# ARTICLES

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CONTENTS

# WHEN "SMALL" IS "BEAUTIFUL"

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOCAL RADIO POLICIES IN EUROPE

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## Abstract

In this article, the focus is on how policy makers in Flanders (Belgium) can be inspired by the implementation of local radio development strategies in three neighbouring markets (the Netherlands, Great-Britain, the French-speaking Community in Belgium). More specific, the article concentrates on the questions of which options policy makers have at their disposal in supporting local radio and what lessons they should learn from foreign experiences in boosting the sector's development. The final aim is to come up with policy recommendations for reorganising local broadcasting and strengthening its economic and social value. To do this, document analysis was combined with seventeen local radio expert interviews in all markets involved. Next, a cross-country analysis was performed to identify structural conditions and propose policy options for a proactive media policy regarding small-scale radio.

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## Introduction

During the last three decades, local radio has established its position in the European media landscape. It seems that, in response to the ongoing globalisation, liberalisation and digitisation of cultural production, local-based practices are increasingly gaining importance in media cultures. Consequently, community radio is increasingly getting more attention both from national and European authorities. This type of non-commercial media is gradually being recognised and funded as third tier media sector at the national level while European policy makers have considered their contribution to the promotion of media pluralism and democracy. After thirty years of campaigning for institutional support and funding, it seems that community media have finally found their place in European media policy (Jiménez and Scifo 2010).

Despite these promising policy and regulatory developments in Europe, the sector faces a lot of upcoming challenges regarding the switchover to digital broadcasting platforms and the sector's further consolidation in European policy making. Furthermore, many national states still fail to provide a sustainable basis for a mature local radio sector that can play a significant role in the pending issues of media literacy, media pluralism and digital democracy. As Cammaerts (2009) argues, community radio is under threat in some of these countries as it experiences difficulties in establishing itself between the state-controlled broadcasting system and the market.

In Flanders (North of Belgium), for example, local radio is facing structural handicaps to be economically viable and to secure its future due to a lack of cohesive policy. Whereas local radio had an audience share of 34.7 percent in 1991; this share has fallen to about 7 percent in 2010. While many non-commercial stations were pushed out of the market by the rise of large-scale networks, the overall financial performance of these networks and the remaining local stations has dramatically deteriorated as well. Furthermore, the ongoing competition for listeners and resources has driven stations to a market conformity approach, which has induced homogenisation of programming strategies and a decrease of local content (Saeys and Coppens 2007).

The story of local radio in Flanders clearly illustrates a number of conflicts that explain some of the current thresholds for the sector's development. Although these conflicts are to some extent unexpected consequences of the legal framework, they have driven up ruinous competition in the market and have negatively affected the economic performance of local radio in Flanders. In brief, the sector suffers from overcrowded airwaves, limited geographical coverage and inadequate funding, but policy makers get stuck in path dependency (Evens and Hauttekeete 2009). Whereas local radio in Flanders developed after the commercial model, policy analysis of similar European countries and regions shows that government can act more proactively in local broadcasting and implement innovative approaches that fully support the development of local and non-commercial radio (Price-Davis and Tacchi 2001; Peissl and Tremetzberger 2010).

This article draws upon a research project carried out in 2008 for the Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media that aimed to map "good practice policies" in three adjacent markets including Great-Britain, the Netherlands and

the French-speaking Community (South of Belgium), and to explore policy options for the support of a sustainable and diverse local radio scene in Flanders. In this article, the focus is on how policy makers in Flanders can be inspired by the implementation of local radio development strategies in three neighbouring countries and regions. More specific, this article concentrates on the questions of which options policy makers have at their disposal in supporting local radio and what lessons they can learn from foreign experiences in boosting the sector's development. This overview of strategies should result into a framework with major policy recommendations for reorganising local broadcasting and strengthening its economic and societal value.

In the first stage, a literature review and document analysis were done, and combined with seventeen interviews with local radio experts. This expert panel consisted of scholars, radio professionals and representatives from regulators and radio federations, coming from the Netherlands (5), Great-Britain (2), and the Flemish (8) and French-speaking Community (2) in Belgium. In the second stage, a market prospect of the considered countries was executed, structural problems were identified and possible remedies were analysed. Eventually, this inspired to develop a set of policy options and recommendations regarding four domains (cultural, economic, technological and regulatory issues) for reorganising and supporting the local radio landscape in Flanders. As these options were not strictly defined in the topic guide, this set of policy perspectives were derived from the interviews and market prospect, and did not really function as a concrete framework during the empirical stage.

As mentioned, the article compromises a cross-country analysis of three neighbouring local radio markets, which each belong to a specific (and later discussed) local radio development model: the Netherlands (North-European policy model), the French-speaking Community (South-European policy model, in transition to the North-European policy model) and Great-Britain (pragmatic policy model). These radio markets are not only adjacent to Flanders, but have specific particularities to be included: the Netherlands serve as a textbook case for local radio policy, Great-Britain has a pioneering position in community radio policy and in digital broadcasting platforms while a fresh regulatory wind, partly based on the French model, is currently reshaping the local radio scene in the French-speaking Community. Hence, this cross-country analysis of good practices can provide some food for thought both for policy makers and scholars to develop a strategic framework for the support of local radio in Flanders and elsewhere.

The article is structured as follows. First, a historical overview of how local radio developed across Europe since the 1970s is briefly sketched. Then, a cross-country analysis of four local radio markets is made resulting into a set of policy options and recommendations. The final section discusses the way forward for local radio policy and research in Europe.

## Models of Local Radio Development

Driven mainly by the increasing availability of low-cost recording and transmitting equipment, and the growing demand for cultural self-expression and community-based media services, local radio stations grew like mushrooms in the late seventies (see Jankowski et al. 1992). Because the radio landscape in each country is

shaped largely by the government's approach and reaction time to the emergence of these local stations, the process of development and maturity strongly varies from one country to another (Cammaerts 2009; Jiménez and Scifo 2010). Despite this variety of historical contexts and policy approaches, the advent of local radio stations all over Europe has in common that it blew a new wind into the broadcasting scene forcing policy makers to develop a legal framework. Initially, governments preferred to implement these new radio stations only locally and to preserve the nationwide public broadcasting monopoly, but the commercial lobby saw opportunities for generating advertising revenue and for competing with established radio channels. Apart from particular national experiences, this interplay between market (private) and government (public) is a constant factor in the development of the European local broadcasting scene (Jauert 1997; Skogerbo 1997; Dunaway 2002). In analogy with similar models of media system development and policy (e.g. van Cuilenburg and McQuail 2003; Hallin and Mancini 2004), three policy models for local radio development were identified, each affecting the maturity and sustainability of the sector to date.

According to the "free market" (De Bens and Petersen 1992) or "South-European" model (Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg 1990), local radio developed as a reaction against the public broadcasting monopoly. Its aim was to provide open access for local communities and alternative radio programming in addition to that of the public broadcaster. Although local stations emerged in a spirit of idealism and clandestineness, often supported by social movements in order to mobilise local communities for specific actions, they were soon persecuted by public authorities (as in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain) who aimed for stifling this emerging pollution of the airwaves (Drijvers 1992). During this "radio war" between governments and amateurs, many of the newly launched local stations were shut down as a result of legal uncertainty or went bankrupt due to financial chaos. Eventually, government was forced to change over to legalisation and to develop a framework that was strongly based on the pioneering ideals. A limited transmission area and a ban on advertising had to guarantee the non-commercial nature of these stations. However, the ban on advertising and the lack of public funding drove amateur radio stations into the hands of private investors such as press groups, which were eager to set up large-scale advertising chains with impunity. Since governments were likely to legalise these illegal situations, commercial networks quickly gained ground. As a result, airtime is increasingly filled with hit music and advertisements instead of local information while the few remaining non-commercial stations are struggling to survive (Glevarec and Pinet 2008; Evens and Hauttekeete 2009).

In the "Scandinavian" (De Bens and Petersen 1992) or "North-European" policy model (Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg 1990), a legal framework was soon developed with a clear focus on the unique nature of non-commercial radio stations. By designing local radio, governments aimed to create a "third tier sector" providing open access for citizens, widening freedom of speech and increasing the level of local information (Jauert and Prehn 2003). This type of local broadcasting was seen as complementary to the public broadcaster; it even became a local or regional division of this public broadcasting system in particular countries. In some countries (as in the Netherlands and later Denmark) a subsidy scheme was introduced to financially support the sector. This financial support to non-commercial stations

and the legal recognition of their societal and cultural value are an integral part of this media policy model, which assumes an interventionist government that supports the development and sustainability of non-commercial local broadcasting. Given the recent emergence of commercial local radio in this model, government is taking measures to counter the effects of commercialisation. This interventionist approach strongly contrasts with the market model, where advertisement lobbies have forced the government to gradually deregulate the sector in order to establish a commercial radio market (Crookes and Vittet-Philippe 1986).

Third, De Bens and Petersen (1992) identify a more "pragmatic" development model, which is, unlike the North and South-European models, characterised by little idealism. Radio regulations in this model typically show a large measure of realism and pragmatism, especially with regard to financing issues (Kleinsteuber and Sonnenberg 1990). Rather than political ideology the emphasis of regulation is on economic sustainability in order to assure that local radio stations can operate without financial chaos and frequent shutdowns. Hence, countries like the United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland have allowed advertising as income source from the beginning and have considered networking as a creative means to reduce operational expenses. Media regulators have also limited the number of available frequencies per region in order to reduce competition and to guarantee the financial sustainability of the sector. Historically, countries in this pragmatic model have in common a less centralised public media system since the public broadcasting monopoly was broken already in the sixties or even earlier. As these countries have a long tradition in private radio, there was no need for a "local revolution" and non-commercial broadcasters could develop slowly while their complementary status was recognised by law.

In the following section, each of these three development models are further explored by comparing the particular radio market and policy approach in the countries and regions selected for this study.

## Local Radio Policies in Europe

In this section, radio markets in the selected countries are briefly sketched with particular attention to their historical context and the role of the government in the development of local radio (for a more factual overview, see Table 1). This development of broadcasting markets has been marked by a distinction between two types of local radio. On the one hand commercial local radio stations aimed at attracting large audiences and advertisers, on the other hand non-commercial local stations, often called community radio, aimed at creating strong bonds with local communities and providing open access for citizens. The tension and choice between these two types of local radio, squeezed between market and government, has proved problematic in several European countries (Jauert and Prehn 2003; Cammaerts 2009).

### The Netherlands

Since its emergence in 1974, local broadcasting – as carrier of local information – has become a relevant factor in the Dutch media landscape (Bakker and Scholten 2007). Public policy focused on decentralisation and diversity of the broadcasting system, which has resulted in almost three hundred local radio stations. After

Table 1: Analog Market Overview in the Netherlands, Great-Britain, the Flemish and French-speaking Community (own elaboration)

| | the Netherlands | Great-Britain | French-speaking Community | Flemish Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Geography* | | | | |
| Area (in km,) | 41.526 | 244.820 | 17.006 | 13.522 |
| Population (in mln) | 16,4 | 60,8 | 4,5 | 6,2 |
| | | | | |
| *Launch* | | | | |
| National public | *NPO* 1930 | *BBC* 1922 | *RTBF* 1930 | *VRT* 1930 |
| National private | 1992 | 1992 | 1991 | 2002 |
| Regional public | 1988 | 1967 | - | - |
| Regional private | 1992 | - | 1991 | - |
| Local public | 1974 | 1967 | - | - |
| Local private | 1988 | 1973 | 1981 | 1982 |
| Community | - | 2002 | 1987 | - |
| | | | | |
| *Amount* | | | | |
| National public | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| National private | 15 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Regional public | 13 | 8 | - | - |
| Regional private | 12 | - | 5 | - |
| Local public | 296 | 36 | - | - |
| Local private | 3 | 295 | 71 | 293 |
| Community | - | +160 | 15 | - |
| | | | | |
| *Market share (end of 2008)* | | | | |
| National public | 31,9% | 46,4% | 27,9% | 66,6% |
| National private | 46,5% | 10,6% | 52,8% | 23,9% |
| Regional public | 12,8% | 5% | - | - |
| Regional private | 3,3% | - | 7% | - |
| Local public | 1% | 4,3% | - | - |
| Local private | <1% | 31,6% | 5% | 7% |
| Community | - | <1% | <1% | - |
| | | | | |
| *Radio advertising (2008)* | | | | |
| Investment (in mln €) | 277 | 601 | 186 | 191 |
| Investment/capita(in €) | 16,8 | 9,9 | 41,3 | 31 |
| Advertising share | 7% | 3,5% | 14,8% | 10,1% |

several experiments, local radio was incorporated in the public system. Neither advertising was allowed, nor was structural funding provided by the national government. As a result, local radio depended on grants, contributions by members and in some cases subsidies from local governments. However, absence of structural public funding restricted the further development of local broadcasting in the Netherlands (Stappers et al. 1992).

In the 1990s, media policy changed as commercial radio both at the national and local level was legally introduced. As local authorities were reluctant to subsidise local broadcasting, advertising was allowed in 1990. The introduction of advertising induced the commercialisation of local radio stations, which were eager to programme advertiser-friendly to maximise advertising income.

This shift in media policy and the absence of structural public funding has caused a split between local radio stations, which had to choose between staying small-scale community-oriented with limited resources, or developing into an advertising-oriented music-format station. Quite remarkably, the former appeared to be more successful in smaller communities than in major cities (Hollander et al. 1995). After years of pressure by the community sector's lobby organisation OLON, policy makers moved towards a structural funding mechanism in 1997. Recently, new legislation has passed that should guarantee an assured income for all local radio stations during the whole licensing period of five years (de Wit 2007).

### Great-Britain

Although Great-Britain is often hailed for its pioneering role in community broadcasting, policy only recently changed in favour of the establishment of the so-called "access radio." The BBC's national monopoly, which was strengthened with the establishment of local and regional divisions, was first challenged by pirate stations operating illegally from broadcasting ships in the mid-1960s (Carter 2003). Twenty years after the introduction of commercial television, the Sound Broadcasting Act of 1972 opened the way for independent local radio and defined the geographical and programming requirements for interested parties. Originally, these stations had to be complementary to the public broadcaster but their reliance on advertising revenues drove most stations towards commercial programming formats. Because of its very strict regulatory framework, many pirates continued their operations in illegality despite fulfilling a community role (Cammaerts 2009). Meanwhile, commercial local radio grew quickly and merged with regional press groups. Today, this commercial radio industry is highly profitable as well as highly concentrated.

After a long existential struggle and lobby work from the Community Media Association (CMA), non-commercial radio finally gained a legal basis as the Communications Act (2003) and later the Community Radio Order (2004) were voted. Community radio became recognised as third tier media, complementary to public and commercial stations and would fulfil social gain objectives. Although advertising is allowed, community radio would remain not-for-profit and funding from any single source would not exceed fifty percent of total budget. In 2005, the Community Radio Fund was established to fund the station's core competencies and to support the further development of the sector. Despite its still fragile financial situation, the community radio sector now hosts an impressive number of stations (Lewis 2008).

### Belgium

As d'Haenens et al. (2009) state, Belgium hosts two communities with diverging cultural politics and media landscapes. Being a federal state, media regulations (except for frequency regulations) were transferred to the Flemish and French-speaking Community while the nationwide public broadcaster BRT was split in 1977. Whereas the public radio monopoly was first challenged by pirate stations from ships in the North Sea in the late 1960s, terrestrial FM pirates hijacked the airwaves at the end of the seventies. Some of these stations were idealistic; most had commercial ambitions and provided popular music, which was in stark contrast to the programming strategies of the public channels those days.

Both communities legalised local radio in 1981 and 1982 respectively, but they reacted quite differently to these evolutions and soon developed diverging policy frameworks. In order to preserve the position of the public broadcaster, Flemish policy makers tried to limit the impact of local radio by preventing national networks and by decentralising the public broadcaster. While policy makers aimed for guaranteeing the small-scale and non-commercial nature of local radio, many stations struggled with financial difficulties due to overcrowded airwaves, limited geographical coverage and lack of public funding. This protectionist policy is best illustrated by the relatively late opening of the national commercial radio market, which developed only by 2002. To date, only a few local stations in Flanders *de facto* operating as community radio have survived (Evens and Hauttekeete 2009).

This approach sharply contrasts with that of the policy makers in the French-speaking Community, who allowed nationwide commercial radio already in 1991. Moreover, in 1987, local stations were allowed to build networks to some extent, which would ameliorate their financial status. In that same year, a specific statute for community radio was created within the regulatory framework. In this regard, the strong influence of the French model should not be underestimated as France implemented a similar regulatory shift a few years earlier. The establishment of the "Fonds d'Aide à la Création Radiophonique" (FACR), a public fund supporting the production of cultural radio projects, in 1994, also closely reflects the French media policy. According to a new decree (in 2008), community radio stations can now be funded structurally by the FACR when applying for grants. Contrary to the Flemish approach, which fails to consider the specific status of community radio and to provide it with a structural funding scheme, community radio is recognised and more actively supported in the southern part of Belgium.

## Policy Options and Recommendations

Apart from the particular social, economic and cultural contexts wherein local radio develops, media policy plays a structuring role in the successful development and sustainable growth of the sector. The current state of both commercial and non-commercial local radio in particular countries is thus largely but not exclusively shaped by the policy approach to the emerging phenomenon of small-scale radio. In this section, structural conditions and policy actions for the successful development of local radio are identified and discussed. All these conditions and actions were identified in the literature and almost all are met in the selected countries except for the Flemish case (summarised in Table 2). Hence, these conditions may contribute to a sustainable local radio market and may therefore be considered for a future policy framework. As policy makers have a wide array of choices in regard to issues such as recognition, funding, diversity etc., policy options are sketched and further recommendations are made for the Flemish case.

### Recognition and Legal Status

The recognition of local radio as third tier media is considered important for the sector's development. Being registered as a separate entity in media regulations enables community radio stations to engage with regulators and funding organisations. A legal status is important, not only for taking tailored policy measures, but also for stimulating the social recognition of the sector in general (Peissl

Table 2: Policy Measures Overview of the Netherlands, Great-Britain and the French-speaking Community

| | the Netherlands | Great-Britain | French-speaking Community |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Recognition and legal status* | Public broadcasting system | Third tier sector | Third tier sector |
| *Funding and financing* | National subsidies | Community radio fund | Community radio fund |
| *Concentration and diversity* | Cross-ownership regulation<br>Programming clauses | Cross-ownership regulation<br>Programming clauses | Cross-ownership regulation |
| *Regulation and control* | | Integrated regulator | |
| *Self-organisation of sector* | Representative organisation | Representative organisation | |
| *Digital switchover* | Planning | Planning | |

and Tremetzberger 2010). Such a status should define several criteria, including non-profit orientation, participatory character and accountability to local communities, which illustrate the sector's key roles and functions. Only by fulfilling these criteria, stations can be recognised as community radio and can apply for funding. Ideally, this recognition is accompanied by structural funding to fully support the sector's development. However, a legal status as separate entity not automatically involves the provision of public funding. The European Parliament recently called its Member States to change over to the recognition of community media (Resetarits 2008).

The extent to which community radio is legally recognised varies across Europe. An overview of policy models suggests that community radio has experienced more support in Nordic countries than in South-European countries. In some Scandinavian countries, community radio was introduced by the government while the sector developed from bottom-up and struggled for recognition in Southern countries (Runge 2007). According to Cammaerts (2009), however, the recognition of community radio is closely related to the position of the public service broadcaster. In countries with a dominant public service tradition, community radio is only recently recognised whereas in more liberal countries, community radio has a longer history and legacy.

Specific regulations define the borders between which community radio can operate. While some countries opt for flexibility and entrepreneurship, others prefer a more stable, institutionalised approach. In general, our country analysis has shown that there are several ways to recognise community radio. In the Netherlands, local radio is part of the public broadcasting system and its programming requirements are similar to those of the national and regional public channels. Community radio in the United Kingdom has been recognised as third tier, complementary to public and commercial radio. Thanks to a set of objectives (localness, social gain, not-for-profit, participation etc.) community radio operates quite separately from established radio stations. Until recently, community radio in the French-speaking

Community was only partially recognised. The audiovisual decree mentioned the concepts of "associative radio" and "educational radio," but did not provide financial resources to these stations. Thanks to recent legislation, community radio is now fully recognised and funded as a third tier sector.

In Flanders, local radio is by definition considered to be commercial, thereby disregarding its specific role in the media landscape. As the regulatory framework only distinguishes between public and commercial radio, the few non-commercial radio stations that have survived are not really recognised and are treated equally as commercial networks. As there is no regulatory basis for actively supporting these stations and for taking tailored measures, policy makers could consider the development of a regulatory framework that recognises the social and cultural value of non-commercial radio in Flanders. In addition, the experts preferred non-commercial local radio being considered as third tier rather than as part of the public broadcasting system. The latter scenario would only strengthen the market position of the public broadcaster while the commercial sector is not seeing local radio stations as real competitors and therefore not opposed to a third tier recognition.

### Funding and Financing

The diversity of the European local radio scene is partly illustrated by its variety of financing models. The sector should be understood as a "mixed economy" in which radio stations rely on different financial resources. These resources may be long-term or project-based, and may be provided both by public and private organisations (Runge 2007). The financial circumstances greatly vary across Europe as in some countries local stations largely rely on advertising while other countries have established public funding mechanisms. Since such structural financing mechanisms are a logical result of the sector's recognition by law, they are more frequent in Nordic than Southern countries. Jauert and Prehn (2003) argue that structural financing mechanisms improve the diversity and quality of (local) programming and prevent stations from homogenising their audio output. For being effective, such mechanisms should be transparent, accountable and accessible for all local stations. Moreover, the independence and stability of the sector is further strengthened by a diversity of funding options (Price-Davis and Tacchi 2001; Coyer 2006; Peissl and Tremetzberger 2010).

Governments can choose between a range of public funding mechanisms. Splitting the public broadcasters' licence fee is the most common and sustainable mechanism as it assures predictable funding for local radio stations. In this case, a (fixed) share of the national broadcaster's budget is allocated for and distributed to the local level. Despite being part of it, local radio in the Netherlands is funded separately from the national public broadcaster. For each household they serve, local stations are granted €1.30 by the national government. The creation of a fund, mostly financed by a share or levy on advertising revenues of established broadcasters, is another popular practice for supporting small-scale radio stations. In the French-speaking Community, for example, the FACR is financed from a percentage of the revenues from public and private broadcasters' advertising. In 2009, thirteen associative radio stations were granted a total of €130,750. The philosophy behind such a "Robin Hood fund" is that it transfers money from the "wealthy" to the "poorer" stations. The Community Radio Fund in the UK (£459,992 in 2010), in

contrast, is part of total media budget and is not funded by taxes on commercial revenues. Furthermore, local radio is often supported by indirect public funding, which not primarily targets the radio sector. In the UK, for example, community radio receives grants from employment and training support schemes, social inclusion or regeneration programmes provided at the local, national and European level.

In addition to public funding, two almost private resources are found important for local radio stations. First, many stations rely on financial support from listeners, members and even local institutions. Therefore, fundraising events to support the stations' activities are being organised. Second, advertising plays an important role in the funding of small-scale radio in Europe and elsewhere – albeit its impact on the sector varies by country. Local stations are allowed to earn advertising income in most European countries, but this income is often strictly regulated. In the UK, for example, a revenue cap of fifty percent has been installed to make sure that non-commercial but successful stations would not distort local advertising markets; community radio stations therefore cannot extract more than the half of their income out of advertising revenues. In some cases, advertising income is considered unethical as commercialism is not in line with the stations' social objectives (Runge 2007).

In Flanders, local radio stations largely rely on advertising revenues as structural funding is not provided by the government. However, many of these local stations are found unattractive by advertisers owing to the limited audience reach and programming quality. As the local radio sector is thus undercapitalised, its viability and sustainability are endangered (Evens and Hauttekeete 2009). Therefore, experts plead for a more active role of the government that supports the sector by the establishment of a public funding mechanism. As the Flemish market for radio advertising is particularly strong, a tax on public and private broadcasters' advertising revenues is suggested to assure the future of local radio in Flanders. However, there are serious doubts about the political support for such a structural funding mechanism for non-commercial radio stations in Flanders. Regional policy makers escape their responsibility by arguing that local stations are free to apply for support at the local level (e.g. municipalities). Also public and commercial broadcasters strongly argue against such a public funding mechanism by fair competition concerns.

## Concentration and Diversity

The sustainability of small-scale radio is increasingly endangered by the emergence of media corporations with interests in several media types (cross-ownership). These organisations no longer target specific media markets but aim for creating synergies between different content outlets in order to establish economies of scale and market power. Policy makers have wrestled with a variety of issues involving ownership of media and concerns over the impact of integrated media companies. Most of these concerns, however, are based on normative and almost unproven assumptions on the relationship between market concentration and company size on the one hand and performance and media diversity on the other hand (Harcourt and Picard 2009). As the general belief is that society is best served by a greater diversity of content, media diversity is defined as a key objective for media policy

and regulation. In this context, media ownership has traditionally been strictly regulated by most European Member States.

Generally, two different policy approaches to media diversity are distinguished. According to the market-based approach, economic regulation and competition law are understood to prevent market failure. Governments only intervene in case free and fair competition is distorted and market entrance is limited by a dominant firm. The interventionist or public model, in contrast, involves an active media policy and highlights the importance of various political views and cultural values (Karppinen 2006). This closely relates to Valcke (2009), whose model is not confined to ownership issues, but also assesses cultural, political and geographical pluralism in the media. In addition to competition law, sector-specific provisions regulate and restrict concentration and cross-ownership in media. The interventionist approach allows for a variety of measures aimed at protecting or promoting media diversity, including must-carry rules and quotas for specific output. Generally, small states tend to the interventionist model as the market-based approach fails due to economic realities of small media markets. This also explains why most small states have opted for a late introduction of commercial broadcasting (Puppis 2009).

Frequency allotments linked to particular music or programming genres are a popular policy tool to maximise diversity in broadcasting markets. These clauses ensure a wide range of genres in the market and contribute to diversity both in local and national markets. Licenses that fail to meet the clauses required by their allotment are withdrawn and then granted to other candidates. Experiences from the Netherlands and Great-Britain show that especially in dense populated areas, granting multiple, overlapping licences with different profiles ensures media diversity (Peissl and Tremetzberger 2010). In sparsely populated areas, on the contrary, licence exclusivity (and less rivalry) may be an option, as ruinous competition for audiences and advertisers has induced homogenisation and mainstream content (van der Wurff et al. 2000). Both the North-European and pragmatic policy model have followed this rationale while creating a sustainable radio sector. In the Netherlands, only one local radio per municipality is granted while the British legislator has introduced advertising revenue caps for community stations operating in the same area as commercial local radio. In the UK's low-density areas, no community radio licenses were granted due the presence of commercial local radio. In all selected countries, measures for limiting media concentration have also been taken. Great-Britain, the Netherlands and the French-speaking Community all have media-specific concentration rules in terms of audience and/or revenue shares while the former two also have established regulatory bodies permanently monitoring market structures.

According to d'Haenens et al. (2009), the Flemish media legislation is one of the sole West-European frameworks without sector-specific concentration rules other than general competition regulations. In the past, the government even stimulated cross-ownership of press groups in commercial television and recently relaxed radio ownership restrictions in favour of the major radio group. As Flemish airwaves are overcrowded inducing irrational competition between several local stations in the same but small area, experts almost agree that a reduction of local stations and the implementation of programming clauses would improve the diversity and sustainability of local broadcasting in Flanders. Specifically for Flanders, a switch

towards the interventionist model (including sector-specific media ownership thresholds) would enrich media diversity and enhance local radio's sustainability. Content regulation by means of programming clauses, however, seems difficult as policy makers are likely to define these clauses on a market-based approach with mainstream genres to create the highest level of competition in the market. In addition, the main broadcasters believe programming decisions are up to the market and not to the government.

### Regulation and Control

Next to passing specific laws that define the objectives and role of community radio, underlying regulations regarding small-scale radio stations could also be implemented. However, as the majority of European countries have failed to create any political awareness of the social and cultural potential of local radio, subsequent regulatory procedures and policies are missing. Runge (2007) argues that an up-to-date regulatory framework increases the understanding of policy makers regarding local radio and thus helps the sector to develop. Therefore, the existence of transparent processes and evaluation criteria for local radio is crucial for the sector's growth and sustainability. This approach requires media regulators with expert knowledge to proactively scan activities in the field and sanction infringements of the law. Moreover, national regulators should ideally consult the sector prior to proposing new legislation, licensing stations or making other decisions. This level and quality of cooperation between authorities and the sector are found crucial for the sector's success and sustainability. Therefore, a platform for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and information between all relevant stakeholders could be established. Great-Britain is a textbook case for how regulators contribute to the smooth introduction of new legislation and engage with the sector in a transparent and accountable fashion. In this case, the British Ofcom shows that interacting with the sector permanently results in a better understanding of and by the sector (Smith 2006).

In addition, the radio broadcasting sector would profit from a stable (co-)regulatory regime and from an integrated regulatory body. A single communication regulator could be considered an adequate answer to the increasing complexity of communication regulation fuelled by the convergence of the media and telecommunications industries. Ofcom, the prime example of a unitary regulatory body in Europe, regulates radio and television broadcasting, fixed line and mobile telecoms including licensing and spectrum issues in Great-Britain.

In the Flemish and French-speaking Community, however, the fragmentation of competencies between media and telecommunication regulators results in conflicts about whether the national or regional level is authorised. This may hinder an efficient approach to the radio sector and hampers the development of the local radio scene. To make things worse, disputes and lawsuits between the communities regarding their frequency plans have made a stimulant radio policy even more difficult. The fragmentation of power in a federal state not necessarily involves regulatory conflicts and instability, as experiences from Germany learn. Unlike the Belgian case, the federal state remains responsible for the technical aspects of broadcasting (including frequency planning and coordination) while the regions regulate media contents (Kleinsteuber 2006). According to our experts, such distribution of competencies may contrast with the current developments towards

converging communications, but creating integrated structures in federal states seems politically unviable as no level is likely to give up their competencies over one of these aspects. However, a better coordination between these competencies (media, telecom and competition) could be a goal for policy makers in federal states so that the vigorous regulation and control of the communications sector is ensured. Strengthening regulation implies that the existing rules are applied more vigorously and with more focus on the specific characteristics of media and telecommunications markets.

### Self-organisation of the Sector

Umbrella organisations are considered important for representing the local radio sector towards regulation authorities. Such organisations fulfil coordination, information and support functions for the sector and act as representatives towards legal recognition and co-regulation. Associations with a more broadly defined identity, deploying a wide range of activities and representing several community media including radio, television and internet projects, more effectively defend the interests of the sector (Peissl and Tremetzberger 2010). Of all media sectors, Runge (2007) found that community radio is the most organised sub-sector, which is possibly due to the heavy regulation of broadcasting and its scarcity of frequencies. In addition, the research shows that especially in smaller states and in countries with little support for community media, the sector has difficulties in establishing interest groups.

In the Netherlands and in Great-Britain respectively, OLON and CMA represent the interests of community-based radio, television and internet projects, and have played an important role in the establishment, recognition and funding of the community radio sector. They are widely regarded as the biggest representative organisations in community radio and are closely cooperating with governments, regulators and funding bodies.

In Flanders, it was impossible to establish a representative organisation defending the interests of the local radio sector. Owing to the diverging interests of commercial networks and non-commercial stations, two organisations emerged but soon disappeared. According to our experts, this lack of self-organisation partly explains the lack of recognition and funding of the sector by the government. It remains a point of discussion whether the government or the sector itself has a responsibility in establishing (and funding) an independent umbrella organisation for community radio in Flanders. Ideally, a representative body would emerge from the radio sector itself and could be structurally supported by the government as can be learned from the OLON and CMA experiences.

### Digital Switchover

Local radio may face serious challenges and opportunities owing to the switchover from analogue to digital transmission systems. The switchover to digital platforms provides local radio stations with the opportunity for a wider reach and more diverse programming by using the radio spectrum more efficiently. To do so, local radio should gain fair and reasonable access to digital platforms and spectrum. As some fear that platform operators will deny access to community radio in favour of more popular radio stations, must-carry regulations could oblige multiplex operators to transmit at least one non-commercial radio station in each service area.

Community radio organisations are also concerned about the high transition costs for going digital, estimated at a tenfold of the current costs for setting up analogue transmission infrastructure. This raises questions about the financial sustainability of digital radio for small-scale and non-commercial broadcasters and the role of the government in providing financial support for completing this transition process (Runge 2007). There are also widespread concerns regarding the implementation of DAB, which is the dominant digital audio broadcasting standard. As DAB has been designed to cater for nationwide public radio broadcasters, more localised stations are less suited to the system. Meanwhile, the emergence of new digital standards such as DAB+ and DRM+, which are less costly and less complex to implement, may provide new perspectives for local stations (Lax et al. 2008).

Recent policy options also leave opportunities for reallocating the freed FM spectrum to new community services. This would improve coverage of existing community radio stations, whose signals are currently weaker because of the high occupancy levels of the band. Thanks to this increased space, more radio projects with a wider audience reach can be allowed. Staying analogue, however, ultimately depends on the political and industrial strategies. First, policy makers should cancel their plans for phasing out FM, which is part of the larger digital dividend policy, while equipment suppliers should guarantee the FM availability on future radio receivers (Hallet and Hintz 2010).

Contrary to the Flemish and French-speaking Community, policy makers in Great-Britain and the Netherlands are investigating which technologies are suited the best for the (digital) transmission of small-scale radio and are already preparing the implications of the digital switchover for radio. Great-Britain, for example, is preparing the digital switchover as part of its "Digital Britain" strategy. The report claims that community radio will occupy the vacated FM spectrum and stresses the importance of a balance between public and private interests in the digital domain. Therefore, policy makers in Flanders should be aware that a part of the spectrum could be set aside for civil society use. No matter how the strategy for (digital) radio looks like, experts stress the importance of a detailed implementation plan for the technological future of radio.

## Conclusion

This article focused on local radio policies from three "good practices" and the lessons that can be learned from the more or less sustainable development of local radio in each of them. Thereby, the article aimed to explore policy options that support the establishment of a stable and diverse local radio landscape, and to make recommendations for a more proactive media policy regarding local radio in the Flemish Community (Belgium). In our cross-country analysis, scrutinising local radio policies in Great-Britain, the Netherlands and the French-speaking Community (Belgium), six structural conditions of such a proactive media policy were identified. These conditions may ensure a sustainable growth of the sector and may assure its future in the digital media industry. Ideally, future regulatory frameworks may consider recognising and funding non-commercial radio, creating media-specific concentration rules, safeguarding diversity and pluralism in media, establishing transparent and coordinated regulatory procedures, recognising representative bodies and facilitating the switchover towards digital broadcasting

platforms. By taking measures on each of these issues, local radio's economic and social capital would be strengthened. Policy makers have a wide array of options regarding each of these aspects and can therefore make choices that keep into account the specific nature of each media landscape.

Given the structural constraints of their media markets, small states are generally inclined to proactive media regulation approaches. In Belgium, in contrast, policy makers have chosen for a market-based approach to media regulation. Local radio developed after the free market model and was persecuted before being legalised. Apart from this common history, the Flemish and French-speaking Community each reacted differently and developed a diverging policy framework. The experience from the French-speaking Community, which recently evolved from a commercial model to a more interventionist approach, shows that a "regulatory revolution" is possible when a fresh wind is blowing through politics and regulators. We therefore hope that this cross-country study may inspire policy makers to develop a framework that supports small-scale radio in Flanders. If not, the sector is likely to blow over thanks to ruinous competition within and between media markets. Instead of disclaiming responsibility, Flemish policy makers could take tailored measures for ensuring the future of non-commercial radio in Flanders and consider each of the proposed policy options. Although recommendations for one particular case are not necessarily fruitful for other markets, this study shows relevance for similar local radio sectors that are also falling between commercial and government-based broadcasting systems. Therefore, the study could be of interest to policy makers and scholars not only in Flanders, but also in other countries where local radio is facing structural difficulties. Following recent examples (see Cammaerts 2009; Peissl and Tremetzberger 2010), this article pleads for more research to local radio from a European or even global perspective, rather than case studies of particular countries. As a result, policy models should be studied from a comparative perspective while recommendations for particular countries should be based upon experiences of policy strategies in similar states. Such a research approach would contribute to the comparability of international radio studies and enhance the quality of policy measures.

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# COMMUNITY RADIO IN IRELAND: "DEFEUDALISING" THE PUBLIC SPHERE?

## NIAMH GAYNOR
## ANNE O'BRIEN

## Abstract

The growth in interest and research in community radio worldwide over the last few decades is a welcome development. While, as noted by Jankowski (2003), a first generation of research has been largely empirical in nature, describing and analysing the organisation and operation of stations in different contexts, more recently a second generation of work has begun to emerge which aims at grounding empirical studies within broader theoretical frameworks, most notably those relating to democracy and the public sphere. The specific components of the public sphere remain somewhat underdeveloped in these studies however. This article aims to contribute to this literature through an examination of community radio in Ireland within a framework drawn from evolving work of Habermas and associated deliberative, social and media theorists. The article, drawing on a detailed study of four community stations in Ireland, identifies elements of community radio which contribute towards a "defeudalisation" of the public sphere as well as highlighting challenges in this regard. Although situated within a specific context, with Irish community radio operating within a comparable regulatory environment to both that in Australia and the United Kingdom, the article draws lessons of specific interest to researchers and activists in these domains, as well as offering a framework of use to community radio researchers interested in examining the sector's contribution to the re-animation of the public sphere more globally.

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## Introduction

The growth in interest and research in community radio over the past number of decades is a welcome development given both its uniqueness within the broader "mediapolis" (Silverstone 2007, 31) and the enthusiasm, energy and commitment of its promoters. A first generation of research in the area, focusing on the organisation and operation of stations within their broader regulatory environment, has highlighted the distinctiveness of the sector compared to commercial and public broadcasting services. Evidence of the role of community stations in building communities by enabling dialogue between different sections of the community (Siemering 2000; Forde et al. 2002; Martin and Wilmore 2010), in reflecting and constructing local culture (Meadows et al. 2005), in fostering and consolidating a sense of place (Keogh 2010), in reducing the isolation of certain communities (Read and Hanson 2006) and in re-engaging marginalised groups and promoting progressive social change (Barlow 1988; Sussman and Estes 2005; Baker 2007) highlights the distinctiveness of the sector vis-à-vis public service or commercial broadcasters. As Jankowski and Prehn (2003) outline, the defining characteristics of community media set them apart from their counterparts at both commercial and public service levels in both their aims – providing news and information relevant to the needs of community members, engaging members in public discussion and contributing to their social and political empowerment – and in their structures of ownership, control and financing which are often shared by local residents. In short, community radio breaks with traditional, mainstream models of media production in that community members are not an audience in the traditional sense. Rather, they are potential and actual broadcasters and producers, active participants in their local communication project.

The distinctiveness of this model of broadcasting clearly has implications for theories of the public sphere, a sphere which Habermas (1962/1989) has argued has been "refeudalised" by the increasing control by state and commercial elites over mainstream media. These theoretical implications have formed the basis of a second generation of research. In a study of community radio in India, Saeed (2009) focuses on the legislative challenges to local activists' attempts to re-animate the public sphere, while in a study of the sector in Australia, Meadows et al argue that, in providing communities with "alterNative" ideas and assumptions (2005, 183), community radio has extended the idea of the mainstream public sphere. In one of the most theoretically comprehensive contributions to date, Stiegler (2009) both demonstrates the failure of mainstream broadcasting as a public sphere within the US and draws in particular on Benjamin Barber's model of "strong democracy" (Barber 1984, after Stiegler (2009, 50-51)) to elucidate what small-scale public spheres might look like within the context of community radio.

While illuminating different characteristics of the normative public sphere in the context of the cases under investigation, the specific components of the public sphere, as theorised by Habermas and his followers, remain somewhat underdeveloped in these studies however. This article aims to bridge this gap through an examination of community radio in Ireland within a framework drawn from the evolving work of Habermas and associated deliberative, social and media theorists. The article draws on a detailed study of four community stations in Ireland. This research, conducted by the authors over the seven month period October 2009 to

April 2010, combined both an ethnographic approach, where time was spent in each of the four stations observing how the stations operated and informally chatting with volunteers and staff, with 33 individual interviews with staff, volunteers and community members in each of the four communities. Examining the empirical findings from this research (see Gaynor and O'Brien 2010 for the complete research report) through the inter-related theoretical lenses of the public sphere, deliberation and civil society which lie at the heart of the community radio project, this article identifies elements of community radio which contribute towards a "defeudalisation" of the public sphere as well as highlighting challenges in this regard. Although situated within a specific context, with Irish community radio operating within a comparable regulatory environment to both that in Australia and the United Kingdom, the article draws lessons of specific interest to researchers and activists in these domains, as well as offering a framework of use to community radio researchers interested in examining the sector's contribution to the re-animation of the public sphere more globally.

## Toward a "Defeudalised" Public Sphere: A Framework of Analysis

Jürgen Habermas' sharp critique of capitalism as set out in his 1962 publication, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, has been pivotal to the idea that the normalised ideal of publicity constitutes the key social function of the media. Contrasting the various fora of an active, participative bourgeois public sphere – typified by the coffee houses of eighteenth century Germany – with the increasingly commercialised and privatised public spheres of contemporary society controlled by mainstream media and elites, Habermas argued that the commercialisation of the media in the 1800s and 1900s turned "rational-critical" debate into "cultural consumption" with the public sphere taking on "feudal features" (1962/1989, 195) as powerful institutions of both market and state took it over. Comparing the public sphere of capitalist society with that of earlier feudal societies where ruling elites sought to dominate their subjects through control of the public sphere, Habermas argued that active citizens have been transformed into passive consumers - of goods, services, politics and spectacle. The result, Habermas (1989) argued, is a "decayed form of the bourgeois sphere" (215), a "manipulated public sphere" (217) and a "manufactured public sphere" (217).

Although Habermas' bleak critique of modernity in *The Structural Transformation* offered no emancipatory alternative, his "linguistic turn" (Holub 1991, 10) in the 1980s through his theory of communicative action proffered a normative model of rational-critical debate through which political emancipation may be achieved. Arguing that the "*self-organised public sphere must develop a prudent combination of power and self-restraint that is needed to sensitise the self-steering mechanisms of the state and the economy*" (1987, 365), Habermas's work in the 1980s depicts the public sphere as a site of rational critical deliberation open and accessible to all with citizens employing deliberative norms which are inclusive, reasoned and reflective (Habermas 1987). Within this space, each participant has an equal opportunity to be heard, to introduce topics, to make contributions and to arrive at decisions motivated solely by the strength of argument (1996, 305). Thus a first normative requirement for a re-invigorated, re-animated and "defeudalised" public sphere is that it be open

and inclusive to all. This clearly has implications for the role and agency of media institutions within this public sphere and resonates strongly with debates on the social functions of the media deriving from the Enlightenment notion of publicity – citizens' freedoms to express and publish opinion, the "right to communicate" (Splichal, 2002, 11-17). As we have seen, this ideal is reflected in the ethos of community radio where "the right to communicate" is highlighted by policy makers (see AMARC 1994) and practitioners alike. While there appears to be broad agreement on this fundamental norm among community radio scholars and analysts, Kitty van Vurren (2006) in a study of community radio in Australia, highlights a critical paradox between the ideals of offering a legitimate alternative voice to the mainstream public sphere – the main function of community radio in her view – and affording full access and participation to all. Her argument that sustaining the value of the public sphere rules out the normative ideal of a universally open and accessible public arena raises important questions in relation to who gets to participate within community public spheres, and to what end. Should community radio provide a space for a broad-range of discourses or should these be limited to more marginalised voices with a view to advocating and effecting social change as proposed by a number of community radio commentators? (Barlow 1988; Sussman and Estes 2005; Baker 2007).

This question is possibly best considered by returning to Habermas' theory of communicative action. The communicative norms he has proposed have drawn considerable debate and critique, serving as a catalyst for a wide body of work within the fields of political and social theory on public deliberation, its role within democracy (in a post-liberal sense), and the role of civic associations and institutions in this regard. Heavily influenced by Enlightenment thinkers, Habermas' earlier work emphasised the importance of logical argument as a means by which views, opinions and analyses are elucidated with the aim of participants arriving at common understandings and views of particular issues under discussion, reaching consensus and agreement on these (1987). These norms have both inspired and drawn considerable criticism from a wide range of theorists. The vast literature on deliberative democracy draws significantly on Habermas' work. Deliberative democrats advocate a public of overlapping discourses aimed at making sense of the world (Dryzek 2000), a shared conversation "*of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks and associations of deliberation, contestation and argumentation*" (Benhabib 1996, 74). For deliberative democrats therefore, the public sphere is a space open and accessible to all with unrestricted communication taking place across a series of conversations. Habermas' communicative norms have also met with some sharp critique however, most particularly from post-structuralists for whom Habermas delivers an overly rationalist conception of the public sphere which, despite claims that it makes room for difference, fails to adequately theorise pluralism and power. Specifically, critics argue that the norms of rational discourse with their deliberative emphasis on communicative reason and consensus ignore the pluralist and inevitably conflictual nature of society (Mouffe 1996, 2005) and exclude individuals and groups for whom more emotive, less bounded and less rational forms of communication are the norm (Young 2000, 2003) thus reinforcing and reproducing existing exclusions and inequalities as powerful actors come to dominate the public sphere (Fraser 1992). Thus, for these critics, Habermas' norms of rational, bounded discourse together with his aim of mutual understanding

and consensus undermine his norms of inclusivity, access and participation, most particularly for those marginalised by the mainstream public sphere.

The question for analysts and activists thus becomes "who is the community encompassed within the community public sphere?" Is there a need for a multiplicity of public spheres including those aimed specifically at more marginalised groups as proposed by Fraser (1992) and should community radio aim at opening spaces specifically for these marginalised groups or can a community public sphere accommodate a range of voices and communication acts? While Habermas and his followers are often juxtaposed in binary opposition to these so-called "difference democrats" who argue for a diversification of communication norms, both Habermas himself and certainly many contemporary deliberative democrats have moved a long way over time in taking on board these criticisms and diversifying their conception of the public sphere. Habermas has moved from a narrowly universal to a much more plural conception of public spheres (Brady 2004; Dahlberg 2005) and while consensus lay at the heart of early deliberative models, later contributions have considerably modified its role and importance, moving beyond a purely reason-centred, consensus oriented emphasis (Dryzek 2000). Deliberations are now seen to include a wide range of communication acts accommodating marginalised, disenfranchised groups, including story-telling, song, protests and boycotts (Young 2000, 2003). Indeed Karppinen, Moe and Svensson (2008), making a case for "theoretical eclecticism," argue that, though differences still exist between different theorists, these are not so great as they once were. The authors argue that both (or all) poles have value as critical perspectives which complement each other (2008, 18). Thus, for many theorists, the ideals of an espousal of alternatives and universal access appear largely compatible with deliberations within a public sphere which is now seen to embody a wide range of communication acts, acts which promote critique, understanding, contestation and accommodation alike.

While normatively therefore, there appears to be some agreement on the need for an open and inclusive public sphere (or spheres, depending on how we define "community" in the context of specific community stations), together with the communication norms these entail, allowing for diverse communication acts which include contestation and resistance, key challenges remain at a practical level in promoting participation within these spheres. In the specific context of community radio, Stiegler identifies civic apathy as a barrier to full participation (2009, 53-54) while, in the context of media and the public sphere more broadly, Dahlgren (2002, 19-22) highlights the importance of a vibrant civic culture in promoting civic participation. For Habermas, civic associations have a key role to play in both animating debate and promoting participation within public spheres, and in forcing the official circuits of power to be attentive and responsive to new issues arising within these spheres (1996, 370). This civic associational function has been echoed by a number of deliberative theorists (Benhabib 1996; Dryzek 1990, 2000) together with social theorists more broadly. In one of the most comprehensive and influential contributions within post-Cold War debates on the links between civil society and democracy, Cohen and Arato draw on Habermas' theory of communicative action and argue that (1992, ix-x) *"The political role of civil society in turn is not directly related to the control or conquest of power but to the generation of influence through the life of democratic associations and unconstrained discussion in the cultural public sphere."* Civil

society, in other words, plays a key role in promoting the civic culture which opens up the public sphere for more inclusive, broader deliberation and debate on issues of public interest and concern. In the context of community radio therefore, not only the stations themselves but also civic associations more broadly have a key role to play in promoting participation within community spheres.

This normalised function attributed to civil society perhaps underestimates the potential for hegemonic dominance and adversarial interest group politics, the type of deliberation which deliberative democrats reject. It furthermore appears to ignore the power imbalances or inequalities inherent in any and all communities. Habermas, deliberative and a number of civil society theorists remain vague on how exactly specific actors – community radio activists and civic associations more broadly – prevent communication distortions or unequal access to and participation in the public sphere in order to "sell" particular messages to the public. Given the core norms of inclusivity, access and participation, this raises a question around the possible need for some form of external intervention to assure the diverse, unconstrained communication within the public sphere advocated by deliberative democrats. This brings us to the issue of regulation.

In his re-thinking of the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure within a communications framework, Habermas' distinction between the "system" and the "life-world" argues strongly against both market and state intervention in the public sphere. Arguing that problems arise when the system – the powerful domains of market, state and organised interests within social life – invades or "colonises" the practical domain of the everyday life-world – the civic domain / public sphere where shared common understandings develop within and across various social groups, Habermas argues for a defence of the life-world from the institutions of both state and market (Habermas 1987). Moreover, arguing that both the state and capitalism need to be "socially tamed," Habermas (1987, 363) envisages the shared understandings, views and perceptions formed within the life-world, at the periphery of political life, feeding upward into policy and decision-making within the system at the centre. In Habermas' view, the "colonisation" of the life-world by the system, most notably the colonisation of the media as a key institution within the life-world by the state and market, has resulted in the crisis of modernity, of which the erosion or refeudalisation of the public sphere is a significant part. In effect, Habermas is arguing for an animation and "defeudalisation" of the public sphere and a move toward a more responsive, accountable and participatory model of democracy. Habermas' exhortation for a separation of state from the life-world presents fundamental challenges to media institutions – including many community radio stations in this respect. Regulated by the "system," how can they be active in the "decolonisation" of the life-world? Splichal's discussion on the contradiction between freedom of the press itself and the publicity function of the media is useful in helping us think through this. Noting that the idea of media autonomy is challenged by the idea of responsibility – the social need to prevent or hinder abuses of power (2002, 7), Splichal argues in favour of media regulation, with such regulation aiming at equal availability of influence while guaranteeing individuals' distinctiveness and uniqueness (2002, 18). For Splichal, *"The empowerment of individuals with 'communicative power' would pave the way for an effective social communication and public use of reason."* Writing from the broader perspective of civic engagement in the public sphere as a key element of democracy, Cohen

and Rogers (1995, 48-9) also envisage a role for the state in ensuring that civic associations work for the broader good rather than those of particular hegemonic or factional interests. Indeed, Habermas himself acknowledges that *"on account of its anarchic structure, the general public sphere is ... more vulnerable to the repressive and exclusionary effects of unequally distributed social power, structural violence, and distorted communication ..."* (1996, 307-8). Acknowledging the need for some mechanism to prevent this, and accepting that all civil associations are not necessarily what Cohen and Rogers term *"other regarding"* (1995, 98), an open question remains in relation to the desirability of state regulation in this context and, if so, in what form and with what consequences.

It is apparent from the above discussion that if we are interested in opening up the public sphere, a range of complex issues present themselves. We need to think about who inhabits this space and who does not, how they do so and how they do not, and above all, how the space might be rendered more open and inclusive in the form envisioned by Habermas and his followers. In short, when thinking about the public sphere, we need to examine the structural issues of access, participation and communication, together with the agency of civic and state actors in this regard, addressing as we do so, some of the key questions emanating from the literature to date. This is what we endeavour to do below in our examination of the contribution of community radio to the Irish public sphere.

## Community Radio in Ireland: Opportunities and Challenges to the Defeudalisation of the Public Sphere

Community radio in Ireland emerged from a pilot-project established in 1994 by the national broadcasting regulator which licensed eleven stations initially. The AMARC Community Radio Charter for Europe (AMARC, 1994) was adopted by the regulator as a statement of the objectives community stations should aim to achieve. Community radio was defined as follows:

> *A community radio station is characterised by its ownership and programming and the community it is authorised to serve. It is owned and controlled by a not-for-profit organisation whose structure provides for membership, management, operation and programming primarily by members of the community at large. Its programming should be based on community access and should reflect the special interests and needs of the listenership it is licensed to serve* (BCI n.d., 3).

Following the pilot project, the regulator supported an expansion of the sector and there are currently (2011) twenty two licensed community stations operating across the country. With the state retaining a central role in the regulation of community radio in Ireland, community radio stations in Ireland exhibit many of the characteristics of normative models more broadly. They are run on a non-commercial basis; their programming content reflects local issues; although sometimes employing a small staff, they are largely reliant on community volunteers for both programming and associated administrative tasks; and stations are owned and managed by representatives from within local communities. While, on paper therefore Irish community stations appear to embody many of the characteristics necessary for the animation of local public spheres, a closer examination through

the theoretical lens elaborated above permits a more comprehensive picture of the degree to which they succeed in this endeavour.

A brief overview of the four stations included in the study is provided in Table 1 below. As the data illustrate, all four stations are relatively "new" stations broadcasting within relatively localised areas and with a significant number of volunteers. Notably also, all are funded by a mix of state and community support. This calls into question the feasibility of the autonomy of the life-world from the system as advocated by Habermas and corresponds more closely to the model advocated by Cohen and Rogers. We return to this important issue later. For now, we turn to a more detailed examination of the other elements within the public sphere framework set out in the previous section.

Table 1: A Brief Overview of the Four Participating Stations

| Station / Characteristics | Life FM | Liffey Sound | Ros FM | Tipperary MW |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Established** | License awarded in 2006, on air since 2008. | License awarded in 2005, on air since 2006. | License awarded in 2003, on air since 2005. | Began as pirate station in 1980, awarded a commercial license in 1990 and a community license in 2004. |
| **Broadcast area** | 10 mile radius around Cork city. | 10 mile radius around West Dublin. | 5 mile radius around Roscommon town. | 20 mile radius in Tipperary. |
| **No. staff (paid)** | 4 | 0 (all staff are voluntary) | 3 (1 full-time and 4 part-time) | 12 (4 full-time and 8 part-time with hours ranging from <3 hours per week to 20 hours per week) |
| **No. volunteers** | 60-80 with 30-40 broadcasting weekly. | Approx. 150 with 72 broadcasting weekly. | Over 100 with 17-18 broadcasting weekly. | Over 100 with 51 broadcasting weekly. |
| **On air** | Mon-Sunday 7am-midnight, with repeats through the night. | Mon-Friday, 5pm-midnight; Sat/Sun, 8am-midnight. | Mon-Friday, 2pm-9pm. | Mon-Sunday, 8am-12 midnight, with repeats through the night. |
| **Estimated Listenership** *Estimates are from surveys conducted by each station.* | 13,000 per week | 11,000 per week | 13,000 per week | 90 per cent of the population (sample size 100) surveyed in 2009. |
| **Cost per year to run** (2009 figures) | Total € 84,000 52 percent from membership / donations; 43 percent from the national regulator's programme funding scheme; 5 percent from advertising*. | Total € 35,000 Breakdown not available but majority from fundraising and the remainder from the national regulator's programme funding scheme. | Total € 150,000 83 percent from a national state agency's community funding programme; 17 percent from fundraising. | Total € 250,000 50 percent from advertising; 32 percent from donations and fundraising; 6 percent from state grant schemes and 2 percent from station investments. All funding for staff salaries comes from a national state agency's community funding programme. |

## Inclusion and Participation

As we have already seen, the issues of inclusion and participation are central to public sphere theory. For community radio scholars, the core question arising is the compatibility of universal inclusion and participation with the goal of engaging more marginalised voices and discourses. For community radio activists, this raises the inter-related questions of "who is the community?" and "what is the role of the station vis-à-vis this community?" Under the Irish licensing scheme three of the stations examined fall under the "geographic community" category while one of the stations is a "community of interest" station. Notwithstanding this distinction, volunteers and staff in all four stations stressed their openness to all within the geographically delineated communities in which they broadcast. When pressed on this question however, staff and volunteers in all four stations noted they had an emphasis on particular groups within their community. Thus Life FM, the "community of interest" station carries a distinct Christian message of hope, Tipperary MW caters in particular to the elderly, Ros FM, a station established and managed by representatives from local state-funded social agencies, has a disability ethos built into its mission, and Liffey Sound tends to cater to a younger age group.

Questioned as to their stations' roles vis-à-vis these communities, the concept of the stations as services to these communities emerged strongly among all actors involved. Across all four stations, staff and volunteers stressed their stations' role in this regard as being two-fold. First, stations were seen as providing an invaluable service in the provision of local information – on news, events, services available. As a staff member of Tipperary MW notes "… *with the commercial* [stations], *it's mainly advertiser focused … with community radio you're focused on the audience at hand. Some of the bulletins would include local issues that wouldn't get on to a bulletin on local commercial stations – minor issues, council notices. It's more of an information point, a locally based information point*." And second, stations' roles in reaching out to more isolated and vulnerable members of the community was noted, people for whom the mainstream public sphere has lost relevance and meaning. These findings accord with analyses that see community radio as playing an important role in building and consolidating a sense of community. However, they do not suggest that community stations play a large role in driving or affecting change as argued by other commentators.

An interesting distinction was made by staff and volunteers across all stations between the wider community "serviced" by the stations and the community of staff and volunteers working within the stations themselves. Across all four stations, this "community within," as some termed it, exhibits a considerable degree of diversity in terms of gender, age, and cultural background, and all stations appear to have made specific efforts to include more marginalised sections of the population – in particular the unemployed (a rapidly growing category in recessionary Ireland). The benefits of involvement for these groups – as noted by these groups and station managers – once again appears to reflect the service function of the stations, where they are viewed more as a local social enterprise than as an alternative public sphere as advocated by a number of community media analysts. This is reflected in the three principal benefits identified by volunteers and managers alike. First, for all, the most important benefit is the technical training provided by stations which provides volunteers with the skills to break into other broadcasting spheres.

Indeed, community radio is viewed by the many of the volunteers interviewed as an entry point into commercial and public broadcasting stations, where it is hard to get work experience. As volunteers from two stations explain ... "*As part of my course in Sound Engineering and Media Technology I'm required to do work experience. I tried a lot of stations and it was hard to get someone to take me on ... I rang Brian* [Life FM station manager] *and he met me for interview and took me on …*" (Life FM volunteer). "*I tried to get interview experience and heard them* [Liffey Sound] *broadcast in the local shop. I met the station manager. He brought me on to a sports programme and three weeks later I got a show ...*" (Liffey Sound volunteer). Second, for some other volunteers, the skills learned within the stations are seen as useful in seeking paid employment elsewhere or indeed, eventually securing a paid position within the station itself (the majority of staff interviewed began as volunteers). And third, allied to this, many volunteers spoke of the confidence they have gained through their work within the stations. A volunteer from Ros FM who comes in to produce and broadcast a music show twice a week expresses this well. "*I was a person who felt myself apart from my own social group. I never really felt part of the town until I did this … I was always from here but I never really fit in … but now have an outlet to speak to everybody.*" Within a broader public sphere dominated by elites, this confidence building function is an important first step in opening up the sphere, bringing more marginalised voices in.

Thus, in drawing more marginalised voices and sections of the community into the stations as well as covering more localised news and events, community radio in Ireland does correspond to a widening of the public sphere as theorised by deliberative democrats and community media scholars alike. However, with a focus on the skills and competencies acquired by volunteers together with the information and entertainment function for the broader community, stations appear to function more as a service to the local population complementing some of the other state-funded social services in the area, rather than as a medium for opening debate and dialogue on diverse issues. To interrogate this further, we need to turn to an examination of the communication norms within the stations.

### Communication Norms: The Quality versus Inclusion Dilemma

As we have seen, the rational, consensus-based communication norms advocated by Habermas have been the subject of much debate and critique among broader theorists. "Difference democrats" in particular have argued that norms of "reasoned argument" mitigate against norms of inclusion as marginalised groups often tend to employ more embodied, emotional communication acts. They also emphasise the conflictual rather than consensual nature of this society. For these theorists and for a number of community media scholars, at the core of a defeudalisation of the public sphere is the capacity of community media to accommodate a diverse range of discourses and communication acts.

These normative conditions rest on an acceptance that community media occupy a very distinct space within the broader mediapolis, diversifying the public sphere rather than competing with other institutions within it. However, in a media sphere dominated by mainstream broadcasters, this perhaps overestimates the public appetite for diversity and change. In the Irish context, this is clearly manifest in what we term here the "quality versus inclusion dilemma" for community

stations. This "quality versus inclusion" issue is generally not so polarised as this characterisation suggests but nonetheless emerged repeatedly in interviews and discussions with staff and managers within all four stations as they stressed the importance of maintaining high production values in a competitive market. While ardent community radio activists stress the "right to communicate" for all, managers within the four stations noted the difficulties this poses when faced with a volunteer whose style may be perceived as "unprofessional" by some listeners, or worse still, cause offence. As the manager of Ros FM explains "… *audiences are very sophisticated. They wouldn't be very forgiving. You're only as good as your last show and so you have to be consistent with your standards.*" The manager in Tipperary MW is quite emphatic about it *"If they're not good enough, they won't go on. It's a decision unfortunately we have to make."* In a medium competing for listenership among an audience used to high standards (for what is the point in having the right to communicate if no one is out there listening?), there is clearly some tension between the diverse communication norms espoused by deliberative theorists and the pressures exerted by norms within the broader mediasphere. Previous research on community radio in Ireland has highlighted this dilemma and argues that community radio risks being perceived as "amateurish" (Farren, 2007). In work examining this issue more broadly, Carpentier et al. note that community media come to be presented as "*unprofessional, inefficient, limited in their capacity to reach large audiences and as marginal as some of the societal groups to whom they try to give voice*" (2003: 65). On the other side of the debate, Van Vuuren (2006) argues that tension over quality in community production is part of a valuable process of decision making and constructing democracy. In the Irish case, with more "professional" norms appearing to win out over broader communication acts and with decision-making in this area restricted to station managers and core staff, the shadow cast by the broader mediasphere appears to pose fundamental challenges to the defeudalisation of this sphere with communication norms falling far short of those espoused by deliberation theorists across the spectrum. Conscious of such difficulties in broadening the public sphere, a number of social theorists, as we have seen, have advocated a role for civic associations in animating this sphere. We now turn to an examination of civic associational agency in this context in Ireland.

## Civic Culture in Ireland

As we have seen so far, community radio in Ireland, through its ownership, management and operating structures, embodies many of the characteristics necessary for animating local, community public spheres. However, as we have also seen, situated within the broader public sphere, stations are not immune from the dominant norms within this sphere. With a particular interest in the role of broader civic associations in promoting participation within the public sphere as advocated by deliberative and social theorists, our research examined the linkages between community stations and broader civic associations within their communities, most notably local community development groups as these espouse many of the same values and ethos as community radio advocates. Interestingly we found active links and synergies between the stations and their respective community groups in promoting community participation in stations to be quite weak. Station staff and volunteers noted that stations were open to community activists to come and

generate publicity for their work and events while activists themselves (who were contacted independently by the researchers) saw no difference between these stations and local commercial broadcasters. Thus, both groups view community stations primarily as a service to the local community. With a focus on information provision, local news, and publicity for local events (as well, as we have seen, on community training and employment), the emphasis appears to lie more in servicing local communities rather than in actively animating local public spheres. Thus, as community groups "*issue press releases and use the station to do interviews in relation to specific projects*" (community group in Roscommon area), the appetite for peoples' own "right to communicate" appears low, not just among the broad community, but among those key civic associations that inhabit and animate the public sphere.

Why? Clearly, at a practical level, the time and resources required to build people's confidence to become involved (most particularly if the dominant communication norms of the mainstream public sphere are required) are enormous. Notwithstanding this, we propose a second key factor which helps explain the largely "service" culture of Irish community stations particularly and civic culture more broadly. Here Habermas' distinction between the life-world and the system proves useful. From its independence in the 1920s, Ireland has had a long legacy of voluntary-statutory service provision. Since the 1980s, with the advent of local state-civic partnerships, this has been consolidated into formal contractual arrangements where local groups are funded to develop and deliver services locally. Habermas' "colonisation" of the life-world by the system is thus extremely well advanced in the Irish context. With a strong local service culture developing, citizens have effectively been turned into passive consumers of services, information, entertainment as critiqued by Habermas almost half a century ago. Through what could be described as Ireland's "Third Way politics," with the whole-scale incursion of the system into the life-world, the space and the appetite for vibrant, active debate and contestation appears somewhat muted, if not closed.

This all suggests that the challenges to the defeudalisation of the public sphere are profound – most particularly given the key role of the state in the regulation of community broadcasting. However, it is here that a fundamental paradox to Habermasian theory emerges. While the encroachment of the state into the broader life-world raises fundamental questions around the capacity of civic associations to actively animate and defeudalise the public sphere, the state's role in regulating community stations arguably presents real opportunities in this regard.

### The Life-world and System: A Systemic Paradox

As we have seen, the state is responsible for both the regulation and, through various funding schemes, is also one of the core funders of community radio in Ireland. Under the 2009 Broadcasting Act, the scope of state regulation is extensive and covers licensing, the ownership and management structures, programming policy, and the funding and financing of community stations (BAI 2009). Closely following the AMARC model, state regulation appears to fulfil the "other regarding" function of state intervention as advocated by Cohen and Rogers (1995) in relation to the civic sphere more broadly. Community ownership of the stations included in this study is reflected in both the membership structures (cooperatives)

and in the high level of voluntary participation in the respective boards, with volunteers in three of the stations (Liffey Sound, Life FM and Tipperary MW) reporting regular contact with board members who also volunteer as broadcasters in the stations. The fourth station, Ros FM, is a little different in this respect. Owned and managed by the local partnership institution – comprising a range of local state-funded social services – volunteers report less contact with board members. State regulation stipulates that stations can include a maximum of six minutes advertising per hour of broadcasting. This further aids in preventing commercial distortions in programming although it also leaves stations heavily dependent on state funding for their ongoing costs. Situated within communities dominated, as we have seen, by the mainstream public sphere where, with the colonisation of the life-world by the system, citizens have been reduced to consumers and dominant communication norms prevail, we propose that, paradoxically, it is state regulation (together with a handful of radical activists working closely with the state) which maintains the distinctiveness of community radio within Ireland's broader mediasphere.

In this section we have examined the opportunities provided by community stations in defeudalising the public sphere, together with the challenges posed in this regard. Among the opportunities identified in opening up this sphere is the diverse participation in volunteering, ownership and management of community stations. The volunteers we spoke and spent time with attest to the diversity of voices on the airwaves, and many for the first time. It is clear that the respective stations are successful in bringing issues of interest to their local communities, in the process reducing individuals' isolation and bringing them into a community sphere that has relevance to their lives. A key factor underpinning these opportunities is the action of the state which, through its licensing and regulation, promotes broad-based community ownership and "other regardedness," reducing distortions and monopolisation of the local sphere. However, fundamental challenges remain as the dominant norms of both the colonised mainstream mediapolis and the colonised broader civic sector exert their influence. Communication norms fall short of deliberative and Habermasian ideals as community stations strive to compete with their mainstream counterparts, and the dynamic, catalytic function of stations as catalysts for a renewed, defeudalised public sphere fall somewhat by the wayside under the shadow of the service culture which underpins the colonisation of the life-world under Ireland's distinctive brand of Third Way governance. In a context where the colonisation of the life-world by both state and market is so extensive, the fundamental paradox is that the life-world, having perhaps lost its capacity for self-renewal, is now dependent on the state for this renewal.

## Conclusion: Some Implications for the Public Sphere

The depth and scale of Ireland's economic crisis is now well-known. Less well-known, though increasingly highlighted by international commentators, is the passivity and apparent apathy of the Irish public in the face of this crisis. Driven by the mainstream media, the public sphere is colonised by and saturated with the language of international finance. Experts now on the vagaries of the international bond markets and well-versed in the language of austerity and structural adjustment, the Irish public has had little opportunity to articulate its frustration, anger and opposition to the actions of key political elites. With the space for meaningful

political debate closed, the feudalisation of the mainstream public sphere by the system appears complete.

At this time of profound crisis within Irish society, community radio provides a real opportunity to defeudalise local, community level spheres. Yet, the stunning irony is that the life-world, saturated by the system, appears to have has lost its capacity for self-renewal. Clearly, Habermas was right. Yet, paradoxically, Habermas was perhaps also wrong. Real opportunities exist in the progressive state policy and regulation of community radio in Ireland to reclaim communities sphere(s) and to broaden the debate from the interests, concerns and analyses of the market to those of our own communities, in the process, as advocated by Habermas "socially taming" both the state and the market. In a regulatory environment comparable to that in a number of other jurisdictions, the challenge to community radio activists, both in Ireland and further afield, is to seize this opportunity, to reinvigorate and recharge our public spheres, re-animating and defeudalising public life at a critical time in our collective history.

### Acknowledgments

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# CORPORATE COMMUNICATION REVISITED

Fifteen years ago, Ian Connell edited one of the earliest special issues of Javnost – The Public devoted to corporate communication. He suggested that "gone are the days when such communication was turned over to the enthusiastic amateur. Now trained professionals, often with experience of PR, and to a lesser extent marketing, are responsible for internal and external communications, and sometimes both" (Connell 1996, 10).

Since then corporate communication has developed rapidly. A critical mass of scholars and practitioners see corporate communication as an interdisciplinary field that integrates business, organizational, managerial, marketing communications and public relations. Corporate communication has become one of the lynchpins of competition within different sectors, and a significant source of both, an opportunity for and a risk to long-term competitive advantage. However, it seems that stakeholders' trust in organisations and public scepticism toward their behaviour and communication have reached the historical lowest point. Anti-corporation protests, consumer boycotts, revealed corporate "greenwashing," NGOs' actions against corporate decisions indicate that corporate communication practice is in crisis. This clearly calls for a thorough critical analysis of corporate communication theories and practices.

Javnost – The Public invites authors to contribute papers focusing on the general question of what are the consequences of corporate communication for its stakeholders and society at large, and more specific questions, such as: What is the role of corporate communication in achieving stakeholders' identification and engagements? What are the mechanisms of improving communications among stakeholders affected by corporations? Can organisations rely on corporate communication to build, protect, and maintain their reputation, achieve trust, and meet stakeholder needs?

We wish to invite papers which address any of these questions from a critical perspective. We are equally keen to consider theoretical reflections and detailed empirical case studies.

Prospective participants should send abstracts of about 250 words to Klemen Podnar (klemen.podnar@fdv.uni-lj.si) by December 1st, 2011; final papers are due by June 1st, 2012.

# CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY:

## OPENING SPACES FOR MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

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## Abstract

The discredit of multiculturalism in contemporary discussions about cultural diversity and democracy is problematic since allegations of multiculturalism's failure and undemocratic consequences are used to justify a (re)turn to assimilation throughout Western societies. Rejecting assimilationism as either desirable or inevitable, this article challenges the alleged incompatibility between multiculturalism and democracy. It makes the case for a (re)conceptualisation of both multiculturalism and democracy in ways that can provide the foundations for inclusive communication. To this end, the article endorses, first, a specific kind of multiculturalism, namely, *critical* multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism defines culture in structural and relational terms, underscoring the superficiality with which multiculturalism has been deployed in Western societies. Secondly, the article examines the constraints that liberal and republican models of democracy impose on a fair politics of cultural diversity. It argues that, largely due to its communication emphasis, Habermas's deliberative democracy is particularly receptive to the demands of critical multiculturalism.

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## Introduction

Despite the diversity of ways in which multicultural principles and policies have been conceived and deployed, pronouncements over multiculturalism's retreat are heard across Western societies (see Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004; Koppmans et al. 2005; Turner 2006; Vervotec and Wessendorf 2010). Most recently, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron made headlines around the world as they pronounced the failure of multiculturalism. What Germany and the UK need, each head of state argued, is to strengthen their national identity and make sure that immigrants adopt the official language and culture. While Merkel and Cameron focused on their countries, the latter – whose speech was aimed at addressing the threat of terrorism – explicitly referred to the UK case as an example of how Europe in generally "needs to wake up" to defend its "open societies" (Cameron 2011).

Cameron's and Merkel's disapproval of multiculturalism is neither exceptional nor surprising. In fact, their arguments have become commonplace in both political and academic debates, among the political left and right, where multiculturalism is seen as encouraging "ethnic" interests, which conflict with national interests, and as overplaying particularities, contributing to the political, social, and economic segregation of minority groups (see Bloemraad et al. 2008; Philips and Saharso 2008; Vervotec and Wessendorf 2010). In short, multiculturalism is seen as a source of divisiveness and exclusion. It is accused of harming not only minority groups, but also democracy itself.

Taking the accusations against multiculturalism seriously forces us to consider alternative ways to conceptualise the role of cultural diversity in democratic societies. One possibility is to discard multiculturalism altogether. Given that multiculturalism developed mainly as a critique to assimilation (Kymlicka 1995; Joppke 1996), discarding multiculturalism would imply accepting the "return of assimilation" (Brubaker 2001). Indeed, assimilationist models of citizenship are gaining terrain in various Western societies previously characterised as multicultural. Even if under the less conspicuous label of "integration" (Philips and Saharso 2008), post-multiculturalism discourses and policies demand minorities' adaptation to the dominant culture as a condition for social inclusion.

This paper rejects the acceptance of assimilationism as either desirable or inevitable. It argues, instead, for the strengthening of a specific kind of multiculturalism, namely, critical multiculturalism. Part I explains what is specific of critical multiculturalism, its advantages for social inclusion, and how critical multiculturalism responds to the main criticisms raised against multiculturalism in general. Part II revisits the alleged incompatibility between multiculturalism and democracy. Instead of discarding critical multiculturalism for its misfit within traditional liberal and republican models of democracy, the paper endorses a third democratic model, one based on Habermas' deliberative democracy. This model of democracy, it is argued, is particularly receptive to the demands of inclusive communication in culturally diverse societies.

## Critical Multiculturalism

Notwithstanding the ease with which the word has been used in contemporary discussions, "multiculturalism" is not a concept that can be taken for granted. Far

from being a centralised program for reform, it is rather a series of propositions – "some so mild that they would probably be acceptable to those who see themselves as the fiercest critics of multiculturalism" (Glazer 1997, 10). Benhabib (1996, 17) argues that multiculturalism has been used to refer to such a wide range of phenomena that it "has practically lost meaning." As a result, some progressive scholars have given up the term "multiculturalism" altogether to defend a cultural politics under a different label, such as Young's (2000a) "politics of difference" and Fraser's (1998) "transformative politics of recognition."

This paper, however, joins those who refuse to allow the cooptation of multiculturalism's potential for cultural intervention and who endorse, instead, a critical definition of multiculturalism. As Palumbo-Liu (2002, 117) explains, the appropriation of multiculturalism by neoliberal interests underscores the need to reclaim it, "to constantly struggle to define multiculturalism's terms and values against such takeovers." In line with this undertaking, anthropologist Terece Turner (1993, 413) contends that to narrow the gap between his discipline and multiculturalism, "one must specify *which* multiculturalism an anthropologist might want to contribute to." The response from Turner (1993) – as well as from other scholars in anthropology and elsewhere – is "critical multiculturalism" (Chicago Cultural Studies Group 1992; Estrada and McLaren 1993; Palumbo-Liu 1995).

What *critical* multiculturalism *criticises* are "the ideological apparatuses that distribute power and resources unevenly among the different constituencies of a multicultural society" (Palumbo-Liu 1995, 2). Accordingly, Lugones and Price (1995) call it "structural multiculturalism." The core of critical multiculturalism is a structural conception of culture, based on the deconstruction of two seeming dichotomies: a dichotomy between structure and culture and a dichotomy between the interests of cultural groups and a "common interest." For critical multiculturalism, it is particularly important to problematise the apparent tension between each of these pairs. To assume that structure is disconnected from culture and that group interests threaten common interests leads to a problematic understanding of culture and cultural differences, which, in turn, suggests an inescapable conflict between equality (in both political and economic terms) and cultural difference. Critical multiculturalism's structural and non-essentialist approach to culture, in contrast, enables a democratic appreciation of cultural difference.

### Redistribution versus Recognition?

While critics from the right worry about the preservation of a national culture and accuse minorities of threatening it, critics from the left recognise the disempowered position of minority groups. They criticise multiculturalism for focusing too much on cultural or ethnic differences while failing to provide socio-economic equality. As Paul Scheffer (2000) has said with respect to the Netherlands, "[t]he energetic approach to social divisions adopted in the past is matched only by the hesitancy now shown in dealing with the multicultural fiasco taking place before our eyes."

Underlying the leftist critique of multiculturalism is a tension between socio-economic equality and cultural rights, which Fraser (1998; 2003) calls the "redistribution-recognition dilemma." Redistribution and recognition, Fraser explains, appear to be two conflicting aims of justice. Redistribution defines collectivities

economically, that is, on the basis of class. Recognition, in turn, is based on a socio-cultural definition of groups. *Maldistribution*, then, is rooted in relations of production; *misrecognition,* in "social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication" (Fraser 2003, 13). While redistribution promotes equality in order to repair socioeconomic injustices, recognition promotes differentiation in order to repair symbolic injustice. The dilemma between the two, in brief, is one between equality and difference.

While Fraser's diagnosis of the apparent contradiction between cultural and economic injustice is useful for developing an understanding of critical multiculturalism, the way in which she resolves this apparent contradiction is not. Fraser acknowledges a politically relevant overlap between economic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition, but upholds the distinction between these two kinds of injustices. In this way, she "reproduces the division that locates certain oppressions as part of political economy and relegates others to the exclusively cultural sphere" (Butler 1997, 270-1). Endorsing the dichotomy between recognition and redistribution leads Fraser "to misrepresent feminist, anti-racist and gay liberation movements as calling for recognition as an end in itself, when they are better understood as conceiving cultural recognition as a means to economic and political justice" (Young 1998, 51). In a dichotomous model as the one advanced by Fraser, that is, any social group whose politics involves both claims for the recognition of difference and for economic equality – be it African Americans or Latinas/os in the United States; Muslims in Europe; queer and indigenous peoples in large parts of the world – seems torn between contradictory goals.

A more constructive approach to the apparent dilemma between redistribution and recognition can be found in Butler's (1997) and Young's (1990; 2000a) proposals for cultural materialism. Both authors criticise Fraser and other leftist critics for dismissing the cultural focus of current social movements by relegating culture to a secondary sphere with respect to material (i.e., "real") life. As Butler (1997, 268) puts it,

> *The charge that new social movements are "merely cultural," that a unified and progressive Marxism must return to a materialism based in an objective analysis of class, itself presupposes that the distinction between material and cultural life is a stable one. And this recourse to an apparently stable distinction between material and cultural life marks the resurgence of a theoretical anachronism.*

What Butler calls a "theoretical anachronism" is the theoretical insistence on the decoupling of culture and structure. To reject this decoupling and articulate a cultural materialist approach, critical multiculturalism relies on the theoretical legacies of post-structuralism. In particular, it draws on the notion of overdetermination. As Williams (1977) reminds us, structure *determines* culture not in that the first gets mirrored in the latter, but in that structure *sets limits* and *exerts pressures* on cultural processes. Moreover, structure itself is always culturally mediated. Representation and reality, "language and signification [are] indissoluble elements of the material social process itself, involved all the time both in production and reproduction" (Williams 1977, 99).

Following the logic of overdetermination, critical multiculturalism conceptualises "issues of justice involving recognition and identity as having inevitable

material economic sources and consequences" (Young 1998, 53). Social unity, that is, cannot rely on the bracketing of cultural differences and conflict. As Butler (1997, 269) explains, "for a politics of 'inclusion' to mean something more than the redomestication and resubordination of such differences, it will have to develop a sense of alliance in the course of a new form of conflictual encounter." Such a politics of inclusion must be based on "*a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways*" (Butler 1997, 269, emphasis in the original), a mode that recognises differences without excluding or subordinating some differences to others.

Young's and Butler's cultural materialist approach, in sum, understands culture in relation to the material conditions in which it is situated. By recognising that cultural injustice is always also economic injustice, this approach dissolves the apparent contradiction between claims of recognition and claims of redistribution. It argues that since "needs are conceptualised in political struggle over who gets to define whose needs for what purpose" (Young 1998, 59), it is also necessary to pay attention to the conditions under which certain needs are articulated and recognised as valid. And since to recognise the needs of culturally silenced groups is to make them visible, recognition is never simply symbolic, or "merely cultural," to use Butler's (1997) words.

### Cultural versus Common Interests?

As mentioned earlier, multiculturalism is commonly accused of being divisive. With different emphases, this accusation comes from the political right and left. Both sides see the interests of minority groups as a social threat. The threat, according to right-wing critics, is against a given notion of "the good" (Bloom 1987), "the Anglo-Protestant culture" (Huntington 2004), or simply "our values" (Cameron 2011). By defending minority interests, then, multiculturalism would be endorsing "cultural relativism" and undermining the stability of the nation. D'Souza's (1991) in the United States goes as far as blaming multiculturalism for neglecting, and thus perpetuating, cultural *pathologies.*

While admittedly less conservative, the leftist critique follows a similar logic and is thus subject to a similar response from critical multiculturalism. In this case, it is not necessarily a specific national identity and way of life that needs to be protected, but a political community more generally. In its defense of "identitarian sects," the leftist argument goes, multiculturalism opposes "common ideals and goals, a sense of a common history, a common set of values, a common language, and even a universal mode of rationality" (Butler 1997, 265). Put as a conflict between the particular interests of cultural groups and the "general interest" of the nation, this is basically another version of the dilemma of equality versus difference presented by Fraser above and is thus addressed by critical multiculturalism in a similar way. Drawing once more on cultural materialism, critical multiculturalism's response replaces cultural essentialism with a relational definition of culture and cultural difference.

The cultural essentialism that underlies both the right-wing and left-wing critique of minority interests conceptualises "social groups as fixed and bounded entities separate from others in basic interests and goals" (Young 2000b, 151). To essentialise culture is to draw clear lines between those who belong and do not belong to a group, on the basis of a set of given – "shared" – attributes; and to conceive

the group itself as a homogeneous and rigid organism that has to be preserved. Understood *relationally,* in contrast, cultural groups "emerge from the way people interact. The attributes by which some individuals are classed together in the 'same' group appear as similar enough to do so only by the emergent comparison with others who appear more different in that respect" (Young 2000a, 90). What distinguishes members of a particular group is a relative social position, a position within social structures of knowledge and power. Individuals who share a social position may differ in interests and opinions, but they are united in what Young calls "social perspective." A social perspective is shaped by individuals' "experience, history, and social knowledge derived from that positioning" (Young 2000a, 136). That different social perspectives have partial and particular views of the social world does not mean that they are necessarily opposed, or in competition, to one another.

This relational definition of cultural difference enables us to think of minority groups in novel and politically productive ways. To focus on a concrete example, an essentialist perspective circumscribes U.S. Latinas/os to people of "brown" skin color, with a Spanish-sounding last name, whose country of ancestry is somewhere south of the U.S.-Mexican border, and who follow a certain pattern of practices: they probably eat tortillas, enchiladas, and tacos, speak Spanish, and listen to rancheras or salsa. More importantly, a Latina/o politics would be seen as an attempt to defend and preserve these practices in opposition to alternative cultural practices as well as to an overarching *U.S. culture*. Likewise, essentialism identifies Muslim communities in Europe with a limited set of cultural practices and their interests are more or less equated with the preservation of such practices. A relational understanding of cultural difference, in contrast, sees U.S. Latinas/os—like the Moroccan-Dutch or the Pakistani-British communities – as occupying a specific structural position in society. As Young (2000a, 95) explains with respect to U.S. Latinas/os, cultural difference "often implies predictable status in law, educational possibility, occupation, access to resources, political power, and prestige" (Young 2000a, 95). Thus, the politics of minority groups should not be equated to the promotion of a minority language, food, religion, and music; their interests cannot be reduced to an aggregation of individual preferences, nor to the mere demand for cultural preservation. What is in the interest of Latinas/os in the US, of the Moroccan-Dutch in the Netherlands or the Pakistani-British in the UK is the advancement of structural changes that would allow them to speak the language they speak – whether it is Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, Berber, English, Dutch or a combination, – eat the food they want to eat and listen to the music they want to hear – either the same recipes and songs their grandparents ate and listened to or newer ones marked by innumerable processes of cultural syncretism – and, *at the same time*, be fully enfranchised with respect to the law, as well as to educational, occupational, material, and political resources.

As these examples show, when cultural difference is defined relationally, difference and equality are not at odds with each other. Group interests do not necessarily conflict with the interests of the broader community. On the contrary, to the extent that a group's claims are targeted against structural inequalities, they are claims of justice and, as such, they may become interests shared by the community at large.

The point here is not to say that all group-based politics fit into a structural justice-oriented model, but that – in its critical form – multiculturalism is concerned with cultural claims that are actually tied to structure and are fundamentally jus-

tice-oriented. Young's (2000a) distinction between *politics of difference* and *politics of identity* is instructive in this respect. While, most group-based claims across the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, and class are questions of social justice and should thus have a privileged place in the broader political agenda, Young argues, there are also groups that, following a rather essentialist logic, aim at the protection of a certain cultural wealth and the recognition of their distinctiveness. The first kind of claims correspond to a *politics of difference*; the second, to a *politics of identity.* Reducing the first to the latter is a common mistake of those who oppose minority rights arguing that these rights would erode society.

Young's distinction between a politics of difference and a politics of identity underscores the specificity of critical multiculturalism. Indeed, the basic criteria to distinguish between a politics of difference and a politics of identity is the first's structural, as opposed to a "merely cultural," approach to social groups and its relational, as opposed to essentialist, conception of culture. Independently of whether one adopts Young's terminology or not, the differentiation between a structural-relational and a *merely cultural*-essentialist politics of culture has at least three important implications for understanding and responding to the alleged demise of multiculturalism.

The first advantage of critical multiculturalism's understanding of cultural differences is its potential for political alliances and social unity. To the extent that cultural interests are not grounded on fixed heritages, but on social perspectives and that each social perspective does not absorb a person's full identity, fruitful alliances based on common (even if not fully overlapping) social positionings become possible. Moreover, in appealing to justice, cultural claims are generalisable proposals. While originating in a specific social perspective, that is, they may become legitimate norms for society as a whole. Their success then is not defined by the defeat of competing claims, but by the advancement of new social agreements. This appreciation for justice-driven agreements is precisely what leads critical multiculturalism to oppose imposed norms and models of unity that bracket or silence differences. Proponents of critical multiculturalism seek solidarity across differences, convinced that "solidarity does not mean that everyone thinks in the same way, it begins when people have the confidence to disagree over issues of fundamental importance precisely because they 'care' about constructing common ground" (Mercer 1990, 68).

A structural-relational view of cultural difference is relevant, secondly, because it acknowledges that some multiculturalist enterprises, regardless of their social value, may not necessarily fit in the agenda of critical multiculturalism (conceived here as a "politics of difference"). This would be the case with a conservative cultural politics, such as the politics of identity, described by Young. More importantly, though, critical multiculturalism rejects neoliberal efforts to co-opt diversity (Melamed 2006), which reduce culture to "ornament," or to what the Chicago Cultural Studies Group (1992, 531) illustratively calls "the Benetton effect." In other words, an understanding of multiculturalism in its critical form underscores the problem of corporate or ornamental approaches that welcome a variety of "ethnic" restaurants "or places of entertainment where the music, art, and literature of different cultures is showcased," while securing that "the many cultures are inactive in informing the personality, character, beliefs, and values of workers/citizens and

the structure of the economic and political system" (Lugones and Price 1995, 103, 105; see also Estrada and McLaren 1993).

Finally, while accounts about the crisis of multiculturalism commonly assume that it went too far, critical multiculturalism suggests that the problem has rather been the opposite: It underscores the superficiality of multicultural policies in Western democracies. German chancellor Angela Merkel's take on multiculturalism provides an example of this. "For a while, we kidded ourselves into believing that they wouldn't stay and would leave. Naturally, the notion that we would become 'multiculti,' that we would live next to one another and be happy about one another, failed," argued Merkel (Karnitschnig 2010). Merkel's view of multiculturalism – one grounded on a "we" that excludes minority groups and on the notion that these groups (*they*) "would leave" – is at odds with the critical definition of multiculturalism discussed above. Not surprisingly, Merkel concluded that Germany needs an assimilationist solution in the form of new policies to secure minority groups' adoption of the German language and culture (Eddy 2010).

## Deliberative Democracy

An endorsement of critical multiculturalism is an important, but insufficient step in defining the conditions for inclusive communication in culturally diverse democracies. In fact, this section shows that critical multiculturalism challenges traditional models of democracy and finds a better fit in Habermas' deliberative politics. This discussion starts by examining liberalism and republicanism, the two alternative views of democracy from which Habermas differentiates his. Admittedly, liberalism and republicanism have served as the brand name for too many and too diverse political frameworks. The aim here is not to account for all these "liberal" and "republican" frameworks, but rather to underscore the particularities and advantages of Habermas's deliberative model. With this in mind, the discussion focuses on two rather extreme interpretations within each tradition: interest-group pluralism in the case of liberalism, and communitarianism in the case of republicanism.

### The Free Individual versus the Dialoging Community

Liberalism, put simply, "is a political theory of limited government, providing institutional guarantees for personal liberty (…) its central political thesis – the need to defend individuals and groups against the oppressive demands and intrusions of authority – is plain" (Rosenblum 1989, 5). In order to go beyond the apparent *plainness* of this definition, it is necessary to examine how liberalism conceives its core value, freedom, and its main threat, government; as well as the implications of this in terms of civic participation. Freedom, in the liberal sense, is usually qualified as "negative" because it is individuals' freedom *from* external constraints. Pettit (1997) calls it freedom as "non-interference." Habermas (1994, 112) refers to it as "private autonomy" and describes it in "the form of a legally protected autonomy that every person can use to realise his or her personal life project." The legitimacy of norms, in this model, is based on *the rule of law*. The underling principle is that of a social-contract individuals subscribe to in order to secure equal legal rights (Habermas 1996a).

Liberal government, accordingly, is expected to have minimal *interference* in citizens' autonomy. It must operate as an impartial arbiter to facilitate the free com-

petition among private interests and must be kept under close civic surveillance. The liberal citizen, as a result, is modeled as "the solitary individual" (Barber 1989, 54) who engages politically in the pursuit of self-regarding interests. Because this approach "interprets democracy as a process of aggregating the preferences of citizens in choosing public officials and policies" (Young 2000a, 19), it is also known as "an aggregative model" of democracy. And because of the way in which the aggregation of multiple and usually conflicting private preferences compete with one another, it is said to follow the logic of the marketplace (Habermas 1996b; Young 2000a; Baker 2002). As Young (2000a, 20) sums up, "On this understanding […] democracy is a mechanism for identifying and aggregating the preferences of citizens, in order to learn which are held in the greatest number or with the greatest intensity."

Republicanism, instead, sees democracy as the community's process of self-determination. This process involves all community members within a single and overarching public sphere in rational deliberation toward shared political purposes. "[T]he paradigm is not the market but dialogue" (Habermas 1996b, 23). Thus, although freedom and individual autonomy are also important in this model, their meaning is not the same as in liberalism. The kind of freedom privileged in a republican democracy is "positive" in the sense that it is a freedom *for* civic action or, as Taylor (1989, 170) puts it, "a citizen liberty, that of the active participant in public affairs." Those who participate in public affairs are autonomous citizens in the sense that they are persons who move freely from the private to the public realm and, free from domination, engage in democratic dialogue. In opposition to the "private autonomy" privileged by liberalism, Habermas (1994; 1996a) refers to this as "public autonomy." This kind of autonomy is republicanism's source of political legitimation. Norms, to be precise, are legitimate to the extent that they are based on *popular sovereignty*, a principle "expressed in rights of communication and participation that secure the public autonomy of citizens" (Habermas 1998, 258).

The two different notions of autonomy – private and public – lead to contrasting views of the citizen. While the liberal citizen is solitary and self-interested, the republican citizen is social in two fundamental ways: identity itself is constituted dialogically (Taylor 1994) and civic engagement is always oriented toward common understanding. Sandel (1984) captures this distinction in his characterisation of the liberal citizen as the "unencumbered self," for whom "what matters above all, what is most essential to our personhood, are not the ends we choose but our capacity to choose them" (1984, 86). While for the unencumbered self, to be autonomous is to be *free from* all aims and interests, the republican citizen is *free to* pursue certain aims and interests that define the self. In this sense, Sandel (1984, 87) explains, the republican community is *constitutive* rather than simply *cooperative:* It "engage[s] the identity as well as the interests of the participants, and so implicate[s] its members in a citizenship more thoroughgoing than the unencumbered self can know."

To the extent that liberalism relies on the free flow of competing interests, it assumes a "realistic" definition of democracy and of its outcomes. That is, liberalism lacks normative principles with which to evaluate the justice of the decisions that succeed in the marketplace of interests. Justice, in liberalism, is defined by a procedure that is fair because it is equal to all. Liberal citizens, each of whom is free to have a different conception of the good, share a common legal system that enables them to negotiate their interests but not a sense of common ethos, nor an

orientation toward common understanding. In such a *proceduralist* model of democracy, strictly based on private autonomy, there is no space for the question of what kind of democracy we want and what kinds of decisions we need to take in order to achieve that democracy.

The republican agenda, in contrast, places these normative questions at its core. As stressed by Habermas (1996a, 279), republicanism "understands citizenship not primarily in *legal* but in *ethical* terms. According to this classical view, in the political public sphere, citizens join together in seeking what is best for them as members of a particular collectivity at a given point of time." This collective pursuit of a common goal corresponds to the "patriotic identification," which, from the republican perspective is "the essential condition for a free (nondepostic) regime" (Taylor 1989, 170). Republicans believe that a viable political project cannot be based on the mere aggregation of individual interests (even if following a single procedure), but requires either the imposition of certain interests over others or, as they propose, a superior or *patriotic* interest, shared by all.

### Equality and Cultural Differences

For critical multiculturalism, it is particularly important to examine how equality fits into the liberal and republican models of democracy. Republicanism defends a broad understanding of social equality as a condition for freedom. Equality, in this sense, enables citizens' civic participation. It justifies redistributive programs, that is, the public investment of private funds to support schools, housing, health, and media systems to guarantee equal access to education, housing, health, and communication for those who, without such programs would remain "less equal." Liberalism, in contrast, limits equality to a matter of compatibility among individuals' rights: everyone has equal rights to the extent that one's freedom of action is legally limited by the freedom of action of the others. Thus, liberalism has a hard time justifying – and usually ends up minimising – redistributive politics and other equalising measures, which are seen as governmental interference on individual autonomy. This does not mean that liberalism dismisses equality altogether, but that it tends to relegate it to legality while *substantial* inequalities persist. In sum, the liberal understanding of freedom conflicts with an extended notion of social equality, while republicanism sees social equality as essential to the very idea of citizenship.

However, the question of equality gets significantly more complicated, for both republicanism and liberalism, when the social differences under consideration are not overtly undesirable ones – such as differentiated access to education, health, housing, and communications—but cultural differences related to gender and sex, age, race, and ethnicity. These differences and the associated demands for recognition are unsettling in new and complex ways.

> For one, the principle of equal respect requires that we treat people in a different-blind fashion. The fundamental intuition that humans command this respect focuses on what is the same for all. For the other, we have to recognise and even foster particularity. The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of non-discrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them (Taylor 1994, 43).

Equal treatment, as Taylor explains, clashes with cultural recognition understood here as the freedom to be oneself. Additionally, in the case of republicanism, cultural differences threaten disinterested civic dialogue because bonds created around particular cultural identities allegedly conflict with the nation's common interest. Cultural specificity, in brief, runs counter to the republican understanding of universal citizenship. The republican model responds by relegating culture, together with all other "self-interests," to the sphere of the private. However, as suggested by Taylor in the passage just quoted, this solution is far from satisfactory for those who see themselves as culturally different. Paradoxically, the latter see discrimination and exclusion in policies designed under what Taylor calls "the principle of equal respect."

By giving priority to individual freedom and defending governmental neutrality with respect to citizens' diversity of interests, liberalism initially appears to be a better host for cultural differences. Indeed, its devotion to the free competition of interests supposedly goes as far as *encouraging* society's varied array of cultural possibilities. After more careful scrutiny, however, liberalism proves to be unreceptive to cultural differences in at least two important ways. First, these differences have a collective rather than an individual basis. Thus, from the liberal perspective, they limit individual autonomy. The "unencumbered self" must be free from ties to ancestry, social status, gender, or sexual preferences in order to command personal interests. Liberal freedom, in other words, is always "suspicious of collective goals" (Taylor 1994, 60) either if they are the goals of the nation, or those of an ethnic, racial, or sexual community. The second difficulty liberalism has in hosting cultural differences is that marketplace competition offers little possibility for effective participation. Not only does this competition follow a predetermined set of procedures, which participants have to accept uncritically, but these procedures privilege the most powerful or "competitive" interests. Since liberal freedom conflicts with policies to guarantee everyone's access to sufficient material and cultural conditions for democratic participation, that is, different cultural interests do not have equal opportunities to be heard.

In sum, the liberal and republican models, constrained by their understanding of freedom, equality, and citizenship, offer a similarly unsatisfactory answer to the question of how do cultural differences fit in democracy. Whatever space they seem to open for culture is definitely closed for a *politics* of culture. Culture, to be precise, is depoliticised either because it is relegated to the private realm in republicanism; or it is subjected to given structures of power in liberalism. The result, in both cases is a political system that may guarantee citizens' "formal" rights, but not their "substantive" rights of civic participation, to borrow a common distinction used in political theory (see Hall and Held 1990). While formal democratic rights are shared universally, substantive rights are the privilege of some. In the case of liberalism, of the economically powerful. In the case of republicanism, of the culturally dominant. If one keeps in mind the structural definition of culture developed earlier, however, the problem is basically the same: The universal norm of citizenship marginalises *the different,* forcing them to accommodate.

### Proceduralism *and* Participation

Habermas's proposal for deliberative politics overcomes an important part of the limitations that liberalism and republicanism present for those concerned with

democracy and social justice under conditions of cultural diversity. A comparison between deliberative democracy and the other two democratic ideals underscores the advantages of the first in dealing with the apparent conflict between equality and cultural difference.

Deliberative democracy shares with liberalism a focus on procedure, and, with republicanism, a notion of citizenship rooted in community building through civic participation. A proceduralist *and* participatory democratic model challenges a basic assumption built into the other two democratic ideals: the idea that common deliberation and a common understanding are necessarily tied to a common ethos.

Deliberative democracy grounds its proceduralism on discourse ethics. This moral philosophy is meant to resolve conflicts of justice at a post-conventional level (where traditional forms of legitimation are not available), without resorting to violence or coercion. It does this by distinguishing between the realm of the good (ethics) and the realm of the right (morality), and confining itself to the latter. Discourse ethics is not oriented toward a predefined ethos, but follows, instead, a *just* or *deliberative* procedure. In Habermas's normative model of communication, to deliberate is to engage in society's reason-based dialogue, oriented toward common understanding, held among all citizens, and free from strategic action (i.e., from the influence of power and money). Proceduralism, in this sense, does not make deliberative democracy value-free. As Habermas (1996b, 26) explains, in this model "the normative content rises from the very structure of communicative actions."

The same reliance on civic participation that separates deliberative democracy from liberalism moves it closer to the republican model. Both the deliberative and the republican approaches are anchored on a common notion of the public sphere. They both understand "democracy in terms of the institutionalisation of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens" (Habermas, 1996b, 23). The two, as well, see in solidarity the fundamental source of social integration. Habermas, however, believes that republicanism's built-in assumption of a common idea of the good makes this model inoperable. Republicanism's "ethical overload," as he calls it (1996b, 21), restricts republican democracy to an agreement on value orientations and interests that does not exist under conditions of cultural diversity.

Instead of the common ethnic-cultural identity assumed by republicanism, deliberative democracy expects citizens to share a commitment to political discourse, the source of which Habermas (1996a; 1998) calls "constitutional patriotism." Constitutional patriotism resolves the problem of solidarity in deliberative politics by operating as a "functional equivalent" of nationalism (Habermas 1998, 117). Solidarity, in this case, does not rely on the idea of the nation – as a community of common descent – or of a common ethnicity, but on a "shared political culture." In this way, Habermas (1998, 118) separates citizens' *political* culture from the "subcultures and their prepolitical identities" and stresses how the viability of the first is necessarily tied to the respect for the latter. "A correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed" (Habermas 1994, 112).

### Private and Public Autonomy

Deliberative politics' theorisation of the link between differentiated life contexts and legality is particularly useful for critical multiculturalism. This link is

grounded on Habermas's argument on the "reciprocal relation" between private and public autonomy. Since the legitimacy of norms in the liberal and republican models derives from either one of these two kinds of autonomy – private autonomy guaranteed through the rule of law, in the case of liberalism; public autonomy guaranteed in the principle of popular sovereignty, in republicanism – they miss the interdependency of both sources of legitimation. They fail to see that "[t]he *democratic process* bears the entire burden of legitimation. It must simultaneously secure the private and the public autonomy of legal subjects" (Habermas 1996a, 450). The rule of law, in other words, does not simply guarantee private autonomy, but also enables citizens to participate in political deliberation. At the same time, in seeing themselves as "authors of just those rights which they are supposed to obey as addressees," citizens recognise the legitimacy of the rule of law (Habermas 1998, 258).

The reciprocal relation between public and private autonomy explains, in Habermas's view, the failure of measures of "welfare paternalism." Aimed at reducing socio-economic inequalities, these measures are imposed from above on the basis of predetermined notions of the law. "In this case, citizenship is reduced to a client's relationships to administration that provides security services, and benefits paternalistically" (Habermas 1996a, 78). It is worth noting that Habermas is not in a position to claim that the services and benefits resulting from this kind of welfare paternalism are good or bad; what he argues is that for them to be valid they would have to be authored by the people who are affected by them.

> *For in the final analysis, private legal subjects cannot enjoy even equal individual liberties if they themselves do not jointly exercise their civic autonomy in order to specify clearly which interests and standards are justified, and to agree on the relevant respects that determine when like cases should be treated alike and different cases differently* (Habermas 1998, 262).

Habermas's words make implicit reference to discourse ethics' principle of universality. Innerved into his theory of deliberative democracy, this principle underscores how justice is necessarily grounded on an open and inclusive debate that includes all citizens and, accordingly, all "life contexts." A recurrent example Habermas uses is the debate about gender equality and policies that have overlooked the perspective of women. Policies of this kind, in Habermas's (1996a; 1998) account, attack gender inequality as something that deserves the administrative execution of norms that are taken for granted. "[F]eminist critique has targeted not only the unredeemed demands, but also the ambivalent consequences of successfully implemented welfare programs […] It rightly insists that the appropriate interpretation of needs and criteria be a matter of public debate in the political public sphere" (1998, 263). It is through public debate, Habermas insists, that the demands of equality can be both defined and satisfied beyond *legal* or formal frameworks. Inclusive participatory debate, that is, can enable *actual* equality.

## Conclusion: Deliberative Democracy's Communicative Advantages

Overall, what makes deliberative politics particularly appealing as the democratic platform for critical multiculturalism is its communicative core. While republi-

canism is similarly grounded on social dialogue, its conception of communication is not nearly as sophisticated and productive. The kind of communication that derives from Habermas's theorisation does not presuppose understanding and a common interest, but enables it. Likewise, one may argue – although Habermas is not always as clear in this respect[1] – that this kind of communication does not presuppose fixed norms of political participation, but understands all norms as imperfect and provisional, always subject to public deliberation. Since discourse ethics occurs at a post-conventional stage, it clashes against conformity and dogmatism. "The very perspectives that make consensus possible are now at issue" (Habermas 1990, 162). This means that all norms need to be morally justified through discourse. "The strong discourse-ethical notion of autonomy requires subjects to question even pregiven legitimating frameworks and authorities. Validity can then be redeemed only on the basis of the formal properties of argumentation" (Rehg 1994, 35).

Deliberative politics' communicative focus has at least two significant advantages for critical multiculturalism. First, understanding communication as the key instrument of political participation offers a promising platform for demanding cultural minorities' participatory representation. Because Habermas's notion of communication requires everyone's inclusion in a participatory process, it underscores the democratic significance of including all *voices* – not simply the *ears* of communication recipients. The requirement of inclusion of marginalised social groups, in other words, cannot be satisfied by *paternalistic* policies designed externally and through a naturalised logic that overlooks the life experiences and associated perspectives of those groups' members. Autonomy, it should be kept in mind, has to be understood as both freedom and effective access to communicative participation. Moreover, this double vision of autonomy also provides a useful response to the charges of social fragmentation raised by multiculturalism's opponents. Habermas's proposal for deliberative democracy cannot presuppose a common civic goal but offers a way to reach it. Predetermined commonality, it contends, not only neglects cultural differences but imposes some (culturally invisible) differences over others, intensifying structural inequality. Commonality reached *in* discourse, instead, must acknowledge and include cultural differences not as a way of distancing them further but of securing an equalitarian dialogue that could bring them closer.

Secondly, communication and the consequences of communication in the deliberative model cannot be separated from the structural conditions in which discourse occurs. Communication operates at all levels of social justice and arguing that a communicative approach is apolitical is misunderstanding this. According to Gouldner's (1976) early account of the reception of Habermas's writings, this is precisely what happened with the leftist critique of his work. The problem, Gouldner (1976, 147) argues, is that "language is not *easily* accessible as a lever of political intervention for emancipatory change." Language, Habermas's early critics assumed, is separated from structure, and thus focusing on the first distracts attention from the *real* issues of social inequality. Interestingly, this is the same assumption of those who criticise multicultural politics as "merely cultural," going back to Butler's (1997) expression. Like Habermas, Butler is convinced of the importance of language in actual (i.e., material) social change. Critical multiculturalism can thus find in deliberative politics "a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways" (Butler 1997, 296).

## Note:

1. Habermas's (1996a, 1998) notion of constitutional patriotism, for example, may not fit well with the principles of critical multiculturalism, due to its reliance on a clear-cut separation between "cultural assimilation" and "political assimilation."

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# BOLLYWOOD AND TURKISH FILMS IN ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

## TWO CASE STUDIES ON DIASPORIC DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION

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## Abstract

This article, a contribution to the thriving scholarship on the engagements between homeland media and diasporic audiences, breaks new ground through a comparative, political economy inspired analysis of two case studies with transnational implications. First we describe the theatrical distribution and exhibition of homeland films towards/by their diasporas, focusing on Indian and Turkish film structures in one location, the Belgian city of Antwerp. Interviews with 45 key players, participant observation and complementary archival research allow us to reconstruct how privately organised film screenings were substituted by commercial initiatives. Further analysis exploring the relations between local exhibitors and transnational distributors evaluates these structures against the background of global media industries' developments in terms of power and transformations, such as increasing competition.

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# Introduction

"No holiday plans or travel prospects? Make a trip to Kinepolis and imagine yourself in France, India, Turkey or even China. All year long Kinepolis offers foreign blockbusters catapulting you straight to the country of your choice ..." (Kinepolis Group 2009, *our translation*). With this online advertisement the main Belgian multiplex exhibition group Kinepolis[1] promoted its ethnically diversified programme in the summer of 2009. The policy of regularly screening diasporic films is especially apparent at Metropolis, the Kinepolis multiplex in Antwerp, the largest Dutch language city in Belgium hosting a variety of diasporic communities. Such commercial responses to urban cultural diversity and more precisely to diasporic communities are a worldwide phenomenon in the film business, in which Antwerp is a small but nonetheless revealing case. Advertising as exemplified above is but one part of the complex pattern formed by selection, distribution, promotion and exhibition of diasporic cinema, i.e. homeland films consumed by corresponding diasporas.

In contrast to previous research on diasporic cinema, mainly oriented towards textual analysis, audiences and reception, we start from a political economy perspective on media and film, as we claim this to be an essential addition for a full understanding of diasporic film cultures. In this article we address two main questions. First, how are diasporic cinema cultures structured and organised as regards distribution and exhibition? And second, how can we evaluate these structures in terms of power and transformations, against the background of global media industries developments? In practice, we focus on two case studies in Antwerp: the Indian and Turkish film cultures[2], which are most prominent in the city (compared to for instance Moroccan and Jewish film cultures).[3] Although being characterised by different migration histories and dissimilar homeland film industries, these two urban cinema cultures do show parallel developments and patterns, which we mainly explore in the cinema theatre sphere (including regular multiplex programmes and private screenings). Based on our detailed economic description, we argue that power is mainly concentrated in the distribution market and that private initiatives have developed into the current public programmes amidst processes of growing competition, commercialisation, and transnationalisation.

## Cultural Studies and Political Economy Engaging with Diaspora

The present globalised media landscape, exemplified by an increased spread of media products as commodities and new related technologies, makes "media in diaspora" a renewed object of communication research. In the cultural studies tradition theoretical and methodological perspectives tend to focus on texts and/or audiences, concentrating on the media representation of diasporas and emphasising the role of media in identity constructions (Gillespie 1995; Karim 2003; Georgiou 2006; Tsagarousianou 2007). In this context television has received much attention, especially in relation with the social relevance assigned to diasporic media consumption, also among Turkish (in Belgium: Gezduci and D'Haenens 2007; elsewhere: Karanfil 2009) and Indian communities worldwide (Gillespie 1995; Dudrah 2005). Diasporic film consumption has been explored as well (e.g. See Kam, Feng and Marchetti 2008), often with a focus on diasporic engagements with Bollywood[4] films (e.g. Dudrah 2002; Desai 2004; Brosius and Yazgi 2007).

Since the 1960s already, transnational media have also been an issue of interest in political economy approaches to media (e.g. Mosco 1996; Golding and Murdock 1997), more precisely concerning the globalisation of US communication (e.g. Schiller 1969) and international aspects of the film industry (Guback 1969), a strand of research that continues to date (e.g. Chakravartty and Zhao 2008). Concerning film, specific attention has been paid to the notions of transnational "flows," "contra-flows" (Thussu 2006) and "hybridised" forms of cinema (Ezra and Rowden 2006, 1-2). Homeland films reaching their diasporas are instances of such flows and part of a more general "institutional circuit of communication products" (Mosco 1996, 25). This includes commercial channels, film rentals, public or private film screenings as well as (satellite) broadcasting and streaming through the Internet. However, informal and illegal networks and downloading are of equal importance.[5] Films are available in all these different formats, in the homeland, in its diasporas, but also increasingly circulating amongst diasporas themselves, so that they become part of broader dynamic patterns illustrating the diasporas' economic significance.

Both fields of study have thus dealt with issues of transnational and diasporic media or film. Traditionally cultural studies (next to anthropology) have been associated with micro level studies, and political economy with macro level patterns and processes, but in recent years possibilities to join efforts are explored. For instance, political economists have reached out towards cultural studies to broaden their perspective by increasingly supporting the dynamics between micro and macro research, according with their idea of social totality (e.g. Murdock and Golding 2005). This includes the relation between the local and the transnational, the private and the public, or between small-scale daily phenomena and broader structures. As Janet Wasko (2004, 323) notes, both cultural studies and political economy "would seem to be needed for a complete critical analysis of culture and media" (for early interdisciplinary work of political economy and cultural studies see: Mosco 1996).

In line with these insights, we carry out a local study, examining structures of distribution and exhibition through historical and institutional analysis in the context of diasporic theatre screenings. Beyond this factual description, we are inspired by political economy approaches to evaluate "*power relations*, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources" (Mosco 1996, 25, *our italics*), in this case films. Studies on the political economy of Indian cinema in general have been conducted (Pendakur and Subramanyam 1996; Pendakur 2003, Thussu 2008) and so have analyses of diasporic film production (Naficy 2001).[6] Additionally, this gives us the opportunity to reveal processes *of social change and historical transformation* (Mosco 1996, 27) against the background of larger patterns of global developments of film industries (Sinclair 2004, 66; Wasko 1999). These processes include commercialisation, diversification, and transnationalisation (Wasko 2004). We consider this a necessary complement to previous audience and text research on diasporas.

## Data Collection for Two Cases of Diasporic Film in Antwerp

This article departs from two case studies, carried out in one location, the Belgian city of Antwerp. While most previous studies have interpreted their comparative approach in a transnational or transdiasporic sense through a comparison of

similar diasporas from one "home country" over different countries or continents (e.g. Georgiou 2006), we analyse several diasporic film cultures in one locality. We detect common and cross-over patterns between the Turkish and Indian cases, allowing for the evaluation of influences of a shared urban and regional context, while at the same time acknowledging their specificity. The presence of diasporic film cultures in Antwerp is not only related to the relative flourishing of the film industries of their countries of origin, but also depends on structural patterns of transnational distribution and local exhibition. The latter two aspects constitute the focus of this article.

Our data collection mainly relies on 45 exploratory interviews (Kvale 1996, 97), conducted in the course of 2009 and 2010. These were all semi-structured, based on topic lists and intended to gather empirical information from both experts in the field and from key players in the Turkish and Indian communities or film screening business. For instance, every distributor/exhibitor (operating from Belgium or from abroad) supplying Turkish and/or Indian films in Antwerp, as well as several DVD shop owners and social workers were interviewed. The factual data gathered from these interviews was complemented with results from published scholarship, statistical information, annual company reports and (confidentially treated) box office results. Small-scale participant observations during multiplex screenings of Turkish and Indian films additionally back our story. Together these data were employed to describe in detail the structural landscape of the Indian and Turkish diasporic cinema in Antwerp and were further analysed, based on a political economy approach.

## Private Screenings Prepare the Ground

As indicated above, the current Turkish and Indian diasporic cinema scenes in Antwerp are situated in Metropolis, the local multiplex of the major Belgian exhibition chain Kinepolis. However, Kinepolis' decision to screen non-Western films did not come out of the blue. Years before this programme was initialised, the Turkish and Indian communities of Antwerp had been organising private screenings of films from their countries of origin, complemented by occasional screenings in neighbourhood cinemas.

Turkish films appeared before Indian ones on the local Antwerp cinema market. The number of people of Turkish origin in Antwerp is estimated at about 8.000 to 12.000 (on a total population of about 470.000 people (Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek 2009), of which 28 percent is of foreign origin (Stad Antwerpen 2008, 38)) depending on how broad the area of Antwerp is defined and which criteria are applied. The first groups of Turkish immigrants arrived in Belgium as labour forces after the mid-1960s (Bayar 1992; Khoojinian 2006), followed by family reunification from the 1970s onwards. A smaller number of people migrated for political reasons during the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1970s, three different theatres in Antwerp occasionally screened Turkish films (interviews with two second-generation Turkish respondents, 15 April 2009 and 25 May 2009). Two of these theatres, Modern and Monty, were small neighbourhood cinemas, prompted by decreasing ticket sales to reach out to immigrants with films from their homeland. The third venue, Splendid, was a theatre behind a Turkish-owned restaurant. Besides these screenings, Turkish businessmen sporadically organised private film screenings at different *ad hoc* locations, at once to serve and earn from their own ethnic community.

The further transformation of the local Turkish screening scene was mainly determined by global developments in the film industry. In Western Europe the cinema-going culture declined between the 1960s and 1980s. Hence, most neighbourhood cinemas closed their doors, including – towards the end of this period – those which occasionally had programmed Turkish films in Antwerp. Two main causes accounted for the overall decline in cinema "routine" (Willems 2007, 251). The first was the changing demography in cities in the after war period, brought about by a city-flight of young families and the entrance of more immigrants in the cities. The second was the rapid spread of home recording technologies VHS and Betamax in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, which created unprecedented potential for home entertainment (Klinger 2006). Diasporic communities eagerly appropriated these technological developments (for Belgium: Devroe and Driesen 2005, 38). In this context, the occasional cinema programming of Turkish films in Antwerp came to an end around 1980.

Figure 1: Indian and Turkish Films in Antwerp: Historical Perspective
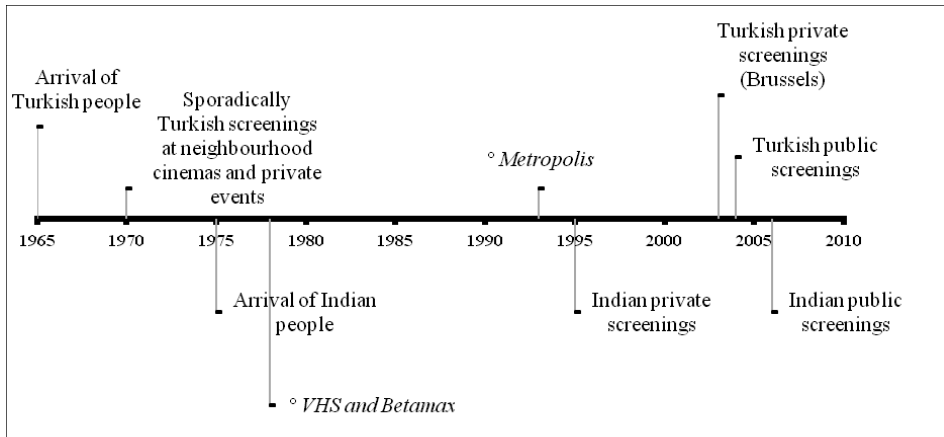


In the 1980s and 1990s, multiplex theatres arose worldwide and became the new hotspots for filmgoers. In Antwerp a whole new urban cinema landscape developed in 1993, when the Metropolis multiplex was built on the outskirts of the city (Willems 2007, 253-5), a classic example of "the splendid American venture on the ring road" (Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings 2003, 197) albeit not an American one.[7] In no time, the multiplex succeeded in controlling most of the local exhibition. At that time Turkey's film industry struggled with political and economic problems (Dönmez-Colin 2008, 44), witnessing a "period of mere extinction of popular Turkish cinema" (Dorsay 1996, 154-5). Meantime, transnational satellite broadcasting became a substitute for (outdoor) film consumption among Turkish diasporas in Europe (Aksoy and Robins 2000, 345-51). These two developments resulted in an absence of Turkish films in the programmes of the brand new Kinepolis venture.

The second half of the 1990s also witnessed the introduction and growth of privately organised screenings of Indian films in Antwerp. Such films had not been screened before, as the first considerable Indian migration to the city, mostly by diamond traders and their personnel, only started around 1975 (Henn 2009), about

10 years after the first members of the Turkish community had arrived. Other sectors harbour quite a different and more recently migrated Indian community in the city: the IT-sector and several small businesses such as taxi services and grocery or telephone/Internet shops. Their numbers are estimated at about 2.500 persons (Stad Antwerpen 2008, 37). In contrast to Turkey's, the Indian film industry experienced a revival in the 1990s. This entailed the potential for expansion after the deregulation in the film sector (Thussu 2008, 100) and the production of spectacle films with – among other subjects – typical diasporic themes such as migration from India to the West (Dudrah 2002, 24-5). Parallel to new overseas box office successes in the US and UK, screenings of these films began in Antwerp in 1995 in a rented cinema hall of the Metropolis theatre. These private events were single screenings, bringing a new film every three or four months. They were charity inspired initiatives of two diamond traders from the Indian Antwerp community who maintained personal contacts with Yash Raj, one of the main Indian distribution companies. The latter thus became the exclusive supplier of the films. The screenings were reserved for the specific community of the diamond business and their families or friends. Hence, only they were informed, through e-mail and fax, although once in a while posters were brought to the Bollywood DVD shops in the city as well. These were organised for over a decade, but eventually disappeared in 2007 when the multiplex serving as their venue, absorbed Indian commercial films in its regular programme (interview with organiser of private screenings, 5 November 2009).

In 2003 Turkish events of the same kind appeared in Brussels. These successful film galas (*Brüksel gala gecesi*) were prompted by the slow recovery of Turkey's film industry, which began in the late 1990s and brought about a clear revival in the new millennium (Dönmez-Colin 2008, 211-23). Again, the local viability of a diasporic film culture depended on more global developments. A Belgian entrepreneur of Turkish origin started renting films for private screenings from Maxximum,[8] a Turkish-German distributor of Turkish films. Films ran several times a day in a cultural event hall in the Belgian capital, usually for two successive days. As the potential audience was familiar with the new films through satellite television and the Internet, only local posters and flyers were used to promote the screenings. The organiser sometimes flew in members of the cast or the film crew, creating large enthusiasm within the Turkish community. Distributor Maxximum then seized the opportunity by hiring the Turkish-Belgian entrepreneur (whose role quickly faded) as its representative and had him start negotiations with Kinepolis. This resulted in a major shift in control, as Kinepolis introduced Turkish films in its multiplexes in Brussels in 2004, but also in other Belgian cities with Turkish communities. The Turkish private events in Brussels thus came to an end only one year after their inception, but gave way to multiplex screenings of Turkish films in various Belgian cities, including Antwerp, where Turkish film screenings had disappeared around 1980 (see above).

### The Multiplex Goes "Ethnic": Public Turkish and Indian Film Screenings

Kinepolis had mainly been programming Western films until it was approached by transnational distributors of non-Western produced films. In 2004, two such distributors offered Kinepolis a first selection of Turkish films: Maxximum, the abovementioned Turkish-German company, and MultiTone Films, a Dutch com-

pany. MultiTone, which would cease its activities in 2007, exported only a limited number of Turkish films outside the Netherlands and played a minor role in Belgium and the rest of Europe. Maxximum, however, quickly pioneered distribution markets outside Germany, such as Austria, Denmark, and Belgium, where it soon became the principal partner for Turkish screenings in Kinepolis. In 2006, the Dutch distributor Bharat Entertainment International (BEI)[9] succeeded to get the Kinepolis group interested in Indian films (interview with CEO of BEI, 29 April 2009). Thus, the Antwerp Kinepolis branch competed and ultimately replaced the privately organised Indian screenings for which Metropolis had sometimes served as a venue. Yash Raj, for over 10 years the sole supplier of prints for those private screenings, was not involved in the Kinepolis screenings. One could argue that the distributor missed an opportunity by not trying to close a deal with Kinepolis as Maxximum had done for Turkish movies.

Clearly, these new developments had consequences for power constellations at both the exhibition and distribution level. Except for the early neighbourhood cinemas (Monty and Modern) private film screenings had only come about when initiated by entrepreneurial members of the diasporic communities themselves. Eventually these initiatives were taken over by the local department of a non-diasporic Belgian multiplex company that operated internationally. Moreover, since the 1990s, each entrepreneur had cooperated with only one distributor, which had captured a kind of monopoly over these small-scale businesses, changing quickly from 2004 onwards. The role of old and new distributors was crucial at this stage, and it remains to be so till today, as distributors still determine the promotion and more surprisingly, the selection of the films (see below).

From the exhibitor's point of view, this structural shift from private venture to commercial enterprise can be seen as the absorption of private initiatives, prompting a commercialisation, although the initiatives within the diasporas had already gained substantial profits. Continuity as well as change was entailed: Turkish and Indian films remained available, but social and power structures changed substantially. Switching to a more regular supply had several advantages: covering a general audience instead of the previous narrow and specific target group, further diversifying the target audiences of the multiplex, next to bringing more order, regularity and control (interview with manager of Metropolis, 18 May 2009). The broadening of the potential viewers, however, was a rather theoretical than material reality. While the opportunity for a more diversified group of consumers is created, the corresponding communities still make the majority of the audience (for a detailed analysis of the Turkish case, see Smets et al. 2011). Neither Indian nor Turkish screenings have succeeded (yet) in attracting a broad Western audience and therefore remain separate entities within the wider multiplex programme. From the perspective of the audience, the end of the private screenings brought more democratised entertainment, as tickets turned cheaper, the exclusivity within (a part of) the community was no longer maintained, and films became available for several days at several times, entailing an increased flexibility compared to the private screenings which were held only once or twice per film. Furthermore, Turkish films can now be viewed in other cities than Brussels, including Antwerp. As Kinepolis had witnessed the success of the private initiatives for years, it was eager to accept the offer to list Turkish and Indian films in its regular programmes

(interview with programming manager of Kinepolis, 7 April 2009). Ever since, these films are available about eight to ten times a year. Nevertheless, it remains an irregular supply. How the distribution, selection and promotion of these films are established within the context of the transnational film industry will be discussed in the following sections.

**Diasporic Distribution: A Dynamic and Competitive Marketplace.** The marketplace of distributors, providing diasporas with their homeland films, appears to be changeable and dynamic. In contrast to Yash Raj, Maxximum succeeded in maintaining its position after the shift from private diasporic to public multiplex screenings. However, from that moment onwards the Turkish-German company had to share its profits with MultiToneFilms for a while. After the latter had disappeared in 2008 it eventually met competition from yet another German distributor, Kinostar.[10] In contrast to the Turkish case, supplies for Indian films shifted from the original distributor (Yash Raj) to two new companies. BEI had only started doing business with Kinepolis for one year, when in 2007 the older UK branch of the Indian company Eros Entertainment[11] appeared as a competitor onto the Antwerp Bollywood scene. Compared to BEI or the distributors of Turkish films, which all concentre on Europe, Eros is by far the biggest player and the most orientated towards the global market. Moreover, the company engages in business beyond distribution by exploiting films on various platforms, including theatres, digital new media, home entertainment and television syndication (Eros International Plc 2009). It (co-)produces Indian films and has its own music label (interview with sales manager Eros, 23 June 2009). Thus Eros interferes in the film business at different levels between the production and final screening stage. In this way, Eros is a classic example of a diversified firm, active on a variety of fields dealing with media products (Wasko 2004, 315), blurring the boundaries between producers and distributors. Similarly, the Turkish production company Pana Film (known from the controversial *Valley of the Wolves* franchise) is recently emerging as a player in the distribution of Turkish films in Europe.

Reliance Big Entertainment, a company comparable to Eros in its diversification and reach, is increasingly entering overseas Bollywood markets, as witnesses the fact that it recently bought a majority stake in Hollywood's IM Global. In 2010 the company provided a film to Belgium (Kinepolis) for the first time, but it remains unsure whether this deal will be repeated. Significantly, the diasporic film market is not yet touched by the oligopolic US companies, in contrast to for instance the distribution market for European film. However, recent developments in Antwerp hint at a possible future shift: the American 20th Century Fox distributed the Bollywood film *My Name is Khan* to Belgium (also in 2010). The appearance of these new players, from Kinostar to Fox, changed the rules of the game: negotiation and competition became more manifest. At the distributors' level a shift occurred from exclusive supplier based on personal relations towards a competitive marketplace, which included the danger of disappearance for the initial distributor (as happened with Yash Raj). Large transnational and diversified companies, which are serving diasporas worldwide, and thus are characterised by an increased transnationalisation, explore the local market in Antwerp, while there is a recent interest from Hollywood as well.

**Quick Release Strategy and the DVD Market.** Releases of Turkish and Indian films in Belgium preferably coincide with those in Turkey and India, a strategy ahead of Hollywood distribution where releases are only beginning to be launched simultaneously worldwide. This is especially important as informal and illegal networks (for the distinction between the two, see Portes 1994, 428) in Belgium and elsewhere, offer DVD and online versions of new films within days after their release.[12] However, the quality may be so bad that audiences are still eager to have the good quality theatre experience (interview with Indian woman in Antwerp, 3 May 2010). Such circuits are especially crucial in the worldwide distribution of diasporic media (Lobato 2007, 117). In Antwerp Turkish and Indian DVDs are available through different channels: formal markets, informal markets and illegal ones. Several DVD shops sell Bollywood films, while one central shop used to provide legal Turkish video rentals and sales (closed down in 2011). Other stores have a limited selection on offer next to their common grocery products or telephone/Internet services. While vendors of Indian DVDs have become quite visible in some Antwerp neighbourhoods, Turkish DVDs are harder to spot. These DVDs are partly obtained through piracy (for further reading on Indian media piracy, see Athique 2008), sold at giveaway prices and of varying quality. Next to shopping in Antwerp, some people bring DVDs from their homeland as they travel back and forth, or from other countries such as Canada and the UK, where especially Indian people travel for business. Hence, this market is highly transnational in several ways (interview with Turkish video shop owner, 12 May 2009). To reduce piracy to a minimum, distributors too increasingly offer their own films online by selling DVDs, or rather video on demand (VOD) (interview with sales manager of Eros; Miller et al. 2001, 149). Thus, they digitalise the global Bollywood market. Nowadays DVD shops indeed suffer from increasing online availability and piracy.

**Selecting Diasporic Films for Exhibition.** Not only were the distributors crucial at the inception of commercial exhibition of Indian and Turkish films, they also have considerable power in the selection process, much more than average distribution companies of Hollywood blockbusters. The diasporic film distribution market can – at least in Belgium – profit from its experience with Indian and Turkish films to assess their potential among the diasporas, and from the absence of such expertise in the exhibition field (interview with programming manager of Kinepolis). Hence, Kinepolis' central booking and programming unit hardly has a hand in the selection process of diasporic films. It merely decides on the acceptance of a film on the basis of space limits in its multiplexes, not of quality control. It is up to the distributor to convince Kinepolis of the commercial potential of the Turkish or Indian films they offer.

Still, even within distribution companies the knowledge of the market remains limited (Miller et al. 2001, 150), as many decisions are based on intuition and trial-and-error. Especially for companies such as Eros, which often decide to support a film in the pre-production stage, few clues are available. However, some factors remain indicative of potential success. The track record of a film's director, the production company and its cast are criteria for both Turkish and Indian films. While "the importance of a star's earning capacity is recognised" in the American film industry too (Kerrigan 2004, 34), for Bollywood films in particular the cast is an important aspect: both BEI and Eros recognise specific "export actors," who often guarantee good results at the Antwerp box office.

Interestingly, the success of diasporic films has indicators in ancillary industries, with which they are vertically integrated. Turkish commercial television and popular film culture are intensely intertwined, so that distributors keep an eye on the popularity of casts or concepts in Turkish television soaps (e.g. the mixture of entertainment and issues of Turkish identity and politics) and closely follow the plans of (television) producers (interview with manager Maxximum, 10 September 2009). For Indian films then, music rather than television is a crucial indicator for potential success, even more decisively than the star cast. Film songs are released six to eight weeks before the film's premiere. If these songs become hits in India and its diaspora, through radio or TV, distributors are more inclined to release the film (interview with CEO of BEI and sales manager of Eros).

**"Spreading the Word" and Other Marketing Strategies.** However unappealing a film might turn out after its selection, good distribution and advertising can compensate much for an initial selection blunder (Miller et al. 2001, 148). It is common practice that distributors are largely responsible for the promotion of their own films, even if exhibitors such as Kinepolis have their share in local advertising. This contrasts with the previous private events, where the organisers were solely responsible for promotion. Marketing strategies of the multiplex for homeland films towards their diasporas appear both at the global and the local level. In the Turkish as well as the Indian case global marketing has become the present focus, as it provides a way to reach audiences in a range of different locations simultaneously and hence reduces marketing costs (Miller et al. 2001, 150). Most Turkish films are now promoted on satellite television and in Turkish newspapers through clips and banners that announce the upcoming releases throughout Europe circa two weeks in advance. Belgium is a mere additional market in the corporate strategy of this global marketing system, often functioning without any local middlemen. Additionally, all distributors at play and exhibitor Kinepolis have their own websites, another approved medium to inform people of news and upcoming releases and part of the increasing digitalisation (interviews with managers of distributors BEI, Eros and Maxximum). This global advertising is a development that accords with the transnationalisation of the distribution business and hence is interesting from a political economy perspective. At this level associated products can be part of the marketing of a film (Miller et al. 2001, 156 and 166), but Belgium is too small a market and not worth the effort. For instance, Eros will release Bollywood music of upcoming films in the UK, but not in Belgium (interview with sales manager Eros).

Local advertising is applied as well. When commercial Turkish screenings started at Kinepolis, Maxximum put the abovementioned organiser of private gala evenings in charge of local promotion. Through his network, promotional material was spread to Turkish tea houses, groceries and associations. Recently, local marketing has been picked up by Metropolis again by initiating a strategic partnership with the Unie van Turkse Verenigingen (UTV), a federation of Turkish associations with its headquarters in Antwerp. It was agreed that future releases of Turkish films would be promoted by UTV, in exchange for free tickets (interviews with manager Metropolis, and coordinator of UTV, 18 June 2009). Similarly, Bollywood distributor BEI focuses on the local Indian market by employing a local advertising company, which spreads prints of posters and flyers in those districts of Antwerp where Indians are working or living and sporadically in shops where

Bollywood DVDs are sold. This marketing strategy was consciously prepared by exploring the market in Antwerp neighbourhoods (interview with CEO of BEI, and manager advertising company, 20 August 2009). Nevertheless, and this is remarkable, none of our Indian respondents was familiar with these flyers.[13] Another kind of local advertising occurs in the multiplex, where promotion of films depends on local theatre managers, who decide which vinyl banners and posters will be spread in their cinema complex. When available, trailers for new Turkish or Indian releases are only shown before similar films and aim exclusively at the corresponding audience.

Promotion is predominantly directed towards the Turkish and Indian communities, a partial continuation of the private screenings. Hence, the main promotional strategy is ethnic marketing (Marich 2005, 265-8). This is part of a more general strategy of targeting specific audience groups, whose identification is considered "key to the success of the film" in cinema marketing (Kerrigan 2004, 31 and 36). Such target audiences are of course not always identified by their ethnic background: age, gender or other factors are also of importance. Although a broad audience is welcomed – indicated by the fact that Kinepolis prefers film prints with Dutch subtitles – only Bollywood films succeed in striking a chord with broader South-Asian (and sporadically other non-Indian) audiences.

Beyond the abovementioned strategies an often extremely successful word-of-mouth advertising is trusted to do the rest, as the Turkish and Indian communities in Antwerp are rather tight (interviews with managers of the distribution companies). This kind of marketing is also known as "buzz," the principle of people recommending products in their social networks. It is an instance of free publicity but one with quite a few risks attached to it when a film is not well received. Such advertising potential is often underestimated (Kerrigan 2004, 37), but apparently well understood by promoters of popular non-Western films. Although the distributors are aware of this potential, they do not intentionally create buzzes in the sense of a conscious marketing tool (Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilly 2003, viii).

Table 1: Comparison of the Turkish and Indian Cases in Antwerp

|  | Turkish case (migration starts around 1965) | Indian case (migration starts around 1975) |
|---|---|---|
| **Private screenings** | - 1970s in three local theatres in Antwerp | |
|  | - From 2003 till 2004 in Brussels | - From 1995 till 2007 in Antwerp |
|  | - Organised by businessmen of the respective communities | |
| **Multiplex** | - Dutch and German distributors<br>- Since 2004: ca. 10 films a year | - Dutch and UK distributors<br>- Since 2006: ca. 12 films a year |
|  | - Selection: production house, cast and ancillary industries<br>- Promotion: both local and global ethnic marketing | |

## Discussion: Diasporic Film Cultures, Political Economy and Audiences

The comparative approach of our research has first uncovered the particularities and commonalities of each case, showing how diasporic cinema distribution and

exhibition are structured and organised. Turkish and Indian immigrants began to settle in the city, respectively about 45 and 35 years ago. At the same time the urban cinema landscape changed drastically when most small neighbourhood theatres disappeared, a process that paved the way for – and was eventually accelerated by – the arrival of the multiplex theatre. Table 1 illustrates the parallel developments of the two diasporic film cultures under study in this context: both found their way to the big screen of the largest city multiplex Metropolis. In both cases, this was preceded by private exhibitions of popular films, organised by local members of the communities. The same urban space witnessed the development and commercialisation of two ethnic film cultures and in a sense imposed its available cinema structures on them. Second, the general patterns behind the development and institutional organisation of these cultures address (1) power relations, (2) historical transformations and (3) the embedment in global contexts. This demonstrates the importance of a political economy inspired approach to fully analyse the diasporic cinema phenomenon.

First, the major and most *powerful* players for homeland films in diaspora are present at two levels: locally, the exhibitor and transnationally, the distributors. The latter seem to be the most decisive for the development and endurance of diasporic cinema cultures, as non-Western films entered the Antwerp public cinema market on their initiative. Moreover, not only the common promotion, but also the selection of the films, and of the theatres where the film will be screened, is their full responsibility. Within this distribution market, previously characterised by small-scale companies, a recent trend has emerged towards more competition and bigger enterprises, even an American one (while at the outset they were all diaspora-run), which confirms more global developments. These companies are typically involved in a range of industries and activities, making them vertically integrated (e.g. link with film production) and diversified (e.g. link with television and music industry). In contrast to the earlier initiatives where one distributor had a monopoly, the current situation is one of competition.

This links immediately to the second political economy issue: *historical transformations and social change*. The most crucial shift was the transition from private community-specific initiatives to public multiplex programmes. In this context power relations as described above appeared subject to change as well and hence were restructured over time in several ways. For instance, a tension was generated between diasporic and non-diasporic ownership and power, as the early initiatives were organised exclusively by and for the communities, which changed drastically when the multiplex took over. While one exclusive distributor for each case suddenly found itself on a competitive marketplace, on the side of the exhibitor, it meant an increase of control. Next to power shifts, the new situation further entailed a commercialisation (e.g. no longer charity-inspired) and diversification, for both distribution (as multifaceted companies increasingly dominate the market) and exhibition (as the multiplex expanded its reach and a change occurred from single to multiple screenings). Apart from the restructuring from private to public screening, relocation took place from local places and cinemas towards the multiplex as central theatrical venture for non-Western film, as part of the overall changing cinema culture in the city. Finally a generally growing transnationalisation occurred: global marketing increases, distributors add new markets worldwide, satellite TV networks expand, and so on.

The historical process of transnationalisation brings us to the third aspect of interest, *global contexts and the transnational*. Although our study was conducted on a local level, several global developments and networks appeared to be of importance. This is where the micro and macro levels meet. Productivity and export flexibility of the film industries in the respective countries of origin and positive trends in the worldwide popularity of cinema-going are necessary conditions for the existence of diasporic cinema culture, but transnational flows, especially in the context of distribution and promotion, are equally significant. None of the distributors for Indian or Turkish film is located in Belgium and none of them exclusively operates in the Belgian market. Naturally, all films are initially supplied by local distributors or by film houses in India and Turkey. The same goes for DVD and television: transnational circuits are essential for supplying DVD shops as well as personal import, while diasporic television channels are part of worldwide broadcasting networks and become increasingly important in marketing strategies of distributors. In sum, diasporic cinema structures are characterised by unsteady balances between the private and the public, between the local and the global and between diasporic and non-diasporic ownership.

Finally, as we consider a political economy analysis as a complementary approach to diasporic film cultures next to audience studies, we want to wind up our discussion by reconnecting to the audience(s). First of all, the audience composition is clearly influenced by structural patterns. Different formats, for instance, appear to attract different people: art house cinemas have so far mainly served Western audiences, failing to appeal to the diasporas with their film programme. The historical transformations we identified also have their consequences: the shift from private diasporic to public multiplex screening entailed a social rift, when exclusive guests came to share their niche with a more diversified audience. For those who had had no access to the private screenings, this meant a democratisation. At the same time the audience for these films remained quite specific, that is to say, hardly any "Westerners" attend the screenings. Moreover, the audience is partly created through marketing practices. As most of the distributors limit their advertisements to diasporic audiences, the existence of Turkish and Indian screenings at the multiplex are a little known phenomenon among other cinema-goers. Second, structural aspects limit the agency of the audience: at the theatre Turkish and Indian diasporas can only choose from a very small selection of homeland films, determined by the selection processes of both distributors and exhibitors. Some respondents brought to notice that due to this limited supply, they watch anything available, however unappealing. On the other hand, box office results diverge quite much. Most research on diasporic cinema cultures focuses on audiences and reception/consumption, while we have argued that a structural analysis is called for in order to present a full overview of diasporic cinema. Such a comparative perspective allowed us to expose broader phenomena and structures in the organisation of diasporic cinema cultures.

## Notes:

1. Kinepolis Group NV was born in 1997 out of a merger of two major exhibition groups Bert and Claeys, who had four years earlier built the Metropolis multiplex in Antwerp. The company has established itself as Belgian's market leader in cinema screenings and entertainment. Kinepolis

currently operates 23 cinema multiplexes in Belgium, France, Spain, Poland and Switzerland (Kinepolis Group 2008, 3).

2. For an in-depth analysis of the Indian case, see Vandevelde et al. 2009, and of the Turkish case, see Smets et al. 2011.

3. Jewish and Moroccan diasporic film cultures in Antwerp are also included in our broader research project, Cinema and Diaspora. A Comparative Study into Ethnic Film Cultures in Antwerp: Indian, Northern African, Turkish and Jewish Cinema (University of Antwerp/Ghent University, FWO-BOF UA, 2008–2012. Promoters: Philippe Meers, Roel Vande Winkel and Sofie Van Bauwel. Researchers: Iris Vandevelde and Kevin Smets). For more information, visit the Cinema&Diaspora website http://www.ua.ac.be/cinemaendiaspora.

4. Throughout the article we use both terms "Indian cinema" and Bollywood (i.e. commercial Hindi films from Bombay). While we do not exclude films from other Indian film industries than Bollywood, the latter is by far the dominant industry available in Antwerp.

5. Turkish or Indian films downloaded from the Internet are no part of this article, but will be picked up in our future research.

6. There is hardly any film production among either the Turkish or the Indian diaspora in Antwerp. This contrasts to other cities and countries, repeatedly described in research on both Turkish film (e.g. Berghahn 2007) and Bollywood worldwide (e.g. Desai 2004).

7. The other multiplex cinema, currently a local branch of the French UGC film theatre group, was established in Antwerp only in 2000 by the Gaumont group. This cineplex has no specific ethnic programme and therefore is not of interest here.

8. The German company Maxximum has distributed more than 30 Turkish films since 2001 in several European countries.

9. Established in 2005 by Soeniel Sewnarain, BEI has distributed "Bollywood Cinema" in the Netherlands for Pathé since 2005 and in Belgium for Kinepolis (covering Antwerp and Brussels) since 2006. Sewnarain is at the same time entrepreneur of EtnoLife, a company coaching ethnic entrepreneurs.

10. Kinostar Theatre has emerged since 1996 as a leading exhibitor and distributor, with a focus on German, American and Turkish films, operating in most EU countries.

11. Eros distributes films in 50 countries and has local branches in India, the UK, the Isle of Man, the US, Dubai, Australia, Fiji, and Singapore. Although it is an Indian company, it manages the European, African, (in part) Middle Eastern and UK markets from its London branch.

12. These can be copies of legal DVDs as well as (lower quality) films recorded in the cinema hall. Interviews with manager of BEI, Maxximum (10 September 2009) and Kinostar (e-mail correspondence).

13. These include two random Antwerp Indians (interviews 27 August 2009 and 2 September 2009) and the Indian co-organiser of Durga (15 May 2009), but even the Bollywood DVD shop owner (3 September 2009) had seen them only once.

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# ARE PARTY ACTIVISTS POTENTIAL OPINION LEADERS?

## MATTEO VERGANI

## Abstract

The article investigates whether or not party activists are potential opinion leaders, presenting the results of field research on four local branches of the Italian PD (Democratic Party). First, the article examines the most relevant "opinion leaders" theories, proposing an original method for recognising potential opinion leaders: the identification of three main features of the ideal-type of opinion leader (the identification with the group, the technical expertise, the social capital) within the biographies of the social actors. Second, the article presents a case-study assessing whether party activists of the local PD branches possess these qualities or not, by analysing the data coming from qualitative fieldwork: ethnographic sessions within the four local branches, and forty biographical interviews with the party activists. At the end of the article some remarks will be given about the methodology used, about the idea of a party opinion leadership and about the role of party activists in changing the voters' mind.

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# The Opinion Leader: The Philosopher's Stone of Politics

In the United States of the 1940s a group of researchers headed by Lazarsfeld conducted a study entitled "The People's Choice" (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948), challenging the current mass communication paradigm.[1] The fieldwork was on the effects of newspapers and radio programmes on the electorate within a local community in Ohio. It emerged, from the study, that 53 percent of the voters sampled strengthened previous political beliefs due to media propaganda; 26 percent of the sample changed from indecisiveness to the choice of a political party (and vice-versa); 16 percent of the sample was non-respondent or their answers could not be interpreted by the researchers; and only 5 percent of the sample declared that they had completely changed their idea due to the electoral campaign in the media. Moreover, the great majority of Republican voters demonstrated that they mainly exposed themselves to Republican messages, and the great majority of Democratic voters to Democratic messages (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). The study clearly demonstrated the substantial ineffectiveness of the mass media communication in convincing people to radically change idea.

On the basis of the results of the Ohio research, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) indicated the "opinion leaders" as the key for changing the people's mind. The authors identified a "two-step flow of communication": from the mass media to the opinion leaders (step 1), and from the opinion leaders to the other people of the same social group, less active and less exposed to the media messages (step 2). The idea was that, while the mass media wield an indirect power in influencing the citizens' vote, interpersonal communication was the most powerful way of influencing the people's choice. If this theory were valid, involving opinion leaders in a party organisation would be crucial because of their power to persuade other people and to influence others' actions and beliefs.[2]

Many authors tried to find the way to detect opinion leaders within a local community, and many different techniques have been used. In general, there are two consolidated ways of identifying opinion leaders. First, the auto-nomination: individuals may be asked to decide whether they themselves are opinion leaders or not. Katz and Lazarsfeld used this method in their early research, yet it is methodologically weak because social actors hardly have a correct cognition of their own influence (Herrera and Martinelli 2006). Second, opinion leadership may be measured by analysing the quantity and the quality of the nominations received by others (Kelly et al. 1991; Lomas et al. 1991; Wiist and Snider 1991; Broadhead et al. 1995). For instance, Valente (2010) identified the opinion leaders by analysing the centrality of individuals within a social network (the degree of centrality is measured through the Social Network Analysis, Borgatti and Everett 2006). There are many possible versions of this method: key informants may select the leaders; all community members may nominate opinion leaders; the selection of the community members may be conducted using different methods, such as the snowball technique. These techniques have several limitations: for instance, the degree of influence wielded by an opinion leader is predicated, in part, on the potential adopters' assessment of his or her credibility and trustworthiness; leaders selected from outside the social group could be suspected of having agendas different from those of the members of the social group, or even agendas harmful to social group members (it is thus

necessary to define exactly who is a member of the social group); using only a select few individuals to nominate leaders may decrease the validity and reliability of the process (Valente and Devis 1999; Valente and Pumpuang 2007).

This article proposes a third way for identifying opinion leaders (or, at least, potential ones): the recognition of the opinion leadership features within the biographical (cultural, social, economical, technological) background of a social actor (both individual or collective). The hypothesis is that the social actor presenting all the opinion leadership features is more likely to be an opinion leader within the local community than the others. He is thus a potential opinion leader. According to the most relevant studies in the field, opinion leaders have three general, distinctive features.

1. Identification with the social group. Opinion leaders need to be identified by their social group as members, reflecting the norms of their community and sharing the destiny of the social group. Many authors noticed that opinion leaders are found to be more innovative (Rogers 2003; Lyons and Henderson 2005),[3] better educated (Saunders, Davis and Monsees 1974; Summers 1970), having a slightly higher level of income (Marshall and Gitosudarmo 1995), and higher level of involvement with a particular issue (Kingdon 1970; Corey 1971) than non-leaders. Yet, if the differences between leaders and social groups are too deep, the leaders will not be recognised by the social group, and they will lose their privileged position in the network (Roch 2005; Valente 2010).

2. Technical expertise. Opinion leaders need to have a strong technical expertise on a relevant issue for the social group (e.g. politics). Leaders attend to media more than the others, and this provides them with the information that they need in order to lead and to stay abreast of what is happening (Cristante 2004; Confetto 2005). They pay greater attention to the quality information sources, such as newspapers and journals (Corey 1971; Levy 1978; Polegato and Wall 1980).

3. Social capital.[4] The more a social actor is at the centre of qualitatively and quantitatively relevant social relations within the social group, the more the social actor has the possibility to influence others' point of view, and to change the others' behaviour (Herrera and Martinelli 2006; Valente 2010).

## Case Study: Activists of the Italian Democratic Party (PD)

The case-study discussed in this article is of the activists of the Italian Democratic Party (PD). The party was chosen because it presents a strong variety in itself, mixing new and old forms of participation. On the one hand the PD comes from the tradition of the PCI (Italian Communist Party): the strongest communist party in Western Europe until the fall of the Berlin wall. In the beginning of the 1950s the PCI was a revolutionary organisation with some 2,600,000 members and 200,000 active militants (Galli 1966; Alberoni et al. 1967; Biorcio 2003). On the other hand the Democratic Party was founded in 2007,[5] being a new project aimed at renovating the Italian political system after the fall of the First Republic and the stagnation of the "Berlusconi era." In the early stages many young voters joined the party becoming activists and asking for a change of the traditional forms of participation (Salvati 2003; Agostini 2009; Pasquino 2009).

The field research was conducted from October 2009 to September 2010 in four local branches of the Italian Democratic Party: Milan, Perugia, Rome and Naples.[6]

The four cities were selected for their heterogeneity regarding the social, economical, cultural, technological and political contexts. The cities lie in different regions of the country (North, Centre, South and the district of the Capital), each one characterised by a distinctive political subculture,[7] economical situation and digital divide. The hypothesis is indeed that, although PD party activists share many common biographical and ideological features, their aptitude for being opinion leaders is influenced by each different regional context.

The field research assesses whether or not PD party activists possess the three features (the identification with the group; the technical expertise; the social capital), by analysing the data of qualitative fieldwork: ethnographic sessions within four local branches, and forty biographical interviews with party activists. The biographical stories were collected through ten in-depth interviews in each of the four branches. The results were analysed using the software Atlas.ti in order to systematically find out and easily systematise and compare the aspects that are related to the opinion leadership features. In the following pages each feature will be discussed presenting some extracts of interviews collected during the field research. In this article the anonymity of the members of the local branch is preserved: only the first letter of the name, gender, age and city (e.g. M., F, 26 years old, Milan) of the people interviewed will be provided.

### Identification Between Party Activists and Local Community

In order to be recognised by the social group, the opinion leader needs to share the same destiny, to suffer the same troubles, to live the same daily conditions. As already said, although leaders have been found to be slightly more innovative, educated, skilled, they cannot be too different from their social group, otherwise they will lose their privileged position in the network.

The identification between the opinion leader and the social group is probably the most methodologically complex factor to analyse, because it is necessary to define: (1) the indicators and/or issues to compare, and (2) the social group where the activists operate. First, there is a bulk of social, economical, cultural indicators that could be useful for assessing the identification between the activists and the local community. In this research, two huge national socio-political issues were selected for the comparison: the migration issue and the economic crisis issue. They were chosen because of their political centrality, and because of their huge impact on all the Italian cities. Second, the social group was defined as the local community where the PD branch operates: the activists were asked to indicate on a map the territory where they usually carry out political activities. The methodological choice was to compare the two issues between their presence within the biographies of the activists and their impact within the local communities. For example: if the economic crisis hit a specific local community hard, do the party activists share the same destiny? Do they talk about the economic crisis as a problem? Do they report carrying out political activities about the issue?

On the one hand the local branch of Milan generally presents a high identification between the activists and the community concerning both the economic crisis and the migration issue. Although being in a traditionally wealthy area of Milan, the local community where the PD branch operates suffered heavily from the economic crisis,[8] and it has been directly hit by a huge flow of migrants for years.[9] Not only

are the activists aware of the issues and promote political activities about them, but there are also some activists belonging to the social classes that are protagonists of the phenomena: migrants and the unemployed.[10]

On the other hand the local branches of Rome, Perugia and Naples generally present a low degree of identification between the activists and the community concerning both the economic crisis and the migration issue. The PD activists of the branches are mainly old retired working class people, some students and some middle-high class workers of public companies (especially in Rome and Naples). The economic crisis is generally absent within their biographies (although the cities and their surroundings suffered from it badly),[11] as is the migration issue.[12] Yet, although the latter is totally absent, some of them recognised the former as a major issue for the local community, yet they admitted not representing it.[13] As the activists admitted during the interviews, the crisis is not even tangible for them: they are generally "protected" from its worst effects.[14]

### Technical Expertise of Party Activists

If the PD party activists were potential opinion leaders within their local communities, they would have a strong technical expertise in politics. Actually, most of the activists of all the party branches have a recognised proficiency in politics: many of the elders have been running institutional offices (mainly in local institutions), and many attended schools and workshops of political training organised by political parties, unions or related associations at least once. The youngest members of the party branch of Milan and Perugia followed a more autonomous path of political training: they created their own independent associations, and organised some thematic meetings with national and regional political personalities (party leaders, Ministers, Councilors).[15] The activists report that their specific political training allowed them to successfully face the talks with ordinary people of the local community, especially if angry or disillusioned with party politics.

In addition to having a strong theoretical background, it is necessary for potential opinion leaders to always be updated about political happenings. They attend to media more than the others, gathering all the information that they need in order to lead and to stay abreast of what is happening, and always paying attention to the quality of the information sources. The fieldwork outlines a difference between the "media diet" of the activists of the larger and more international cities (Milan, Rome) and the activists of the other ones (Perugia, Naples). In Milan and Rome all the activists (up to more than 60 years old) follow politics mainly on the internet, through national (e.g. Repubblica.it, Corriere.it) and international news websites (e.g. LeMonde, The Times, the BBC, Al Jazeera), through mailing-list subscription on specific issues and through Twitter and Facebook profiles and groups of local politicians, associations and interest groups. More specifically, Facebook is one of the preferred medium for gathering information about local issues, otherwise difficult to find on the traditional mainstream media.[16]

In Perugia and Naples just a few activists use the internet: in the Southern regions (such as Campania) and in the more rural regions (such as Umbria) the digital divide is a relevant phenomenon, and affects not only elder but also young people (CISIS 2011). Although cities such as Perugia and Naples are different from their countryside, they are still less digitally developed than cities such as Milan

and Rome. The traditional daily press is the second preferred medium in Milan and Rome, but the first in Perugia and Naples. Activists report that they read, daily, many local and national newspapers, especially the ones more closely linked to leftist editors: "Repubblica" and "l'Unità." They report putting their confidence more in these newspapers than in TV channels. The latter have an awful reputation among the activists, in all the local PD branches. It is interesting to note that, according to a 2009 Censis national research, the majority (about two thirds) of Italian citizens gather political information mainly from TV, a quarter from newspapers, and only a few from the internet.[17] It follows that generally, PD party activists belong to a minority of people, concerning the precision and the variety of the sources of political information, although presenting regional differences due to the digital divide.

### Social Capital of Party Activists

The possession of a durable network of relations provides the social actor with a set of resources necessary to be considered a potential opinion leader: the more the social actor is at the centre of relevant social relations (more or less institutionalised), the more he/she has the possibility to influence the others' point of view, and to change the others' behaviour. In other words: the more relevant (qualitatively and quantitatively) is the social actor's social capital, the more he/she is a potential opinion leader.

All the activists capitalise on their own social network of informal relations in the local community for electoral purposes. There is a sort of competition among the activists for having (and showing-off having) a large net of relations in the local community: the more the network of an activist is recognised as extended within the community, the more he/she is seen as influential, also within the party branch organisation.[18]

Some of the activists, especially the youngest ones in Milan and Rome, spend most of the time dedicated to politics on Facebook, where they present their thinking, they forward news and articles, they discuss with other people about politics. Yet the majority of the activists still cultivate their relations with people of the local community in the traditional face-to-face way: streets, bars and recreation centres are places where they meet people, they discuss, they express their point of view. During the electoral campaign, the activists intensify their presence in their networks of relations, reactivating all the contacts with friends, colleagues, family members and acquaintances. During that time the internet is seen as a less useful and sometimes even a dangerous tool, especially in Perugia and Naples: the preferred way for seeking votes is still the traditional, face-to-face one.[19]

While the party activists have a generally developed net of informal relations within the local community, the relations with more institutionalised groups present some difficulties. First, the party belonging is often seen by others as a primary source of identity, and this often generates mistrust if an association wants to maintain autonomy from political parties. For instance a young activist of the Milan PD branch was told he would be excluded from the electoral list of a student's association for the University elections, because the other students were worried about losing the autonomy of their political group if she became elected. Second, the Italian parties traditionally maintained strong and regular relations only with

"affiliated" institutionalised groups (such as associations, unions, companies, and so on) (Alberoni et al. 1967). It follows that, institutionalised groups willing to be perceived as autonomous by the community do not want to have close relations with the party. For instance a citizen committee initially assembling within the PD branch of Rome, soon decided to move to another more "neutral" location for the meetings.[20]

## Conclusion

Several remarks emerge from the presentation of the results of the fieldwork. The technique proposed has evident limitations: relying exclusively on the social actors' narratives collected through biographical interviews, it may get stuck on the distortions of the social and personal representations. The biographic interview may overcome this distortions, for example through the accurate use of "neutral prompts" and through the analysis of non-verbal and contextual data (Gorden 1980; Holstain and Staples 1992; Chambon 1995; Atkinson 1998; Bichi 2002). Yet there is no possibility to test and control the possible distortions. It would be thus interesting to find a productive interaction between this technique and the one of analysing the quantity and the quality of the nominations received by others. Despite this limits, the case study allows to suggest some insights on the features of the party opinion leadership, and on the role of party activists within contemporary parties.

For what concerns the specific case-study, it is possible to say that the PD party activists demonstrated a weak identification with local communities, especially in the southern branches. From the discussion on the identification between the activists and the local community it emerges that only the PD branch of Milan faces relevant issues such as migration and the economic crisis. The activists of the other branches present the anomalous condition of not being hit by the economic crisis, although the surrounding territories and local communities are.[21] This regional difference may be explained by the economical and social features of the South of Italy, more exposed to the economic crisis, and less inhabited by that urban middle class that is the most relevant basis of the PD party organisation. In addition to that, although the political expertise of all the activists appears to be generally high, there is a relevant difference between the media expertise of the activists from big and international metropolises such as Rome and Milan, and activists from less developed centres such as Perugia and Naples. The digital divide in provincial areas (although urban, like Perugia) and in the South of Italy is still relevant, and affects the possibility of the PD activists to knowingly use the internet as a source of fresh, direct and "raw" political news, and leaves them anchored to the traditional mass media such as radio, press and TV. Traditional Italian media that is internationally known for it's lack of impartiality and freedom (for instance, according to the 2010 "Freedom of the Press" table of the Freedom House, Italy is at the 72nd position in the Nations' ranking). PD party activists present some of the opinion leadership features, and especially the political expertise. Yet they do not have all three features, especially in the South of Italy, where phenomena such as the digital divide leaves them with less resources than in other territories. The widespread distrust in politics and political parties among Italian citizens makes their influence weaker within the local communities. Thus the PD party activists do not yet possess all the features for being fully considered as potential opinion leaders.

More generally, it is possible to say that the activists' social capital is generally high in the local communities (although presenting regional differences due to the digital divide), yet it appears to be linked almost exclusively to the personal, informal network of the activists (friends, colleagues, family, and so on). They have difficulties in being accepted by other associations, and in integrating their political group with other different groups of the local community. It follows that, if the activists of a community know each other and see one another during their leisure time, they are likely to belong to similar social networks. As stated at the beginning of the article, the key-question is: are the party activists the key for changing the people's mind? The answer is: yes, they are. Yet they are able to influence only their personal social network: they hardly ever reach out to the majority of the local community members.

Last but not least, some final remarks about the role of party activists in contemporary political parties. Many have been questioning on the function of party activists within party organisations. Some political executives described the party activists as a useless and damaging heritage of the past: "it's better to have five minutes on TV than ten thousand party members"[22] and "party members are a disadvantage; it would be better to use opinion polls for testing the public opinion, instead of using these extremists representing none among the common people"[23] are the beliefs respectively of a Spanish political executive of the PSE and of an English Labour Party MP. It is a fact that the party militancy today is less crucial for party organisations than in the XIX and early XX century, due to many different factors as the rise of media and opinion polls (Manin 1995; Sartori 1997; Wattemberg 2000), and the success of organisational models as the catch-all party (Kirchheimer 1971), the professional-electoral party (Panebianco 1982), the cartel-party (Katz and Mair 1995), and the personal party (Calise 2000; Poguntke and Webb 2005).[24] Yet, as the case study outlines (according to Raniolo 2002, and Scarrow 2000), party activists are not only a source of voluntary work, but also a powerful source of legitimacy in front of the public opinion, and provide the party a stable catchment area allowing to survive under any weather circumstances.

## Notes:

1. At that time the communication studies were divided into two main approaches: on the one hand many scholars were still thinking that the media had the power to influence the audiences directly, inoculating people with messages like a hypodermic needle. On the other hand some other researchers were starting to study the audiences' practices of negotiation and resistance to the mass media messages (Berger 1995; Croteau and Hoynes 1997). Lazarsfeld's research has been one of the milestones of the second approach.

2. Actually, however, although the theory is based upon simple assumptions, his operationalisation is methodologically very complex. First, subsequent researches demonstrated that the original "two-step flow" model is too simple, and does not fit with the complexity of reality: opinion leaders may obtain information not only from the media but also conversing with other people and other opinion leaders (Mcquail and Windhal 2003). The media messages thus pass through "n" opinion leaders before arriving to the social groups: the "two-step" model becomes a "n-step" model (McQuail 2010). Second, the relation between the reception of the message and the interpersonal conversation is not univocally defined, as the original theory implicitly assumes: the opinion leaders may know about an issue through the conversation with other people, then they may start to selectively gather information from the media and, finally, they may report their ideas to the social groups. Thus it may be misleading to assume that the opinion leaders receive the very first flow of information from the media, almost exclusively forming their opinion there (McCombs and Becker

1979). Third, there are many different kinds of opinion leaders, and their weight on the respective social groups has to be studied in both the "virtual" life and "real" life (Nisbet and Kotcher 2009): there is not an ordered structure of independent social groups, each one led by one single opinion leader. Rather, there are many opinion leaders having smaller or greater (stronger or weaker, more specific or more generic, more "virtual" or more "real") spheres of influence, and having many reciprocal overlapping areas in which their influence is negotiated depending on specific themes and times (Herrera and Martinelli 2006).

3. Becker (1970) questioned whether opinion leaders would always be earlier adopters of innovations, hypothesising that opinion leaders would be earlier adopters only of innovations that were compatible with the community norms but later adopters of innovations perceived to be incompatible.

4. There are multiple definitions, interpretations, and uses of the label "social capital." This article refers to the classic Bourdieu's definition of social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 1986: 51).

5. The PD was officially founded on 14 October 2007 as a merger of various left-wing and centrist parties which were part of "The Union" in the 2006 general election. Several parties merged to form the Democratic Party, however its bulk was formed by the DS (Democrats of the Left) and La Margherita (The Daisy).

6. The research was conducted in only one (among ten of them) territorial branch of each city. Every branch is called "circolo" (circle), and counts up to some fifty activists. The head of the local party organization was asked, in each city, to recommend the "best" branch in terms of quantity and quality (heterogeneity, effectiveness, assiduity) of participation.

7. According to Trigilia (1986), a local political subculture is defined as a distinguishing socio-political local system, in which there is: a high grade of consensus toward a certain political actor, and a high concentration of local economical, social and political interests. In a system characterised by a homogeneous local political subculture there is always a thick net of institutions (i.e. political parties, churches, groups of interests, aid agencies, and so on) that are coordinated by a powerful actor controlling the local government and the relations with the central national power (Trigilia 1986). Scholars widely studied, especially in Italy, the features of the local political subcultures and their relations with the political system (Sivini 1971; Trigilia 1981; Caciagli 1988; Bagnasco 1996).

8. According to the most recent population census data, about one in five workers is an entrepreneur or freelancer (three times more than the national average), about an half of the population is occupied (10 percent more than the national average), about a quarter have got a university degree (about 20 percent more than the national average). Yet, the local community was strongly hit by the economic crisis due to its features: as autonomous workers, entrepreneurs and freelancers were more exposed to the fluctuation of the market than public workers and employees; in Milan only 63 percent of people with university degrees find a job within two years; the number of precarious contracts have been constantly growing especially for young people. Data refers to 2009-2011, and was collected from the official website of the National Institute of Statistics (www.istat.it), from the official website of the Italian General Confederation of Labour (www.cgil.it), and from the "Census Informative System" of Milan (http://www.comune.milano.it/dseserver/sice/index.html).

9. According to the 2010 Caritas/Migrantes Dossier on the Immigration in Italy (www.dossierimmigrazione.it), Milan has more than 200,000 foreign residents (about 15 percent of the population), 13 percent of which are second generation.

10. For example, one of the activists interviewed during the fieldwork is a second generation Sinhalese girl, born and raised in Italy but still a foreign resident because she is not allowed to become an Italian citizen under the current law. Although not having the right to vote in Italy, she leads a group within the party branch working on the rights of second generation immigrants.

11. According to the National Institute of Statistics (www.istat.it), in 2009 the economy of the

Umbria Region reached one of its all-time lows, with a regional product diminished by about 4.5 percent. The unemployment rate in Perugia rose from 4.2 percent in 2007 to the 6.5 percent in 2009: from 12,000 to 16,000 people unemployed, and the unemployment rate in Naples rose from 12.4 percent in 2007 to 14.6 percent in 2009: from 123,000 to 137,000 people unemployed.

12. According to the 2010 Caritas/Migrantes Dossier on the Immigration in Italy (www.dossierimmigrazione.it), Rome has more than 300,000 foreign residents (almost 11 percent of the population); in Perugia the foreign residents are about 10 percent of the population; the Campania Region is the 7th in Italy for the number of regular hosted immigrants, and Naples hosts more than 50 percent of them. Although being a less relevant phenomenon than in other cities of the Centre and North of Italy, migration has a significant social impact in Naples (Ammaturo et al. 2010).

13. "The most troubled people of the neighborhood do not vote, they don't feel represented by anyone … they have lost the faith in politics […] they feel that no one cares about their condition, their troubles … the percentage of these people is growing day by day […] here we have a growing percentage of discouraged people who abstain from voting" (G. M., 40 years old, Naples)

14. "The crisis here is not tangible nor relevant […] within the party branch there are not only wealthy people, but also people who need to look after their living expenses, maybe paying more attention to the shopping recently ... however no one, for example, is going to give up their holidays" (S. F., 28 years old, Perugia)

15. "We created an independent association, and every year we organised a three day summer school […] three days of conferences, consideration of the centre-left, reformism … we had very important guests, such as the ex-Minister Visco, Bersani […] we were about one hundred young people, coming from different party branches and associations, such as the young Hebrews, the young Muslims, entrepreneurs, young researchers" (M. M., 26 years old, Milan)

16. "I follow the protagonists of the territorial politics on Facebook […] all the people who publish news about their activities and about local politics on their profile […] By following them, I am always up to date on what is happening in local politics" (I. F., 31 years old, Milan)

17. Censis is an Italian center of study on socio-economical issues. The research data is available on www.censis.it.

18. "The thing that helped me to being accepted in the local branch, and that helps me in my request for being a candidate at the next Municipal elections as a Councilor, is that I work at the supermarket in the neighborhood. I know everybody here, I know what they think, what they like and what they dislike. And thus everybody knows me." (A. M., 28 years old, Perugia)

19. "When on Facebook one forwards a communication indicating one should vote for a candidate, he may be perceived as arrogant […] the only way to do this thing is the direct, personal contact […] it is not possible to talk via Facebook, it is not possible to send an email […] You need to look in the eyes of the person you are talking with" (F. M., 31 years old, Perugia)

20. "The committee doesn't meet in here anymore. They went away because many of them weren't PD members, and they asked to change base, because they didn't want to be perceived as an association belonging to the party. They now meet near to the Church, the priest gave them a small room for their activities" (R. M., 67 years old, Rome)

21. There may be a distortion and overrepresentation caused by the selection criteria of the branches chosen for the fieldwork: the provincial head of the local party organisation was asked, in each city, to recommend the "best" branch in terms of quantity and quality (heterogeneity, effectiveness, assiduity) of participation. It is thus clear that these party branches are animated by a socially and culturally dynamic middle-class, who sometimes succeeded in avoiding the worst effects of the economic crisis.

22. Quoted in Botella (1989: 3) and Raniolo (2002: 98).

23. Quoted in Crouch (2000: 135).

24. For an overview of the causes of the decline of party membership, see Seyd and Whiteley (2004).

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*TOM EVENS*
*STEVE PAULUSSEN*
## KO JE "MAJHNO" "LEPO"
### PRIMERJALNA ANALIZA POLITIK LOKALNEGA RADIA V EVROPI

Članek proučuje, kako bi se snovalci politik v Flandriji (Belgija) lahko zgledovali po implementaciji strategij razvoja lokalnih radijskih postaj na treh sosednjih trgih (v Nizozemski, Veliki Britaniji in francosko govoreči skupnosti v Belgiji). Osredotoča se na možnosti, ki jih imajo na voljo snovalci politik pri zagotavljanju podpore lokalnim radijskim postajam, in na tuje izkušnje, ki bi jih morali upoštevati pri spodbujanju razvoja tega sektorja. Končni cilj je pripraviti priporočila za reorganizacijo lokalne radiodifuzije in krepitev njene ekonomske in družbene vrednosti. Temu je namenjena analiza dokumentov v kombinaciji z intervjuji s sedemnajstimi radijskimi strokovnjaki z vseh proučevanih trgov. Napravljena je bila tudi primerjava med državami, da bi identificirali strukturne pogoje in predlagali možnosti za proaktivno medijsko politiko za manjše radijske postaje.

*NIAMH GAYNOR*
*ANNE O'BRIEN*
## SKUPNOSTNI RADIO NA IRSKEM:
### "DEFEVDALIZACIJA" JAVNE SFERE?

Povečevanje zanimanja in raziskav na področju skupnostnega radia po vsem svetu je dobrodošlo. Medtem ko so bile raziskave prve generacije, kot pravi Jankowski (2003), v veliki meri empirične in so opisovale in analizirale organizacijo in delo na radijskih postajah v različnih kontekstih, zadnje čase prihaja v ospredje druga generacija raziskav, ki utemeljuje empirične študije znotraj širših teoretičnih okvirjev, še zlasti v odnosu do demokracije in javne sfere. Specifične komponente javne sfere so sicer v teh študijah dokaj nerazvite. Namen članka je prispevati k proučevanju skupnostnega radia na Irskem znotraj okvirov, ki so jih postavili Habermas in z njegovim delom povezani deliberativni družboslovni in medijski teoretiki. Članek, ki črpa iz podrobne raziskave štirih skupnostih radijskih postaj na Irskem, ugotavlja elemente skupnostnega radia, ki prispevajo k »defevdalizaciji« javne sfere. Čeprav je članek postavljen v specifični kontekst (irski skupnostni radio deluje v primerjalno podobnem zakonskem okolju kot tisti v Avstraliji in Veliki Britaniji), prinaša zaključke, ki so posebnega pomena za raziskovalce in aktiviste na tem področju, in ponuja okvir uporabe raziskovalcem skupnostnega radia, ki jih zanima prispevek tega sektorja k oživljanju bolj globalne javne sfere nasploh.

*ISABEL AWAD*

## KRITIČNI MULTIKULTURALIZEM IN DELIBERATIVNA DEMOKRACIJA:
### ODPIRANJE PROSTOROV ZA BOLJ VKLJUČUJOČO KOMUNIKACIJO

Diskreditacija multikulturalizma v sodobnih razpravah o kulturni raznolikosti in demokraciji je problematična, saj se domneve o njegovem fiasku in nedemokratičnih posledicah v zahodnih družbah uporabljajo za upravičevanje vračanja k asimilaciji. Članek zavrača tako zaželenost kot neizogibnost asimilacionizma in oporeka domnevni nezdružljivosti multikulturalizma in demokracije. Zagovarja namreč (re)konceptualizacijo tako multikulturalizma kot demokracije kot temelja za inkluzivno komuniciranje. V ta namen se članek opira na posebno vrsto multi-kulturalizma – *kritični* multikulturalizem. Kritični multikulturalizem definira kulturo na strukturni in relacijski način ter poudarja površnost, značilno za uporabo pojma v zahodnih družbah. V nadaljevanju članek obravnava omejitve, ki jih liberalni in republikanski model demokracije postavljata politiki kulturne raznolikosti. Avtorica trdi, da je Habermasova deliberativna de-mokracija zaradi njenega poudarka na komuniciranju posebej sprejemljiva za zahteve kritičnega multikulturalizma.

*IRIS VANDEVELDE*
*KEVIN SMETS*
*PHILIPPE MEERS*
*ROEL VANDE WINKEL*
*SOFIE VAN BAUWEL*

## BOLLYWOOD IN TURŠKI FILMI V ANTWERPNU (BELGIJA)
### ŠTUDIJI PRIMERA FILMSKE DISTRIBUCIJE IN PRIKAZOVANJA V DIASPORI

Članek prispeva k bogatenju znanja o odnosih med domovinskimi mediji in občinstvi v diaspori na temelju primerjalne političnoekonomske analize dveh študij primerov s transnacionalnimi implikacijami. Avtorji najprej predstavijo filmsko distribucijo in prikazovanje domovinskih fil-mov v kinematografih v diasporah, s posebnim ozirom na indijske in turške filmske strukture na enem prostoru, v belgijskem mestu Antwerpen. Intervjuji s 45 ključnimi akterji, raziskovanje z udeležbo in komplementarna raziskovanje arhivov omogočajo rekonstrukcijo procesa, v katerem so zasebno organizirano prikazovanje filmov nadomestile komercialne iniciative. Na-daljnja analiza odnosov med lokalnimi prikazovalci in transnacionalnimi distributerji ocenjuje omenjene strukture z vidika moči in transformacij, kot je npr. vedno večja tekmovalnost, v razvoju globalne medijske industrije.

*MATTEO VERGANI*
# ALI SO STRANKARSKI AKTIVISTI POTENCIALNI MNENJSKI VODITELJI?

Članek s pomočjo terenske raziskave med štirimi lokalnimi odbori italijanske Demokratske stranke (PD) proučuje, ali so strankarski aktivisti potencialni mnenjski voditelji. V članku so najprej predstavljene najpomembnejše teorije »mnenjskih voditeljev«. Avtor nato predlaga izvirno metodo za prepoznavanje potencialnih mnenjskih voditeljev: identifikacijo treh glavnih značilnosti idealno-tipskega mnenjskega voditelja (identifikacija s skupino, tehnično znanje in družbeni kapital) v biografijah družbenih akterjev. V nadaljevanju avtor predstavlja študijo primera, v kateri z analizo podatkov, zbranih v opazovanju z udeležbo v štirih lokalnih odborih in štiridesetih biografskih intervjujih s strankarskimi aktivisti, ugotavlja, ali strankarski aktivisti v lokalnih odborih PD imajo omenjene značilnosti ali ne. Članek se zaključuje s komentiranjem uporabljene metodologije, ideje vodenja strankarskega mnenja in vloge strankarskih aktivistov pri spreminjanju mnenj volivcev.

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