

Inter-ethnic Communication and Multiculturalism in European Mediascape

Workshop theme

Interethnic relations, mutual representations, displays of identity and the media

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Abstract:

Inter-ethnic communication, being one of the most valuable flags of most migration policies, is in fact a complex and multidimensional thematic transversal to all contemporary contexts, scales and groups.

“Giving voice” to migrant and minority groups was one of instruments thought to establish and promote communication in the European and the North American countries and, as a result, we observed the birth of a significant number of “ethnic minority media” and also of “minority oriented productions” in the mainstream media on the contemporary “mediascape”. Apart from the everyday interacting interpersonal (effective) communication happening everyday at all European streets, now we can also observe that migrant and minority groups are communicating thru the media, setting their agendas and addressing their interlocutors in a direct manner.

How can we address this issue in a context marked by a claimed retreat from multiculturalism and increase of arguments for social cohesion in Europe?

How should the risks and advantages involved in the multicultural communication policies be evaluated?

In public debate and political talks multiculturalism has been addressed for the past few years with doubts. Recent Europeanized and heavily mediated problems, such as the Danish caricature crisis, disturbances in French suburbs, and conflicts related to the Muslim “veil” demonstrate that public concern is focused on “non-intergratedness”. Where as multiculturalism stressed group cohesion and focused on preserving “minority cultures”, the new discourse of social cohesion and cultural diversity focuses on individualization on the one hand, and on cultural cohesion at European level on the other hand.

There have been various strategies to manage difference in plural societies. Australian, European, and Canadian roots of multiculturalism are based on a top-down policy of a state inculcated into the citizens through programs for tolerance. There have been significant differences in the ways multiculturalism is understood in these contexts. However, we can see some similarity in these policies compared to the United States, which has taken a laissez-fair approach to integration of immigrants, and where interventionist multiculturalism would be considered incompatible with American national identity.

The workshop invites both theoretical and empirical analysis of this discursive and political shift from various national, social and disciplinary viewpoints.