cosmopolitan who

is at home with diversity within the dynamics of culture (see Beck 2003).

Beck (Ibid.) argues that there are many types of cosmopolitanisms and their sensibility lies beyond multi-culturalism (which to varying degrees essentializes difference) to a sense of common humanity lived out in different places, ethnicities, religions, regimes and so on. Silverstone (2007) understands this as "a claim for an empirically grounded plurality as the condition of humanity in late modernity" (Ibid; 14). To move beyond the current "condition of cosmopolitanism" (Roche 2007) to a genuine and lived cosmopolitanism requires some facility for dialogue and the exchange of ideas and understanding.

This is because a cosmopolitan individual lives within a "doubling of identity and identification; the cosmopolitan ethic, embodies a commitment, indeed obligation, to recognise not just the stranger as other, but the other in oneself" (Silverstone 2007; 14). Thus communication is one of welcoming the other and understanding the other as both different and as part of one's own and each other's identity and condition. The media are one resource for facilitating dialogue or at least communication. However, the communication spaces of the media polis can only foster and create the conditions for a progressive cosmopolitanism if it can welcome 'the other' and thereby genuinely intermingle minority and majority voices within media and communication spaces. Silverstone (2007) suggests that thought is required to address the ways in which cultures in Europe can be negotiated through the media that potentially may offer plural spaces for mediation.

The condition of plurality of cultures within the mobility of peoples who have the aspiration to communicate across difference creates situations of the counterpoint or the contrapuntal. The concept of the contrapuntal addresses the articulation of diversity within and between cultures. In the European context, for instance, there is diversity between and within a variety of cultures, languages and ethnicities. This diversity is also the context of the European media environment.

This environment is, however, active and influential in materializing and indeed shaping the characteristics of the relationships that underpin and give form to diversity. In the media these relations are realised in the power differential between dominant and subordinate media institutions; in the capacities and reach of the technologies and their platforms; in the social organisation of audiences and producers, including their real and represented locations; and in patterns of inclusion and exclusion across and within nation states (Silverstone 2005).

Given that the concept of contrapuntal includes a consideration of integrity in the articulation of diversity as it manifests in communication and mediation, the above mentioned characteristics of the media are significant because they frame the character of communication in both form and content. Thus, for example, media institutions and characteristics of communication frame the possible ways in which the production of voices and responses can be shaped and represented as well as enabling and determining levels of reciprocity and responsibility in communications (Silverstone 2007).

Sociologically speaking, Silverstone (Ibid.) argues that contrapuntal moments show the presence of the other (the stranger) in time and space is a point of reference in relation the significance of the here, the now and the self. Silverstone (Ibid.) continues, saying that the contrapuntal points to the necessary presence of a multiplicity of voices as well as the media polis' own plurality in creating a genuine space for dialogue to foster respect and hospitality amongst peoples in Europe (and globally).

To summarize, key aspects of the contrapuntal include the notion that any particular identity only exists within a range of opposites. The contrapuntal does not suggest that cultural difference and conflict can be ameliorated rather there is an ongoing recognition and re-recognition of difference with which social actors engage in varying ways. Not all engagement, however, is open and hospitable to the 'other'.

For example, in relation to mass media communication the 'one to many' format is unequal and unjust, with freedom "to be heard and to speak" denied to many (Silverstone Ibid.). The interactive digital media can open up new networks of communication in various forms of social networking, blogging and wikis and so on, these forms however need new patterns of association to create dialogue and trust in communication. Nonetheless, the media polis' multiple threads of broadcast programmes, websites, home pages etc. are weaving multiplicity into communication that may inform civil society and the public sphere. However, this poses questions of how these media spaces are used by different people in Europe.

7. Contexts of Mediation and Dialogue in Europe

In the gradual orientation to Europeanization by nation states through the expansion of the EU and in the movements of migration throughout Europe there is some tentative and fragile interlinking between social and symbolic worlds. It is partly through the media and the process of mediation that the plurality of cultures and their representation becomes visible. Silverstone (Ibid.) argues that to understand this process requires analysts to listen to the expressive score of different cultures, noting what is present and absent, and shifts in positions of dominance and subordination. Mediation and culture is contrapuntal and lived cultures such as migration express this through the movement and displacement of individuals, groups and populations prompted by economic, political, religious and environmental changes.

Silverstone's (2005; 2007; 90-98) study of mediation in the everyday lives of migrants and minority group producers and users of media explores the dynamics of mediation between 2001 and 2003. The research explores minorities' engagement with local, national and trans-national media in EU nation states. The team worked with 75 distinct groups among recent and established minorities with populations of over a 1000 in the 15 EU member states (before enlargement in 2004) to explore their media and media practices (Silverstone 2007; 91). Silverstone addresses the way in the media interact within individual and institutional processes of communication. He traces the link between production and reception in the ways in which minorities make sense of and make meaningful global, national and local events across the public and the private aspects of everyday life.

The key findings of the study show that mediation is highly contextualized. Generally, minorities tend not to directly relate to either the social and cultural mainstream of any 'host' country or many of the marketing categories of national audiences. Rather, many minorities construct a media space from national, local and trans-national media and their use and appropriation of media is complex and layered. Within this context, the local is of primary importance for minorities, as it provides the situated context for access, production and use. Thus, in cities, access to media and communication for minorities is through neighbourhood phones, internet or video hire centres, internet cafes and local authority centres. These sites are important as they provide access to media and communication for those who otherwise may not have the resources have individualised and privatised access. Although, some sites may generate specific user groups based on ethnicity due to their location within migration patterns, they nonetheless form open and inclusive sites of communication that can be appropriated by locally placed communities (Silverstone Ibid; 90-95).

Cities also provide cultural and multicultural media outlets and projects, such as local print, radio and cable TV that provide opportunities for engagement in locally available media production processes. The cultural based media outlets tend to produce

content that is based on particular linguistic and culturally traditions for specific minority audiences. Although, there are some independent local media projects much local media production and consumption is linked to national initiatives that include public service multiple ethnic and multicultural programming. These programming facilities are often part of multicultural policy agendas and examples include: Couleur Locale (Belgium); Radio Multikulti (Germany); Colourful Radio (the Netherlands) and Sesam (Sweden). These types of initiatives are, however, often shaped by national initiatives that may not fully recognise the actual voices and presence of minorities. They can limit access to production processes to minority groups and hence curtail opportunities for self-representation in mediating cultural expression by minority groups. Another part of the media dynamic for minorities is the role of minority media, which although often small in scope and under-supported and under-represented in relation to mainstream press and media nonetheless provide important services. Examples of such services include national local hybrids such as London Greek Radio that offers in Greek, information on their rights and on social services for a national Greek audience in London in the United Kingdom (UK). Another example from radio is the BBC Asian Network in the UK that provides some broadcasting in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi and Mirpuri.

A further media source that interacts in the communications environment of migrants and minority groups is the presence of transnational satellite TV that transmits programming from various destinations and so-called 'homelands'. The provision of this type of programming varies across cultures but examples include 30 Arabic satellite channels, 36 Turkish, and increasing numbers of channels from Russia, Poland and the ex-Soviet states, as well as 8 Hindu channels and 20 Spanish and Portuguese channels.

However, these types of transnational media are limited to countries that are vibrant enough economically to support such media production, which therefore excludes migrants from weaker economically based nations. In this context of local, national and transnational media outlets, the Internet is a distinct form of communication for minority communities. For example, specifically within diasporic communities, the Internet as an information and communication medium enables access that is low in cost compared to other media.

However, its significance also lies in its underlying design for user-participation, which is enabling a rapid growth of on-line diasporic news and information sites produced by individuals and communities within diaspora networks and minority populations. Sites hosted by these networks, therefore have the ethos and capacity to include the displaced as well as those left behind in home societies. Some particular characteristics of digital technology support these types of producer-consumer led new media projects, for example, the development of search engines that are specifically dedicated to Spanish or Latin American websites hosted in Belgium.

Silverstone and his research team found that these types of websites are culturally con-

vergent and often bi-lingual. In these spaces of communication, debate by various groups opens up their concerns with many voicing oppositional perspectives of home as well as of host nations (Silverstone Ibid; 90-95). These sorts of spaces are emerging frameworks for debating public and private issues, they, however, are not especially well linked to other public fore, which limits their contribution to a public sphere within Europe and beyond.

The studies in Silverstone's (Ibid.) project show how diasporic communities are resourceful in developing media packages from a variety of media forms and outputs to address their information, communication and cultural requirements. However, apart from informal Internet production and use, many migrants or minorities are not in the position to voice their concerns from their own perspective and many are represented through the process of mainstream media production leaving them in relatively powerless positions to shape and inform media output.

There are, however, some projects that are challenging mainstream media production through the use of new media and new forms of production and consumption patterns of association. For instance, the European Commission funded project, Advanced Trans-European Telematics Application for Community Help Project (ATTACH) involved Newham Online, Young-people online, community web groups, and digital storytelling in the London site.

The European project team designed a communication system that was inclusive in terms of free and universal access to new media, public participation and the building of skills. Building on the work done in the ATTACH project in London, the Carpenters Connect Project developed an interactive digital television (iDTV) network. They did this by forming a partnership made up from Newham Council, the Carpenters Tenants Management Organisation and tenants of Carpenters Estate, with other public, private and voluntary sector organisations. The tenants built on the infrastructure, set-top boxes, and skills and media training to provide their own content and produce their own television programmes and videos.

They created 'Home2Home' a new company in the iDTV market, and continue to make their own films, documentaries, and programmes. The manager of the Tenants Management Organisation feels that new media organised at the local level can provide media services that are produced *by* the residents *for* the residents who are both the producers and consumers of the service. The manager says it is a steep learning curve, not only in organisational, technological and skill-related terms, but also in understanding of how programming is received by audiences. Most programmes, such as 'Meet the Neighbours', 'Down Carpenters Way', and a series of documentaries produced under the title 'Carpenters Shorts' are well received. However 'Living the High Life' did raise controversy over its depiction of life in a 'tower-block' in a deprived area. Nonetheless, the manager felt that the Carpenters Connects team within their pattern of association could respond to the issues raised by their critics in a fair way without losing their

own voices and perspectives (Harrison and Wessels 2005).

Another example shows how new media partnerships and patterns of association can empower people. The Dialogue project involved citizens and municipal councils from Bologna (Italy), Ronneby (Sweden), and Lewisham (England). Citizens were trained to use the Web, with 'use' understood through the metaphor of "communication as a network, as a cyberspace, and as participative" (project worker, 1999). This is reflected in a phrase commonly used in Bologna, which was "we teach you the techniques, you teach us the content to which they can be applied" (*ibid.*).

In Ronneby, a group of feminist researchers based the work of the project on Virginia Woolf's argument that women need their own space to write, and they saw new media as a contemporary space for the development of self-expression. The women of the town and surrounding region developed four virtual rooms, each with its own function and representing different aspects of women's writing. Room one is for participants' personal presentations, room two contains the 'Virtual Cookbook' as an example of collaborative writing, and the third room is for poems and short stories. The fourth room is a chat room for discussions. The women mediated key political issues through new media by involving Bosnian women migrants in the project by sharing stories, experiences, political and historical debate, and recipes. They also foster active parental involvement in schools through the interactive site that links them with the

school, and they encourage mothers and daughters to work together and learn from each other using new media.

In Lewisham (UK), the Dialogue project involves citizen-panels use of on-line 'Live Chat' and videoconferencing to improve participation in local democratic processes. Online 'Live Chat' feeds into formal council procedures and is relayed back to residents through the local authority web site. Residents find that politicians do listen to the 'Live Chat' sessions. For example, in one instance, John and a number of others took part in a chat-session on proposed changes to local government and they were subsequently asked to attend a Council meeting to air their opinions further. The project also fostered participation for schoolchildren by, in their terminology 'connecting on screen' via videoconferencing.

The children from Lewisham, Bologna and Ronneby took part in discussions ranging from the character of their everyday lives, their hobbies and school-life to issues such as bullying, racism and migration. They found that they all had different ideas and experiences of bullying, racism and migration. Laura (Lewisham), for example, remembers that a migrant girl from Bologna had said: "I have had no problem with the language so far, and nobody has made me feel unwelcome because of my culture". The schoolchildren felt that through the project they got some understanding of what life was like in Bologna, Ronneby, and Lewisham, which widened their understanding of other cultures in that they could see similarities as well as differences (Harrison and Wessels 2005).

The discussion in this section of the paper shows how individuals and groups in different situations are creatively developing new patterns and packages of media use to meet some of their information, communication and cultural requirements. The research undertaken by Silverstone's research network shows how minorities and migrant populations appropriate various media technologies, channels and services at the local level. By their artful use and re-configuration of media they form a communication environment to support their social and cultural situations.

However, in many cases the appropriation of local, national and transnational media gives minority and diasporic groups little space for producing their own programming, self-representation and therefore little room for voicing their own experiences and concerns. The research by Wessels (in Harrison and Wessels 2005; also Wessels 2000 and 2007), however, shows how some patterns of association have formed through European Commission funded projects that facilitate a more participative approach to media production and reception.

The way in which these projects are socially organised, namely from peoples, groups and individuals at a local level who wish to communicate with others in a respectful way to foster dialogue across cultures, shows that there is potential in the media polis for genuine communication that is inclusive in media spaces that are shareable by multiple voices. These patterns of association and relations of communication are, however, rare and limited in number, and the majority of public communication is produced by the mainstream media industry.

8. Proper Distance

The development of a shareable media polis and a communications environment means that analysts need to address what can be termed the 'relations of communication'. By this term, the author means the values and mores of the media that are also related within the production and reception processes, as well as these processes themselves, as together they combine to define media outputs and their interpretations. A key aspect of media work in which its values are expressed is through the respect and distance that media workers practice in producing content and ultimately represent in their programming of people, events and places.

Silverstone (2007) critically assesses the current media through the concept of 'proper distance' and addresses hospitality, responsibility and trust in the mediation of public and everyday life. Proper distance means the degree of proximity required in mediated inter-relationships that creates and sustains a sense of other sufficient for reciprocity and for the exercise of duty of care, obligation and responsibility, as well as understanding. If proper distance is achieved in mediated communication it maintains a sense of other through difference as well as shared identity, thus proper distance is a perquisite for, and part of plurality (Silverstone Ibid.).

Silverstone (Ibid.) draws on the work of Arendt who sees proximity as an important aspect of politics and Levinas who sees

proximity as an important dimension of morality. Silverstone (Ibid.) continues from these positions by arguing that "proper distance involves imagination, understanding and duty of care and involves an epistemological (Arendt) and an ontological (Levinas) commitment to finding the space to express what is experienced (Arendt) and essential (Levinas) in our relationships to the other" (Silverstone Ibid; 47)

Relationships and social knowledge amongst peoples are highly dependent on the media as a key communicator within late modern society. Silverstone argues that the current organisation of the media fails to value and to practice proper distance. Generally, he argue the media "trade in otherness, in the spectacular and the visible" (Silverstone Ibid; 47), and in so doing they limit the possibility of connection and identification. Identity, in this context, is a commodity that is traded, which empties identity of its distinctiveness and connective-ness. It denies the validity of difference and the irreducibility of otherness in social relations. This approach to representation highlights the failure of the current media to hear different perspectives and to address the complexities of social life. This method of communication sustains modernity's inability to engage with plurality and the rights of the stranger (Silverstone Ibid.).

Silverstone (Ibid.) gives examples of distance that is 'too close', 'too far', and distance that is neither 'too close of far'. For example, he points out that journalists within the armies of occupying forces, the media intrusion into private life of public figures, and exotic images in global advertising are examples of incorporation and the denial or reduction of difference. These are instances of being 'too close' to foster respect of the other. Whereas, the way Moslems, Iraqis, Palestinians are represented as beyond the pale of humanity, is in practice and in convention a position that is 'too far' to create understanding of the other.

An example of distance that it neither 'too close or too far' is found in the cult of celebrity, which destroys difference by exaggerating it (the ordinary made exceptional) and naturalizing it (the exceptional made ordinary) thus, through this dialectic negates the legitimacy of difference. Proper distance in mediation as 'both close and far' where the other is acknowledged, understood, and respected needs, Silverstone argues, producers and audiences with imagination (Silverstone Ibid; 47-48).

An important aspect in imagining and achieving proper distance is the virtue of hospitality, which is the first virtue of the media polis (Silverstone Ibid.). Hospitality is an obligation to welcome the stranger and is a right to the freedom of speech and an obligation to listen and to hear. It is universal in which "the right to visit, to associate, belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface; for since the earth is a globe, they cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must, finally, tolerate living in close proximity, because originally no one had a greater right to any region of earth than anyone else" (Kant 1983; 118).

In relation to hospitality in the media, Silverstone (2007) argues hospitality must be seen as a culture rather than one ethic in an

array of media ethics. This is because hospitality is about a sense of ethos, an ethos that is about "home, the familiar place of dwelling … the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, as our own or as forgiveness… ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality" (Derrida cited in Silverstone Ibid; 139).

Silverstone (Ibid.) recognises that Derrida's notion of ethics-as-hospitality is important because hospitality as an obligation rather than a right is a primary ethic in a cosmopolitan world. He argues that it is at the heart of our relationships with others and is constitutive of such relations. He describes hospitality as:

> "The capacity, indeed the expectation, of welcoming the other on one's space, with or without any expectation of reciprocity, is a particular and irreducible component of what it means to be human. Hospitality is the mark of the interface we have with the stranger. It speaks of the long relationship between the sedentary and the nomad. It is inscribed into the cultures of most of the world religions as an ethic beyond the political, an ethic of humility and generosity, which bypasses differences of power and inequalities of wealth and status" (Silverstone Ibid; 139)

From Silverstone's perspective, hospitality is the ethos in which 'the other' not only speaks but that 'the stranger' should be heard. He also differentiates hospitality from tolerance or toleration in that it is not a relation of sufferance or patronage of the powerful. In Derrida's terms tolerance is "scrutinised hos-pitality, always under surveillance, parsimonious, and protective of its sovereignty" (Derrida in Borradori 2003; 128). Hospitality, on the other hand is unconditional, entirely innocent and devoid of judgement and discrimination.

For Silverstone (2007), hospitality is uniform and universal, and is an obligation whatever anyone's position is in social or symbolic hierarchies. Thus, the rich will welcome the poor, the poor the rich; and the powerful the weak, the weak the powerful and so embodying Rawls' (1999) notion justice[3]. Here Silverstone (Ibid.) links hospitality as a core component of justice to the media as when absent it is a sign of injustice in the lived as well as mediated world. The culture of hospitality is therefore at the centre of a plural and just mediated world that informs and is constituted through a proper distance between selves and others.

9. Conclusion

This paper has considered the complexity of developing the role of the media in any developments in the Europeanization of public spheres given the diversity of identities and cultures within and between nation states. The media has traditionally had a role in the public sphere in mediating the voices of civil society and was, and is, a core institution in the nation states of Europe. However, traditional media tends to have a national perspective and, although public service broadcasting aims to facilitate fair representation and expression (as does commercial TV to a

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[3] Rawl's (1999) uses a social contract argument to show that justice, and especially distributive justice, is a form of fairness as an impartial distribution of goods.

limited degree by force of regulation) none-theless programming and press frame news and events within their production and audi-ence systems.

Furthermore, sensationalist reporting and complex world politics is generating a complicated substantive media and commu-nications environment. Some new media pat-terns of association are offering new forms of communication and expression, but they are not part of the mass media industry or sector. Nonetheless, they are generating innovative ways to foster dialogue in the public sphere within the European context. However, as Silverstone (Ibid.) points out there is an overarching need for 'proper distance' in the media of Europe to underpin European civil society through the culture of hospitality bet-ween situated and mediated agents to ensure genuine dialogue and just participation.

Silverstone's (2007; 2005) recommenda-tions include that the media-polis needs to be developed as a shared space, which is char-acterised as contrapuntal. He argues (Ibid.) that media communication needs to evolve through the continuous multiple-presence of many and various voices that define and pro-duce spaces of mutual hospitality in the me-dia-polis. Through the recognition of the other and in the sound of his or her voice hospitality within a cosmopolitan condition and mediated culture involves sharing that space and taking responsibility for it (Silverstone 2007).

This means that all social agents are obliged to open their space to the stranger whatever their position in the media hierar-chy (Ibid.). In practical terms this means that digital and analogue spectrum must be made

available for minorities and the varyingly dis-advantaged. The spectrum must also facilitate and allow for non-national transmission and individual channels must provide programme time for the all those who are excluded in one form or another. Furthermore, in mainstream news and current affairs programming, the relations of communication needs to ensure that, any and all of those marginalised, must be seen and heard in their own terms, fully representing their voices and bodily presence (Silverstone 2005).

There are some emerging media pat-terns of association that are fostering hos-pitality that involve the sharing of experien-ce through the voices of participants, seen mainly in innovative new media projects but also to some degree in minority media as well as a few examples in the mainstream media. To achieve this type of 'just' commu-nication is difficult and the openness in these types of relations of communication is at risk of being abused but nonetheless still needs to be pursued. These obligations within a cul-ture of hospitality should be a requirement and *modus operandi* across all mediums of communication including minority channels and programmes, mainstream media, and new media projects.

Although there are difficulties in achie-ving proper distance, the examples of new media projects given in this paper show how proper distance can be achieved in some in-novation projects that are shaped through new patterns of association. These patterns of as-sociation are based on shared understanding and the welcoming of the other within a cul-ture of hospitality. However, further research

is needed to see how these types of projects can underpin media communication for the inclusion of the many and various voices of peoples in Europe in ways that reinvigorate and re-imagine a public sphere for Europe that is relevant to the 21ˢᵗ Century.

Both research and policy agendas need to address the issues such as hospitality within the culture of proper distance and how they may be practised within the relations of communication. This is because "without an acknowledgement of the other's moral standpoint, of the right to be in the world we share, and a recognition that his or her presence in such a world presumes a right to act on and it in, then hospitality loses meaning" (Silverstone 2007; 143). This has implications for the current changes in, and enlargement of, the Europe Union because without hospitality the conditions for building an inclusive and genuine cosmopolitan society within and between the states of Europe will be hampered.

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ABSTRACT

An ideal-type public sphere provides space for public debate regarding what makes for a 'good society', and for consideration of the issues involved in the development and sustainability of such a society. In general terms these debates are historically situated and nationally understood. Current developments in the process of fostering some development in the Europeanization of public spheres raise specific questions, such as: what are the obstacles for creating European public spheres that are inclusive for different groups in Europe? What is the role of the media in constructing civic cultures in Europe? To gain an understanding of the dynamics of the role of the media in relation to civil society involves understanding the ways in which the media and participation are culturally embedded and understood in late modernity and in the expansion of the European Union. Within Europe, cultural distinctiveness emerges through differences in ways of life and their respective institutional expression as well as personal and group identity formations. Dewey's (1939) claim that society is realised through communication allows one to explore the question of cultural expression and dialogue in tracing the articulation of cultures within a changing Europe. The framework of analysis is that of 'communication spaces' of digital media and mass media in relation to the dynamics of participation. The paper draws on comparative European research of migrant and minority communities within Europe as well as more settled communities in Europe. The case studies show how mass media and new media are differentially appropriated within various contexts of use. The concept of 'proper distance' (Silverstone 2007) is used to explore these developments and to analyse the role of the media more generally in a changing Europe. Proper distance includes issues such as hospitality, responsibility and trust in the mediation of public and everyday life. It critically assesses the capacity of current mainstream media to engender dialogue between the peoples of Europe with a focus on fostering respect and understanding in the creation of inclusive public spheres in the context and contradictions of Europeanization.

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