

# PLATFORM

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# EDITORIAL

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Rising mediation in contemporary realities foregrounds the development and articulation of media reflexivity in public discourse. The naturalisation of mediated worldviews paradoxically requires practical and ethical sophistication in media choices. In the context of rapidly transforming and transformative media and academic cultures, graduate student researchers of media and communications represent an emerging generation of media participants who not only routinely construct and perform diverse media potentials, but are also professionally called upon as media scholars to significantly sharpen critical frameworks for the analysis and commentary of new media ontologies and epistemologies.

One of the most significant 'quality indicators' of such academically specialist forms of media reflexivity is authorship of professionally recognised publications – which may, at present, be conceptualised as located in relation to two main discursive spheres. To contribute to the first sphere of top-quality, discipline-specific, international academic publications, graduate proposals may be subject to prohibitively competitive assessment alongside the work of far more advanced and eminent scholars. These high levels of competition, coupled with considerable time pressures in editorial and review processes, means that graduate submissions may more likely be rejected with minimal feedback given or face an extended time lag between submission and publication if accepted (usually helped by co-authorship with more senior academics). Although graduate perspectives may be more visible in the second sphere of school-based, interdisciplinary graduate publications, they may be reviewed by and disseminated to researchers who may not share their areas of expertise and interest, as these publications tend to cohere articles addressing vastly dissimilar topics.

*PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication* has been positioned in the space overlapping these two discursive spheres, having been started to nurture scholarly reflexive voices among media and communications graduate student researchers as well as to award international recognition to top-quality graduate contributions to the discipline from the early emergence of these expressions in academic discourse. As a consensual project of media and communications

graduate student researchers worldwide, *PLATFORM* is steered by a vision to grow and sustain an internationally networked community of graduate students who not only enthuse about their individual contributions to excellence in media research, but also passionately support one another to draw upon, develop, and discuss their expertise and interests through academic publication.

The aims of *PLATFORM* include:

- To provide a platform for media and communications graduate student researchers to showcase, share, and support the work of one another through publication, peer-review, and comments;
- To provide a platform for emerging media and communications scholars to build a publication record and to contribute subsequently to other academic publications;
- To increase scholarly appreciation of media and communications research across diverse theoretical, methodological, and empirical interests; and
- To encourage international awareness and collaboration through the discussion of issues associated with the rising significance of multiple media and communications platforms for societies and individuals in and across various globalised and localised environments.

As suggested above, *PLATFORM* will include theoretical, methodological, and/or empirical research which probes insightfully into the political, economic, and/or socio-cultural dimensions of media content, technologies, processes, philosophies, education, and research. Topics may draw from more established research traditions, such as those of political communication, journalism studies, as well as research on audiences and publics; to newer fields such as game studies and biomedica. *PLATFORM* welcomes both the contextualisation of these areas of study within particular paradigms and/or geographical locations, as well as the extension of ideas across sub-disciplines, schools of thought, and/or regional and global geographies.

## **THE *PLATFORM* REVIEW PROCESS**

Graduate students may submit abstracts and/or full proposals for General or Thematic Articles; Essays; Reviews of books, websites, and/or multimedia; Interviews with established and/or emerging scholars; and Multimedia. Work may be submitted at any time, and will be reviewed upon submission. Coordinated by topic/area/section editors, the *PLATFORM* review process intends to be distinctly meticulous in balancing quest for quality and support of work-in-progress, refining submissions for publication through detailed feedback at the following review stages:

- If an abstract is submitted, it is reviewed by the editor responsible for that topic/area/section, who comments on how a suitable full paper may be developed. Proposals for essays, reviews, interviews and multimedia will also be reviewed by a relevant topic/area/section editor.

- Each full proposal for articles is delegated to a relevant topic/area/section editor, who coordinates the double-blind peer-review process. This editor is responsible for inviting existing reviewers and recruiting new reviewers among graduate student and more senior researchers whose areas of expertise and interest enable them to provide informed, (sub)disciplinary-specific review of the full paper. These reviewers will be requested to comment on the manuscript and submit a review summary form which assesses the paper according to the quality of its theoretical engagement, academic writing, and relevance to the field of media and communications, and recommends whether the paper be accepted, accepted with minor revisions, significantly revised and submitted for further review, or declined. The editor decides whether to accept or decline the paper after considering the marked-up manuscript and review summary form, and forwards these documents to authors together with the publication decision and further editorial suggestions for enhanced rigour and readability.
- All finally revised work is formatted, ordered and compiled with the editorial, for review by the international editorial board of established scholars and graduate student representatives at international, regional and local professional media and communications associations.

*PLATFORM* will be published biannually in January and July. Contributions of exceptional quality will be updated and thematically organised into an e-book anthology every three to five years.

## **THE PLATFORM WEBSITE**

To better leverage on what new media technologies can offer, the *PLATFORM* website was specifically designed as an opportune space for undergraduate and graduate students, as well as for up-and-coming young academics to share research ideas and ultimately publish their first chapter. In addition to hosting scholarly works, *PLATFORM* has also included a Communities section, which aims to highlight events of interest and contains the biographies of published *PLATFORM* authors. Unlike the sidebar which encompasses *PLATFORM*'s various affiliates and support groups, it is hoped that the Links page will serve as a 'network node' for visitors to hyperlink to other sites of interest. Plans are also underway for the Gallery to showcase photos of *PLATFORM*'s key events and special occasions. Lastly, an interactive forum for discussion can be found on the drawing board.

Despite the emphasis *PLATFORM* places on the internet as a tool to draw students and emerging academics closer together, *PLATFORM* fully acknowledges the essential role that traditional media continues to play. This is reflected in the site's banner, which depicts the conventional library alongside one of the most common tools for instant connectivity – the computer. Undoubtedly, electronic and digital media technologies are taking us into a

networked world where ideas collide in real-time. But without the humble printing press, Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' might never have taken root. To build bridges between the 'old' and 'new' world, or indeed, to fuse both worlds together into a greater inter-connected 'networked globe', it is impossible not to discuss one without referring to the other.

## **THE *PLATFORM* OPEN-ACCESS POLICY**

Questions surrounding the issue of content are vital in this new media age. Traditional understandings of the structures of information production and consumption are being increasingly contested. The new media environment is one defined by the convergence between producer and user as we see the emergence of user-generated content and collaborative media production. Traditionally, entry-level barriers into mass communications were incredibly high. To be a media producer was to be in a minority, privileged position. The publication of scholarly journals, for example, was traditionally dominated by corporate publishers and well-funded university departments. In many traditional scholarly journals, academics relinquish their copyrights over published articles. Networked media platforms, such as the internet, and more open and inclusive thought-paradigms, such as open-access, are introducing exciting new options for the dissemination of scholarly works. Scholars can make their work available to the world via the internet without the time-lags imposed by printing and distributing processes. In addition, open-access information lifts traditional restrictions such as subscription fees, making possible a much wider circulation of knowledge.

As an online publication, *PLATFORM* embraces these new opportunities to build upon changes in the ways in which information is distributed. Not only will our content reflect the changes that are upon us, but the way in which the journal functions will also be representative of our respect for open-access and the Creative Commons (CC) movement. *PLATFORM* offers free access to all its content, does not charge authors for the publication of their work, and respects authors' rights to retain copyright of published work.

At the forefront of this push for open access to information is Creative Commons. If copyright laws of the past were based on the idea of restriction and control, the CC movement is defined by openness, access, and freedom. Elliott Bledsoe, Jessica Coates and Brian Fitzgerald describe the CC movement as providing a point of difference to traditional copyright laws as they allow for 'generic, non-discriminatory and open-access materials' (2007: 6). Information that is free and open results in discussion, debate, and creativity and it is in this framework that *PLATFORM* hopes to position itself as part of a wider discussion.



## **VOL1: MEDIATED TEMPORALITIES, SPATIALITIES, AND OTHERS**

In the tradition of quality peer-reviewed journals, all articles in Volume 1, including the guest article (see below), underwent a rigorous round of reviews and rewrites (described earlier) to ensure high scholarly standards at par with the stringent quality of international peer-review journals described earlier on in the introduction. As mentioned earlier, this commitment to high standards in scholarly publishing serves not only to meet *PLATFORM*'s commitment to general academic excellence, but also serves as a learning experience to our contributors in their journey towards becoming well-published academics.

In addition to submitted articles, *PLATFORM*'s inaugural volume also includes recognition of outstanding graduate students by inviting professors and supervisors to nominate guest authors from among their students. The criteria for nomination include an excellent track-record in journal publication and conference presentation as well as a demonstrated potential for future scholarly contribution. The inclusion of guest articles sets the stage for peer exposure, introducing guest authors to the international media and communications graduate student community, as well as exposing graduate students to emerging scholars in the field of media and communications.

This inaugural volume features four distinctive methodologies of academic inquiry, encompassing two theoretical reflections on technological mediation of space and time (Panayiota Tsatsou and Aleksandra Bida), a post-structuralist deconstruction of discourse (Fleur Gabriel), two empirically-based analyses of implications of media representations of the 'other' (Rut Sanz Sabino and guest author Agnes Schneeberger), and lastly an interview with Saskia Sassen.

Tsatsou negotiates a middle ground between David Harvey's 'time-space compression' thesis and Anthony Giddens's 'time-space distancing' view of globalisation. She argues for the retheorisation of time and space to account for new ways in which time and space remain relevant despite being 'compressed' or 'distanced' by technology. Critiquing entrenched views that suggest the 'meaninglessness' of time and space, Tsatsou confidently asserts her view that media and communications technologies mediate, re-mediate, define and restructure temporal and spatial dimensions.

Bida reflects upon communications technology's deterritorialisation of global and local cultures. Drawing upon John Tomlinson, she argues that his idea of 'complex connectivity', when applied to communication and culture (as opposed to the political) gives rise to 'direct connectivity' seen in global-scale interactions between individuals, and 'indirect connectivity' manifested in the global consumption of mass cultural products. She further proposes reterritorialisation as a way of exploring how global and local villages negotiate the influence of global cultural and communications influences.

In her post-structuralist Derridean deconstruction of the discourse around

‘coming of age’, Gabriel argues for the problematisation of media representation of youth sexuality against the supposedly ‘natural’ innocence and asexuality of pre-adolescent youth, and the ‘cultural’ norms defining this ‘natural’ state of children. Using Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of the discourses around incest as a taboo, she problematises the cultural depiction of pedophilia in the films *Lolita* (1997) and *Thirteen* (2003), as well as in public and political division over photographer Bill Henson’s 2008 photo exhibition of child subjects.

Sanz Sabino explores the depiction of a ‘good Nation’ versus ‘foreign’ and ‘evil’ terrorists as a rhetorical technique adopted in British news representation of the 7/7 London bombings, arguing that these mediated discourses have the capacity to generate and support a ‘clash of civilizations’. Arguing against Samuel Huntington’s thesis of the inevitable clash between the Western and the Muslim worlds, she posits that mediated representations of terrorists as the ‘other’ far from merely recording instances of the clash between the West and Islam, in fact serve to justify the use of war as a means to counter terrorism. She concludes with a call for more objective mediated discourses that does not generate and support civilizational clashes.

Echoing Sanz Sabino’s rhetorical analysis of media’s technique of pitting a British ‘us’ against an Islamic ‘them’, guest author Agnes Schneeberger explores the British press’ mediated ‘othering’ of Turkey and its European Union (EU) bid. Focusing on the theme of identity construction, Schneeberger illustrates that the historical definition of European identity as distinct from the Eastern ‘other’ continues in contemporary media narratives. However, her empirical analysis demonstrates that ‘othering’ of Turkey is centered not around its Muslim heritage but questions over its political stability and human rights record.

The articles described above were selected not only on the strength of their arguments and writing style but also with the belief that the concepts and issues raised are highly relevant to contemporary concerns in media and communications and can thus engender discussion, especially in an open-access scholarly environment as envisioned above.

The works published here should not be seen as the final definitive answer to the topics that are raised. They are works that can be accessed and drawn upon freely so that new debates may be started, and so that the open access information revolution can continue to give a voice to those who wish to be heard.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Among many who have contributed to the founding and hosting of *PLATFORM* in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne, Australia, the *PLATFORM* team particularly thanks our academic mentors Ingrid Volkmer, Sean Cubitt and Jenny Lee, Web and Online Learning



Manager Matt Carter, School Manager Mathilde Lochert, as well as the School Executive Committee.

The Creative Commons (CC) Clinic at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), notably Elliott Bledsoe, Jessica Coates and Brian Fitzgerald also deserve special mention and thanks for their invaluable advice and work on *PLATFORM*'s licensing agreements.

In addition, as *PLATFORM* is the result of significant collaboration with official graduate student representatives from four international, regional and local professional associations of media and communications research, we thank, for their valued investment of interest, energy and time, our international editorial board members – Tamara Witschge and Benjamin De Cleen, Chair and Vice-Chair, European Communication Research and Education Association Young Scholars Network (YECREA); Stefania Milan, Co-Chair, International Association of Media and Communication Research Emerging Scholars Network (IAMCR ESN); Mikaela L. Marlow and Michele Cheng Hoon Khoo, Student Board Members, International Communication Association (ICA); as well as Diana Bossio, Executive Committee Member, Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA).

For this inaugural volume, we thank all the supervisors who have nominated their graduate students for guest authorship, Agnes Schneeberger for her guest paper, and Saskia Sassen for generously sharing her insights in an interview. Importantly, we express our gratitude to all *PLATFORM* reviewers, who have created an efficient and useful review process through their willingness to review multiple submissions, their provision of detailed feedback, as well as their prompt reviewing. We also thank all contributors (whether or not their papers were accepted for Volume 1) for taking the time and effort to submit and revise their papers. Finally, we thank all who have involved themselves in *PLATFORM* by providing suggestions and encouraging others to participate in *PLATFORM*. We hope that you will enjoy Volume 1, and invite you to join in the future development of *PLATFORM*.

## REFERENCE

Bledsoe, E., Coates, J., and Fitzgerald, B. (2007). *Unlocking the Potential through Creative Commons: An Industry Engagement & Action Agenda*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation.



# RECONCEPTUALISING 'TIME' AND 'SPACE' IN THE ERA OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

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**Abstract:** This paper examines to what extent electronic media and communications have contributed to currently changing concepts of time and space and how crucial their role is in experiencing temporality, spatiality and mobility. The paper argues that media and communication technologies play a complex part in shifting conceptions of time and space, without diminishing to insignificance the concepts of time and space or subjective experiences of them. On the contrary, by challenging established conceptual approaches to time and space, electronic media could be considered to 'mediate' time and space, problematising the multi-layered significance of how they are experienced today. The paper is divided into three sections. First, it presents theoretical approaches to time and space, and it discusses the two seemingly contrasting approaches of 'time-space distancing' and 'time-space compression'. Second, it develops a historical analysis of the ways in which media have empirically modified the concepts of time and space, and it discusses the examples of 'internet time' and new 'electronic spaces' to challenge the argument of temporal simultaneity and non-significance of space in the new digital era, respectively. Viewing the historical changes of space in particular as intimately linked to the shifting conceptualisation of place, the third section examines the emergence of a perception of place as 'non-place', whilst it argues in favour of the counter-thesis of a mediated sense of place. In this regard, the paper espouses the thesis that electronic communications have succeeded in interconnecting remote places without eliminating their importance.

**Key words:** time, space, place, electronic media, compression, distancing, mediation

## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines whether and to what extent electronic media and communications contribute to currently changing concepts of time and space, looking at their role in how people experience temporality, spatiality and mobility. I argue that electronic media and communications play a complex part in shifting conceptions of time and space, expressing the need for redefining and reconceptualising the terms in question through the notion of 'mediation'. By challenging existing conceptual approaches to time and space, electronic media and communications have problematised the multi-layered significance of how people experience time and space, with temporal and spatial dimensions of reality still being important, though in a different way from the past<sup>1</sup>.

'Time', 'space' and 'place' are some of the most used and misused terms in media and communications, and they have been defined differently and from different theoretical perspectives, constituting rather nebulous keywords in the field. In outlining the conceptual framework of these terms, time is defined as 'natural time...abstract time ... or experiential (phenomenological) time', with the latter being conceived as 'my time: time as experienced by me-or-anyone, my own here-and-now, my situated being-in-the-world, me as a real someone someplace sometime now' (Scannell, 1996, p. 152). Space, in turn, 'is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed' (Relph, 1976, p. 8). In relation to the often intermingled concept of place, 'there is nearly always some associated sense or concept of place' in a way that 'it seems that space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places' (Relph, 1976, p. 8). In this sense, place 'is a concretion of value ... it is an object in which one can dwell', whilst 'space ... is given by the ability to move' (Tuan, 1977, p. 12).

Time and space constitute intrinsically inseparable elements of physical reality. Time engages space and space requires time, as 'we have the sense of space because we can move and of time because, as biological beings, we undergo recurrent phases of tension and ease' (Tuan, 1977, p. 118). On the one hand, space exists in time, changes through time and it is depicted differently at different temporal points in history, whereas distance often involves time length. On the other hand, the sense and measurement of time are heavily dependent upon space and spatial distances. Consequently, time is associated with the spatial dimensions of the world and vice versa, while these two structural aspects of reality 'coexist, intermesh, and define each other in personal experience' (Tuan, 1977, p. 130). Space becomes place when it acquires symbolic meaning and a concrete definition, marking the whole spectrum of identity and sense of belonging. Thus, place is also associated with the concepts of time and space. These close links and their crucial importance for the evolution of reality bring forward the issue of the role of electronic media and communications in conceptualising and experiencing time, space, and place.

Time, space and place are involved in a heated discussion of continuity and change in relation to media and communications systems<sup>2</sup>. 'Time-space compression' (Harvey, 1990, 1993), 'compression of the world into a "single place"' (Robertson,

1992, p. 6), 'stretching' of social relations across distance, namely 'action at distance' (Giddens, 1994), 'no sense of place' (Meyrowitz, 1985), and 'placelessness' (Relph, 1976) are some of the prominent approaches to the concepts of time, space and place and to the ways they are experienced in an age of postmodernity and electronically mediated communications. Before the advent of electronic communications, people were bound by oral communication and physical travel, whereas today people are able to cross and adjust temporal and spatial distances largely because of the usage of electronic media and communications.

The paper is divided into three sections. First, time and space are approached from a theoretical perspective. The paper discusses two main seemingly contrasting theoretical approaches, 'time-space distancing' and 'time-space compression', and argues for the necessity of adopting a more dialectical view that combines these two approaches and allows the reconceptualisation of the concepts of time and space through the notion of 'mediation'. In order to substantiate this argument, this section reviews contemporary theoretical and empirical literature in media and globalisation studies and illustrates the complexity of the notion of 'mediation' and its role in reconceptualising time and space. The second section provides a historically informed analysis of the ways in which electronic media have empirically modified how time and space are conceived and experienced. With reference to the modern archetypal examples of 'internet time' and new 'electronic spaces', I challenge the arguments of temporal simultaneity and the non-significance of space in the digital era. Viewing historical changes of *space* in particular as intimately linked to shifting conceptualisations of *place*, the third section examines the perception of place as 'non-place', formulating however the counter-argument that place is not abolished but mediated in varying ways.

## **REVIEWING 'TIME-SPACE DISTANCING' AND 'COMPRESSION': MEDIATED TIME AND SPACE?**

The significant bulk of the literature in media and globalisation studies contends that mass media and communications and, more specifically, electronic media have altered the importance and nature of spatial and temporal gaps. The invention of the Morse telegraph in the 1840s was the first medium that enabled communications between remote places in shorter times, thus reducing the importance of space and time (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 13) for remote communication and exchange. The telegraph also paved the way for the synchronisation of local time and the establishment of time zones (Rantanen, 1997, p. 610). These developments led to the formation of the first news agencies in the first half of the 19th century, which brought about an instantiation of communications around the globe (Rantanen, 1997, p. 611). Instantiation of communications has been strengthened even more by the broadcasting media in the second half of the 20th century in particular as well as by the increasingly widespread digital communication technologies of the last two decades.

The experience of time and space has significant implications for people's physical mobility and sense of identity. Thus, the changes in time and space under the influence

of media technologies have provoked a heated debate between theorists. 'Time-space distancing' (Giddens, 1994) and 'time-space compression' (Harvey, 1990, 1993) are two key theses in this debate.

Central to Giddens' theory on globalisation is the notion of 'time-space distancing', namely the process of a separation of time from space. This notion stems from, on the one hand, Giddens' (1973) sociological criticism of Marx's argument that 'even spatial distance reduces itself to time' (p. 538) and, on the other hand, the significant influence on Giddens by McLuhan's (1987) problematic concept of the 'global village' and its teleological doctrine that technological advancement allows people to interact with each other as in face-to-face interactions. Giddens (1990) argues that technological evolution has driven a universalisation and liberalisation of time and space, which he considers prerequisites for globalisation in an age of postmodernity. He argues that globalising dimensions of interactions create 'stretched' relationships between 'local' and 'distant' media forms (pp. 63-65), with 'local happenings' being, for instance, 'shaped by events occurred many miles away and vice versa' (p. 64). In non-electronic communications, oral, writing and print forms of communication were shaped by local or inter-local contexts, as temporal and spatial span of communication was limited due to non-advanced technological and other developments (e.g. postal services) and proximity was a prerequisite. In contrast, electronic means of communication have enabled local contexts to develop communication practices and flows of exchange with geographically remote and temporally distant contexts. These practices and flows of exchange separate time from space, facilitate social interactions that are disembedded from spatial and temporal contexts, and establish stretched and distanced communication patterns and relationships.

Close to the idea of distancing, Thompson (1995) argues that 'any process of symbolic exchange generally involves the detachment of a symbolic form from its context of production: it is distanced from this context, both spatially and temporally, and re-embedded in new contexts which may be located at different times and places' (p. 21). For instance, videos produced in offline spaces can be exchanged and shared only if placed in a new context (e.g. internet websites), thus being distanced from the original context and exchanged between people who live in different time zones and experience different timing in their everyday schedules. In this sense, according to Thompson, the role of media and communications in the production and exchange of symbolic products and meanings entails that these products and meanings become available in a great typology of space and time (p. 30).

Like Giddens, Harvey (1990) identifies postmodern conceptions of space and time as the historical starting point of his theorisation. However, diverging from Giddens' idea of a separation of time from space, Harvey formulates the notion of 'time-space compression'. He uses the notions of universalisation and liberalisation of space and time differently from Giddens, arguing that universalisation and liberalisation allowed time to annihilate space (p. 241). In this sense, what takes place, according to Harvey, is a shortening of time and shrinking of space, so that time has the potential to diminish



the constraints of space and vice versa.

Harvey understands time-space compression as a chain of changes concerning an increasing rapidity of time and a decrease in physical distances in an age of post-modernity: 'the general effect, then, is for capitalist modernisation to be very much about speed-up and acceleration in the pace of economic processes and, hence, in social life' (p. 230). He argues not only that an increasing rapidity of time breaks down barriers of space, but also that media technologies have played a significant role in this change, among other technological innovations: 'innovations dedicated to the removal of spatial barriers ... the railroad and the telegraph, the automobile, radio and telephone, the jet aircraft and television, and the recent telecommunications revolution are cases in point' (p. 232). Thus, for Harvey the advent of new global communications technology like telephones, satellites and TV have made it possible for exchanges to take place compressing the units of time and space needed in the past. Harvey defines the new situation of compression as 'disruptive spatiality' where aggregation of spaces, cultures and symbols redefine, but do not make extinct, the temporal and spatial order of social life we have known so far (p. 302). Hence, the notion of compression aims to illustrate the shifting terrain of temporal measurements and spatial distances, a terrain that defines the terms under which communications are carried out today across the globe.

In this paper, I propose an incorporation of both approaches of 'time-space compression' and 'distanciation' into a single thesis, arguing for a 'mediated' sense of time and space - which considers 'time' and 'space' to be both essentially compressed and significantly distanced.

Giddens' notion of 'time-space distanciation' has been rightly criticised by Waters (1995), who says that new communications technologies have encouraged transglobal social relationships to become more intense and robust rather than stretched (p. 58). I consider mediated social relationships prominent and tremendously facilitated by electronic media and communications, with time and space being nowadays both stretched and compressed. In this sense, Giddens' notion of distanciation should not be abandoned as the creation of new spaces through media and communications can lead to new places in different units of time.

More specifically, temporal shrinking, permeable spatial boundaries and the establishment of new electronic spaces draw a more complex picture of mediated time-space experiences than that suggested by technologically deterministic theses. Technologically deterministic arguments, such as McLuhan's (1964) claim that electronic media have been 'abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned', thus leading people to 'live mythically and integrally' in a 'global village' (pp. 3-5), do not capture the complexity of the issues of time and space in today's media-saturated system. Beyond techno-deterministic theses, one can argue that 'two decades of rapid technological change in global communications have made temporal and spatial concerns more paramount and more problematic than previously' (Ferguson, 1989, p. 152). Different media forms and usages give rise to divergent perceptions of distance, duration and mobility in multiple contexts, mediating, re-mediating, defining and

negotiating variable understandings and experiences of time and space<sup>3</sup>.

Contemporary theoretical and empirical research on mediation and globalisation present useful insights into the complexity of issues of time and space in late modernity. Globalisation spans all areas of social living, whereas mediation is one of the main functions attributed to electronic media and communication technologies in an age of globalisation. More specifically, globalisation has significant effects on people's conceptions of time and space. Globalising events, such as 'mega-events' (e.g. the Olympic Games) (Roche, 2003), change the way we conceive and organise the time and space in which we live. Such events have become today 'media events' and are critical parameters of communication and public life. They can, as Dayan and Katz argue (1992), re-locate space and conquer space and time through, for instance, transforming home into public space for the duration of the event and modifying time frameworks according to the schedule of media events (p. 133). Also, global events, or what Volkmer (2008) calls 'event-spheres', create 'globalised discourse spaces in a global network society', providing other symbolic, narrative and cultural dimensions to the notion of space (p. 91). In global events, such as the Olympic Games, time becomes 'olympic' with different time-zones following the time organisation decided by those in charge of the Games, while time difference becomes less of an issue, as media and especially the internet allow people to attend the event at a later time than the time the event takes place at. Space is where the event is held and, regardless of geographic distance, people can 'attend' the event through electronic communications. Also, new spaces can be facilitated through the creation of online discussion forums and other mediated spaces where Olympic Games fans can be located<sup>4</sup>.

It immediately becomes evident that these effects of globalisation and globalising events on time and space are facilitated significantly by electronic media, as the transnational span of electronic communications can extend the scope of 'mega-events', making the latter more influential on how people go about their everyday schedules and contexts of living. Here is where the notion of 'mediation' comes to the fore. Mediation can be viewed as a function and attribute of electronic media and communications. It can also be used to describe media representations of phenomena that take place in 'distant' time and space, and the ways in which such representations may give life to new phenomena (e.g. 'distant suffering') and lead to public action towards and engagement with distant others (Chouliaraki, 2008a, 2008b). A view of mediation as an active use of media to link time and space, as well as to effect public action directly or indirectly, may help us understand the role of electronic media and communications in shaping contemporary experiences of globalisation (Rantanen, 2005), as electronic communications enable through mediation diverse forms of globalisation to be activated in various domains of social life. Mediated globalisation also raises questions of how media and global electronic media in particular change our conceptions of time, space and place, as they arguably free 'communication from the constraints of the immediate and the local' (Silverstone, 2005, p. 197). An indicative example of the nature and role of mediation in (re)conceptualising and (re)experiencing time and space is Silverstone's

(2006) notion of the 'mediapolis', which he defines as: 'the mediated public space where contemporary political life increasingly finds its place, both at national and global levels' (p. 31). 'Mediapolis' is largely created by electronic communications, constituting the new, mediated arena where public debate and communication take place regardless of previously restrictive spatial and temporal boundaries and through incorporating experiences and perceptions of those boundaries.

The notion of 'mediation' is also contained in debates on 'mediatisation'. Mediatisation has been seen as a social process (Hjarvard, 2005; Krotz, 2007) that should be approached from an institutional perspective (Hjarvard, 2006) and with a strong performative element (Cottle, 2006). Mediatisation goes beyond the function of mediation and representation and allows us to disentangle more directly the effects of media on society and culture: 'the media will be doing something more than simply reporting or "*mediating*" them; they will be performatively enacting them, that is, "*doing something*" over and above reporting or representing ... "*mediatising*" them in a subjunctive mode' (Cottle, 2006, pp. 415-416, original emphasis). More specifically, Schulz (2004) argues that there are three functions of media in communications that describe the notion of 'mediatisation': the 'relay function' by which the media transmit messages and services over geographic and temporal boundaries; the semiotic function that encodes and formats messages of human communication; and the economic function through which mediated products constitute part of the mass production processes of today. The 'relay function' is what one can understand as 'mediation', while the other two functions complement 'mediation' and extend the impact of media on various aspects of human communication and social life. It is through the almost instant transfer of messages and services across geographical boundaries and through different time zones or in different time slots, that media bridge spatial, temporal, as well as cultural distances, often creating new spaces (e.g. online forums) and new measures of time (e.g. Twitter and 'real time').

The concept of mediation has inspired scholars to look at specific electronic media forms and to explore the ways in which such forms modify and/or re-organise one or more aspects of temporal and spatial dimensions of life today. Hoskins (2001), for instance, argues that television remediates the past in the present since it positions events and news in new temporal contexts. He claims that television does this by providing 'liveness' and fighting against 'time lag' between the occurrence of an event and its televisual broadcast (e.g. the Gulf War and its communication via CNN), creating a sense of simultaneity which blurs distinctions between perceptions of old and new. Similar to this notion of 'simultaneity' is Tomlinson's concept of 'immediacy' which he heralds as a new element of culture after the shift from mechanical speed to electronic media and communication systems, and especially in the 21st century. Tomlinson (2007) links immediacy to time and the idea of 'instantaneity', as well as to 'space' and the sense of proximity, connection and direct agency, arguing that immediacy is a new cultural condition highly brought about by electronic media systems, or what he calls 'telemediated cultural experience' (p. 74).

Regarding new media that advented after broadcasting and demonstrate a high degree of interactivity (e.g. the internet), Castells (2000) provides an account of how advances in telecommunications have created a 'network society', and established 'the space of flows' and 'timeless time'. For Castells, 'the space of flows' describes a new material organisation of human communication and exchange that is independent of physical proximity, and where time is 'timeless' or dissolved, sequence is lost and parallel or simultaneous communication takes place. Castells' ideas have been developed further in relation to more recent technological forms of communications, such as mobile communications (Fortunati, 2002; Castells *et al.*, 2006, pp. 171-178). New media technologies raise also the issue of how mediated time and space relate to external temporal and spatial boundaries. External or conventionally accepted boundaries (e.g. time and geographic zones) have increasingly less restrictive power on communication and exchange, with mediated or internal time and space establishing their own boundaries, often in parallel as well as in co-existence with external spatialities and temporalities. For instance, researchers have discussed 'cross-platform' media production (e.g. radio and internet), arguing that such methods operate in their own unique time and space (Neumark, 2006, p. 222), enabling communication to take place regardless of external spatial and temporal limitations or gaps.

Extending the notion of 'mediation', some argue that in today's communication landscape a 'repertoire of "connected" relationships' takes place, thus going beyond 'mediated' relationships (Licoppe, 2004). It is argued that 'connected' relationships do not substitute face-to-face communication, but constitute another communicative dimension and possibly enrich face-to-face communication. Also, it is argued that 'connected' relationships make physical absence and geographic or temporal distances increasingly less important as neither determines communications as significantly as in the past. Licoppe (2004) uses the example of mobile technologies, stressing the decreased importance of physical location in gaining access to communication and human connection. Nevertheless, such arguments about the diminishing importance of space or time in electronic, digital and mobile communications are subject to criticism, as discussed later in the paper.

More recent work on mobile technologies (Link & Campbell, 2009, p. 1) argues about a 'reconstruction of space and time', as mobile technologies influence time and space in many realms of social life, such as the transformation of public into private space and vice versa, the blurring of lines demarcating work and personal life, and new patterns of coordination and social networks. Here it is argued that spatial distances are less important due to the personalised nature of communications across geographic regions developed through mobile technologies. However, mobile technologies allow people not only to detach communication activities from external spatial boundaries but also to re-structure such boundaries, as they set more technological criteria for defining space and its boundaries. For example, a mobile telephone user often thinks of spatial boundaries not on the basis of how these boundaries are defined externally (e.g. geographic zone, city, borough, road, etc). Instead, when the user intends to communicate through his



or her mobile phone, s/he thinks of space and its boundaries taking into consideration technological or 'network' criteria such as network coverage, signal strength, etc. In terms of time, Link and Campbell (2009) discuss the potential of mobile technologies to facilitate diverse coordination schemes of time, which result in the diminished meaning of clockwise time, as time is now defined in terms of being 'convenient or not'. At the same time, a new sense of time is created in mobile communication which might often lose touch with external (clockwise) temporal boundaries. For instance, mobile telephony users count time mostly in terms of credit available or convenience and appropriateness of the time when mobile communication takes place, often independently of external time boundaries and more dependently on 'internal' (subjective) conceptions and contextualisations of time.

Thus, mobile technologies influence the ways in which individuals position themselves in space and time, determining degrees of spatial and temporal flexibility in everyday living. This point is similar to Link and Campbell's (2009) argument about how 'spatio-temporal boundaries are negotiated in a mobile society' (p. 14), though they refer here not only to the actual spatio-temporal boundaries but also to the ways in which people perceive and mentally (re)construct or eliminate such boundaries. Although mobility creates a sense of fluid and shifting temporality and spatiality, the user has the potential not only to re-conceptualise but also to re-shape and re-structure the time and space boundaries that matter for his or her communication, without time and space becoming unimportant.

All these theoretical and research reflections on time and space in the era of electronic media and communications synthesise a complex and often controversial picture of how different media technologies influence, negotiate and define personal and societal understandings of time and space in different modes and in diverse contexts. By problematising and synthetically examining such discourses and research arguments, I argue that time and space exist through mediation, re-mediation, restructuring and negotiation in electronic communications.

## **RECONCEPTUALISING 'TIME' AND 'SPACE'**

Using the examples of 'internet time' and 'electronic spaces', this section develops a historical analysis of how media have influenced conceptualisations of time and space, challenging in particular some of the arguments of temporal simultaneity and the insignificance of space.

### *From 'time' to 'internet time'*

I would like to point out the socially-constructed nature of concepts of time and space. Time was conceptually constructed through the invention of the calendar and, in the modern world, by the international standardisation system of Greenwich Mean Time. Also, time has been influenced by historical changes in perceptions and experiences of social and geographical spaces, thus being socially dependent and historically shaped by various parameters determining social order. As Durkheim (1965) remarks, 'it is the

rhythm of social life which is at the basis of the category of time' (p. 488). In this sense, the methodical study of time requires its social and historical contextualisation, as well as a historical-empiricist perspective that accounts principally for structural effects on time by changes in the existing social order (Lee & Liebanau, 2000, pp. 44-48).

The social framework in which time is arranged in modern times was first shaped by the invention of the mechanical clock, which established parameters for the measurement of time and its conformity to human affairs, and ultimately humans' conformity to it. Later on, in the 19th century, the first wired electronic medium, the telegraph, undermined the essence of the previously prevalent conception of 'real time' (in oral communication) and of delayed time (in script and printed communication), as it allowed communicators to overcome, for the first time and to a certain extent, time gaps and barriers in communications. This initial process towards instant global communication expanded after the advent, in the 20th century, of wireless electronic media – namely the radio and television. Broadcasting has been thought to constitute, from its very beginning, the means that changed our sense of time. In Scannell's (1996) words: 'the huge investment of labour (care) that goes to produce the output of broadcasting delivers a service whose most generalisable effect is to re-temporise time' (p. 149). In his analysis, Scannell discusses the role of the 'broadcasting calendar' in shaping 'our sense of time' (pp.152-155). In addition, I would argue that broadcasting and electronic media more generally not only alter our sense of time, but also create other 'parallel' time frames. Electronic media have their own 'times' and calendars, which are organised in consideration of non-media time frames, influencing and re-negotiating at the same time the dynamics, perceptions and experiences of the latter. For example, there are particular types of radio and TV programmes which are transmitted in the morning only. These programmes take into consideration the target audience's daily schedule, while they influence the audience's daily routine significantly.

Particularly as new digital communication technologies develop, the conceptualisation of time alters. Rifkin (1987) claims in this respect that:

...the computer will help facilitate a revolutionary change in time orientation, just as clocks did several hundred years ago...the new computer technology is already changing the way we conceptualise time and, in the process, is changing the way we think about ourselves and the world around us (p. 13).

The internet and the construction of the concept of 'internet time' (Lee & Liebenau, 2000, p. 43)<sup>5</sup> exemplify Rifkin's and others' views on the role of new media technologies<sup>6</sup>. New information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the internet in particular have influenced the dynamics of everyday life, as they 'affect and change time, people's perceptions of time, and the way time is organised' (Lee & Liebenau, 2000, p. 44). As Haddon (2001) maintains, time is in many ways connected to ICTs; either as time structured and organised by ICTs (Scannell, 1988), or as 'disposable' time spent in ICTs, with consequent 'opportunity costs' (Klammer *et al.*, 2000), or finally as time pressure and multitasking problems that are potentially alleviated by using ICTs (Frissen, 2000).



The internet and the various activities in which people are involved when using it have fundamentally changed the meaning of temporal differences and their implications for physical mobility. Contacts between distant locations can take place on the internet at the same time. Internet activities, such as e-mail, alter the dimension of time in work and in social interaction, releasing rigid time-patterns in the organisation of work and other everyday life activities. In Negroponte's (1995) words: 'nine-to-five, five days a week, and two weeks off a year starts to evaporate as the dominant beat to business life. Professional and personal messages start to commingle: Sunday is not so different from Monday' (p. 193), with all industrial settings of work and living now revised by flexible and shifting post-industrialist modes of time management.

In this sense, information technologies and the internet in particular help 'diminish the importance of time-frames generally accepted as appropriate for performing a given activity' (Failla & Bagnara, 1992, p. 678). This weakening of time constraints, in terms of communication between remote places and within the everyday organisation of life, goes even further, offering people a new virtual reality that 'allows "future" or inexperienced experiences to be experienced' (Lee & Liebenau, 2000, p. 50). In doing so, the internet 'allows simulation of the future and thereby modifies the time-frames which are no longer relegated to repetitions of the past with little variation' (Lee & Liebenau, 2000, p. 50). Indicative examples are internet spaces, such as Second Life, social networking sites and interactive online games, all of which allow shifts of conventional offline temporal boundaries through fitting in these boundaries online time schedules and activities that operate in parallel and which are located in 'virtual' temporal frameworks, challenging users' identities and life timeframes<sup>7</sup>.

Regardless of the re-negotiation of time frames and the creation of a parallel 'internet time', temporal limitations still exist even in this emerging virtual world of communication, exchange and mobility. For instance, while internet users have a sense of instantaneity, the inefficiency of web surfing and delays in connections make time matter. Empirical studies on internet non-usage have illustrated that one of the main reasons for people not adopting or abandoning the internet is time spent inefficiently searching online material (Katz & Rice, 2002). Thus, even if one accepts the view that the old order of measurable and firmly demarcated time 'is being shattered in the network society' (Castells, 2000, p. 463), Castells' notion of 'timeless time' and the idea that mobile or wireless technologies have enhanced even further the timelessness of time (Castells *et al.*, 2006, p. 174) should be problematised. Temporality, lag in time and deadlines still matter, even if they are increasingly mediated by new technologies, with the latter altering the parameters of influence, dimensions, flexibility and aspects of urgency of time in everyday life.

Also, although the internet has provoked a shift in definitions and perceptions of temporality, the incorporation of time into people's lives is historically rooted in different cultural environments. Time is still a consideration that people cannot ignore in their daily lives, as it is tightly attached to the complex notion of people's cultural identities and lifestyles. Nowotny (1994) talks, at a very early stage of the development

of internet communications, about 'the illusion of simultaneity', while the notion of subjective time – the evaluation of temporal quality by different individuals – contests the claim of instantaneity of today's social life (pp.16-44). In this respect, the movement of temporality along technological change demands a structural reconsideration of the old-fashioned notion of time that takes seriously into account socio-cultural drivers and media technology parameters that mediate the concept and experience of time.

*From 'space' to 'electronic spaces'*

Space is an ambiguous and inconsistently defined concept. In this paper, I view space as both a geographical and a socio-economic dimension of existence.

As regards the geographical dimension, space is broadly considered a physical location but it is often associated with the concept of place, as 'space provides the context for places but derives its meaning from particular places' (Relph, 1976, p. 8). In this respect, representations of space are derived essentially from the experience of cultural and perceptual places that shape individual and collective identities. As such, space is linked to the notion of thought, consciousness and experience<sup>8</sup>.

From a socio-economic perspective, the production of space is rooted in capitalism and in technological and organisational developments that took place in recent centuries (Harvey, 1993, pp. 5-7). Space and spatial relations have been heavily commodified and affected by the structural conditions of market production and consumption. Especially during the course of the last century's commercial and technological advancement, it has been argued that spatial boundaries have been restructured and seriously challenged. For example, Heidegger (1971) argues that 'all distances in time and space are shrinking ... everything gets lumped together into uniform distancelessness' (p. 165). The spread of mass media and communications has given rise to new 'electronic spaces', diminishing spatial distances. The example of 'electronic spaces' can shed light on the role of electronic media in reconceptualising space and reshaping the ways in which space can be experienced.

In outlining the historical role of media and communications, one can distinguish five main stages of mediated communications that influenced the conceptualisation of space and its relation to time: the stage of oral – what could be considered 'unmediated' or 'premediated' – communication which was accompanied by a local sense of space and a specifically framed time period; the stage of script media production which boosted an extended local conception of space, broadening the spatial span of communication and its viability in time; the stage of print media which gave rise to both local and extended national spaces, decreasing and restraining the importance of time for communication; the stage of electronic media which has given rise to a global conception of space and time, lying at the core of this paper; and the stage of digital communication, which is still developing and tends (wrongly, in my view) to see space as meaningless and the world as distanceless.

With the invention and spread of mass electronic media, the primarily dominant oral and script communication, where locality was the fixed realm of exchange, gave

way to geographically dispersed communications, decreasing the importance of spatial differences and detaching physical mobility or distance from the rapidly increasing pace of communications. This is so, as communications developed globally and defined their own 'electronic spaces' regardless of the space where the involved actors are located or the physical mobility they demonstrate. The use of the telegraph was the focal starting point of this evolution (Rantanen, 1997, p. 612). Newly constructed and more abstract spaces of mass communications, global 'electronic spaces', thus started to emerge, constituting a point of reference in the history of communications. These new electronic spaces became another commodity, which was controlled by a handful of global media forces, while based on mediated social relationships (Harvey, 1993, p. 14).

Later, in the first half of the 20th century, the invention of broadcasting transformed spatiality in a fundamental way, as it made the content of communications available and accessible to everyone around the globe, thus challenging perceptions of farness and spatial barriers. Through broadcasting, humans began to have the 'possibility of being in two places, two times, at once', so that 'the world returns for us in its wholeness' (Scannell, 1996, p. 172). Hence, electronic media of the last century boosted further the emerging electronic spaces, with the latter embodying 'the magical liveness of a here-and-there, now-and-then' (Scannell, 1996, p. 173).

Even more recently, new 'virtual' spaces available on the internet have signalled further transformations or even debasement of conventionally perceived 'real' spaces. The question to address here is the extent to which the shift from 'real' to electronic or virtual spaces will facilitate a domination of digitally shaped or 'unreal' spaces. Especially in the age of mobile internet and other mobile means of communication, the arguments for a 'reconstruction of space' (Link & Campbell, 2009) and the creation of a new material organisation that is independent of physical proximity (Castells, *et al.*, 2006, pp. 171-178) obtain more significance.

This paper claims that 'electronic' and 'virtual' or mobile spaces of a worldwide reach do not abolish the significance of space; rather, they alter the structural conditions under which people conceptualise and experience space<sup>9</sup>. Graham and Marvin (1996) make a similar point in their account of electronic spaces and the future of cities. They confirm that telecommunications 'dramatically alter the significance of distance in the organisation of space' (p. 317), but they argue that space is still important, as 'the city is being redefined and redrawn in both physical and electronic space' (p. 336). I would like to take this argument further, as this is about a process of redefining and restructuring space, with mediation reframing existing spaces and creating new, parallel electronic and virtual ones. The argument that the changing experience of space results in a world where no spatial distances matter is challenged further in the following section where the closely associated concept of place and arguments of 'placelessness' are discussed critically.

## **FROM 'PLACELESSNESS' TO 'MEDIATED PLACE'**

The above discourses on the shift in the conceptualisation and experience of space

have generated theorisations concerning the ways in which the concept of place and its experience have been equally altered, giving rise to abstract (unspecified) spaces or 'non-places' (Auge, 1995, pp. 77-80), as discussed later in this section.

Place, conceptualised in terms of geography and individual emotional-cultural or 'lived' involvement (Tuan, 1977), cannot be understood without taking into consideration the spatial relations that sustain it (Harvey, 1993, p. 15). This section discusses whether the above spatial shifts through electronic media and communications support the argument of 'imaginary', 'electronic' or 'virtual' spaces that replace existing places as they become accessible via mediated worldwide images.

#### *No sense of place and place polygamy*

As the concept of place is socially constructed, multi-layered and divergently contextualised (Harvey, 1993, p. 4), the literature has stressed its importance for the identification and location of individuality in the world. It is argued that 'there are as many identities of place as there are people' (Nairn, 1965, p. 78) and place is considered crucial for the orientation of human beings and the formation of 'place-bound identities'. Place is the means through which people make sense of the world in which they live and act (Harvey, 1993, p. 4), and Relph (1976) claims that places 'are not abstraction or concepts, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world ... important sources of individual and communal identity ... centers of human existence' (p. 141). Heidegger (1958) further declares that "'place' places man in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedom and reality" (p. 19). Consequently, making sense of a place requires not only locating but also defining the 'self' as an individual and social being with a past and a future, thus enabling self-positioning into community and the development of specific communal identities (Crang, 1998, pp. 103-104).

Regarding the shifts in the concept and experience of place, scholars have argued that place and identity are in crisis, using terms such as 'no sense of place' (Meyrowitz, 1985), 'placelessness' (Relph, 1976) and 'non-place' (Auge, 1995). A lack of an authentic sense of places (Relph, 1976, p. 64), which leads to the weakening of distinct experiences and identities of places, as well as look-alike landscapes and, consequently, abstractedness of spaces are some of the main arguments in this direction. In this sense, space, regarded as the context of places, has content and it takes meaning from particular places. Such positions raise the question of how contemporary subjects experience different places around the globe. For example, does the airport of Heathrow differ in any way from other airports in big cities around the globe? Or is, as Auge (1995) puts it, 'the traveller's space...the archetype of *non-place*' (p. 86, original emphasis) dominated by geographical and cultural uniformity?

At this point, Beck (2000) and his notion of 'place polygamy' add another dimension to how people perceive and experience places (pp. 72-77). His example of a woman who lives in two places during the calendar year, feeling both places to be home, challenges the linear relation between place, culture and identity that Harvey, Relph and Crang



used to consider essential. However, Beck ends up with the same sense of identity in crisis, as he implies that today it is difficult for the individual to define him or herself and to associate with a specific place that fits this identity and further develops it. What he argues is that, in the age of globalisation, identity is characterised by 'place polygamy' rather than a sense of a single place of birth or life, as subjects can simultaneously access more than one place through geographical or media mobility. Beck does not deny the existence of different places; rather, he argues that subjects may be 'marri[ed]' to several places at once, and experience culturally diverse places in a single location (pp. 73-74). The examples of western capitals, such as New York and London, are indicative in this respect, as physically they are approachable and psychologically they provide the same sense of cosmopolitanism to visitors and residents:

Transnational place polygamy, marriage to several places at once, belonging in different worlds: this is the gateway to globality in one's own life; it leads to the globalisation of biography ... One's own life is no longer tied to a particular place (Beck, 2000, p. 73-74).

These arguments about the sameness of places, or placelessness, and 'place polygamy' can be problematised and essentially criticised. Complementing recent ideas supporting that media and media uses are place-making practices (Moores, 2007), I claim that for each individual the notion of place takes on a different meaning and it is mediated by human relationships which take place in different socio-cultural contexts. Taking into account Moores' (2007) argument that place-making is carried out in daily living and has strong habitual and affective dimensions, I support that places do not exist only as geographically demarcated areas (spaces), since the coexistence of experience, perception, imagination, location, individuality and sense of community is essentially involved in their construction. In this complex interrelation, 'materiality, representation and imagination' (Harvey, 1993, p. 23) cannot be seen separately in the continuously evolving process of place construction, as places are still significant elements of social reality and individual identity. To answer the question above of whether airports are distinctive today, I espouse Cresswell's (2006, p. 257) observation that even if they are very much alike in terms of architecture and design, people's appropriation and experience of an airport differ, becoming potentially an 'intricate "place-ballet" of multiple movements'. For example, travelers may perceive particular airports as transits to a life experience, the homeless may find shelters in the airport, and taxi drivers and other airport staff may consider the airport to be their workplace, with these individuals experiencing and attaching themselves to the same airport in their own ways.

#### *Place and media and communications technologies*

At this point, the paper accounts for the role of media in the claimed increasing homogeneity of places in an age of post-modernity, where, arguably, 'we are most likely to find prophetic evocations of spaces in which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense' (Auge, 1995, p. 87).

According to Relph (1976), by constructing a model of mass attitudes and fashions

of kitsch (p. 120), mass communications contribute to the domination of 'mass culture of dictated and standardised values' and to 'a growing uniformity of landscape and a lessening diversity of places' (p. 92)<sup>10</sup>. In more balanced terms, Meyrowitz (1985) evaluates the relevant role of electronic media, arguing that "electronic media affect us ... by changing the 'situational geography' of social life" (p. 6). He talks about the distinction between social and physical place, with electronic media leading "to a nearly total dissociation of physical place and social 'place'" (Meyrowitz, 1985, p. 115). This is what Auge (1995) presents as the space of 'non-place' through the mediation of words, where 'certain places exist only through the words that evoke them and in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés' (pp. 94-95).

At this point, I share Moores' criticism (2007, p. 14) of Auge's and Relph's pessimistic arguments about the non-existence of place thanks to media technologies, among other factors, as Auge and Relph seem to be concerned with the environmental, technological and architectural uniformity of physical locations today, instead of the diverse or routine ways in which people experience and locate themselves into such physical locations, giving these physical locations more cultural and social-existential dimensions. Nevertheless, I aim to take Moores' thesis further, arguing for an assessment of the role of media in the existence of place today through the exploration of people's interactions with media technologies. These can be interactions concerning not only the identification of a physical location or space as place but also the ways in which the latter is mediated and experienced in everyday life. In addition, the media and the creation of new electronic spaces, discussed earlier in the paper, provide more opportunities for the creation of mediated places where people can experience and re-define their identity elements (e.g. virtual communities on the internet).

Scholars such as Auge, Relph and (to a certain extent) Meyrowitz support that electronic media and mediated communications have reduced the need for face-to-face contact, thus decreasing the importance of place-formed communities (Webber, 1964). Thus, they mistakenly identify 'place' and associate its social importance with its physical location (Moores, 2007, pp. 4-5). Looking deeper, the changes that electronic media and communications systems have provoked imply that the driving forces of place, identity and ideology are diverse and open to change, making the creation of place hardly predictable and equally unforeseen and diverse. This hardly predictable influence of electronic media on place is considered by Scannell (1996) and his argument that broadcasting results in people 'being in two places at once' (p. 91) – the physical and the experiential place, (e.g. public events and the liveness of broadcasting). People can interact and associate themselves with the place where they are in at a particular moment, such as a crowded square, while having in front of their eyes a screen that transmits everything that is happening somewhere else, on a music stage for instance, thus experiencing the energy that is present in the other place, the music stage, and while being located at a long distance from it. This potential of the electronic media and the social or identity element of place lead Moores (2007) to argue that 'electronically mediated communications transcend physical boundaries virtually instantaneously,



while serving to recreate aspects of the liveness and immediacy of physical co-presence' (p. 4). Hence, electronic media re-situate people and contribute to the process of place-making, rather than to that of constructions of 'non-place'.

One could argue that through mediated images, people either become aware of the existence of other places or enrich their perceptions of what a place can be, acting in favour of the evolution of their own place. For instance, news agencies early on, in the 19th century, arguably 'increased readers' sense of place ... started to build the bridge between here and there by bringing places where events occurred to readers of news.' (Rantanen, 2003, p. 436). Rantanen actually argues that electronic news create at first a sense of placelessness, but then give a new sense of place to the reader, allowing him or her to distinguish between 'here' and 'there'. Furthermore, one must not overlook the increasing importance of the sense of place in the production of electronic messages. This may be illustrated by the example of news agencies, as 'news agencies competed against each other in transmitting news from remote places as fast as possible. Places also became an object of trade' (Rantanen, 1997, p. 615).

Even if one accepts that the authenticity of the experience of places is seriously undermined by the increasing production of mass values and ideals, the potential for alternative conceptualisations and new forms of places should not be omitted in considerations of place. For example, for migrants (Moore, 2007), the role of media in maintaining a sense of remote place (e.g. homeland) or in the experience of belonging to a new, physically proximate place may indicate not only the persistent importance of place but also the significance of the ways in which place is mediated by electronic communications today.

Having contributed to the conception of space and time as universal and to the partial collapse of space and time constraints, electronic media and communications cannot be conceived as necessarily influencing placelessness. From this point of view, claims about the diminishing importance of place-based communities due to the influence of mass communications (Webber, 1964) may be dismissed as monolithic and deterministic. Mass and new electronic communications mediate the sense of place and succeed in interconnecting remote places in global electronic spaces, negotiating identities, and modifying forms of mobility, but without eliminating the essence of place, space, and time.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has noted the critical role of media in challenging historically significant concepts of time and space, changing how people shape their identities and extending the scope of physical and psychological mobility in today's globalised world. The first section discussed critically two contrasting theses, 'time-space compression' and 'time-space distancing', highlighting the complexity of time-space relationships through a review of theory and research on mediation. Arguing against the uncritical exposition of extreme theses regarding the collapse of temporal distances and the elimination of spatial distances, I have favoured a more moderate view where time and space continue

to matter, sometimes even more significantly, and where electronic media play a far more complex role in mediating social phenomena, thus restructuring concepts and experiences of time and space. The second section explored the role of media and communications in the ways in which time and space have historically been subject to change, using the historical examples of 'internet time' and 'electronic spaces' to problematise the arguments of temporal simultaneity and the insignificance of spatial distances. In the third section, I engaged with the ways in which the historical changes of space in particular have resulted in notions of 'non-place' and 'place-polygamy', articulating a counter-argument that electronic media and communications provoke a mediated sense of place. This suggests that the interminable discussion of time and space as meaningless dimensions of reality should finally cease and be replaced by another discussion: a discussion which focuses more on how these dimensions are mediated, re-mediated, defined and restructured in the arena of global electronic communications and mediated experiences of remote places, requiring continuous and insightful reconceptualisation.

## ENDNOTES

1. The temporal context for presenting the argument of reconceptualising 'time' is late or post-modernity and more specifically the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. On the other hand, the spatial context is quite fluid, as the paper does not specify the countries or the populations it refers to. Nevertheless, the spatial boundaries are somehow defined by the rather globalised and, at the same time, uneven diffusion and development of electronic media and communications, where the focus is mostly on countries and populations of the West.
2. The main scholars involved in the discussion of time and space are: Giddens (1994), Harvey (1990 & 1993), Auge (1995), Massey (1992), Meyrowitz (1985), McLuhan (1964 & 1987), Innis (1950 & 1951), and Relph (1976).
3. This is what Ferguson (1993, p.156) describes 'new time-space "zones"' that can view "'time-without-time'", and a de-contextualised sense of "space-without-space"' through a 'transformational logic'.
4. Another analysis of events is offered by Katz and Liebes (2007).
5. Although Lee and Liebenau discuss 'internet time' in the context of the invention, by the Swiss watchmaker Swatch, of a new way of measuring time that is appropriate for internet users' synchronisation, 'internet time' is seen in the paper from a broader perspective and as indicative of the shifting terrain of time in the internet era.
6. Others use different terms to discuss time and ICTs. Hassan (2003, p.233), for instance, uses the term 'network time' and defines it as 'digitally compressed clock-time; which operates on a spectrum of technologically possible levels of compression'. However, he takes a rather rigid techno- and network-centric approach to explain the shift of the shapes and roles of time in people's lives.
7. These ideas are close to Baudrillard's (1995) argument about the blurred line

- between reality and artificiality, or 'hyperreality'.
8. In his attempt to illustrate the interconnection between space and place and the role of consciousness, Relph refers to various forms of space such as pragmatic or primitive space, perceptual space, existential space, architectural and planning space, cognitive space and abstract place. For more, see Relph, 1976, pp. 8-26.
  9. This is in line with the view of Lefebvre (1991), who argues that 'space as a whole, geographical or historical space, is...modified, but without any concomitant abolition of its underpinnings' (p. 90).
  10. Relph (1976) refers to a range of 'processes' or 'media', such as mass communications, mass culture, big businesses, powerful central authorities and the economic system, all of which encourage placelessness (pp. 90-121).

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# CULTURAL DETERRITORIALISATION: COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, PROVENANCE AND PLACE

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**Abstract:** The deterritorialisation, or uprooting from time and place, of culture through communication technologies can be explored through John Tomlinson's idea of globalisation as "complex connectivity". This paper aims to cover various areas of research to highlight the ways in which cultural deterritorialisation continually permeates cultural experience. The analysis is grounded in an understanding of globalisation as both a homogenising and differentiating force. Three aspects of communication's "complex connectivity" are looked at in greater detail: control, speed/ease, and the idea of a global village. These are discussed in terms of ownership and market concentration, and notions of "direct connectivity" and "indirect connectivity". Adapted from Tomlinson's "complex connectivity", "direct connectivity" focuses on interpersonal relations and deterritorialisation on individual scales through personal global contact, while "indirect connectivity" enlarges the scale with a focus on mass cultural production and global consumption. Finally, a discussion of possible kinds of reterritorialisation will consider the impact of these aspects of communication's "complex connectivity" on cultural flows. Rather than concepts such as transterritoriality which are not rooted and remain deterritorialised, reterritorialisation is explored as a means of balancing global trends in the cultural and communications sectors of global and local villages alike.

**Key words:** communication, "complex connectivity", culture, deterritorialisation, global village, globalisation

## INTRODUCTION

The deterritorialisation, or uprooting from place and people, of culture through communication technologies and practices can be explored through John Tomlinson's (1999) idea of globalisation as "complex connectivity". Rather than examining political implications, such as the possibilities of (anti)national resurgence, the focus here will remain on cultural agency and information flows. The analysis is grounded in an understanding of globalisation as both a homogenising and differentiating force, and means of transferring or exporting culture are also integral to the topic. Anthony Giddens' (1991) notion of post-traditional culture is in line with the proliferation of communication technology and access to global information through the changing experience of time and space around the globe. This change situates the experience of deterritorialisation in relation to culture.

An understanding of deterritorialisation connects to various immediate implications for everyday life and potential types of global assimilation. Studies of several countries and regions will be focused on, in addition to the impact of major corporations in communications, and the perception of American cultural imperialism. I concentrate on three aspects of communication's "complex connectivity": control, speed/ease, and the idea of a global village. Control will be discussed in terms of ownership and market concentration. Speed and ease will frame the notion of "direct connectivity" through changes in interpersonal communication via the internet and mobile telephony. Thirdly, the global village will be looked at in terms of "indirect connectivity" or the scope of modern international mass communication, with specific factors including the prevalence of television and film flows as well as the virtual scope of this electronic global village. Finally, a discussion of reterritorialisation will assess the possibility of new rooting in the "complex connectivity" of globalisation.

## HOMOGENISATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

As international connectivity, from cultural flows to economic ties, continues to grow in complexity and scale, a perception of globalisation as an intricate and integral force of contemporary culture is needed in order to examine the deterritorialising process. One facet of this is economic globalisation which Subhabrata Banerjee and Stephen Linstead (2001) highlight by arguing that globalisation is in fact consumerism and a form of neo-colonialism. For them, boundaries dissolve in the global village and people consume global brands while corporations compete in the global marketplace. Globalisation becomes the "knowledge producing (and appropriating) process in which the social, cultural and political combine at particular geographic locations and times" (p. 690). Local knowledge and global knowledge can influence, impede, or reinforce each other. While localisation, seen as a kind of resistance, cannot thwart the dominance of the global, it can incorporate itself through glocalisation or the intermingling of the local and global. Banerjee and Linstead point out that "[t]here is not one global mass culture, but rather transnational processes produce the globalisation of culture where a multitude of cultural flows, not always consistent with dominant nation-state ideologies emerge" (p. 696). A dismissal of "one global mass culture" is imperative in avoiding a

superficial understanding of globalised cultural flows.

Referring to Arjun Appadurai's (1996) understanding of globalisation through "ethnoscapes", "technoscapes", "finanscapes", "mediascapes", and "ideoscapes", the significance of communication technology emerges through its integral role as a part of each of these: increasing global mobility, technology, capital, information flows, and disseminating (counter)ideologies, respectively. While these can be seen as improvements in one light, they also have entrenched colonising effects. Crucially, for Banerjee and Linstead globalisation both homogenises and differentiates: "global consumer culture is a homogenising trend while simultaneously acknowledging and exploiting distinct market niches based on cultural difference" (p. 698). They stress that much of the world is embracing the American means of expressing identity through consumption and that this serves to further deterritorialise culture through globalisation's homogenisation and differentiation. Big brands are supranational and yet cultural signification is commercially used to fashion products which can appeal to many or varied tastes. While this seemingly contradictory process can be presented in an idealistic light, the authors conclude that while the "globalised" bear the costs, it is the "globalisers" controlling the process who reap the benefits. This assessment has implications in terms of the sources and effects of cultural deterritorialisation, and these implications will be further discussed in later sections.

## **DETERRITORIALISATION, TIME AND SPACE**

Tomlinson's (1999) understanding of globalisation as "complex connectivity" provides a flexible framework for the global communications expanse. In highlighting the deterritorialisation of cultures as well as the sense of proximity that globalisation has created, Tomlinson incorporates homogenisation as well as differentiation into this concept. For Tomlinson deterritorialisation "weakens the ties of culture to place" through its "penetration of local worlds" and "dislodging of everyday meanings" (p. 29). He mentions the related terms of delocalisation and dis-placement in a discussion of how this complex and ambiguous phenomenon, one that is uneven and sometimes contradictory, has been embraced and at times reversed. Deterritorialisation includes the effects of untethering cultural notions and artefacts from locality as well as opening them to individuals and groups of any culture.

Having "provided an alternative vision of the subject that contrasted with the dominant understanding of subjectivity as contained within the territorial confines set up by centralised powers" (Jacquemet, 2005, p. 262), deterritorialisation emerges culturally or sociologically as an effect of our greatly altered experience of space and time. This suggests an alternate possibility in infiltrating or reframing previously established physical, cultural, or ideological confines, yet it does not have to suggest a breakdown of the old understandings. For Marco Jacquemet (2005) "the most important social implication of deterritorialisation is not the dissolution of identities, cultures, or nation-states in a global environment ... but the interplay between global and local processes, and the reconstitution of local social positioning within global cultural flows" (p. 263).

This evaluation reiterates Tomlinson's "complex connectivity" in its stress on interplay and global flows.

As means of interpersonal and mass communication have altered, deterritorialisation needs to be placed in the context of contemporary experiences of time and space. Giddens' (1991) highlighting of the seminal change in experiencing space and time also extends to self-identity and post-traditional culture in a way that frames global communications. The post-traditional culture of amalgamated influences becomes an important feature of cultural communication flows and their effects. Tomlinson (1999) agrees with the diminishing prominence of place in everyday life and describes "places that are changing around us and gradually, subtly, losing their power to define the terms of our existence" (p. 29). Time is additionally complicated by the speed with which we virtually and physically traverse time zones.

For Giddens (1991) the "post-traditional order of modernity" has a "backdrop of new forms of mediated experience" (p. 5) and this mediated experience has been a factor in organising social relations since the advent of writing. The mass printing of newspapers has played a "major role in completing the separation of space from time" (p. 25) through a shift in the scope of information. Formerly, remote stories simply didn't have the same immediacy and this has only been magnified with electronic media. Giddens is quick to point out the similarities between printed and electronic media, and how they reorganise time and space through a "collage effect" of the various events dominating over their respective locations, hence "the intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness" (p. 27). This domination of events over their locations and the repeated infiltrations of international events into localised lives change the way culture is able to flow. Place becomes another detail in an onslaught of international happenings which are then grouped thematically rather than geographically. Geography loses its rigidity as the "collage" alters formerly regimented divisions.

Other effects of deterritorialisation that Giddens mentions include "reality inversion" (p. 27) and a "multifarious number of milieux" (p. 84). Reality inversion transforms the real thing into something which seems less concrete because of previous encounters with it through mediation. Subsequently, rare experiences seem to be encountered regularly, and death is a poignant example of this. A kind of desensitisation to events at both ends of the spectrum, from natural disasters to medical miracles, this inversion blurs ties of people to a specific time and place. Additionally, because modern media destroy old boundaries by creating seemingly "direct" audiences who are not really there, a pluralism of choice – Giddens' "milieux" – is enacted on a greater scale and with more consistent force. Through mass media these milieux can be incredibly diverse, and Tomlinson (1999) agrees that choice contributes to deterritorialisation as people "come to include distant events and processes more routinely in their perceptions of what is significant for their own personal lives" (p. 115). He complicates this general point by noting that "mediated experience becomes imbricated with 'immediate' experience" (p. 115) which correlates to Giddens' "reality inversion". However, an emphasis on the power of mediation to disrupt "reality" also undermines the fact that so much of



contemporary experience is mediated. A problem arises through the need to further contextualise mediated information. Because deterritorialisation can eliminate context, control over communications or “connectivity” – the ways we allow and experience cultural and informational flows – is shaped on many levels, from the individual, social, and national to the global.

## **CONTROLLING CULTURE AND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES**

Control of the communications sector is a complex tangle of influence. Governments, nongovernmental agencies, as well as major conglomerates weave this web of power, expectations of gains, and potential dependence. Jamie Browlee’s (2005) claim that media agencies partake in the “construction, dissemination and reinforcement of ideologies” (p. 44) is highly relevant in the scope of his look at cross-media ownership, cross-border mergers, and the fact that less than a dozen giants dominate the media market globally. These giants and their budding rivals have found larger audiences and markets, and with a hold on serious market share it is up to them to homogenise and/or differentiate, to mould the world’s understanding of globalisation, and shape global cultural constructs. Through multinational corporate or migratory linkages and exported or shared cultural content, culture is deterritorialised and the crucial question is to what extent and to what effect. Two key culture-shaping trends – in opposition to each other on many levels – are the international growth of corporate giants and of mediated communities.

Brownlee (2005) writes on mass media concentration in Canada as well as around the globe and analyses concentrated economic ownership and obstacles to it. If economics are newspapers’ number one priority, as many owners have declared, then ownership and control over content have serious direct and indirect consequences for the integrity of the disseminated information. Direct control over what is covered, how, and in what way is complemented by the influence of advertisers and the weight of their interests. Such control furthers a consumer culture approach of the media which has extensive consequences through cultural representation. Citing some grim figures, such as the 18 independent newspapers in Canada’s province of Ontario in the 1970s all gone a mere three decades later, Brownlee stresses how concentrated control affects information flows.

As technology has made possible the existence of corporate economies that overshadow those of nations (Brownlee, 2005), a trend in the formation of communities beyond the physical boundaries of nations has also emerged. As Ananda Mitra (1997) pointed out over a decade ago, computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as the internet presents new possibilities for the formation of communities. A clear example of this is immigrants who are scattered rather than clustered in specific areas yet able to interact through CMC using the computer as “a tool to image and imagine the group affiliation” (p. 58). Though the interpersonal aspects of the internet can be deemed impersonal and the agency or intentionality inherent in being able to use and rewrite texts can be seen as an inauthentic cultural re-imagining, Mitra notes that imagination



becomes common memory for group formation. Though the lack of restrictions and controls provides a forum where anyone with access may contribute, the challenge to traditional hegemony may not be as great. Mitra also points out the difficulty in locating the dominant online, since, for example, “[n]o grand narratives about India emerge on the internet space” where the “permanence of the image is subverted by the ongoing discourses” (p. 74). Individuals can subvert the cultural homogenisation that national mass media tend to cultivate and the economies of scale that corporate giants foster throughout the cultural arena. It is here that the deterritorialisation of culture shows a problematised congruity; while undermining old grand narratives it can offer new global ones not tied to time or place in traditional ways.

## **DIRECT CONNECTIVITY AND INTIMACY**

Contact encouraged by mediated interpersonal relations through telecommunications, multiculturalism, and travel, or what can be called “direct connectivity”, has rapidly become a satisfactory form of communication and cultural exchange. When Tomlinson (1999) asks whether email really is most like letter writing, he suggests that it be seen as a new form of oral communication through its significantly more synchronous application. This complicates our everyday assumptions about the way new media alter our lives and to what extent as this is more than a mere improvement to former methods of communications with changing preferences, habits, information flows, and webs of contacts. The amalgamation of oral and written, sent and instantaneous is also experienced in instant or text messaging as well as various social networking websites. According to Tomlinson, deterritorialisation disembodies intimacy through a “one-to-oneness” rather than “face-to-faceness” and enacts public intimacy, or change in acceptable locations for communication exchange. The focus on such intimacy underlines this look at “direct connectivity” through the highly global technologies of mobile telephony and email.

Like studies of similar populations in Ghana and Kenya, where mobile telephony has quickly surged while internet use has remained low, Radhamany Sooryamoorthy and colleagues (2008) focused on the south Indian state of Kerala to understand the social ties that these technologies build and localise. They found that frequent email and mobile users maintained technologically mediated networks more so than infrequent users and reported a greater number of friends than family members in these similarly sized networks, which is quite understandable through the extended reach of technologically mediated communication. The larger external and smaller local networks of frequent users are a similar case, hence the finding that email use can predict geographical diversity within the studied networks, while mobile phone use was negatively associated with such diversity. The finding of email users maintaining global contacts is explained by the greater difficulty in establishing connections across time zones via synchronous communication. The asynchronous nature of email enables a greater ease and diminishes time constraints, and this enhances the speed and ease of deterritorialisation on the individual scale.

The authors conclude that: "For the relatively high-status respondents, email and mobile phones are used in complementary ways to maintain social relations that are geographically distinct. One way of looking at this distinction is to see mobile phones as providing access to a proximate zone, while the internet provides access to distant zones" (p. 747). This would seem to place different forms of mediated communication at odds with each other in terms of their effect on communication's "complex connectivity", yet geographically limited "direct connectivity" through proximate networks is a part of cultural formation without which deterritorialisation could not be enacted. It is these local networks that maintain cultures that can be uprooted or exported. The extent of global interpersonal reach today has made the prevalence of deterritorialised culture an acceptable and even embraced occurrence through a newly growing willingness to consume culture or (re)learn it.

Other researchers like Daphne Winland (2006) have had similar findings in looking at groups such as immigrants. While travel home has been the more traditional area for scholars of immigrant communities, Winland discusses ways in which CMC "has intensified the nature and quality of linkages between Croats worldwide" (p. 274), from television, to radio, and internet sites offering message boards or chat rooms and access to local media. She points out that "numerous and diverse interactive and noninteractive Croatian-themed websites have been aimed at or generated mainly by diasporic Croats" (p. 274) and the dissemination of conservative politics are all elements of cultural flow that push culture and information into virtual spaces rather than physically bordered ones. Disembodied intimacy makes cultural sharing easier and quicker, while public intimacy allows individuals more opportunities to share.

Providing a sweeping look at various effects of globalisation, Giddens (2003) covers risk, tradition, family, and democracy in *Runaway World*. Key for Giddens are changes in communications technology: "Instantaneous electronic communication isn't just a way in which news or information is conveyed more quickly. Its existence alters the very texture of our lives, rich and poor alike" (p. 11). His example of the face of Nelson Mandela being more recognisable to many people than that of a neighbour elaborates on this point on a small and yet massive scale. We cannot know everyone both physically near and far, so it is this balance of priority of whom and what we chose to know that establishes links in the web of "complex connectivity". As more people know of more of the same ones "direct connectivity" changes its impact on everyday life. Yet technology aids this connectivity by surpassing more and more past obstacles associated with time and space. Giddens points out that the 40 years it took radio to garner an audience of 50 million, the personal computer managed in 15 and the internet in four. This speed and scope not only shows how globalisation is an "out there" phenomenon but is an "in here" phenomenon as well by influencing our lives on the personal level. All these developments point to the changing function of tradition in contemporary lives. For Giddens tradition is something invented and reinvented, and while some traditions have lasted hundreds of years, customs and rituals are generally much newer than we like to believe. What implications such a view of tradition has

for the arguable deterritorialisation of culture of the past is not as vital as the present deterritorialisation – faster, more prevalent, and global.

## INDIRECT CONNECTIVITY AND GLOBAL VILLAGE-ING

The third aspect, the global village, will be explored through “indirect connectivity” by means of mass communication. Using Giddens’ phrases Tomlinson (1999) explains that: “People may still be ‘at home’ in their localities but they are at some level aware that these are ‘phantasmagoric’ places in which familiar features are often not unique to that locale and part of its ‘organic development’ but, rather, features that have been ‘placed into’ the locale by distanced forces” (p. 107). This aspect of features being “placed into” is deterritorialisation at work on an everyday level, and the approach to information exchange or flow needs to be complicated by oppositional realities such as US statistics of foreign news coverage shrinking in the last decades. What Tomlinson seeks to highlight beyond contradictory approaches to understanding the flows is whether our ability to intervene has grown. This is what “indirect connectivity” must include in order for it to be a complex, dynamic social process rather than something akin to a consumer-based marketing phenomenon.

Looking at the state of global news Simon Cottle and Mugdha Rai (2008) are wary of embracing the proclamations many have found while attempting to “re-examine the cultural flows of global news and discover to what extent cultural disjuncture and difference are valorised in today’s global ‘mediascape’” (p. 162). Their analysis of various “frames” employed by global news sources includes two which are particularly relevant to cultural deterritorialisation. One of these is the “cultural recognition frame” which “not only represents but also symbolises and/or affirms cultural values and community ideals – by, inter alia, acknowledging and/or celebrating cultural groups and differences, by recognising Others” (p. 171). The other is the “mythic tales frame” which “also functions culturally, activating and displaying cultural myths that have resonance for contemporary cultures” (p. 171). However, these two frames account only for a fraction of their findings. So even as the latter frame works on “resurrecting and/or recycling established values, symbols and affective narratives” (p. 171), it does this on a seemingly miniscule scale. Giddens’ claims about the pull of tradition waning is echoed in such findings, and yet the effectiveness of these frames to portray a new globalised world which requires neither a location nor a point in time to create or propagate cultural content is what seems more pertinent. Cottle and Rai (2008) refer to Ingrid Volkmer’s claim that new features and style of global news “contribute to a ‘thick cosmopolitanism’, or feelings of being at home within a culturally heterogeneous world” (p. 164), and this is the effect that deterritorialisation in many ways embodies – by attaching itself to ideas of cosmopolitanism which do not necessarily take privilege and unbalanced flows into account.

The pre-eminence of American content in a “culturally heterogeneous” world cannot be overlooked. While the prominence of the cultural imperialism thesis has diminished, “seen as an antiquated ideological imposture by the advocates of the

new school” and the globalisation approach is “sometimes referred to as a bundle of neoliberal dogmas that masquerade as postmodernist waffle” (Chalaby, 2006, p. 35), there is something to be said for the way in which these approaches work together. Globalisation has come to embody an aspect of American dominance and whether this is accepted, rejected, or somehow ignored, it deserves more detailed exploration. What Jean Chalaby (2006) proposes is not returning to the notion of cultural imperialism, noting that its “greatest shortcoming was its entrenchment in the national imaginary, a too narrow perspective from which to understand the transnational and deterritorialised nature of the emerging media order” (p. 36). While assessing American dominance in two key audiovisual sectors, European television as well as film production and distribution, Chalaby concentrates on the European experience of American imperialism. Preferring the term “cultural primacy”, he simply advocates for an adoption of the US perspective in marketing television since “American conglomerates are set to dominate the era of multichannel television” (p. 36). A dominating nation in a vital aspect of media and international communications has implications for the future deterritorialisation of cultures and the kind of reterritorialisation that will be possible – American reterritorialisation? Having “successfully adopted local adaptation of content and programming as an international strategy, creating hybrid television brands and media products that appeal ever more to European viewers” (p. 36), Chalaby is certain that US corporations are poised to secure European and other markets.

The figures analysed include top media companies and the US is the only nation with double-digit entries as well as more than double that of its nearest competitors of Japan, the UK, Germany, France and Italy. Meanwhile, European companies have addressed regional concerns with some success but other than a few exceptions lack international reach. Furthermore, comparing the numbers of films and series on European television, US films had increased by 25 percent from 1988 to 1997 while series went up by nearly 78 percent. The only other increase in categories of National, Europe, USA, and Other, was European films – but even this was a mere 5.3 percent. There is no indication that this American trend is reversing as data from five years after that period were putting US films at over 70 percent market share. Also significant for what will be shown and where, the US already controlled over half the EU distribution market. Meanwhile, initiatives such as the Television Without Frontiers Directive from 1991, intending to bring diversity and growth to the European industry, instead “facilitate[d] the crossborder operations of media multinationals by lessening the legal barriers of entry to national markets” (p. 44). Chalaby notes that MTV and CNN have already learned that local adaptation is “a prerequisite to decent ratings” and have “transformed into hybrid cultural products” (p. 45). Mixing local and international content, in the most profitable proportions, such global giants cover all their bases with foreign and indigenous programming. Jetix, Cartoon Network, Discovery, and National Geographic all duplicate content but also participate in local co-productions while creating economies of scale.

In line with Chalaby’s assessment of MTV’s success in Europe, Anthony Fung



(2006) examined MTV in China in more depth to find the balance of global/Western to local quite unequal. Reaching over 340 million households in 140 countries, MTV remains “a global youth phenomenon” (p. 72). Fung argues that the commercial formula employed must account for taste, style, quality of content, as well as appropriate politics. This results in Chinese repackaging while “the symbolic meaning, values and moral norms associated with the localised MTV programme is still not local” as “the strategy of localisation remains confined to the production process” as “MTV syndicates sell a modern symbol of the capitalist West in connection with MTV consumption” (p. 76) through programs like *MTV Global Village* which introduces foreign popular music and infotainment or *MTV Star Profile* which promotes internationally famous movie stars. As local as MTV China might pretend to be it is selling the same consumerist values, and Fung’s conclusion is that in daily production, as with glitzy award shows, Chinese authorities allow MTV to privilege Western forms in order to provide a means of reaching youth culture.

Chalaby (2006) too sees this kind of hybridisation as “a key to the success of this strategy” (p. 46). Stressing “US primacy”, he attempts to sideline any implications of cultural imperialism, presuming an objectivity to a strictly business approach. He advises European public broadcasters to “think less in terms of national market and more in terms of genre” (p. 49). This is really advocating deterritorialising cultures based on profit margins and marketability of genres. Chalaby further stresses this position in closing when he asks who is to blame for future US-based domination: “Media executives who do their job, identify and exploit gaps in the markets? Or European public broadcasters and politicians locked in 19th-century-style imperial rivalries?” (p. 49). Meanwhile, it is such an approach to globalisation, of stagnant national rivalries while mass cultural imperialism stems simply from a job well done, that makes aspects of “indirect connectivity” so susceptible to excessively uneven cultural deterritorialisation in terms of where so-called global culture finds most sway and from how far away.

## **RETERRITORIALISATION, NOT TRANSTERRITORIALITY**

Tomlinson (1999) acknowledges the unevenness of deterritorialisation, with less choice for some, but he also stresses the possibilities for reterritorialisation amidst such unevenness. Reterritorialisation encompasses the “various attempts to re-establish a cultural ‘home’” (p. 148). It is a means of recontextualising global culture in the local setting. Does a reterritorialisation of culture become merely a new cultural amalgamation that is heavily influenced by commodified culture and its homogenised consumption? If so, the liberalisation of the cultural and communications sectors and profit-seeking approaches are offering big corporations means of manufacturing this culture. Alternatively, reterritorialised culture can remain centrally rooted in more traditional, intangible notions of culture. This is seen predominantly through “direct connectivity”, when extended networks and diasporic communities engage in it through everyday communications or organised virtual communities and share these reconstituted forms of culture. But while mass means of “indirect connectivity” and slack controls in the face of nation-size corporate economies are the stronger homogenising factors, even



these must work with an element of differentiation in order to be successful, as global MTV has shown. As to whether the available types of reterritorialisation are of the American variety, the MTV example seems to point to yes. However, this is one of the stronger examples to support that assumption and youth culture is highly susceptible to popular and consumerist trends. The bigger question is what will continue to happen – with continued corporate eminence, worldwide American film and TV markets, global internet and mobile telephony use, and the many other means of “complex connectivity”. This overview presents the globe as the same culturally mixed “village” as it has been throughout history. Global culture is certainly capable of consuming the smaller types, and yet these smaller cultures are often resilient or subversive – not to mention many – and reterritorialisation is rooted in their resilience.

Daniel Mato (2005) finds in his study of Latin American telenovelas that territorial references remain meaningful and continue to emerge. He addresses the “perception of globalisation as a deterritorialised and / or deterritorialising process” and argues that “the practices of social actors are not deterritorialised” (p. 425) but transterritorial. According to Mato Miami does not become a “nonplace”, “non-Latin American place”, not-“ours” place, or even a “deterritorialised” space. He sees it as “a clear territorial reference, a place, a part simultaneously of two spaces – Latin America and the United States” (p. 432). Yes, the number of Spanish speaking residents of Miami makes it Hispanic and American, but it is more adequate to say that the Hispanic element is reterritorialised in the city for it remains American in many other ways. Constructing a bilocated “transterritorial” space is an easy way of avoiding the “complex connectivity” of such a place. By ignoring the complexity of deterritorialisation, Mato assumes that it could be complete and disregards reterritorialisation, in favour of a vague or somehow neutral transterritorial space. This example of Miami touches on cultural reterritorialisation through the lens of multiculturalism.

Gerald Kernerman (2005) discusses Canadian cultural policy and the social sway over the last decades through the Canadian “ambiguous zone” of multicultural nationalism, something deeply embedded in the country’s national mythology. The political and ideological roots of multicultural nationalism can illuminate a non-consumer reterritorialisation of culture and this multicultural nationalism differs from corporately-driven homogenisation because the combined homogenisation and differentiation is not a means of market access, but an integral agent of cultural coherence. This socio-political facet is where culture flows end up as well as why “[d]eliberative democracy’s interlocutors” claim that “[u]nderstanding the Other, agreeing to disagree and living with difference are all necessary capacities ... for successful co-existence in agonistic, culturally diverse and interdependent societies” (Cottle & Rai, 2008, p. 166). While the “collage effect” or “reality reversal” affect our understanding of reality, a viable plurality of choice and cultures can resist global homogeneity and remains an avenue of intervention.

Finally, the insertion of ethnic, local, and national cultures into the market and the convergence of communication and cultural studies is described by Jesús Martín-Barbero

(2006) as “the multidimensionality of all communication processes and their increasingly strong influence in the deterritorialisation and hybridisation that modernisation brings about” (p. 283). He asserts that the convergence occurred when the mediation of communication stopped being instrumental and became structural, and this is what has made it so central to culture: “today, technology refers not only to new machines but also to new ways of perception and new languages, to new sensibilities and discourses, to cultural mutations caused by the association of new means of production and new ways of communicating that turn knowledge into a direct, productive force” (p. 285). Such a view highlights the influence that modern communication technology has on our lives and why future developments, whether magnifications of what has happened or a reversal of the trends, will be extremely interesting to observe. After all, cultural deterritorialisation through globalisation and modern communication technology can be seen not as an end to locality “but its transformation into a more complex cultural space” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 149). The process of reterritorialisation provides a means of ensuring that differentiation remains an integral aspect of globalisation, along with the massive homogenising forces integral to local and global villages alike.

## CONCLUSION

Returning to Tomlinson’s question of our ability to intervene in the cultural flows that shape the direct and indirect portions of the “complex connectivity” that is globalisation, Giddens (2003) also believes that individuals still retain power over it. By reconstructing institutions which can intervene, individuals possess a power to mould aspects of globalisation rather than being continually shaped by it. This is a vital influence if we are reminded that “globalisation is not incidental to our lives today”, being instead “a shift in our very life circumstance” and essentially “the way we live now” (p. 19). Though not everyone acknowledges the deep impacts of globalisation, a concept both held up as a saving grace of a nationalistic globe and the very exploitation of the modern age, it is crucial that it not become an empty term that is easily ignored. Beyond these dramatic extremes it is difficult to deny that many of the ways in which much of the world communicates and interacts have dramatically changed and that through this change culture, tradition, and physical geography have shifted or shrunk in the minds of citizens and consumers alike through “direct” and “indirect connectivity”.

The “feelings of being at home within a culturally heterogeneous world” (Ingrid Volkmer quoted in Cottle & Rai, 2008, p. 164) can obscure the potentially unidirectional flow of information and culture. The homogenising aspect of this phenomenon is not something to underestimate as most research on American prominence in many cultural sectors and parts of the world indicates. The differentiating aspects of globalisation can also be exploited, and the exportation of culture cannot be permitted to diminish the individual’s cultural agency, whether it occurs through reterritorialisation as Tomlinson suggests or institutions as Giddens proposes. This cultural agency remains a source with which to balance corporate dominance and regional or national imperialisms. Simply accepting deterritorialised culture as common cultural capital denies the chance for truly diverse cultures to thrive in a seemingly post-traditional and globalising world

where a diminishing prominence of place and irreverence to time often define everyday life.

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# PRESUMED INNOCENT: THE PARADOX OF 'COMING OF AGE' AND THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH SEXUALITY IN *LOLITA* AND *THIRTEEN*

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**Abstract:** This paper uses a post-structuralist perspective to articulate the conceptual limits of the discourse of 'coming of age' as a means of examining concerns about the representation of young female sexuality in the media. Through analysis of the content and production contexts of the films *Lolita* (1997) and *Thirteen* (2003), it argues that the discourse of 'coming of age' is grounded in a contradictory logic that produces conflicting aims: a desire to preserve the innocence of youth and a simultaneous expectation that they 'grow up'. Using techniques of Derridean deconstruction, the paper examines the effects that this logic produces in terms of how key aspects of 'coming of age' contradict what the discourse sets out to determine and how this contributes to perceptions of youth sexuality as problematic. It will be shown that these conceptual contradictions remain unseen in attempts to make sense of the controversial aspects of the two films: the issue of pedophilia in *Lolita* and the problem of teenage rebellion in *Thirteen*. Importantly, the deconstructive reading suggests that it is the paradoxical underpinnings of this approach to youth identity that enables the discourse to be thought at all. By working to recognise this, it is possible to move beyond the limits of the discourse and think differently about youth in response to the perceived threat posed to young people by media representations of adolescent sex and sexuality.

**Key words:** deconstruction, youth, sexuality, media, coming of age



## INTRODUCTION

This paper uses a post-structuralist perspective to articulate the conceptual limits of the discourse of 'coming of age' as a means of examining concerns about the representation of adolescent female sexuality in the media<sup>1</sup>. As a dominant framework for studying youth identity, it will be argued that the notion of 'coming of age' is grounded in a contradictory logic that produces conflicting aims: a desire to preserve the innocence of youth and a simultaneous expectation that they 'grow up.' Techniques of Derridean deconstruction are used to intervene in this logic and point to where key aspects of 'coming of age' can be seen to contradict what the discourse sets out to determine and how this contributes to perceptions of youth sexuality as a problem.

This work is done via an analysis of two films: *Lolita* (1997) and *Thirteen* (2003); two films that have generated public concern for their depiction of adolescent sexual behaviour. Examination of the content and production contexts of these films indicates where the paradoxical elements of 'coming of age' remain unseen in attempts to make sense of the controversial aspects of each film: the issue of pedophilia in *Lolita* and the problem of teenage rebellion in *Thirteen*. Responses from critics to these films are also analysed in terms of how they work to reaffirm a normative order and so reproduce the conditions that create the conceptual conflict, even though the films carry the potential to take notions of youth identity into more productive conceptual territory. Importantly, deconstruction shows that the paradoxical underpinnings of the discourse of 'coming of age' are what enable the discourse to be thought at all. By working to recognise this, it is possible to offer a response to the perceived threat posed by media representations of sex and sexuality in relation to young people that does not reproduce the conditions for such a sense of threat to emerge.

## ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY IN THE MEDIA: WHERE THE PROBLEM LIES

In May 2008, 20 photographs due for exhibition in Sydney by Australian photographer Bill Henson were seized by police in response to public complaints that the images constituted child pornography. The media coverage of this incident highlights the controversy surrounding the depiction of minors in a sexualised way. Questions were raised as to whether Henson's work brought "art" into "the realm of pornography" (Bachelard and Mangan, 2008, n.p.) and whether it involved the exploitation of his young subjects.

The NSW Director of Public Prosecutions ruled that Henson's works did not constitute child pornography and did not prosecute, however debate continued over the issues of child exploitation and "the delicate point of consent" for those under 16 years of age ("It is important," 2008, n.p.). One side of the debate focused on issues of artistic freedom and the unique power of art to express difficult human emotion and experiences. Larissa Dubecki, a columnist for *The Age*, argued that Henson grappled with "the ambiguity of teen existence" in his art and offered depictions of "the stormy adolescent interior" (2008, n.p.).

The other side of the debate expressed concern over the psychological and social

impact on the child models. Child psychologist Steve Biddulph claimed that depictions of childhood such as Henson's "takes their [children's] power and their privacy away and lets the world in" (2008, n.p.). In this way, the act of capturing innocence may paradoxically end innocence. From Biddulph's perspective, the premature sexualisation of children may force them to deal with situations beyond their mental capacity to handle, severely disrupting natural sexual development processes. "Teenage children are developmentally fragile," Biddulph argues, "they try on any number of selves, and they have to be free to do so, without adult predation on their bodies or minds" (2008, n.p.). Biddulph expresses a notion of youth as constituting a special time and space which involves both cognitive and physical development, and which is tied to identity construction. However, these processes leave youth vulnerable to potentially dangerous social or emotional influences – a vulnerability that seems to be compounded by a media culture that promotes and allows the depiction of minors in a way that foregrounds their developing bodies and budding sexuality.

The Henson case highlights a range of commonsense assumptions about youth as vulnerable and fragile, susceptible to harm, and at risk of premature development via interactions with or exposure to the media<sup>2</sup>. These developmental assumptions have generated public discussions about youth on a range of issues such as corporate pedophilia<sup>3</sup>, body image pressures on girls and the influence of violent media on boys. These assumptions are often called on to explain the meaning of various youth issues and events, and the Henson case represents what is the latest in a long line of contentious issues to do so. Arguably then, the particular problem of youth sexuality in the media may lie not so much with the various events or situations that are perceived as threatening the well-being of young people but, instead, with the underlying concepts used to make sense of them. A focus on how these underlying assumptions operate seems necessary given that, despite the many calls to preserve the sexual innocence of youth and protect them from exploitation, abuse or harm, situations which appear to threaten youth continue to arise. The following discussion thus examines how dominant assumptions about youth can be seen to produce the problem of youth sexuality, and what happens when these same assumptions are used to respond to it.

### **'COMING OF AGE': KEY TENSIONS**

In Western societies, the discourse of 'coming of age' articulates a process of maturation that young people go through in preparation for adulthood. Key developmental psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall helped develop this idea that has become the dominant system of reasoning regarding youth, naturalised over time. Hall argued that "a slow, steady coming of age" (Lesko, 2001, p. 88) would guard against precocity in the young and keep them in a more manageable state of ongoing preparation and prolonged dependency so that they could realise their "full potential" once adulthood was reached (Lesko, 2001, p. 63; Griffin, 2004, p. 12). 'Coming of age' involves the development, internalisation and consolidation of standards of social, sexual, emotional and physical conduct<sup>4</sup>. Education professor Nancy Lesko (2001) writes that phrases such as youth "are 'at the threshold' and in 'transition to

adulthood''' accompany this time, and these imply a process of "evolutionary arrival in an enlightened state after a lengthy period of backwardness" (p. 3). Put another way, "youth cannot live in the present"; rather, they exist "in the discourse of 'growing up'" and hence as a future presence (Lesko, 2001, p. 137). This social 'becoming', which also views youth as inherently unstable or in a state of lack, as seen in Biddulph's comments, is what makes them fundamentally different from adults. But to relate the notions of identity and 'coming of age' is to see the latter as culminating in the achievement of a full-personhood that is stable and enduring.

However, Lesko (2001) calls attention to "the difficulty of ... securing 'identity' when youth are simultaneously contained within an 'expectant mode'" (p. 123) or in a state of "perpetual becoming" (p. 63). It is this key tension that constitutes what might be called the paradox of 'coming of age.' The discourse describes something that is supposed to happen given the values and structures of modern society, but at the same time it is prevented from happening by those very same structures. To critically engage with the problems such contradictions bring, the paper follows with a brief overview of deconstruction and then applies a deconstructive analysis to the films *Lolita* and *Thirteen*, both of which exemplify the difficulties of making sense of youth.

## DECONSTRUCTION AND PRESENCE

Understanding youth as "'becoming', rather than 'being,'" and therefore as lacking a stable identity (James & James, 2004, p. 27) points us towards what the discourse of 'coming of age' privileges: presence. Presence marks the ideal end point of a developmental process where a self-knowing and self-present adulthood is reached. However, the notion of presence is questioned by Jacques Derrida through his deconstructive theory<sup>5</sup>.

Within metaphysics, the notion of presence is a fundamental concept. Presence is positioned as prior to and exterior from thought, and is understood to constitute the invariable "ground or necessary origin of thought" (Lucy, 2004, p. 76) as situated against its conceptual opposite – absence. This logic applies to all conceptual oppositions that posit an immovable truth against, and as hierarchically superior to, its other, such as nature/culture (Lucy, 2004, p. 102). This "metaphysical gesture", according to Derrida (1988), "has been the most constant, most profound and most potent" in terms of both enabling and inscribing the limits of intelligible reality, and this is where deconstruction intervenes (p. 93). In Derrida's (1976) words, deconstruction makes "enigmatic what one thinks one understands by ... 'presence'" (p. 70). What is thought to exist independently in and of itself is actually dependent on that which it is opposed to; it is the secondary concept in a binary pair that enables the primary concept to be thought, such that, in a presence/absence binary, presence is always 'breached' or 'split' by absence. The key implication of this is that if there is no absolute separation between conceptual oppositions – if what counts as presence is actually dependent on its relationship to absence – then a notion of presence as original is "contradictorily coherent" (Derrida, 1978, p. 279). In other words, presence is thinkable only in its difference from itself, and

it is therefore deferred from ever being able to fully 'be' itself.

On this basis, the presumed self-presence or full-personhood of adulthood is therefore not self-evident, but always already 'less than' itself despite its appearance as whole and complete. Similarly, understanding youth according to developmental stages that are taken as a naturally occurring biological 'fact' does not mean viewing these stages as absolutely natural. That nature is knowable and thinkable within language means the concept relies on a cultural context for its meaning. So if nature is made meaningful via the determinations of discourse, then the assumed self-presence (and 'natural' authority) of adulthood is also an effect of a discourse.

As a cultural construction, then, the ideal of arriving at a stable adult identity from an unstable, yet seemingly 'natural', youth is open to reinterpretation. But in recognising this possibility and working within it, the aim is not to do away with thinking through conceptual oppositions. As Derrida (1976) argues, "there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics" (p. 105). In order to analyse what is at stake for both youth and adults in the dominant, yet ambivalently grounded, way of thinking that characterises the discourse of 'coming of age', it is necessary to stand "on a borderline: sometimes within an uncriticised conceptuality, sometimes putting a strain on the boundaries and working toward deconstruction" (Derrida, 1976, p. 105). In applying this approach, the following discussion of *Lolita* and *Thirteen* will articulate three additional elements that comprise the first and overall tension of 'coming of age'. Specifically, the discussion points to where conceptual ambivalences are missed and therefore what is ignored in the problems raised by the paradox, and the possibility of constituting youth differently as a result is considered.

### ***LOLITA*: 'AN UNTHINKABLE ATTRACTION'<sup>6</sup>**

The 1997 remake of *Lolita* directed by Adrian Lyne provides an excellent example of this strain of working both within and against dominant concepts in deconstructing its depiction of what is considered one of the most dangerous threats to youth in recent times: pedophilia. Based on the Vladimir Nabokov novel and following Stanley Kubrick's 1962 film version, *Lolita* tells the story of middle-aged Englishman Humbert Humbert, who falls madly in love with Lolita, the 12-year-old daughter of his landlady, in the New England summer of 1947. The film details Humbert and Lolita's five-year relationship both as stepfather and daughter and as lovers. Their sexual relationship begins somewhat playfully and is consenting, but it ends with Lolita manipulating Humbert and scheming against him, eventually leaving him to be with another older man, the mysterious Clare Quilty. Humbert is utterly destroyed by his love for Lolita. He is consumed with guilt and remorse for what he does to her, but at the same time he remains unremittingly devoted to her. A controversial film, its depiction of the sexual activity of a young teenage girl and the debate over what it should mean, goes right to the heart of the paradox of 'coming of age'.

In the West, pedophilia is regarded as morally wrong and objectionable, yet when considered according to the logic of an innocence/knowledge binary split



within the developmental discourses that define 'coming of age', the issue acquires a new complexity. Derrida's analysis of Lévi-Strauss's work on the prohibition of incest shows how deconstruction destabilises the opposition of innocence and knowledge (which operates within a broader nature/culture binary). Derrida argues that the presumed difference between nature and culture "finds itself erased or questioned" when it encounters "a scandal, that is to say, something which no longer tolerates the nature/culture opposition," and incest is something that is scandalous because it "simultaneously seems to require the predicates of nature and of culture" (Derrida, 1978, p. 283). To elaborate, Derrida (1978) writes that because the prohibition is universal then it is therefore "not dependent on any particular culture or on any determinate norm" and so can be considered natural. But as something that is prohibited, this means that it is governed by "a system of norms and interdicts" which can vary "from one social structure to another," making it also cultural (p. 283).

With regard to pedophilia, it is commonly accepted that the physical immaturity of children makes them unable to 'have sex', and as this is common to all children, their asexuality can therefore be seen as natural. But what is being suggested in this paper is that 'sex' is actually a cultural construct because it is in this domain that sexual practices are organised, regulated and made meaningful, and this includes the notion of asexuality or sexual innocence which pedophilic activity is thought to violate. So to attribute a state of asexuality to children is not the same as their being in a state of 'natural innocence' that exists independently of any particular norm or value system. The natural innocence of children is in fact culturally attributed to them, thus making pedophilia something scandalous because what makes it wrong cannot be contained by the 'inside-outside' relationship of nature to culture or innocence to knowledge. Indeed, Derrida writes that "from the moment when the incest prohibition can no longer be conceived within the nature/culture opposition, it can no longer be said to be a scandalous fact" (1978, p. 283), and neither, presumably, can pedophilia.

Instead, Derrida (1978) argues that, as something that "escapes these concepts" of nature and culture, the incest prohibition may be more accurately understood as preceding those concepts (p. 283), and the same logic can be applied to the problem of pedophilia. Derrida (1978) argues that the work of "philosophical conceptualisation" is "systematic with the nature/culture opposition," but that in order for the oppositional logic of the binary to function, it must leave "in the domain of the unthinkable the very thing that makes this conceptualisation possible: the origin of the prohibition of incest" (p. 284). That the incest prohibition cannot be accommodated by the oppositional logic of nature/culture means that the latter does not come before the notion of incest by operating as founding concepts grounded in absolute, transcendental truth; rather, they are conditioned or made possible by the space that marks the difference between them. This space of difference – space that is 'undecidable' – is where "the origin of the prohibition of incest" (and of pedophilia) resides.

If Derrida's argument holds, this means that the metaphysical distinction made between youth and adult on the basis of innocence/knowledge as it applies to sexuality



cannot remain intact. This opposition cannot account for a stage that is 'becoming', a stage that is based neither in innocence nor in knowledge, or is both these things at the same time, and is therefore 'undecidable.' Despite the fact that a gradual becoming is exactly what the 'coming of age' discourse implies, in order to be able to maintain the general difference between youth and adult, an absolute break is required. We are faced with an all or nothing alternative, so there must be a shift from complete asexuality to total sexuality (from absence to presence, nature to culture, innocence to knowledge or experience, dependence to independence) and not a gradual process from one into the other. Because of this we reach the limits of 'coming of age' in that it prescribes something that is prevented from happening given the oppositional structure it is also supposed to maintain. When a moment of change, of becoming, does happen, and an obvious example of this is the loss of virginity, it is therefore seen as wrong, premature, dangerous, an "uncontrollable force" (Lesko, 2001, p. 3). A steadfast belief in the absolute innocence of children makes this loss something to fear and prevent, rather than as necessary for arrival into adulthood. As a result, pedophilia is seen to disrupt and ruin a 'natural' progression towards sexual maturity.

Concomitantly, sexual maturity is imagined as always at risk of arriving 'too soon' and thereby leading to all manner of social pathology in teenagers. As Lesko (2001) writes, "teenagers cannot go ... forward to adulthood 'before their time' without incurring derogatory labels, for example, 'immature,' 'loose,' or 'precocious'" (p. 123). But what remains unseen here is that what is at risk of being lost is only what functions as natural, not nature in itself. Derrida shows that the attribution of 'natural innocence,' by being thinkable as such, makes it always already 'cultural' (that is, governed by a variable system of norms and interdicts). 'Natural innocence' is therefore definable only in terms of its difference rather than by virtue of its presumed self-presence, and the implication of this fact is that such a 'state of being' can always be defined differently.

Such a possibility is important when considering that there is a point in current constructions of adolescence where it is physically possible, but not culturally acceptable, for young people (that is, post-pubescent) to be sexually active and to therefore have a sexual identity. It is interesting to note that the marker of cultural acceptability is age-based (turning 16 or 18 or 21), but the fact that this marker does not match the physical timing of sexual maturity does little to change both general opinion and the law that sex with a minor is utterly unacceptable. As noted above, and despite physical evidence to the contrary, such an act violates the 'natural' innocence of youth, and so it is entirely unthinkable that it be seen as anything other than a gross violation of the young person due to an extreme perversion in the adult. As Belinda Morrissey (2005) writes, "the legal dictum that one cannot consent to anything which is deemed criminal" means that "all those classed as ... minors cannot consent to any sexual act whatsoever because having sex with someone under the age of consent is criminal" (p. 60). More particularly, she notes that the implicit innocence and naïveté associated with virginity, especially for young girls, means that they cannot give informed consent (p. 59). Based on this conceptualisation of youth, there is no space in which a sexual relationship between a

minor and an adult could ever be considered not inherently abusive and criminal, and there is no other way to understand youth in this context except as victims.

*Lolita* therefore treads dangerous, if not impossible, territory in its depiction of a consensual sexual relationship between an adult and a minor, even though the 'safer' theme of 'innocence lost' is where the film ends. The night before their first sexual encounter, Lolita asks Humbert: "if I tell you how naughty I was at camp, promise you won't be mad?" Lolita wakes the next morning and, having slept next to Humbert, whispers her transgression in his ear. Surprised by her confession, he responds: "you played that with Charlie ... at camp?" She replies: "don't tell me you never tried it when you were a kid?" "Never," he says. She then moves and sits on top of him, removes her retainer and begins to untie his pyjama pants, saying: "I guess I'm gonna have to show you everything." As Humbert smiles up at her, his voiceover says: "Gentlewomen of the jury, I was not even her first lover." In a later scene, Lolita demonstrates her (seductive) power over Humbert by getting him to raise her allowance and to let her be in the school play. Sitting at his feet, she moves her hand up and down his inner thigh as he tries to read his mail: "I really do think it [her allowance] should be two dollars. Am I right?" she asks. Her hand moves higher, "am I right?" she repeats. Humbert, aware of what she is doing, relents: "God, yes. Two dollars."

These and many other instances in the film point to the limits of what innocence/knowledge marks as intelligible possibility by having a relationship that, when based on this distinction, is both consensual and abusive at the same time. But what Derrida's (1978) argument suggests is that it is only when the difference between nature and culture is "assumed to be self-evident" (p. 283) that the problem of teen sexuality exists. This is to say that the binary can only treat behaviour which exceeds its limits (burgeoning sexuality and/or sexual power) as problematic because the behaviour, while conditioned by the binary, threatens the coherence of the distinction and of ideas about the sexual status of young people as naturally occurring.

Here, the second element of the paradox of 'coming of age' can be introduced. The first and overall tension is that 'coming of age' describes a process that is supposed to happen given the values and structures of modern society, but is at the same time prevented from happening by those very same structures. This is because the oppositional logic of nature/culture or innocence/knowledge on which 'coming of age' is based cannot account for that which belongs to neither side of the binary. This is the second element. It has been shown how pedophilia and the problem of youth sexuality (and the representation of youth sexuality) upsets the binary distinctions that define youth. This makes the space that marks the difference between the binary positions of great significance. It is this space of difference that makes oppositional logic thinkable in the first place. This means that thinking the absolute difference between innocence and knowledge – on which judgements about pedophilia and youth sexuality are based – actually requires engaging with the space of undecidability. The effect of this engagement is to understand that what appears to be self-evident about each binary position is only ever contradictorily so because each position is grounded in a difference

from itself and not in an absolute presence with itself. The discussion now turns to an examination of responses to the screening of *Lolita* in Australia to show how both liberal and conservative perspectives on the film do not recognise this “originary difference” (Lucy, 2004, p. 88) of oppositional logic and so preserve the contradictory logic of ‘coming of age’.

### **‘SEE IT AND MAKE UP YOUR OWN MIND’?**

The release of *Lolita* in Australia in April 1999 was met with attempts to ban it. Samela Harris writes that Adelaide MP Trish Draper, who led the protest to ban the film, called it “an encouragement to engage in predatory behaviour against young children” (1999, n.p.). She succeeded in getting the Office of Film and Literature Classification to review “the film’s R rating one day after its national release” (Schembri, 1999, n.p.). This perspective sees any depiction of pedophilia as dangerous because it would “make the behaviour acceptable” (“The case for *Lolita*,” 1999, n.p.). Mark Davidson quotes Maryam Kubasek “of the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families” as saying that “however artistically [the new *Lolita* film] is done, it really panders to the pedophile community in the sense that what they want to believe is that children truly are sexual beings and that to initiate them in the sexual experience is doing them a favour” (1997, n.p.).

The more liberal response, on the other hand, emphasises the value of exploring the darker sides of society so that they might be better understood, but this side is clear in stating that “exposition” of such matters “is not necessarily a validation of the practice” (“The case for *Lolita*,” 1999, n.p.). “Films that deal intelligently and sensitively with unpleasant subjects deserve to be seen, not banned” writes Jim Schembri (1999, n.p.). For him, the point of “worthwhile art” is that it provides an opportunity “to look into the darker corners of human behaviour and emerge with a better understanding of ourselves” (n.p.). The point of considering these arguments, however, is not to determine which side is more convincing, or that in this instance the Classification Review Board upheld the film’s R rating (“The case for *Lolita*,” 1999, n.p.). The point is that both positions ultimately condemn pedophilia, and so evidence a failure to engage with ‘undecidability’ as it operates in moral decisions around sex abuse. For there to be such a thing as right and wrong, and to be able to make decisions based on this, requires an engagement with the space that conditions the possibility of both, and, as already noted, that space is ‘undecidable’.

Deconstructive logic suggests that if a decision is thought to have a single ‘correct’ effect or outcome, then there will have been no decision, because there will have been no space in which to recognise what a decision is: a choice between two competing options. As Derrida (1988) writes, “a decision can only come into being in a space that exceeds the calculable program” that would make the decision an “effect of determinate causes” (p. 116). For there to be any possibility of coming to a decision about whether sex with a child is wrong, the question must pass through the undecidable; indeed, the very notion of decision “is structured by this experience ... of the undecidable” (Derrida, 1988, p.

116). This means that decisions are always marked by an indecision in that what seems to be the correct option is thinkable only by virtue of the irreducible possibility that that option could actually be wrong, and this possibility can never be avoided, even in the moment a decision is made. So engaging with the space of the undecidable is therefore engaging with the possibility of an outcome that is 'otherwise.'

In this instance, this means risking what seems an irresponsible choice: that pedophilia is not wrong. To be clear, though, this is not to suggest that deconstruction supports pedophilia. Deconstructing a moral absolute in this way means dealing with what it seeks to repress and this involves, as previously noted, "putting a strain on the boundaries" of a dominant way of thinking. It is perfectly okay to prohibit pedophilia, but the point is that how we come to this decision, according to Derrida (1992), involves the ghost of the undecidable (p. 24). This "ghost" silently pervades every decision, deconstructing "from within any assurance of presence" (Derrida, 1992, pp. 24-25), which means that the only way attitudes towards pedophilia will not change is if they always can change, and this possibility has to be met with at every moment. This is a difficult and sometimes a dangerous thing to do, but necessary nonetheless for what it enables us to understand about what is normally taken for granted regarding youth sexual identity.

Both sides of the argument over *Lolita* base their positions in the absolute 'wrongness' of pedophilia. Even though they argue differently about how the depiction of Lolita's relationship with Humbert should be treated, having to acknowledge the possibility of their relationship being 'otherwise' (that is, not pedophilic) is intolerable. Once again, though, within deconstruction such a belief is only ever possible based on a foundation that is 'contradictorily coherent' and, whether this basis is seen or not, a belief in the absolute wrongness of the relationship is conditioned by, is always already breached by, the opposite possibility. Without an attempt to consider what else is possible – that if constituted differently, the sexual relationship between a minor and adult might not be inherently wrong – each position can do no more than state and re-state what is thought to be unconditionally wrong about it against another position that, while arguing for a different solution, is doing so for the same reason. With minds already made up, each position prevents the other from making any progress towards getting what they want and so perpetuates debate over something that both sides would wish to have resolved.

A deconstructive intervention is also required for making sense of the film's external context of production, as it is through this context that the content of *Lolita* is ultimately framed. Barbara Biggs, as a survivor of, and a public speaker on, sexual abuse, writes that if a film like *Lolita* is going to truly deal with something like pedophilia then it should cast someone in the lead who is actually 12 years old, as the character is portrayed in the original novel (2005, n.p.). In her opinion, the 1962 film cast an actress (Sue Lyon) who "looks at least 18," and while the 1997 version cast a 14-year-old (Dominique Swain) in the role, it made "at least some attempt to make her behaviour and body mannerisms those of a young girl" (2005, n.p.). The point of her argument,



however, is that “the obvious reason a real 12-year-old wasn’t used, or someone who looked 12, is that audiences would have been horrified” (Biggs, 2005, n.p.) making them less willing to enter into the film’s world and the story being told because it would simply be too real. “Heaven forbid” she writes, that “viewers would not be able to avoid the thought of something similar happening to their own daughters” (2005, n.p.).

This is an interesting position because it highlights the fact that there comes a point in debate over the film’s content where ‘real life’ intervenes and acts against the risk of the ‘otherwise’ being felt. According to this logic, working once again to the reassuring, yet impossible, certitude of the innocence/knowledge distinction, it would be exploitative and abusive to cast an actual 12-year-old in the role of Lolita. Even though the attention to the film’s subject matter has been given on account of its closeness to a real life issue, and the film’s potential effects on real life have been the cause for much controversy, any question of the film’s relationship to real life is undermined by the legalities and moral ambiguities of having a minor portray the role in such a manner as would be necessary to achieve verisimilitude. In other words, to attempt realism here is to actually push beyond the limits of intelligible reality.

What is even more interesting, however, is the claim that the role of Lolita could only have been played by a girl at or near that age. Harris quotes Jeremy Irons, the Humbert Humbert of the 1997 film, on finding Swain to play Lolita, saying “we were lucky to catch her at that age” (1999, n.p.). Another girl, he says, “was the right age but had been in a lot of Hollywood soaps” and so had “screen reactions” that were “like a mini-adult.” In contrast, the unknown Swain was “a fawn-like creature who was not pretty and yet because of her youth and lack of self-consciousness she was terribly attractive and also infuriating, all the things Lolita should be” (quoted in Harris, 1999, n.p.). Irons’ comments point to a brief period where age (14 years) permitted use, but where body and personality were still that of a young girl. By the end of filming, however, Irons says that the stage had passed: “in just that six months, she had grown about 15cm for a start” (quoted in Harris, 1999, n.p.). This suggests that, while the casting of a 14-year-old required many precautionary measures, such as having “all scenes ... carefully videoed as well as filmed, [having] the young star’s mother on the set at all times and [using] an older body-double ... for all scenes of sexual implication” (Harris, 1999, n.p.), no one else could have captured the essence of the character. Swain’s unselfconsciousness made her ideal to play Lolita, Irons suggesting that such a quality could not be replicated by a more experienced actress, and that once that sense was lost, there was no getting it back. Placing this within a nature/culture (innocence/knowledge) opposition, it is Swain’s ‘natural innocence’ that makes her ideal for the role but also vulnerable to the dangers of premature exposure to sex.

Nevertheless, it might be argued that rather than this exposure leading to her being a victim, it is her perceived innocence that would make her less likely to be harmed simply by being, as traditional logic would have it, unaware of the culturally constructed taboo she is involved with. It would be Swain’s eventual self-consciousness, and the knowing that comes with that, that would make her aware of the potential dangers



involved and therefore at a greater risk of being harmed by the experience. What is being suggested here is that whether young people are aware of themselves in terms of their sexuality or not, dominant logic maintains that only youth can depict youth, but to have youth depict youth is to violate what is intrinsic about youth. This is to say that only youth in their perceived natural state of being (that is, in a state of 'becoming') can offer a depiction of that natural state, but the deliberate enactment of that state (on or in film, or in photographic work such as Henson's) contradicts the assumption that it is a state of innocent unknowing, the effect of which is to 'unnaturally' remove them from that state.

Here the third element to the 'coming of age' paradox is added. The first element is that 'coming of age' prescribes a process that is supposed to happen, but because the discourse is grounded in the oppositional distinction of innocence and knowledge, in order to be maintained, the binary cannot account for how youths gradually become adult. This means that 'coming of age' is not able to occur in the way that it is thought it should. The second element is that failing to account for the 'undecidable' element that conditions this conceptual opposition means that it is not possible to know the difference between such elements and to therefore be able to operate within them in the first place. The third element is that for the distinctions that the space of undecidability marks to exist, they have to remain open to the possibility of being 'otherwise'. This means that youth are not necessarily victims if they have a sexual relationship with an adult, it is not necessarily absolutely wrong, and it is not necessarily a violation of what is intrinsic about youth. Moral decisions are made nonetheless, and they have real effects, but by removing the fixity of notions of youth and abuse, we can engage differently with the "field ... of decidability" (Derrida, 1988, p. 116) and therefore with possibilities that take us beyond current conceptual limits.

### ***THIRTEEN: 'THEY'RE NOT LITTLE GIRLS ANYMORE'*<sup>8</sup>**

*Thirteen* (2003) provides another opportunity to think differently about youth and the discourse of 'coming of age'. Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, it depicts life at the extreme end of what might be called teenage rebellion, even though the film ultimately offers viewers a return to 'safer' conceptual territory, as with *Lolita*. It nonetheless challenges the limits of possibility regarding youth behaviour and in doing so encounters the paradox of 'coming of age,' pointing to its fourth key constitutive element. *Thirteen* is the story of Tracy who, upon entering the seventh grade and meeting the popular Evie, goes from being a typical good girl to a typical bad one under Evie's influence. The two girls share a wild and intense relationship in which they, amongst other things, steal money, shoplift, get various body piercings, take drugs, and have casual sex. Tracy's family struggles to understand and cope with her increasingly erratic behaviour, which eventually culminates in a dramatic showdown between the girls and their mothers. It would be easy to say that the film represents behaviours and experiences that are in fact uncommon to most seventh graders, and so does not need to be seen as a grave indication of the troubled lives of young people in the 'real world'. But what this film demonstrates is precisely the hold that the dominant 'coming of age' logic has over our

thinking, such that the logic is affirmed even as it is challenged.

The film marks a developmental stage that is 'in between' child and adult, or 'in transition' to adulthood, and, while this stage is upsetting and troublesome, it is possible to see that it is part of the normative 'coming of age' process. When developmental logic conceives of a gradual process of preparation for adulthood, then it must prescribe that teens go through various obstacles in the service of their eventual arrival at adulthood. But also, the development of an adult identity calls for a period that is inherently tumultuous and disruptive due to its occupation of a social space that is neither child nor adult. Being a 'tween'<sup>9</sup> is going to upset the boundaries of social acceptability, but that is what is supposed to happen given this logic. In Christine Griffin's (2004) words, "dominant representations of youth have simultaneously treated youth as a period of inevitable turmoil and a time for 'having a fling', and as a time when the path to 'normal' life must be found and followed" (p. 16). So however confronting its depiction, and however destructive the stage might be, teen rebellion has a place in the 'coming of age' discourse, to the extent that it is thought 'wrong' not to go through a 'rebellious phase'. Why, then, is it the cause for so much fear when this is exactly how 'coming of age' has been structured?

If rebellion is accepted because it ultimately leads to an acceptance of the dominant social order, then this would by definition not make it rebellious. 'True' rebellion takes us towards the 'otherwise' of conceptual thought; it is about engaging with the undecidability of 'coming of age' and of opening up to an unforeseeable outcome. As already noted, a space that is 'in between' is actually an unthinkable space given binary logic. If youth is about being in preparation for an adult state of being, then in order to maintain this ideal, young people can never actually arrive at adulthood, they can never become adult, for this would upset the defining limits of both 'youth' and 'adult'. Teens therefore rebel in the service of nothing. Here, at this conceptual limit, there is an additional aspect of the third part of the paradox of 'coming of age.' For something to count as an event or a marker of 'coming of age', it cannot be seen as a consequence of any predetermined knowledge or planned outcome, otherwise there is no 'otherwise' and "it would become a foregone conclusion," already "right in advance" (Lucy, 2004, p. 150). No moment of transition could therefore be marked: there could only be "the unfolding of a calculable process" (Derrida, 1992, p. 24). By contrast, Derrida (2002) argues that "to whom it is said 'come', should not be determined in advance" (p. 12), for to do so would be to cancel out the context in which to experience such a thing as, in this instance, 'coming of age'. So for teen rebellion to count towards the event of 'coming of age', an "interruption of the deliberation that precedes it" is required (Derrida, 1992, p. 26).

This involves working with and not against undecidability in making 'all or nothing' distinctions between youth and adult. This means that teens are either yet to have 'come of age' – are yet to have 'done' the things that supposedly mark 'coming of age' – or 'coming of age' will have "already followed a rule" (Derrida, 1992, p. 24) and occurred. The moments of 'arrival' in the film, such as when Tracy has her first

sexual encounter or gets high for the first time, are finite moments, except that once they happen, “once the ordeal of the undecidable is past (if that is possible)” (Derrida, 1992, p. 24), they cannot be traced back to an origin grounded in Tracy’s ‘youth’.

In other words, the moment of a transition necessitates a break with what Derrida (1992) calls a “horizon of expectation” (p. 26). “If there were anticipation or programming”, Derrida (2002) argues, “there would be neither event nor history” (p. 12), because “it is on condition of the ‘come’ that there is an experience of coming, of the event ... and consequently, of that which, because it comes from the other, cannot be anticipated” (p. 12). This would make teen rebellion, rather than a prescribed developmental stage, a point at which the ‘otherwise’ is engaged. It would be a point where the ‘event’ or ‘events’ of ‘coming of age’ occur, and so rebellion is what institutes a new conceptual order that breaks with what preceded it. So to say that adulthood has been successfully prepared for is not the same as having it arrive from youth, for the preparation done ‘in’ youth anticipated an outcome, but the only way that an outcome could come to pass is if its arrival was not the expected outcome. This is because youth is adulthood’s ‘other’ and, following Derrida’s (1992) remarks, we cannot do without this conceptual distinction, even as it is challenged (p. 23). So the outcome is not the outcome, it is something entirely ‘new’ because Tracy, for example, will have become something else: adult.

This is the fourth element of the paradox of ‘coming of age’. Once ‘coming of age’ has ‘arrived’ or ‘occurred’, having passed through the space of the undecidable, it will immediately become something else and it will no longer be governed by the horizon of expectation of ‘coming of age’. This is to say that youth does not, cannot, ‘come of age’. Yet this is also how adulthood can come. While this manner of conceptualisation appears to be contradictory, it is a way of allowing a process of ‘coming of age’ to occur in a way that keeps a youth/adult or innocence/knowledge binary intact.

However, the social context of the production of *Thirteen* signals the difficulty of dealing with this last element (and therefore all the elements) of the paradox of ‘coming of age’. As with *Lolita*, the young actors in the film had to abide by strict guidelines during the filming process. For example, the film’s DVD audio commentary explains that in a three-way make-out scene with Tracy, Evie and neighbour Luke, the guidelines of the manner and kind of touching allowed had to be strictly observed by parents and other officials during filming (for example, the girls could not touch the waistband of the boy’s shorts). The director, Hardwicke, also notes that in the scene Evie had to be stopped from using a bong taken from Luke’s mantelpiece because Nikki Reed, the actress playing Evie, was underage. Instead, they had her put it down and rejoin the threesome by having Luke say “get back here, girl.” She sits back down and pulls off his shirt – the less controversial option, it would seem.

Also, while the film was admired for its highly realistic portrayal of ‘real’ teen life, which includes “sex, violence, drug use, profanity” and very near “nudity”, Catherine Driscoll writes that these are exactly the issues that get “assessed in considering whether a film is suitable for youth” and are what count towards a restrictive rating (2002, p.

206). In this case, the film was classified MA+ in Australia and R in America. It seems ridiculous that minors would ever be allowed to portray these things, however closely regulated and supervised, if by doing so they would involve themselves in things deemed unsuitable for youth to see, let alone do, and even if they are supposedly depicting what teen reality is really about. What does it mean for the discourse of 'coming of age' that the young actresses be allowed in the film when it is illegal for actual thirteen-year-olds to see it? We run into the same conceptual contradiction raised by *Lolita*: that only youth can depict youth, but to have youth depict youth is to violate what is intrinsic about youth.

The result is that *Thirteen* is a film "about youth but not for youth" (Driscoll, 2002, p. 206). Adults can watch the on-screen transgressions of young teens, yet they can still protect the innocence of young viewers through, in this instance, film classification guidelines. This, however, does not open the way for dealing with the issue that youth are simultaneously regarded as innocent at the same time as their non-innocence is displayed, even if it is only 'performed' as opposed to actually 'experienced'. But, significantly, this is assuming that there is a difference between the two.

## THE PERFORMATIVITY OF INNOCENCE

Both films actually provide a key clue for how to address the conflicts that the paradox of 'coming of age' produces. The kind of behaviour depicted in the films becomes a reason to reaffirm the distinction of innocence/knowledge, because every time something happens to mark 'coming of age', the notion of innocence that defines youth is broken with. Because this contradicts the notion of 'coming of age' as progressive and gradual, such a break seems dangerous and premature, a cause for fear and panic, even though a young person is doing what they are supposed to do in the only way that the binary logic of innocence/knowledge will allow if that logic is to be maintained.

However, for innocence to be represented at all it must already be other than so-called pure innocence. One of the issues raised here (and by the Henson case) is that to have young people 'perform' their age is to violate their own innocence, which assumes that innocence cannot be performed, that it can only 'be', which is why only youth can depict youth, even though, technically, it cannot be depicted. But the deconstructive reading performed here suggests that the films are not strictly a reflection or representation of a 'natural' state of youth if that so-called natural state is already constituted within a system of differential relations, or is already 'breached' or 'split' from within. This is to say that the experience of innocence is made possible precisely because it is not pure, but produced. A 'produced' innocence need not be thought of as less important or 'true' than an absolute innocence, but the former calls for more attention and consideration to be paid to how we make sense of youth and the effects of this process, and there is an opportunity to think differently as a result.

What is revealed by calling attention to the manner of conceptualisation of youth in this way is that part of what constitutes pedophilia and teen rebellion as problematic has to do with the concepts in use. By acknowledging the ambivalence of the grounding



assumptions of 'coming of age,' the issues of safety, abuse, consent and exploitation that are raised by these problems can be considered beyond assumptions of the inherent nature of youth. This does not mean that youth has no firm meaning or will slip from any attempt to make it meaningful, nor is this analysis about replacing a flawed logic with something less problematic. This work involves, as Derrida (1976) states, both "conserving and annulling inherited conceptual oppositions" (p.105). In doing so, it is possible to respond to the perceived threat posed by media representations of sex and sexuality in relation to young people in a way that does not reproduce the conditions that produced the threat in the first place.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to address concerns about the representation of youth sexuality in the media by focusing on the conceptual conditions of youth that work to structure a notion of youth sexuality as problematic. Using techniques of Derridean deconstruction, the paper examined the conceptual limits of the discourse of 'coming of age', articulated four key paradoxical elements that underpin the discourse, and investigated the effects of these elements through an analysis of the films *Lolita* and *Thirteen*. The reading revealed that the oppositional logic of nature / culture or innocence / knowledge cannot contain that which it marks as the proper development of youth and their ideal entry into adulthood. It showed that when the undecidability of oppositional logic goes unrecognised, dominant logic becomes problematic because attempts are made to maintain a logic based on absolute distinctions, when in fact they are thinkable only because they are not absolute. The effect of this is that the discourse of 'coming of age' can only perpetuate a conflict between a desire to protect the innocence of youth and a demand that they 'grow up'.

In response to this conflict, this paper has argued that the innocence of youth is always already cultural, and that there is nothing intrinsic or immutable about youth to work from or to seek to protect. From this perspective, there is an opportunity to think differently about youth and to have arguments about the problems of teen sexuality progress rather than be continuously re-hashed using terms that ensure the perpetuation of youth sexuality as a problem.

Further research might therefore consider the meaning and effects of expressions of youth sexuality in the media according to constructions of youth that do not take youth to be victims, or inherently vulnerable, or innocent and asexual. The kinds of outcomes such alternative constructions or discourses produce for young people and the wider society would also need to be investigated and this may require the application of empirical research methods which have not been considered here. However, if, as the present deconstructive study has indicated, the barrier to moving beyond the problem of youth sexuality has to do with how the conceptual frameworks underpinning dominant youth discourses operate, then any further attempt to address the problem of youth sexuality and consider solutions for it would need to involve examining the assumptions about youth underpinning the chosen research method or interpretive framework, as



well as how such assumptions relate to the problem or issue under examination.

## ENDNOTES

1. I acknowledge and thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful and constructive feedback on this paper. I also thank Sue Yell, Simon Cooper and Robert Briggs for their assistance in the development of the arguments presented here, and for providing comments and feedback on the paper.
2. See David Buckingham's *After the Death of Childhood: Growing Up in the Age of Electronic Media* (2000) and *Young People, Sex and the Media: The Facts of Life?* (2003) for useful examinations of popular perceptions of youth and concerns about the adverse influence of media on young people that can be seen to rely on assumptions about the nature of youth provided by developmental psychology.
3. The 2006 paper from the Australia Institute on "corporate pedophilia" argued that retailers such as David Jones and Myer engaged in a form of child abuse by using sexualised images of children in their advertising campaigns (see <http://www.tai.org.au/documents/downloads/DP90.pdf>).
4. While it is generally assumed that 'coming of age' concerns teenagers or at least concerns youth once they reach puberty, it is also the case that children are never not learning how to behave in society. However, it may be said that unlike the category 'youth', 'childhood' does not carry the same expectation as youth to 'become' adult; rather, children are required to just 'be'. But given that the activities of childhood eventually become subject to a specific set of expectations that characterise youth, it is also possible to suggest that all so-called children are engaged in a process of 'coming of age'. I do not therefore draw a sharp distinction between child and youth, although I predominantly use the terms youth or teenager here as the films I will shortly discuss concern girls aged 12 and 13.
5. The deconstructive approach which informs the argument of this paper is derived from Derrida, however Derrida's work is part of a larger theoretical tradition of interrogating and questioning the assumptions that have underpinned Western culture. Key theorists such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Lacan have made significant contributions to this tradition, and Derrida's approach has been informed by aspects of their work.
6. The phrase 'An unthinkable attraction', used here as a subheading, is a tagline from the 1997 film version of *Lolita*.
7. This subheading is another tagline from *Lolita* (1997).
8. The phrase 'They're not little girls anymore' is a tagline from *Thirteen* (2003).
9. The term 'tween' refers to middle childhood and signals a state or stage of being that is, literally, in between child and teen. The term is predominantly used within a marketing discourse to describe the consumer category of 8-14 year olds and has been discussed in the context of accusations of corporate pedophilia.

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# WHEN THE 'OTHER' BECOMES 'US': MEDIATED REPRESENTATIONS, 'TERRORISM' AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR'

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to elaborate on the use of one of the rhetorical techniques employed in the political and mediated representation of 'Islamist terrorists' by the British print media in the aftermath of the London bombings of July 7th, 2005. This technique consists of the emphasis on making 'terrorism' and its perpetrators look 'foreign', by creating an opposition between the Nation and the 'Other' (Said, 1997). This opposition is questionable from, at least, two perspectives. On the one hand, this polarisation depends on the position of who produces the discourse. The British reaction to the bombings was a patriotic one which sought to protect the British Nation against the 'foreign enemy' (Bulley, 2008). On the other hand, though, taking into account that the bombers of July 7th were actually British, it is possible to question the actual meaning of 'us' and 'them', as well as the term 'foreign', since the 'Other' is, in this context, also a part of 'us'. The consequence is an ambiguous division between 'known' and 'unknown', 'good' and 'evil', which does not only occur in rhetorical terms, but which is also visible in ongoing conflicts, and has an impact on the 'clash of civilisations' concept.

**Key words:** terrorism, media representations, 'Otherness', 'war on terror', 'clash of civilisations', identity



## INTRODUCTION

The study of 'terrorism' through its media representations provides a useful insight to understanding not only the phenomenon of 'terrorism' itself, but also the social and political contexts in which it occurs. The discussion presented in this paper is based on some of the conclusions reached in a study about 'terrorism' and the media. This research consisted of a comparative study of newspapers published in the immediate aftermath of two 'terrorist' events, which took place in Madrid (Spain) on March 11th, 2004 and in London (UK) on July 7th, 2005 (Sanz Sabido, 2008). This analysis was based on original Spanish and British newspaper material and its purpose was to identify any differences and similarities in the reporting of 'terrorist' events in both countries. Amongst other findings, I concluded that the concept of 'terrorism' is understood and represented differently in Britain and Spain. I also found that journalistic practices in both countries work in similar ways, although image content tends to be more salient in British front pages than in Spanish ones, where, on the contrary, more textual information is included.

However, this paper is particularly interested in the analysis concerning the British media coverage of the London bombings. The purpose is to illustrate the discursive techniques used by British newspapers in order to emphasise the patriotic exaltation of the British Nation and to make the 'terrorists' look 'foreign'. The potential consequences that may derive from the use of these techniques are also drawn upon. These consequences are related to the representation of Muslims and 'terrorism' within the framework of the 'Western' political and military agendas, and ultimately translate into concepts such as Huntington's 'clash of civilisations'.

Although this paper does not present a critique of methodology as such, it seems appropriate briefly to outline the method of media analysis that has been applied. The front pages of seven national British newspapers were analysed, including broadsheets and tabloids, which were published one day after the London bombings of July 7th. These newspapers were *The Sun*, *The Independent*, *Daily Express*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*. In order to analyse this material, I proposed the use of what I have called a 'holistic' method, which is based on a number of separate existing traditions. These are combined so as to offer a more comprehensive analysis, one that can overcome some of the limitations of each individual method, providing knowledge about a given text from different angles. According to this method, the components that are analysed in a text – either front or inside pages – include the textual or written content of the news article or articles (content and theme analysis methods were applied); any images or photographic content (semiotics); the structure of the page, where both text and image are combined in a certain way in relation to one another (the salience of certain elements over others was considered); and the context in which such page is produced, which refers to the social, financial and political context in which the news is formed.

The first section of this paper analyses some of the discursive properties of the material war that takes place in Iraq and Afghanistan. Based on some headlines published

in British newspapers, certain discursive practices will be drawn upon, particularly the use of rhetorical representations to create an opposition between two groups, 'us' and 'them'. I suggest that the use of the label 'foreign' to refer to second-generation British citizens within the context of a multicultural Britain must be questioned. The 'foreign' label plays a central part in the construction of these citizens' identities in terms of their belonging to a certain group, since it is closely related to numerous conflicts of political, financial and social nature in the Middle East.

In fact, it is argued that the purpose of this rhetoric is to construct a view of 'terrorism' which highlights its uncontrollable and unpredictable nature, so ultimately policies and military actions may be justified accordingly. Moreover, the emphasis on the existence of a 'foreign' ideology, which threatens to bring an end to the 'Western' society by attacking it from within, has also played a central role in public discourse and, by extension, in material actions. However, in this rhetorical process, citizens who were born in Britain, but who have a background other than British, are placed in a position where their belonging to the British society becomes unclear, which may have an effect in terms of their identity.

In the second section, this mediated dichotomy between 'us' and the 'Other' is considered in relation to the theory of the 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington, 1998). The absolutist opposition between 'us' and 'them' creates a situation in which it is not possible to condemn what is believed to be the cause of the attacks – participation in the 'war on terror' – and, simultaneously, condemn the attacks themselves. The ideology supporting the 'Western us' dominates over other ideologies, silencing any voices of dissent and minimising alternative debates. It will be suggested that the lack of factual information for the general public about the 'Other' and about the conflict with 'them' is one of the engines of the concept of the 'clash of civilisations'.

Some authors argue that the lack of accurate understanding of the 'Other' – from whichever position it is viewed, that is, whoever the 'Other' may be – is emphasised by the media's framing of the issues (Hussain, 2007). For example, some studies have shown that Muslims are represented as 'victims' but also as 'threats to society' (Rigoni, 2006). This type of representation causes and spreads fears of an expansion of the 'Islamic threat', supports the idea of the 'clash' and, by extension, provides a justification for launching a pre-emptive attack against the 'Other'. It will be suggested that the idea of the 'clash of civilisations' is a construction which not only serves to represent but, to a great extent, also promote, this ongoing conflict, while the true nature of the struggles is hidden: the financial, political and military interests that are being pursued under the name of freedom and democracy.

As a final introductory note, I must explain that a number of terms – such as 'terrorism', 'war on terror', 'Islamist', and 'West' – are placed within quotation marks throughout this paper. This is done with the purpose of representing that these terms are discursive and they can be questioned depending on what position they are analysed from or the context in which they are used.

## **'WE BRITONS' AND THE 'OTHER'**

Since September 2001, the attacks in the United States and the subsequent chain of events that followed them "favoured a climate of fear and generalised bewilderment worldwide" and produced a "radicalisation of political positions" (Ferrari, 2007, p. 604). Paradoxically, this radicalisation has been justified by the attempt to bring security back to the 'West', which has, instead, suffered further 'terrorist' attacks and now faces the constant threat that these attacks may reoccur. In this climate of fear a discourse of war emerged before any actual military actions had begun and provided the basis for those actions within the frame of the 'war on terror', which translated into the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. Faced with such important ramifications, it is essential to understand how the war in the Middle East was presented to the 'Western' audience.

The 'war on terror', or military intervention of the United States and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, has two dimensions. To make this point clear, it is useful to draw on Archer's model of orders of reality, in which she presents three levels: a natural order, involved with events produced naturally, such as floods or earthquakes; a practical order, which refers to material culture and practical relations and actions; and a social order, related to discursive knowledge and relations (Archer, 2001, p. 162). The 'war on terror', according to this model, belongs to the practical order, since it is not a natural event and it is happening in material terms in the Middle East. However, it also belongs to the social order, because it exists at a discursive level which pre-dated the material one.

Thus, the establishment of the category 'war' when the 2001 events took place, and the organisation of the subsequent discourse around that category, led towards the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. In this respect, Montgomery (2005) points out that "to claim that discourse determined later courses of action would be – clearly – to overstate the point; but there were discursive processes at work", even if they worked in uneven and contradictory ways (pp. 149-150). Bush (2001), in his first address to the Nation on September 11th, stated that "we stand together to win the war against terrorism", mentioning the term 'war' for the first time and initiating the move from an 'attack' to an 'act of war'. Baxi (2005) states that never before September 11th were acts of 'terror' "described in terms of a 'war', nor were the practices of 'counter-terror'" (p. 8). In Montgomery's words, what we see "at the level of public discourse is the term war (as in act of war) emerging by discursive amplification out of the difficulties of describing a tragic and horrific event" (p. 176). Bush's first mention of the term 'war' was not literal, but figurative, although it escalated until it became literal, culminating in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The crucial aspect of this discourse of war is the fact that it was strongly ideological and rhetorical. According to Ferrari (2007), a conflict frame was presented, which was based on the creation of two positions which were opposed to, and exclusive from, one another (p. 620). Indeed, the main discursive tendency observed in the media and one of the crucial points in understanding how the discourse about 'war' and 'terrorism' was constructed can be appreciated by looking into the creation of two antagonistic

positions through the rhetorical use of the pronouns 'we' and 'they'. One position is close, familiar and known, whereas the other is different, strange and mysterious. The first one takes the form of 'us' – 'the good ones' –, whereas the 'Other' is always 'them' – 'the evil ones'.

Bush's discourse was based on a persuasion strategy which works on fear of the 'Other', where both emotive states are "nothing but two sides of the same ideological space, which is the space of fear, or the space *implied* by a conflict frame and *required* by a strategy of fear" (Ferrari, 2007, p. 620). According to Ferrari, the bipolar structure of 'good' and 'evil', and 'us' and 'them', is also reflected in the opposition between 'confidence' and 'fear'. This is what forms Bush's strategy of fear, which is rooted in the conflict frame as an ideological basis of Bush's persuasion strategy from the September 11th events towards the war in Iraq (Ferrari, 2007, p. 620). This rhetoric of fear works because, during the mediated preparation for an imminent war, the idea that 'our' civilisation is in danger, because of an external threat, appeals to the endangered audience, and therefore any actions to defend themselves or 'their' society are validated.

Said (1997) states that the pronoun 'we' is used as the opposite to Islam, which is not known, familiar or acceptable, since it is outside the world that 'we' inhabit (p. xxx). However, the ambiguity of these terms matches the ambiguity of what they represent from, at least, two points of view. Firstly, this polarisation takes a different meaning depending on where the discourse originates from. Who 'us' and 'them' represent is a question of who produces the discourse, since in such mediated struggle no group is discourse-free. This means that, although this study concentrates primarily on 'Western'<sup>1</sup> discourse, the same kind of practice is carried out by other groups or ideologies, in this case, 'Islamist' groups.

Secondly, the meaning of the terms 'us' and 'them' can also be questioned in terms of who it includes within a given group or society. In order to illustrate this idea it is helpful to draw on a specific front page which was published on July 8th, 2005, one day after the London bombings, and which provides a significant example of the discursive 'we' as opposed to the 'Other'<sup>2</sup>. The front page of *Daily Express* on that date was headlined "75 killed and 743 injured by suicide bombers but ... We Britons will never be defeated" (*Daily Express*, 2005, July 8). I have stated earlier that this discussion emerges from a larger research project which compares Spanish and British newspaper coverage of 'terrorist' events. One of the most significant differences between the British and the Spanish case studies, which emerged from the content and theme analyses, rests on the tone of the reaction to the bombings. British newspapers were generally more defiant against the 'terrorists', usually based on the emphasis of a patriotic reaction. This is visible in headlines such as the one mentioned above or in others like "Bloodied but unbowed" (*Daily Mirror*, 2005, July 8). British newspapers, unlike Spanish ones, employ terms such as 'intimidated', 'bloodied' or 'defeated', which are employed to convey the message that Britain may have been hit, but the Nation is still strong and will not collapse, and *they* are yet to be beaten. Although this choice of terminology is not universal if only the front pages are analysed, it does become a generalised trend when the inside articles are also considered.



Whereas Spanish newspapers defended the country's democratic system and integrity, Britain reacted in the name of the British Nation and the 'British way of life'<sup>3</sup>, which was defended against the 'foreign'. This type of reaction has also been observed in other instances, like in the aftermath of the incidents that took place in Glasgow airport on June 30th, 2007. The headline on the front page of *The Sun* on July 4th 2007 read "Fly it in the face of terror", in reference to the British flag that served as a background image. The nationalist sense is emphasised on this occasion by the fact that the event happened in Scotland, but the opposition is presented as being between Britain and 'terror', where 'terror' becomes almost a personalised entity<sup>4</sup>. Like Tony Blair's excerpt, from his speech on July 7th, illustrates, "our determination to defend our way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people" (*Daily Express*, 2005, July 8, p. 6), the opposition between 'us' and 'them' is presented by referring to 'our determination to defend our way of life' as opposed to 'their determination to cause death'.

However, focusing on the use of the pronoun 'we' in the *Daily Express* headline, it seems clear that this term represents and emphasises the 'us' category, that is, 'the ones that have been attacked', 'the good ones', 'the civilised ones' and 'the ones that will stand together'. This example becomes more interesting, though, as the use of 'we' has been paired with a specific nationality, 'Britons'. This addition can be understood simply as the explicit form of an implicit meaning, that is, 'we' may have been understood as British citizens without the added explanation. However, it might have also been possible to understand 'we' not as national citizens of a particular country, but as members of the 'civilised, Western, democratic society'. After all, the United States and Spain have also been victims of previous, similar atrocities, and have also been *there*, in the same 'we' position. Nevertheless, the newspaper chose to highlight the statement that Britons will not be defeated by including the specific reference.

What makes this choice even more noteworthy is the widely discussed fact that the bombers *were*, actually, also British<sup>5</sup>. All these considerations about this statement lead to at least three questions. First, if the discursive tendency is to separate 'us' from 'them', this cannot be successfully done on the basis of nationality as, in this case, 'they' are also Britons. Therefore, who are 'we'? What exactly does it refer to and who does it include? Secondly, the opposite consideration also applies. Since the separation between 'us' and 'them' does not work based on the nationality criterion – because the bombers, who are supposed to be aliens to 'us', are actually an integrated part of the 'We Britons' classification –, it is also valid to ask what the pronoun 'they' refers to. And last, following on from the previous points, the final question is why the term 'We Britons' was used if this choice of words is potentially so problematic.

This last question could be answered simply by pointing out that, at this stage in the aftermath of the bombings, it was still not known that the 'terrorists' were British. However, there are indications that this may not have been the case<sup>6</sup>. Questions about the nationality of the bombers had already been raised in various newspapers, including the same *Daily Express*, where the editorial states that "the bombs are being planted by



fanatics who *live among us* [italics added]" (*Daily Express*, 2005, July 8, p. 21). Similarly, *Daily Mail* published an article highlighting the statement "it's time to tilt the balance of justice in favour of the law-abiding and away from those who *choose to live here* [italics added] proclaiming their hatred of everything that Britain represents" (*Daily Mail*, 2005, July 8, p. 18). It seems that, even though at this point there may have been no sufficient information to know that the bombers were definitely British – or, at least, this information was not made publicly available – the prospect of this being the case was plausible enough not to proffer such a phrase.

The reason for this headline in particular, and the generalised discourse observed in the media (fomenting the opposition and hostility against the 'Other', as well as the strength and unity between 'us'), is related to what Bulley (2008) believes to be an effort to make the attacks look 'foreign' – that is, not something that 'We Britons' would do – even though almost everything about the attacks was 'domestic'. This author explains that the emphasis on "the contingency of the bombings, their extraordinary nature, their uncontrollability and 'Otherness'" by politicians and the media pursues the primary objective of justifying the foreign policies that have derived from these 'terrorist' attacks (p. 382). Indeed, while rhetorical techniques such as the ones being discussed are presented to the public in order to support and justify the war, from an International Relations point of view the 'war on terror' was justified in terms of the "protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the international or global rule of law, and ... as a worldwide installation of market-friendly democracy and freedom" (Baxi, 2005, p. 9)<sup>7</sup>.

In this sense, Bulley (2008) states that the 'foreignness' of the attacks has a link with the 'failing state' concept (a state that cannot guarantee the freedom and human rights of its citizens), so if the attacks are the "results of another state's failure and disintegration" (pp. 385-386), then the international community must act "pre-emptively if necessary, to prevent states from failing. The terror is foreign, so it demands a proactive foreign policy" (p. 386). However, as the 'terror' actually comes from *within*, it is valid to question how supporting a war in the Middle East will solve this situation.

In terms of making the 'terrorists' look foreign, some newspaper excerpts present this tendency when describing the bomber on the bus: "He was olive-skinned, about 6ft tall, 25 years of age, basically very presentable. He looked *foreign* [italics added] and was wearing *foreign* [italics added] clothes" (*Daily Express*, 2005, July 8, p. 2). Similarly, Blair (2006) talks about a 'foreign' ideology, stating about Khan, the ringleader, that "he may have been born here. But his ideology wasn't" (in Bulley, 2008, p. 381). It is possible to question, though, what is meant by 'foreign' in a country like Britain. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'foreign' as of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own; dealing with or relating to other countries; coming or introduced from outside; (foreign to) strange and unfamiliar to; (foreign to) not belonging to or characteristic of. (Compact Oxford English Dictionary online)

This definition would validate the use of the term 'foreign' to describe the bomber, his clothes and his ideology, especially based on the meaning "coming or introduced

from outside". However, it is also valid to suggest that, in a multicultural country like Britain, the use of this term may need to be reviewed, since what is being considered as 'foreign' – because it looks different or is identified with a different religion or culture – , has now become an integrated part of this country. In other words, not everyone who is dressing in those 'foreign' clothes and supporting 'foreign' ideologies is a foreigner: some of *them* are, in fact, British. This takes us back to the first two questions posed above. If the 'foreign' has become British, then who are 'we' and who are 'they'?

I would suggest that these two categories, 'us' and 'them', are constructed positions characterised, on the one hand, by very broad features, due to the vast amount of people *belonging* to each group, and, on the other hand, by some specific, more relevant attributes which make them part of one group and not the other. These are the attributes that make very heterogeneous groups seem homogeneous, which ultimately leads to generalised terms such as 'Western' society, 'democratic state' or 'capitalist state'. Even though these terms refer to different aspects of a country's system and organisation, they are all used to describe 'us', whereas the 'Others' are identified as 'Islamists', 'fundamentalists' or 'radicals'. In relation to the 'Other', a metonymic twist gives grounds for a label which names the whole group after a minority within the same group, even though not every member of that group agrees with or shares those specific attributes used for labelling and stereotyping purposes. As with the 'Western us', this is also a vast and ambiguous group to define.

## A 'CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS'?

Earlier I stated that the discursive points presented above ultimately have a link with theories such as the 'clash of civilisations'. This is a concept that has encountered numerous criticisms and updates since Huntington suggested the term. He states that religion is "perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilises people" (Grim & Finke, 2007, p. 636) and, therefore, is the basis of every value-system, in a way that every world civilisation is based around one of the major religions. He matches each country with one of those religions and suggests that social conflict emanates from the 'clash' between countries of different faiths. In general terms, Huntington establishes that the major divide between civilisations is the one between 'the West and the Rest' "because only the West valued 'individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets'. Therefore the West (in reality, the United States) must be prepared to deal militarily with threats from these rival civilisations" (Ali, 2003, p. 299).

One of the critiques that Huntington's ideas encounter is the fact that it is not possible to identify one country with one religion. To state that Arabs are Muslims and Europeans are Christians is inaccurate and far from reality. There are usually different religions cohabiting within each country and, not only that, but "religious hegemonies can and do change: Spain was once a Muslim land and Algeria was a Christian land. ... History fails to reflect Huntington's simplified image of religious uniformity or stability" (Grim & Finke, 2007, p. 636). Ali (2003) makes a similar point in reference to Islam, stating

that “the world of Islam has not been monolithic for over a thousand years” (p. 300) and people of different faiths live together in the same country without necessarily having conflictive situations. In fact, it is argued that many inhabitants of the same country and different religions have more in common amongst themselves than with citizens of other countries that follow the same beliefs. Huntington’s idea of having one single civilisation has also been criticised, as it is believed that *forcing* religious homogeneity within one country can actually be the cause of conflict – as it is indeed the case –, and having one civilisation where one religion is imposed is likely to become the cause of religious persecutions<sup>8</sup> on a larger scale.

On a different note, there have been studies that suggest different explanations for the ‘clash of civilisations’. Following the publication of the Danish cartoons of Prophet Mohammed in 2006, Hussain (2007) suggests that this was an example of civilisations clashing, although the media’s framing of the subject was “inherently flawed” (p. 112), not helping to provide the audience with an accurate understanding of what had really happened. His main point is that both worlds have a considerable lack of objective knowledge about each other, which is emphasised by the media’s role. This author analyses several aspects of the misrepresentation and misinformation of each of these civilisations about each other, to the extent that he does not talk about ‘clash of civilisations’ but a ‘clash of misconceptions’.

On a similar note, Ali (2003) states that many conflicting ideologies have existed in the world – such as capitalism, socialism, communism, Nazism – and that they were all based on the principle that “the less you know, the easier to manipulate. With the triumph of one ideology and the total collapse of the other, the space for debate and dissent” narrows dramatically (p. 281). Ali raises an essential point in relation to knowledge about any conflicting ideologies and how much room there is for discussion. Indeed, one of the main engines of the current ‘clash of civilisations’ – if such ‘clash’ exists – is the lack of factual information for the general public to assimilate and determine what their position is in terms of the conflict.

Lewis (1990) states that the ongoing conflict between the ‘West’ and the Middle East is “no less than a clash of civilisations – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both” (p. 6). Lewis also adds that it is essential that the ‘West’ is not “provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival” (p. 6). Yet, if this ‘clash’ attends to historical reasons which translate in potentially irrational feelings in the present, it is possible to question why the concept of ‘clashing civilisations’ is being promoted through rhetorical uses and discourses, such as the ones discussed in the previous section, which foment division and further struggles. In these lines, it can be argued that this term is part of the construction of the ‘clash’ itself, in order to attend to certain political agendas. However, Lewis dedicates some attention to the roots of this conflict, and he believes that imperialism is, amongst others, one of the potential causes of the existing tensions. Imperialism is certainly one of the most recurring issues in explaining the critiques against

the 'West'. Ali (2003), for instance, states that "the most dangerous 'fundamentalism' today – the 'mother of all fundamentalisms' – is American imperialism" (p. xiii). Although Lewis dismisses the idea that imperialism is the root of Muslim hatred against the 'West', Ali seems certain that the American imperialist attitude is at the heart of the problem, amongst other reasons. In this sense, the root of the 'clash' is precisely the *Manichean* division, illustrated above, between 'us' (the 'good' ones) and 'them' (the 'evil' ones), where 'we' are the ones in possession of the ultimate truth and, therefore, have the absolute right to impose it on others (who are downplayed and not considered as equal to 'us').

However, in terms of what characteristic of the 'Western' society causes this conflict with other civilisations, such as the Islamic one, it is interesting to observe that some authors point at their democratic systems, whereas other authors suggest that it is related to globalisation or the cultural imperialism that is affecting countries all around the world. In any case, as stated by Blair on July 7th, the 'British way of life', as an example of the broader 'Western' way of life, was under attack on July 7th as well as on September 11th and March 11th, so the 'Western' way of life may be understood as a general term to define the different aspects that describe this civilisation and differentiate it from others. These differing opinions in relation to the precise causes of conflict between the 'West' and the 'Rest' constitute another symptom of the ambiguity which characterises the division between 'us' and 'them' that I mentioned earlier.

In fact, one of the most frequent causes of tensions that authors point out is the question of Israel, which is the manifest instance that illustrates this problem from several angles: support for a country whose very right to exist is a point of contention among some (Muslim and non Muslim) states and groups; displacement of Palestinians; presence of a 'Western' force with its imperialist-capitalist-democratic views within the Middle East; the religious implications attached to the lands that are being disputed; and the power that the 'West' acquire by having such presence in this conflictive zone. This power is not only political but also of great economic value due to the vast production of oil in the Middle East. Drawing on the rhetorical division that I presented on the previous section, it could be argued that Israel is, in fact, an 'Other' within the Middle East – the ultimate 'Other' – from the point of view of those countries which surround it, which reject it and are in continuous tensions with it. However, from a 'Western' discourse perspective, Palestinian nationalism is the source of 'evil' and a threat to Israel and the stability of the whole region. The argument that the meaning of 'us' and 'them' is relative, since it is discursively dependent on the position of the speaker, is, therefore, observable not only rhetorically but also in every aspect of this conflict in material terms.

On a different note, with regards to the representation of Muslims in the media, Rigoni (2006) states that some mass media represent Muslim converts simultaneously as "a 'victim' and a 'threat to society'", which has the "effect, if not the aim, of causing or encouraging the primary fears of an expansionist Islamic force, and to give credence to the assumptions of a 'clash of civilisations'" (p. 75)<sup>9</sup>. According to this statement,



the reason for applying the concept of a 'clash' between rival civilisations is, once again, to emphasise the feelings of fear and insecurity towards an enemy and, as a consequence, provide a justification for attacking the 'Other'. By highlighting the idea that *our* civilisation is in danger because of an external threat, any actions to defend *our* society or to retaliate are automatically validated, but before this happens, it is essential to define a division between what is acceptable – 'us', 'our' society – , and what is not acceptable – the 'evil Other'. This is done, as I have argued previously, rhetorically and by emphasising the differences over the similarities, the foreign qualities against the domestic ones. This becomes more complicated, though, when the 'Other' – the 'foreign' – is embedded within 'us'. In other words, when 'We Britons' – or 'We Westerners' – are not able to differentiate anymore between the 'real us' and the 'Other', the term ultimately becomes void of meaning, adding to the confusion, the potential feelings of fear and insecurity towards an enemy which is now *within* and impossible to delimit.

In reference to Huntington's theory of 'clashing civilisations', he predicts, before the events of September 11th took place, that Islam is one of the main menaces to the 'West' and that, if it joined with another civilisation, they would become a great threat. In these lines, he states that "the world is not one. Civilisations unite and divide mankind ... blood and belief are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for" (Grim & Finke, 2007, p. 636). According to Ali (2003), these views provide the 'West' with a "simple but politically convenient analysis" which works as an "extremely useful cover for policy-makers and ideologues in Washington and elsewhere. Islam was seen as the biggest threat because most of the world's oil is produced in Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia" (p. 299). Said (1997) also points out that there is no other religion or culture which represents a more serious threat to the 'Western' civilisation than Islam but, similarly, he states that the upheavals that are taking place in the 'Islamic' world "have more to do with social, economic, and historical factors than they do unilaterally with Islam" (pp. lii-liii).

All in all, it is important to reflect on the connection between what the West has said about Islam and what various Muslim societies have done in a reactive way (Harris, 2006, p.23), because the "'word politics' by which each side sets up situations, justifies actions, forecloses options, and presses alternatives on the other" are created through a cycle of "back-and-forth between the West and Islam, the challenging and the answering, the opening of certain rhetorical spaces and the closing of others" (Said, 1997, p. lvi). These tendencies alternate a number of actions and reactions between two sides – 'us', 'them', the 'good' ones or the 'bad' ones, whoever these may be and whatever form they may take –, which translate, ultimately, into what is known as a 'clash of civilisations'.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper was to draw upon one of the rhetorical techniques used within UK politics and the British print media in order to create representations of 'Islamist terrorists' in the aftermath of the London bombings of July 7th. This technique – the rhetorical creation of two antagonist positions, 'us' and 'them', in order to refer to



the 'good' Nation and its 'evil' enemy – , has been explained and illustrated based on mediated examples of this division. By the end of the discussion, I have argued that the ultimate purpose of this technique is to emphasise the 'foreign' nature of 'terrorism' and its perpetrators look 'foreign', in order to foment the feeling of insecurity and struggle, so the need for foreign policies to avoid further 'terrorist' attacks is widely understood and so military actions rising from such policies are deemed justified.

Whereas, in this sense, 'Islamist terrorism' is presented as a 'foreign' entity, having an effect on the creation of the identities of British-born citizens who come from other backgrounds, it is also necessary to point out another problem. Certain news articles revealed the fact that the Muslim community should not be blamed for the bombings, as most Muslims are peaceful and do not agree with this type of activity or method. In any case, the way Islam is generally portrayed in the 'West' seems to have one simple meaning but, in fact, this generalised meaning is only a partial and incomplete understanding of the Islamic religion and society (Said, 1997, p. lvii). In fact, Islam is a much more complex term than is portrayed in the 'West', since this term designates the varied life that goes on in the 'Islamic' society, which includes more than 800 million people<sup>10</sup>, millions of square miles of territory, and dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures (Said, p. l).

The difficulty is that, in Said's words, there is a "close affiliation between language and political reality", and "everything about the study of Islam in the contemporary West is saturated with political importance" (p. lvii). Within this politically and discursively-charged context, *Manichean* approaches like the division between 'good' and 'bad' help create a separation between the 'just and correct we' and the 'evil Other', ultimately uniting the Nation against the threat. However, it can be concluded that in this struggle there is no right or wrong – or, in other words, there is no such *Manichean* dichotomy as political leaders have attempted to present – , but two groups with opposed interests who take military and political actions based on discursive justifications.

The media and the language used by it play a fundamental role in the shaping of public discourse, and this also applies to 'terrorism' and the 'war on terror'. Wollin (2008) states that, in the aftermath of September 11th, Americans were "propelled into the realm of mythology", explaining that myths do not provide an argument or a demonstration, and they do "not make the world intelligible, only dramatic", while heroes' destructive actions automatically acquire justification (p. 10). Silberstein (2004) also refers to the way language was used in that period of national crisis, stating that through public rhetoric "patriotism became consumerism, dissent was discouraged ... public language (re)created a national identity. Words helped many things happen. An act of 'terror' became an act of 'war'" (p. xiii). I have also discussed the patriotic feelings and the national identity that resulted from the events of July 7th (which had previously been observed in the United States after September 11th), and the discursive move from a 'terrorist' attack to an 'act of war', which set the basis for the subsequent war.

With regards to the patriotic reaction after September 11th, the representation of the United States standing together against the 'enemy' and other patriotic images and

initiatives which have later been repeated in other countries, raised concerns due to “the potential legislative correlates of ubiquitous flag waving”, in reference to the risk that *post-9/11* measures pose, compromising “fundamental civil liberties” (Silberstein, 2004, p. 122). The paradoxical situation is that, this fight, which is supposed to defend democracy and civil liberties is, in reality, endangering them.

I have suggested that one of the foundations of this ongoing conflict is related to, in some cases, the provision of misleading information, including the reading of religious texts that have been taken out of context. However, these are not the only reasons to explain the violence, and they are just factors that affect – in a negative way – the development of the conflict. Grim and Finke (2007) argue that “picturing such violence merely as a corruption of religion fails to account for the displacement and death of people because of their religious orientation” (p. 635) – as in the case of Palestine as well as the sectarian massacres in Iraq. This explanation also ignores the political and financial interests that are being pursued by the United States and its allies, and which have nothing to do with religion or with the corruption of it.

The climate generated under these circumstances has led some authors to state that there is a ‘clash of civilisations’ between ‘Western’ and ‘Islamic’ societies. I have argued that it is essential to understand – or, at least, be aware of – the truth about the ‘Other’, so misrepresentations and misunderstandings can be questioned and, ultimately, avoided. Conflicts which are based on irrational or unfounded fears may possibly be prevented. With a more accurate knowledge of the ‘Other’, feelings of hatred may potentially be reduced. This is not only a key point in international terms but, having observed that the boundaries between the ‘Other’ and ‘us’ are blurred by the fact that the ‘Other’ can also be one of ‘us’, it becomes imperative to take steps towards better knowledge and communication. As Cox and Marks (2003) state, “it is only through mutual understanding that respect can be promoted and provide a basis not only for peaceful co-existence but for mutually beneficial and enhancing relationships” (p. 8). It is also essential that objectivity is present in every “learned discourse about other societies, despite the long history of political, moral, and religious concerns” felt about the alien, the strange and different (Said, 1997, p. lvii). Accordingly, I suggest that it is essential that all parties involved acquire a better understanding of each other as a starting point, hopefully, for a peaceful coexistence.

This is not a simple issue, nor is it easy to resolve. The lives of many citizens have been affected so far, both in the ‘West’ and in the Middle East, on account of disputes that date back years and even centuries. What runs the risk of being represented as a religious problem is actually associated with historical, financial, political and – only partly – religious issues, as well as serious exacerbations of existing negative feelings due to further military incursions, imperialist attitudes and biased forms of discourse. Mediated discourses need to provide the audience with objective information about political debates and disputes, and move away from generating and supporting division and the idea of ‘clashing civilisations’ as in the examples illustrated above.

## ENDNOTES

1. References to the 'West' are not meant geographically but in political, ideological and financial terms.
2. These and the following observations were the result of the application of the proposed 'holistic' method presented earlier. Although this methodology is a combination of a number of existing traditions, the main method of discourse analysis employed here is content analysis.
3. Tony Blair mentioned the 'British way of life' during his speech on July 7th, 2005. He stated that "we will hold true to the British way of life throughout".
4. Within the frame of the 'war on terror', 'terror' has acquired a new dimension and, instead of being a method towards an end, it is considered as the enemy itself.
5. Mohammed Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer and Hasib Hussain were born in Britain as second-generation British citizens. Germaine Lindsay was born in Jamaica and moved to Britain when he was five months old.
6. Prime Minister Tony Blair's official spokesman was asked on July 7th whether Mr Blair's comments on Islam indicated that he had evidence linking the attacks to Al Qaeda or similar groups, to which he responded that it was "too soon to go into the issue of responsibility" and he further clarified that "the PM chose his words carefully. He believes it's important that we make sure whoever carried this out does not in any way achieve the goal of dividing the UK one against each other" (*Daily Express*, 2005, July 8, p. 6). This cautious statement raises the question of how much information was already at hand or, at the very least, what the suspicions were at this stage, as the focus on a possible division within the UK may suggest that the attacks were carried out from within.
7. Shortly put, this war on terror remains by definition a 'just war', raising the question only of how far the nomenclature may retard its efficient pursuit. Baxi points out, though, that Bush's 'war on terror' "instantly de-focuses antecedent or ongoing forms of state and international 'terrorism'. ... This war mobilises an infinite potential for counter-terror response by the coalitions of willing states against nomadic insurgents and states that supposedly or allegedly harbour them", forfeiting their "status as co-equal sovereign formations instantly upon the fabrication of their status as 'rogue', 'outlaw', or 'failed' states" (Baxi, 2005, p. 9).
8. Grim and Finke define 'religious persecution' as the "physical abuse or displacement due to one's religion", which has been a form of social conflict recorded throughout history. They point out that no religion is exempt from persecution even today. Having admitted that different religions co-existing together have the potential for conflict, they also affirm that "the attempt to regulate cultural and religious consensus within countries results in greater religious persecution". (Grim & Finke, 2007, p. 634)
9. Rigoni's study shows that the reality is that most adult converts make their choice at the end of an intellectual process, but only British Muslim press choose to highlight this fact.
10. According to Said, this figure was correct in 1997 when his book *Covering Islam. How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* was published.

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# CONSTRUCTING EUROPEAN IDENTITY THROUGH MEDIATED DIFFERENCE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TURKEY'S EU ACCESSION PROCESS IN THE BRITISH PRESS

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**Abstract:** An ever expanding and constantly intensifying mass-mediated environment means that we are surrounded by a variety of narratives that shape our sense of identity through mediated notions of difference. The lack of clear boundaries demarcating Europe have made discourses of differentiation particularly important for European identity formation. In the case of European identity, which has been defined historically in contrast to the Eastern frontier, the East continues to be used as an important point of reference for the construction of an opposing Other vis-à-vis Europe today. The empirical part of this research explores the role of mediated Othering in forging European identity, through a quantitative content analysis of British newspaper texts centred on Turkey with a European dimension; in particular, it looks at Turkey's bid to join the EU. Results show that although the British press communicate an inclusive interpretation of European identity, it continues to portray Turkey in connection with persistent exclusivist perceptions.

**Key words:** British press and Turkey, European identity and media, narrative, difference, Eastern Other

## INTRODUCTION

Media narratives are at the heart of the European identity construction process as they are central to the formation and reproduction of collective identities to form an imagined community (Anderson, 1983). An ever-expanding and constantly intensifying mass-mediated environment means that we are surrounded by a variety of narratives that “create identity at all levels of human social life” by drawing “symbolic boundaries” (Loseke, 2007, p. 661). Exploring how media narratives construct these boundaries through mediated notions of difference is important for the understanding of the formation of European identity. Cohen’s (1994) hypothesis, “You know who you are, only by knowing who you are not” (p. 1), supports the argument that analysing differences in contrast to an opposing Other can provide answers to one’s identity.

Mediated notions of difference are manifested in the construction of excluded Others which very often contribute to defining the entity they are excluded from. European unity has been formed historically in contrast to, and even in defence against the Eastern frontier (Delanty, 1995). Islam in its role as the main Other against the *Imperium Christianum* helped define a common European identity in the past (Hay, 1957). The relationship between Europe and Islam today is often still perceived as “a kind of continuation or renewal of the (historical) clashes between Christianity and Islam” (Cardini, 2001, p. 1).

The enduring relevance of the Eastern Other is an important factor in European identity formation today, as argued by Neumann (1999) who notes “‘The East’ is indeed Europe’s other, and it is continuously being recycled in order to represent European identities. ... The question is not whether the East will be used in the forging of new European identities but how this is being done” (p. 207). Turkey’s progressing EU membership has intensified ongoing discussions about the EU’s current and future identity. Does Turkey, as the embodiment of a continuation of the Islamic Other in Western perceptions, function as a focus point against which a common European identity is defined today? If so, what are the ways in which media narratives form such a European identity through mediated notions of difference? These questions are the starting points for this article, which seeks to explore mediated Othering in forging a European identity through an empirical study of British newspaper texts centred on Turkey with a European dimension, in particular Turkey’s bid to join the EU.

Turkey’s accession to the EU poses an interesting case for analysing European identity, as it is expected to have a crystallising effect, revealing perceptions of European identity by framing Turkey as being distinct from being European. The media salience of the issue started to increase over time after Turkey received the status of an EU candidate country in 1999 and continued to gain visibility in public discussions, as a more concrete, final decision on Turkey’s EU membership became apparent (Wimmel, 2005). Other

studies analysing Turkey's bid to join the EU in the European and Turkish press have focussed on selected time periods before and after major EU events in connection with Turkey's membership prospects from 1999 to 2005 (Wimmel, 2005; Koenig, Mihelj *et al.*, 2006; Negrine, Kejanlioglu *et al.*, 2008). Results show that exclusivist perceptions of Europe and "clash of civilisations" framings dominate media narratives (Koenig, Mihelj *et al.*, 2006). These research findings confirm the relevance of modes of differentiation in European identity formation modelled in contrast to Turkey. The exact nature and content of these forms of mediated difference and how they are employed, however, calls for further analysis.

This study seeks to expand the focus of previous studies with a broader analysis of different contexts before and after the start of EU accession negotiations in 2005, giving special attention to mediated differences in the construction of European identity. A quantitative content analysis of the British newspapers *The Times* and *The Guardian* comparing the years 2002 and 2007, analyses different topical aspects associated with Turkey and how these are evaluated to explore the range of contexts in which Turkey is positioned vis-à-vis Europe. Further, the analysis explores points of reference that are used as sources of similarity or difference in EU-Turkey relations and investigates how British print media represent Turkey.

This article proceeds by first locating the study of identity construction in media and communication research. Then, the article will examine the role of an opposing Other in identity formation, followed by a conceptualisation of European identity. After arguing that identity is constructed to a significant degree through difference in contrast to an opposing Other, the article concludes by exploring empirical evidence of mediated differences and how they position Turkey vis-à-vis Europe.

## **MEDIA NARRATIVES AND IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESSES**

Media are part of the complex processes involved in the construction of meaning by informing the ways we make sense of the world. Silverstone (1999) illustrates this point by arguing that the media influence how we see and live by the way "they filter and frame everyday realities through their singular and multiple representations, producing touchstones, references, for the conduct of everyday life, for the production and maintenance of common sense" (p. 6). This all-encompassing nature of the media that permeate our experiences and perceptions is best described in Livingstone's (2009) words "yes, everything is mediated" (p. 5).

Media narratives are a powerful force in structuring our ways of thinking. Bennett and Edelman (1985) outline the scope of their impact by arguing "the narrative shapes people's views of rationality, of objectivity, of morality, and of their conceptions of themselves and others" (p. 159). At the same they put

this impact into perspective when noting that the reception of a narrative also depends on the recipients' individual situation and cognitive condition. It is the media narratives' potential to shape perceptions of ourselves and others that make them most relevant for the formation of identities in today's mass-mediated world.

Media, political elites and social activists all play a part in creating narratives of cultural identities (Derman & Ross, 2003; Loseke, 2007). It is the media, however, that have the power to change narratives authored by other public actors (Gamson & Wolsfeld, 1993, quoted in Loseke, 2007). Media narratives, in turn, are formed within certain cultural contexts. Loseke (2007) argues that these particular contexts "influence what stories and characters likely will be evaluated as believable and important and what moral evaluations likely will be attached to those stories and characters" (p. 663). In the case of this article it is Western media, exemplified in British newspaper texts, which form the context to analyse moral evaluations of Turkey in representing the Eastern Other vis-à-vis Europe.

Graham and Hart (1999) describe identity formation as a "situated and relational socially constructed narrative, capable of being read in conflicting ways at any one time, and of being transformed through time" (p. 264). Similarly, Camauer (2003) also conceptualises identity as the construction of a narrative. The media are central to the construction of such identity narratives. This is highlighted by Sjursen (2006) who argues that "identities are malleable and they are shaped and reshaped through communicative processes" (p. 14).

Georgiou (2006) makes the link between media and identity formation more explicit by arguing that "media as means/technologies/contexts for communication in specific locations and beyond, have become institutions and organised mechanisms of great significance for constructing identities in local, national and transnational contexts within modernity" (p. 11). She explains that circulating media narratives and cultural symbols produce and reproduce imagined belonging (Georgiou, 2006, p. 151). Derman and Ross (2003) make a similar reference to the formation of identities in media narratives by arguing that "the media tell stories ... Whatever criteria, ideology and approach are used, the process and the outcome is the same: there is something to be said (mediated) and this mediation has first to define and categorise identities in order then to paste them into a whole" (p. 1). This further illustrates the transforming power of media narratives to categorise and construct identities.

Cohen (1994) argues that the media function as one of the main "frontier guards" of national identity since they "seek to influence the ideological and legal parameters of nationality, citizenship and belonging" (p. 2). This structuring capacity of the media is further illustrated by Gellner (2006, pp. 121-122) who sees the media as an important contributor to identity formation and argues that it is not the content but the media as a form of institutionalised

communication that is at the core of the reproduction of national identity.

Since transnational European media, such as the multilingual news channel *euronews*, are the exception rather than the norm, national media are still the main arena for identity formation. This means that other collective identities such as European identity are also likely to be constructed within the parameters set out by national media. An advancing European integration process, however, has changed the focus of news organisations from national to supranational levels of governance (Semetko, De Vreese *et al.*, 2000). This highlights that the degree of Europeanisation of national news content contributes to the progression of a European identity. This is supported through research by Bruter (2003; 2005) who argues that news coverage on Europe influences levels of European identity among citizens. Results of his experiments with focus groups show that positive news coverage on Europe modifies people's perceptions and "clearly influences their likelihood of identifying with Europe" (Bruter, 2005, p. 126), while negative news coverage has the opposite effect.

The above illustrates that media play an important part in influencing our perceptions of the world, how we see ourselves in relation to this world and how we see others. This supports the argument that mediated notions of difference influence our sense of European identity and perceptions of Turkey. The power of media narratives to transform other narratives underpins the significance of the media for the construction of identities. By communicating national and European culture, the media take part in the identity formation process and provide political communities with the "deep codes for distinguishing between self and other" (Schlesinger, 2003, p. 9). Similarly, Loseke (2007) argues that narratives of identities are surrounded by symbolic codes containing "images of the rights, responsibilities, and normative expectations of people in the world, and of the expected affective responses to these people" (p. 666). She further notes that "symbolic codes in the Western world typically construct one identity in contrast to another ... often as binary opposites" (Loseke, 2007, p. 666). This duality in the construction of Western identity makes the analysis of mediated notions of difference a crucial part in analysing European identity. The following part of this article explores the mechanisms of identity formation processes and will conceptualise European identity.

## **EUROPEAN IDENTITY FORMATION AND DIFFERENCE**

Media narratives contribute to the construction of identities through the circulation of cultural codes that define the boundaries of one identity to another. In this sense, inclusion and exclusion are comparable to two sides of one coin that both form essential parts of the identity formation process. Melucci (1996) describes this duality as inherent to the concept of identity by arguing that "the paradox of identity always consists of the fact that difference, in order to be affirmed and lived as such, presupposes a certain equality and a degree



of reciprocity" (p. 74). This exemplifies that identity consists of both a sense of belonging and difference. This paradox is also being addressed by Calhoun (1994) who notes that identity always refers to "common frames of significance" despite the emphasis on difference (p. 25). According to this understanding, countries like the United Kingdom or France distinguish themselves through cultural difference but share a common recognition to accept each other as nation states.

Treating inclusion and exclusion as parts of the identity formation process leads to the conceptual distinction between identification and identity. Unlike identity, identification is "constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (Hall, 1996, p. 2). Identities, in contrast, are the product of difference and exclusion with people establishing their identity to a large part by defining what they are not (Shore, 1993). This conceptual distinction refers to inclusion as a positive identification with something or someone, and exclusion as a negative difference in contrast to an opposing Other.

Identity applies both to individuals and groups but is there a distinction to be made between individual and collective level that is conceptually relevant? Other than individual identity, collective identity applies to a group of people that recognises itself as a community. Schlesinger (1993, p. 7) summarises four main characteristics that exemplify collective identities which include 1) the creation and sustenance of a self-identifying community through cultural symbols; 2) dual processes of inclusion and exclusion to distinguish the collective consciousness from others; 3) selective memory and amnesia to create specific versions of history to support the collective identity over time, and 4) locality that situates collective identity in a national territory. He argues that it is vital to consider the origins, evolution and contextual setting of a social group when looking at constructions of collective identities. What can be noted here is that both individual and collective identities are relational.

Melucci (1996) defines collective identity as "an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the *orientations* of their action and the *field* of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place" (p. 70, original emphasis). These "action systems" are created and sustained through interpersonal and mediated communication channels. Melucci (1982) argues that a distinction between individual and collective level does not affect the concept of identity since "what changes is the system of relations to which the actor refers and with respect to which his recognition comes" (quoted in Schlesinger, 1991, p. 154). This highlights that an understanding of identity as a process is more important conceptually than a distinction between different levels. A similar point is being made by Calhoun (1994) and Mennell (1994) who argue that it is

more helpful to understand identity as a project than to focus on the distinction between macro- and micro levels.

While national identity represents a specific form of collective identity (Schlesinger, 1991, p. 151), European identity, as a supranational identity, is not easily accommodated alongside national collective identity conceptions. The question then, is how to distinguish between the two, and what kind of different features and construction mechanisms can be identified. Smith (1991) defines national identity and nation as “complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components – ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political. They signify bonds of solidarity among members of communities united by shared memories, myths and traditions” (p. 15). This definition highlights the main elements of national identity that include political and cultural components to form a sense of belonging and unity. Similarly, European identity is seen to be based on a common history, values and people that can be fostered by unifying symbols such as the EU flag or Europe Day – a view largely shared among policy makers. This, however, is contrasted by arguments not to conceptualise European identity as a homogeneous unity based on the nation state model but “as an institutional arena within which diversity and multiple connections among people and organizations can flourish partly because they never add up to a single, integrated whole” (Calhoun, 2001, p. 38). This is a view shared by Spohn (2005) as well as Schlesinger (2001) who concludes that “despite the rhetorical claims, the EU does not have a transcendent common culture and identity analogous to the national cultures and national identities of its component states” (p. 99). If European identity cannot be defined in terms of the nation state model, how else does it materialise? Sjursen (2006) suggests to locate European identity in the concept of constitutional patriotism as a state of “in between-ness” (p. 213).

The discussion above partly suggests that national identities tend to be more consistent constructs, manifested in national culture and institutions, while European identity is a vaguer concept that finds expression in liberal values, transnational institutions, and diversity. This makes it hard to distinguish empirically between the two and leads to the question ‘to what degree can identity features be attributed to national identity or traces of European identity?’ For now, this remains an unresolved problematic. What can be said is that empirical results will show an interpretation of European identity through a British perspective. This perspective will also reflect Britain’s troubled relationship with the EU and its characterisation as a stranger in Europe (Wall, 2008).

What can be identified as a common denominator in both national and European identity formation is the role of an opposing Other. It emerges as a main and general feature in all identity formation processes. Hall (1996) argues that even the concept of identification requires boundaries by noting

that it “requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process” (p. 3). He continues to highlight the importance of the Other by arguing “that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not ... that the ‘positive’ meaning of any term – and thus its ‘identity’ – can be constructed” (Hall, 1996, pp. 4-5).

In the case of national identities, this means that other nation states as well as internal groups function as defining Others around which identity is constructed. In the British example, Kershner (1998) argues that enemies such as “the French in the eighteenth century, the Russians in the mid-nineteenth century and the Boers at the beginning of the twentieth century” (p. 4) have fostered national unity across regional borders and defined British identity. In the case of European identity formation, the Eastern Other is the defining element (Hay, 1957; Delanty, 1995). In this context, Morley and Robins (1995) note that Europe is “an idea inextricably linked with the myths of Western civilisation and grievously shaped by the haunting encounters with its colonial Others” (p. 5). Describing the complex power relations and somewhat ambivalent ties between Europe and its Islamic Other, Said (2003) notes that “the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (pp. 1-2). This marks two important aspects of European identity that illustrate its ambivalent nature: the interconnectedness of Europe and the East through joint historical origins, and the transformation of the East into an image of the Other.

The notion of the division between East and West is part of a whole set of European dualistic modes of thinking: “It seems clear that an integral part of the European cultural heritage, the European way of thinking, is related to dualism. Dualism appears in other cultures too, but in the European cultural heritage and in the European mind it seems to have a surprisingly central role. .... It seems natural to confront radical with reactionary, past with present, private with public, true with false, us with them, friends with enemies, good with bad” (Harle, 1990, p. 2). Binary codes are essential for the creation of meaning (Bocock, 1996, p. 159) in general but become particularly interesting in the context of European identity formation. This dualistic thinking which has been described in theoretical considerations is likely to be reflected in empirical identity constructions of “us” and “them” which will be addressed in the following analysis section.

## **METHOD AND ANALYSIS**

The sample for this analysis included all articles published in *The Guardian* and *The Times* in the year 2002 and 2007 that mentioned Turkey with a European

dimension, in particular Turkey's bid to join the EU. The search string "EU OR Europ! AND Turk!" was applied to the News Search of the NEXIS UK database to identify relevant articles. These search criteria ensured that all articles were included that hold references to Turkey's bid to join the EU and articles about Turkey with references to an EU or European dimension. The EU dimension describes news coverage linking Turkey to the EU institutional framework. This includes references to people, bodies, treaties, legislation, etc. related to EU institutions such as the European Council or European Parliament. The European dimension is more open and describes news coverage linking Turkey to broader European issues such as European culture, values or history.

A further article selection criterion included a 150-word rule for salience which determined that the title or first 150 words of the text body of an article must mention Turkey's bid to join the EU or Turkey in connection with a link to an EU and/or European dimension. Exceptions to the 150-word rule were articles that covered Turkey as the main topic with a European dimension in the overall text body. This ensured that all articles on Turkey were included where references to an EU or European dimension appeared later in the body of the text.

The selected years 2002 and 2007 represent time periods before and after the official start of EU accession negotiations with Turkey on 3 October 2005. These time periods were chosen for comparison to see whether and how news coverage about Turkey has changed after it became an official EU candidate country. The main events in these two years of news coverage were the Turkish national elections. Further events include the 2002 decision of the Copenhagen European Council of Ministers to review Turkey's European course in December 2004 and the re-opening of accession negotiations with Turkey in 2007 after their suspension in 2006 due to a failure to apply to Cyprus the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement. The total number of articles was 183 with a total of 89 articles in *The Times* and 94 articles in *The Guardian* (2002: *The Times* n=48, *The Guardian* n=53; 2007: *The Times* n=41, *The Guardian* n=41).

The content variables for this analysis comprised two object variables (i.e. "Topical aspects" and "Sources of similarity or distance") and two evaluation variables (i.e. "Evaluation of topical aspects" and "Degree of similarity or distance"). The object variable "Topical aspects" identified different topical aspects in discussions about Turkey. Examples of topical aspects include Turkey's political stability or Turkey's respect for human and civic rights. The object variable "Sources of similarity or distance" identified reference points that were used to describe resemblance or disparity in the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Examples include Turkey's proximity to Islamic political movements or human rights. In case multiple topics or sources of similarity or distance were mentioned in one article the most salient one was selected for analysis (i.e. the most dominant, indicated by headline and presence in the



text).

The variable "Evaluation of topical aspects" measured manifest positive or negative assessments in the news text on a scale ranging from minus two to plus two. The scale points represent expressions of criticism (i.e. -1 = fairly negative, -2 = very negative), expressions of support (i.e. 1 = fairly positive, 2 = very positive), or a combination of both expressions of criticism and support (0 = ambivalent). Topical aspects without any manifest evaluations (9 = neutral) were excluded from the analysis. Similarly, the evaluation variable "Degree of similarity or distance" measured the degree of similarity or distance in the relationship between Turkey and the EU. Negative scale points (i.e. -1 = some distance and -2 = high distance) represent sources of distance, positive scale points (i.e. 1 = some similarity, 2 = high similarity) represent sources of similarity and a combination of both represents an ambivalent degree (0 = ambivalent). The scale points -1 or 1 were used to describe normal language use and -2 or 2 were used to describe emphasised language use (i.e. use of adjectives or superlatives).

*Topical aspects in newspaper coverage of EU-Turkey relations.*

The most dominant topical aspect discussed in connection with EU-Turkey relations was Turkey's political stability which accounted for 41% of the overall news coverage. This topical aspect mainly derived from news coverage about Turkey's political situation before and after the national elections in 2002 and 2007. Other featured topics included Turkey's respect for human and civic rights (18%), Turkey's EU membership (12%), Turkish-Cypriote relations (9%), Turkey's minority rights (7%), Turkey's demography and Muslim population (7%), followed by Turkey's strategic location and military power (4%) and Turkey's economic development with three percent.

A comparison between newspapers showed that the topical aspect of Turkey's political stability featured notably more dominantly in *The Times* with a 19% point difference from *The Guardian*. More than half of all newspaper articles in *The Times* (51%) covered Turkey's political stability as the most prominent topical aspect, compared to 32% in *The Guardian*. However, Turkey's respect for human and civic rights was more present in *The Guardian* (22%) than in *The Times* (14%), and Turkey's EU membership also featured more prominently in *The Guardian* (17%) than in *The Times* (6%). In all other topical aspects, there were no differences between *The Times* and *The Guardian*.

A comparison of time periods showed that Turkey's political stability was much more frequently discussed in 2007 (50%) than previously in 2002 (34%). Similarly, Turkey's minority rights had a greater salience in 2007 (10%) than in 2002 (5%). Turkey's EU membership (17%) became a more important point of discussion in 2007 (+10% point difference) after the official start of EU accession negotiations in October 2005. In contrast, Turkey's respect for



human and civic rights was given much less attention in 2007 (13%) than in 2002 (22%). Compared to 2002 (16%) Turkish-Cypriote relations had very little relevance in the overall newspaper coverage in 2007 (1%). This can be explained by the heated discussions and diplomatic negotiations between the UN, the EU, Northern- and Southern Cyprus and Turkey about the potential re-unification of Cyprus prior to its EU membership in 2002. After the failure of negotiations and the decision to only grant Southern-Cyprus EU membership the newspaper coverage decreased. Turkey's strategic location and military power had almost no relevance in 2007 (1%) as compared to 2002 (6%). Table 1 gives an overview of the topical aspects in discussions about EU-Turkey relations across newspapers and time.

	Newspapers		Years		Total
	Times	Guardian	2002	2007	
Turkey's political stability	51% (45)	32% (30)	34% (34)	50% (41)	41% (75)
Turkey's respect for human and civic rights	14% (12)	22% (21)	22% (22)	13% (11)	18% (33)
Turkey's EU membership	6% (5)	17% (16)	7% (7)	17% (14)	12% (21)
Turkish-Cypriote relations	10% (9)	9% (8)	16% (16)	1% (1)	9% (17)
Turkey's minority rights	7% (6)	7% (7)	5% (5)	10% (8)	7% (13)
Turkey's demography and Muslim population	6% (5)	7% (7)	8% (8)	5% (4)	7% (12)
Turkey's strategic location and military power	6% (5)	2% (2)	6% (6)	1% (1)	4% (7)
Turkey's economic development	2% (2)	3% (3)	3% (3)	2% (2)	3% (5)
Total	100% (89)	100% (94)	100% (101)	100% (82)	100% (183)

**Table 1: Comparison of topical aspects**

**Note:** Figures may not add exactly due to rounding. N in parentheses

The key findings of this analysis were that Turkey's political stability (41%) and Turkey's respect for human, civic and minority rights (25% combined) accounted for 66% of aspects addressed in the overall news coverage in both years. *The Times* (65%) gave the two main aspects Turkey's political stability and Turkey's respect for human and civic rights greater attention in its news coverage than *The Guardian* (54%). A comparison of the years 2002 and 2007 showed that these two most frequently featured aspects became more relevant over time, increasing from 64% of the overall newspaper coverage in 2002 to 73% in 2007. When combining the categories of Turkey's respect for human and civic

rights with Turkey's minority rights, results show that these aspects remained important issues over time with only a slight decrease from 27% in 2002 to 23% in 2007. Interestingly, Turkey's demography and Muslim population played an even smaller role in progressing EU negotiations (5%) than it did before the start of EU accession talks (8%), which lends support to the assumption that the relevance of Turkey's religious identity component has decreased over time.

*Evaluation of topical aspects in EU-Turkey relations.*

A comparison of evaluations of topical aspects in connection with Turkey showed that four out of eight aspects received a negative evaluation, followed

Topical aspects	Newspaper	Mean	Cases (N)	Percent (%)
Turkey's political stability	The Times	-.41	34	34.7%
	The Guardian	-1.08	12	12.2%
	Total	-.59	46	46.9%
Turkey's respect for human and civic rights	The Times	-.67	9	9.2%
	The Guardian	-.30	10	10.2%
	Total	-.47	19	19.4%
Turkey's EU membership	The Times	.50	2	2.0%
	The Guardian	.00	1	1.0%
	Total	.33	3	3.1%
Turkish-Cypriote relations	The Times	-.33	3	3.1%
	The Guardian	-.33	3	3.1%
	Total	-.33	6	6.1%
Turkey's minority rights	The Times	-.40	5	5.1%
	The Guardian	-1.00	4	4.1%
	Total	-.67	9	9.2%
Turkey's demography and Muslim population	The Times	.00	4	4.1%
	The Guardian	.00	3	3.1%
	Total	.00	7	7.1%
Turkey's strategic location and military power	The Times	1.00	2	2.0%
	The Guardian	1.00	1	1.0%
	Total	1.00	3	3.1%
Turkey's economic development	The Times	1.50	2	2.0%
	The Guardian	.00	3	3.1%
	Total	.60	5	5.1%
Total	The Times	-.28	61	62.2%
	The Guardian	-.54	37	37.8%
	Total	-.38	98	100.0%

**Table 2: Evaluation of topical aspects among newspapers**  
 Data basis: n = 98 (Exclusion of n = 85: neutral evaluation)  
 Scale: -1, -2 = negative, 1, 2 = positive, 0 = ambivalent

by three categories that had an overall positive evaluation and one category that was classified as ambivalent. The most negative evaluated category was Turkey's minority rights (-0.67). This was followed by Turkey's political stability which received a similarly negative evaluation (-0.59). Turkey's respect for human and civic rights and Turkish-Cypriote relations were given negative evaluations of -0.47 and -0.33 points. The positive evaluated categories were Turkey's strategic location and military power (1.00), Turkey's economic development (0.60) and Turkey's EU membership (0.33). Turkey's demography and Muslim population received an ambivalent evaluation. The overall evaluation of all aspects in connection with Turkey received a negative evaluation of -0.38 points.

A comparison of the topical aspects evaluations in the two newspapers showed that *The Guardian* (-1.08) was more critical of Turkey's political stability than *The Times* (-0.41). In contrast, *The Times* (-0.67) had a more critical view on Turkey's respect for human and civic rights than *The Guardian* (-0.30). While *The Guardian* had an ambivalent stance on Turkey's EU membership (0.00), *The Times* had a positive evaluation (0.50). Turkey's minority rights were another example of polarised evaluations between the newspapers, with *The Guardian* (-1.00) having a much more negative position than *The Times* (-0.40). There were no differences between the newspapers regarding the evaluations of Turkish-Cypriote relations (-0.33), Turkey's demography and Muslim population (0.00) and Turkey's strategic location and military power (1.00). The most noteworthy difference between the newspapers was the evaluation of Turkey's economic development which *The Times* saw as very positive (1.50) while *The Guardian* was ambivalent.

Overall, *The Guardian* had more critical news coverage than *The Times*. Table 2 gives an overview of the evaluations of topical aspects among newspapers.

A key finding was that the majority of aspects received a negative evaluation with the most frequently discussed aspects among those with the most negative evaluations. This means that the weight of the most frequently mentioned aspects, namely Turkey's political stability and Turkey's respect for human and civic rights featured as major points of critique against Turkey. Aspects with positive evaluations featured less prominently in the overall news coverage. Another important finding was that *The Guardian* (-0.54) is generally more critical than *The Times* (-0.28), particularly regarding Turkey's political stability and

Topical aspects	Year	Mean	Cases (N)	Percent (%)
Turkey's political stability	2002	-.83	23	23.5%
	2007	-.35	23	23.5%
	Total	-.59	46	46.9%
Turkey's respect for human and civic rights	2002	.00	9	9.2%
	2007	-.90	10	10.2%
	Total	-.47	19	19.4%
Turkey's EU membership	2007	.33	3	3.1%
	Total	.33	3	3.1%
Turkish-Cypriote relations	2002	-.40	5	5.1%
	2007	.00	1	1.0%
	Total	-.33	6	6.1%
Turkey's minority rights	2002	-1.00	3	3.1%
	2007	-.50	6	6.1%
	Total	-.67	9	9.2%
Turkey's demography and Muslim population	2002	-.17	6	6.1%
	2007	1.00	1	1.0%
	Total	.00	7	7.1%
Turkey's strategic location and military power	2002	1.00	3	3.1%
	Total	1.00	3	3.1%
Turkey's economic development	2002	.00	3	3.1%
	2007	1.50	2	2.0%
	Total	.60	5	5.1%
Total	2002	-.42	52	53.1%
	2007	-.33	46	46.9%
	Total	-.38	98	100.0%

Table 3: Evaluation of topical aspects over time  
Data basis: n = 98 (Exclusion of n = 85: neutral evaluation)  
Scale: -1, -2 = negative, 1, 2 = positive, 0 = ambivalent

minority rights.

A comparison of evaluation means between 2002 and 2007 showed that Turkey's political stability was less critically rated in 2007 (-0.35) than it was in 2002 (-0.83). Evaluations also improved over time regarding Turkish-Cypriote relations and Turkey's minority rights. Other changes included improved evaluations regarding Turkey's demography and Muslim population (from -0.17 to 1.00) and Turkey's economic development (from 0.00 to 1.50). Evaluations for Turkey's respect for human and civic rights, however, dropped drastically from an ambivalent evaluation to a considerably negative one (-0.90) in 2007. Overall, evaluations for Turkey slightly improved from 2002 to 2007 to a less critical stance. Table 3 gives an overview of the evaluations of topical aspects in the two time periods.

The key findings of this part of the analysis included that the evaluations of a majority of categories improved over time. In contrast, evaluations for Turkey's respect for human and civic rights as the second most common topical aspect, decreased from an ambivalent to a negative level in 2007. Overall, the evaluations of Turkey changed only slightly to a less critical level in 2007.

*Sources of similarity or difference in EU-Turkey relations.*

Results show that proximity to Islamic political movements (27%) was the most frequently used source of difference in EU-Turkey relations. Frequencies of other sources of difference included secular democracy (12%), human rights (11%), religion (9%), negotiations over Cyprus (7%), culture (4%), geographic location (3%) and economic performance (3%). The most frequently used source of similarity was commitment to reforms (22%) which was used as the second most frequent source in EU-Turkey relations (frequencies mentioned in this paragraph are not reported in the tables).

A comparison of evaluation means showed that human rights were the major source of difference in EU-Turkey relations (-0.75). Other sources of difference include negotiations over Cyprus, geographic location, and economic performance (all -0.50). Further sources of difference were religion (-0.33), proximity to Islamic political movements (-0.31), and to a lesser degree culture (-0.17) and secular democracy (-0.14). The only major source of similarity in EU-Turkey relations was commitment to reforms (0.11). Historical relations between Greece and Turkey were also evaluated positively (0.50) but are not statistically relevant as they were only based on two cases.

A comparison among newspapers (see Table 4) showed that *The Times* was more critical regarding economic performance (-0.67/0.00), proximity to Islamic political movements (-0.44/-0.07) and human rights (-0.86/-0.67) than *The Guardian*. In contrast, *The Guardian* had a much more critical stance than *The Times* regarding negotiations over Cyprus (-1.00/-0.25), secular democracy (-0.50/0.00) and to a lesser degree to religion (-0.50/-0.20). There were little differences in



Sources of similarity or difference	Newspaper	Mean	Cases (N)	Percentage (%)
Proximity to Islamic political movements	The Times	-.44	25	22.7%
	The Guardian	-.07	14	12.7%
	Total	-.31	39	35.5%
Commitment to reforms	The Times	.09	11	10.0%
	The Guardian	.14	7	6.4%
	Total	.11	18	16.4%
Secular democracy	The Times	.00	5	4.5%
	The Guardian	-.50	2	1.8%
	Total	-.14	7	6.4%
Human rights	The Times	-.86	7	6.4%
	The Guardian	-.67	9	8.2%
	Total	-.75	16	14.5%
Religion	The Times	-.20	5	4.5%
	The Guardian	-.50	4	3.6%
	Total	-.33	9	8.2%
Negotiations over Cyprus	The Times	-.25	4	3.6%
	The Guardian	-1.00	2	1.8%
	Total	-.50	6	5.5%
Culture	The Times	.33	3	2.7%
	The Guardian	-.67	3	2.7%
	Total	-.17	6	5.5%
Geographic location	The Times	-.50	2	1.8%
	Total	-.50	2	1.8%
Economic performance	The Times	-.67	3	2.7%
	The Guardian	.00	1	.9%
	Total	-.50	4	3.6%
Support by U.S.A.	The Times	.00	1	.9%
	Total	.00	1	.9%
Historical relations with Greece	The Times	.50	2	1.8%
	Total	.50	2	1.8%
Total	The Times	-.28	68	61.8%
	The Guardian	-.31	42	38.2%
	Total	-.29	110	100.0%

Table 4: Degrees of similarity or difference in EU-Turkey relations among newspapers  
Data basis: n = 110 (Exclusion of n = 73: neutral evaluation)  
Scale: -1, -2 = negative, 1, 2 = positive, 0 = ambivalent

the evaluations regarding commitment to reforms, geographic location and historical relations between Greece and Turkey.

The most considerable difference between the newspapers could be found in the category culture which featured as a source of similarity in *The Times* while it was seen as a source of difference in *The Guardian* (0.33/-0.50). Overall, *The Times* and *The Guardian* had an equivalent negative evaluation that accounts for more sources of difference than similarity in EU-Turkey relations.

Key findings included that the proximity to Islamic political movements featured as the most prominent source of difference (27%) which was followed by secular democracy (12%), human rights (11%) and religion (9%). Human rights were the source of difference that was most negatively evaluated (-0.75). Religion

and proximity to Islamic political movements were in the category of third most negative evaluated sources of difference. A newspaper comparison showed that the categories economic development, political Islam and human rights were more negatively evaluated in *The Times* while culture, negotiations over Cyprus, secular democracy and religion were more critically evaluated in *The Guardian*. Contrary to the different evaluations of topical aspects, the newspapers both showed similarly negative evaluations of sources of difference or similarity.

A comparison of time periods (see Table 5) showed an improvement of evaluations over time regarding proximity to Islamic political movements



(-0.57/-0.16), commitment to reforms (0.07/0.33), human rights (-1.00/-0.60), culture (-0.25/0.00), and economic performance (-1.33/2.00). A negative change over time could be testified for secular democracy (0.50/-0.40), religion (-0.20/-0.50) and negotiations over Cyprus (-0.40/-1.00). Overall, newspaper coverage has become slightly less critical in 2007 (-0.23) than in 2002 (-0.34).

The results show the following trends: Firstly, political aspects dominate the topics that locate Turkey vis-à-vis Europe. This supports claims that the U.K. sees the EU mainly as a political and not a cultural or geographic entity and evaluates prospect member states according to political principles that can be acquired over time. Secondly, the newspaper bias shows no consistent ideological cluster which supports the argument that the issue of Turkey's EU membership permeates the ideological spectrum both from left to right.

Thirdly, despite the overall negative evaluations, the trend over time shows an improvement of evaluations regarding both topical aspects and sources of similarity or difference. This puts the negative media outlook of Turkey's membership prospects as outlined in other studies into perspective (Koenig, Mihelj *et al.* 2006; Negrine, Kejanlioglu *et al.* 2008).

## CONCLUSION

The lack of clear boundaries that demarcate Europe have made discourses and practices of differentiation particularly important for defining European

Sources of similarity or difference	Year	Mean	Cases (N)	Percent (%)
Proximity to Islamic political movements	2002	-.57	14	12.7%
	2007	-.16	25	22.7%
	Total	-.31	39	35.5%
Commitment to reforms	2002	.07	15	13.6%
	2007	.33	3	2.7%
	Total	.11	18	16.4%
Secular democracy	2002	.50	2	1.8%
	2007	-.40	5	4.5%
	Total	-.14	7	6.4%
Human rights	2002	-1.00	6	5.5%
	2007	-.60	10	9.1%
	Total	-.75	16	14.5%
Religion	2002	-.20	5	4.5%
	2007	-.50	4	3.6%
	Total	-.33	9	8.2%
Negotiations over Cyprus	2002	-.40	5	4.5%
	2007	-1.00	1	.9%
	Total	-.50	6	5.5%
Culture	2002	-.25	4	3.6%
	2007	.00	2	1.8%
	Total	-.17	6	5.5%
Geographic location	2002	-1.00	1	.9%
	2007	.00	1	.9%
	Total	-.50	2	1.8%
Economic performance	2002	-1.33	3	2.7%
	2007	2.00	1	.9%
	Total	-.50	4	3.6%
Support by U.S.A.	2002	.00	1	.9%
	Total	.00	1	.9%
Historical relations with Greece	2002	.50	2	1.8%
	Total	.50	2	1.8%
Total	2002	-.34	58	52.7%
	2007	-.23	52	47.3%
	Total	-.29	110	100.0%

Table 5: Degrees of similarity or difference in EU-Turkey relations over time  
Data basis: n = 110 (Exclusion of n = 73: neutral evaluation)  
Scale: -1, -2 = negative, 1, 2 = positive, 0 = ambivalent

identity formation (Rumelili, 2004). Media, which have been described as the frontier guards of identity, are powerful inventors of narratives in the construction of discourses of differentiation. Their ability to influence how we see ourselves and others make the media an important factor in altering our perceptions of Turkey and understanding of European identity.

The empirical results have confirmed theoretical considerations that European identity is largely constructed through symbolic boundaries and that Turkey serves as an important reference point against which these boundaries are defined. In comparison to other studies that have analysed news coverage of Turkey's EU accession process, the results of this study verify that the British press tends to focus more on specific issues such as human rights and to a much lesser degree on abstract notions of identity and the meaning of Europe (Negrine, Kejanlioglu *et al.*, 2008) to locate Turkey vis-à-vis Europe. The absence of explicit references to EU identity or manifest definitions of "us" and "them" in British media coverage, however, does not mean that identity formation processes are not taking place. The drawing of boundaries through a majority of sources of difference in the news texts is a clear indicator of mediated Othering. The predominant use of differences in news coverage about EU-Turkey relations illustrates that identification only plays a minor role in EU identity formation.

An interesting example of the definition of European identity through a British perspective is that religion as a source of difference only plays a minor role in British news coverage. This, however, depends on the contextual setting. While religion in a cultural context forms a marginal source of difference, the opposite is the case when it comes to violations of secular democracy through religion. Or, put differently, while Britain might tolerate religious diversity in a cultural sense, it strongly opposes violations of the separation of state and religion. This is illustrated by the negative evaluation of the proximity to Islamic political movements which feature as the most prominent source of difference in EU-Turkey relations.

What is noticeable, however, is that even the most prominent and incidentally also most negative sources of difference such as human rights and proximity to Islamic political movements are of a temporary and therefore inclusive nature with a chance for Turkey to improve them over time. The way Turkey is represented in British media highlights that, although sources of difference dominate the news coverage, the characteristic of these notions does not form permanent difference (see Rumelili, 2004, p. 37). Sources of difference that establish permanent difference and exclusion, such as Turkey's geographic location or culture, are given only minor consideration. This lends support to the argument that European identity through British eyes is communicated as an inclusive identity. What we can learn about European identity from this British point of view is that states can become European by acquiring the principles of democracy and human rights. Trends over time have revealed changes in news

content that show an improvement of negatively evaluated topics and sources of difference. These changes in media coverage are likely to also result in the changing of people's perceptions.

On the one side, the British press contribute to the notion of an Europeanised Turkey by highlighting its committed efforts to reforms. On the other side, Turkey continues to be portrayed in media narratives in connection with earlier more exclusivist representations. Negrine *et al.* (2008) describe this problematic by noting that "even Turkey's efforts to 'modernize and westernize' have not eroded the sense of difference" (p. 51). British media are only one example of several national media spheres in Europe that will shape the public's sense of belonging to Europe and views of Turkey. Countries like Austria or Germany are likely to communicate a more exclusivist interpretation of European identity based on their past and present relations with Turkey. An analysis of other countries would expand the scope of this study to contribute to a clearer picture of an evolving and changing European space by analysing how European identity is constructed vis-à-vis Turkey in other national media narratives.

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# POWER, MOBILITY, AND DIASPORA IN THE GLOBAL CITY: AN INTERVIEW WITH SASKIA SASSEN

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Saskia Sassen is widely recognised as one of the leading theorists on globalisation, and is perhaps best known for her comprehensive work on the 'global city' (Sassen, 2001). She has written 12 books that deal with a vast range of issues relating to globalisation, from immigration, state sovereignty, and the movement of people and capital (Sassen, 1988, 1996, 1998, 2000) to digitisation and global networks (Latham & Sassen, 2005; Sassen, 2008a Ch 7 & 8) and most recently cities and urban warfare (Sassen, 2007b, 2008b). While she is regarded for her extensive body of work on globalisation and its implications for place, scale, nations, and individuals, she is most renowned for coining the term 'global city' to describe the ascendance of a new type of cities and regions which serve as the strategic spaces for global capitalism. For Sassen, global cities – such as New York, Paris, London, and Tokyo – are not only the command centres where much of the global economy is organised, managed, and controlled, but they also embody the local places where the effects of globalisation become most visible and 'assume concrete, localised forms' (2008a).

A central thread that runs through Sassen's work is her argument that globalisation and the national are not distinct, separate realms but remain firmly embedded in one another. While globalisation has given rise to the global financial market, cross-border activities, digital networks with global span, and international organisations such as the UN and WTO that operate independent of nation-states, these remain materially embedded at the local, national level: the headquarters of financial firms, or the physical infrastructure (servers, cables, computers) which serves as the backbone for the internet (2008a: 340-6). Sassen explores the impact of globalisation at the micro-level, and in particular its consequences for the people living in these cities; from the highly specialised workers of legal, accounting, and advertising firms, to the powerless, 'invisible' individuals who live on the fringes, such as migrant and low-wage workers and the homeless or disadvantaged. Most recently, her work has focussed on the potential for digital technologies to overcome some of these

barriers of globalisation by allowing local, immobile individuals previously excluded from the political process to exploit the highly networked spaces of the contemporary city and emerge as a new 'social force' in global politics (Sassen, 2007b).

Born in the Netherlands, Sassen grew up in Buenos Aires and Rome before moving to the United States to study sociology and economics at the University of Notre Dame. In her fascinating autobiographical chapter from *The Disobedient Generation* she describes herself as 'always being a foreigner but never an expatriate' (2005, p. 222) and in this interview she elaborates on how her own experiences as a migrant, political activist, and global traveller shaped her work as a global theorist. Currently, she is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and a member of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University in New York, and Centennial Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics. In addition to her many books, chapters, and essays, she has been published in the *Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Huffington Post*, the *Financial Times*, *OpenDemocracy.org* and *Le Monde Diplomatique* to name only a few. Sassen has also served as an advisor to several international bodies, and has contributed to a recent five-year UNESCO study on sustainable human settlement. In this interview, she provides an account of her work since the publication of her first book *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (1988), as well as an insight into her research approach and her influences.

**PLATFORM:** You've said that emphasising the importance of 'the local' in the process of globalisation allows you to situate your work in specific contexts rather than standing back as a 'global observer'. When did you first become interested in the sociology of globalisation, and how does this approach provide a different perspective from other globalisation theorists who tend to take a broad, macro-level approach?

**Saskia Sassen:** Emphasising place in a complex global economy is one way to address what I see as the need to destabilise the accepted dominant narratives and explanations of globalisation. I already was doing this in my first book *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (Sassen, 1988) – linking global migration to certain features of global capital. The dominant narratives have produced the global as a master category that obscures as much as it reveals. The aim is to generate new questions for research, questions excluded by dominant narratives. A second feature is the need to develop conceptual architectures that allow us to detect what we might think of as countergeographies of globalisation. By these I mean conditions, processes, and actors riding or using the mainstream infrastructure produced largely by and for the global corporate economy, but for other aims, ranging from emancipatory struggles to organised crime. There are multiple instances of these countergeographies.

On a more foundational level it can be seen as a research practice that contests the power of master categories to tell the full story. We need to problematise these categories, yet problematising can itself engender new master categories as this is a task that is continuous. A master category is one way of structuring a discursive space, with its own power logics and exclusions. Master categories have the power of illuminating a complex issue with great efficiency, but they do so with a clarity that is blinding. They thereby also keep us from seeing other presences in the landscape. They produce a vast penumbra around that centre of light and it is in that penumbra that I have gone digging over and over again, across a variety of subjects and over twenty years.

**P: You began your career as an academic working on immigration policy, which as you've written led you to become interested in global cities. How did this trajectory come about, and how did your own experience as a migrant living in the U.S. shape your ideas about globalisation and the movement of people, communities, and cultures?**

**SS:** Growing up in three countries with five different languages must have had something to do with my choice of academic subjects, or so I am told. But it is not a self evident proposition. It might be the case, and it might be interesting to study whether it is indeed so, that such beginnings lead necessarily to an interest in international or global subjects. Conceivably, it might lead on in the opposite direction: a search for clearly demarcated subjects, where closure is primary and the fuzziness of the international is evicted from the category. More interesting, perhaps, is whether not knowing a single language perfectly inflects one's way of thinking. In my experience, imperfect knowledge of all the languages I work in is consequential. I keep running into conditions not well captured in any of these languages. The result is a proclivity to invent terms or to use existing words for unexpected or unusual applications. Language is seeing. Juxtaposing different languages is seeing differences in that seeing. When you throw into that mix the third component, imperfect knowledge of the languages in play, you get my experience: little gaps across these languages, gaps that point to interstitial spaces where there is work to be done. One possible move, and it was my move, is to compensate imperfect knowledge of language with theory. It is this indirect connection, rather than the fact itself of growing up in more than one country, that captures the influence of my life on my scholarship, and on my way of thinking. This has shaped my perhaps peculiar way of theorising – theory gets constituted through the text itself, rather than through a model that stands outside the specifics of the subject under consideration. And it has shaped my need to develop new categories for analysis, such as that of the global city, and, more recently, the denationalised state.

**P: Can you explain why you chose to focus on cities and regions in your**



**research, and briefly summarise your concept of the ‘global city’?**

**SS:** Indeed, the more expected focus would have been on self-evidently global institutions. This question of the scaling analytics in my work has recurred. Today, this question is reframed in terms of some of the issues (and scalings!) that organize my book *Territory, Authority, Rights* (Sassen, 2008a). One of the issues I raise in this book is the importance of focusing on the sub-national shaping of the global even inside the national state; for instance, the Executive branch of government and its growing alignment with globalization. I am hearing the same type of surprise: why focus on the Executive branch of government to understand globalisation? Or in my research on immigration, which I argue is contained in and constitutive of specific global systems.

A basic hypothesis in my 30 years of research is that the global is partly endogenous to the national rather than a formation that stands necessarily outside and in opposition to the national. Endogeneity can be the result of an originally national condition that becomes reconstructed as global; for example, the fact that what we call global capital is in part an amalgamation of what often were national capitals. Global capital can then be seen as comprising not only new forms of capital but also denationalised national capital. Or endogeneity can result from the partial endogenising of global dynamics and entities into national institutional orders – for example, the fact that global electronic financial markets are partly embedded in, and dependent on, a network of national financial centres.

This approach has theoretical, empirical, and political implications for developing critical globalisation studies. The global is not simply defined as that which is outside and in contestation to the national, nor is the global only that which is part of a space of flows that cuts across borders. There are, in my view, components of globalisation that we keep coding in national terms, and there are global actors whom we think of as local, who may not move across borders and lack the characteristics of what have become dominant representations of the global. If we understand the global as indeed partly endogenous to or endogenised into the national, we expand the range of actors who are conceivably global. We can then include even those who are immobile, resource-poor, and not able to travel global circuits.

**P:** In your autobiographical chapter from *The Disobedient Generation*, you wrote that ‘it was always a politics against the abuse of power’ that stirred you and which influenced your decision to become a sociologist. Did your experiences with power and political agency as a political activist inform your work on global cities, where you have often been concerned with issues of powerlessness and marginalisation in urban space?

**SS:** Yes, focusing on a complex city to understand the global means you are going to deal with the low wage workers and economic sectors, such as industrial services (trucking, warehousing, etc) that we do not associate with the leading knowledge economy sectors. In short, you cut through the stereotypical imagery which makes all these other workers and activities invisible. You discover the teeming masses of workers in low wage and backward jobs that are part of the infrastructure of global cities, including the most advanced sectors of the knowledge economy, which we think is only about high-level professionals.

**P:** You've argued that globalisation has enabled a new kind of political subject, one who does not necessarily identify with the nation-state but with his/her position as a marginalised individual living in a particularised space. What role have new media technologies played in the emergence of this new 'social force', and how have they contributed to the new possibilities for diasporic communities and marginalised citizens to participate in global politics?

**SS:** There are forms of global activism that enable localised and perhaps immobile people to experience themselves as part of a global network, or even a public domain that is at another scale from the locality from which they work. As part of a larger network, human rights activists or environmental activists, who may be obsessed with the torturer in their local jail, or with the forest near their town and the water supply in their region, can begin to experience themselves as part of a broader global effort without relinquishing their localness. It is this combination that is critical for my argument about cosmopolitanism, or, rather, against the widespread assumption that if it's global it is cosmopolitan. So I talk about non-cosmopolitan forms of globality. The new information technologies, which are designed to eliminate distance and to produce space-time compression, can actually also have the effect of revalorising locality and local actors. I make that argument for a diversity of actors, for instance, financial markets as well as activists. I contest this notion of the collapsing of the global with the cosmopolitan. Financiers are non-cosmopolitan globalists, and I argue that most human-rights, or environmentalist, activists, who are actually on the ground, are that too. I want to get at the multivalence of both globalisation and what it means to be a non-cosmopolitan globalist – re-inventing the local as alter-globalisation. In a very different domain, I would say that there is going to be a real push towards re-localising all kinds of markets, pulling them out of the supranational market and making them local but inserted in horizontal global, or at least, cross-border, networks. We don't need the standardised production of multinationals that can sell you the same production no matter where you are.

We see the emergence of various types of subjects contesting various aspects of power, of the system – people working against the market as conceived of by WTO and the IMF, against landmines, against the trafficking of people, against

environmental destruction. These hundreds of contesting actors in different localities have wound up producing a kind of synthetic effect – they constitute the multitude. A critical question then is to understand the many informal political architectures through which the multitude actually is constituted. There is making, “poesis,” in these informal political architectures. There are many different kinds of making being built from the ground up, and there are different terrains in which new kinds of political subjects and struggles are emerging. A single city can have hundreds of terrains for political action. All of this begins to bring texture, structuration to the notion of the multitude. What I care about is the making of these specific, diverse, political architectures within the multitude. I want to capture this negotiation, the constituting of a global multitude of sorts but one that is deeply localised (and may have nothing to do with cosmopolitanism!). There’s a kind of global politics in the making which has, as a critical component, multitudes that might be global even though they are not mobile.

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