

Cosmopolitanism and the Margins

An international symposium on *Voice, Space and Citizenship*

30-31 October 2014

Venue: E2 Auditorium, KTH Royal Institute of Technology Campus, Stockholm

As indicated by the volume of research and writing produced in recent years, questions related with cosmopolitanism, citizenship and social space retain their significance both in cultural studies and political science. At odds with the cosmopolitan vision, however, we are witnessing the rise of the remodeled European far-right that capitalizes on populist rhetoric over the loss of jobs, sovereignty, cultural and ethnic ideals and on immigration and immigrants such as the so-called “benefits tourists” from Eastern and Central Europe. The resurgent conservatism in Europe condemns cosmopolitanism while at the same time lauding its results. Parallel to this, both our mediated (e.g. electronic media) and actual (e.g. urban space) spaces of communication become increasingly more exclusive, more commodified and less tolerant of dissent, otherness and marginality, be it gentrification in London or the ban on graffiti in Stockholm and elsewhere.

Against this background, the symposium concerns itself with both theoretical and practical aspects of communication, urban space and social practice at large. We seek to offer contextual understandings of a broad range of questions and debates that materialize around multiculturalism, marginal/ized communities, race-racism-racialization, global social movements, environmental crises, and art and ‘expressive cultures’. While recent social incidents that invoke such debates (such as the various global uprisings and urban riots) constitute concrete contexts within which to reconsider the purchase of cosmopolitanism as idea and ideal, the symposium aims to generate theoretical thinking and deliberation on the transhistoric and transcultural viability of cosmopolitan thought.

Cosmopolitanism and the Margins is part of the ongoing research project Cosmopolitanism from the Margins: Mediations of Expressivity, Social Space and Cultural Citizenship funded by the Swedish Research Council and hosted by the Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment at KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Proj. Dir.: Miyase Christensen, Stockholm University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology; Co-investigator: André Jansson, Karlstad University; Doctoral Researcher: Tindra Thor, Stockholm University). The symposium is administered by Dr. Susanna Lidström and Sofia Jonsson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology.

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAM

Thursday, October 30	
12:00-13:00	Symposium Lunch
13:15-13:30	Opening: Miyase Christensen (Stockholm University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology) and Nina Wormbs (KTH Royal Institute of Technology)
13:30-15:15	<i>Keynote Session 1</i>
	<p>Lilie Chouliaraki (London School of Economics) <i>Post-humanitarianism: The Contemporary Politics of Solidarity</i></p> <p>Nikos Papastergiadis (The University of Melbourne) <i>Cosmopolitanism: A Perspective from the South</i></p> <p>Q & A/Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Miyase Christensen</p>
15:15-15:30	Coffee Break
15:30-17:00	<i>Paper Session 1</i> <p>Alexa Robertson (Stockholm University) Parts of Sweden are the global South?: space as a discursive construct in global television news</p> <p>Koen Leurs (London School of Economics) Digital Thrown-togetherness. Young Londoners negotiating urban politics of difference and encounter on Facebook</p> <p>Johan Lindell (Karlstad University) & Martin Danielsson (Högskolan i Halmstad) (Mediated) cosmopolitanism as symbolic violence</p>
19:00	Symposium Dinner

Friday, October 31	
09:00-10:30	<i>Keynote Session 2</i>

	<p>Myria Georgiou (London School of Economics, <i>Loving difference? The Contradictory Cosmopolitan Visions of the Mediated City</i></p> <p>Erik Gandini & Jesper Kurlandsky (FASAD) <i>Cosmopolitan Visions</i></p> <p>Q & A / Discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Christian Christensen (Stockholm University)</p>
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break
10:45-12:15	<p><i>Paper Session 2</i></p> <p>Tindra Thor (Stockholm University) #banksyinstockholm – The Spatial Politics of Interventions and Art</p> <p>Mariangela Veikou (University of Peloponnese) NGOs, the blogs and asylum in Greece</p> <p>Ilkin Mehrabov (Karlstad University) Surveillance and Corporate Social Media: From Mediated Transnational Social Space to Surveilled Public Sphere?</p>
12:15-13:00	<p>Closing Plenary - Karin Becker (Stockholm University) <i>Closing Remarks and Points of Discussion</i></p>
13:00-14:00	Symposium Lunch

Keynote Speeches:

Lilie Chouliaraki (London School of Economics)

Post-humanitarianism: The Contemporary Politics of Solidarity

In this lecture, I discuss historical change in the communication of solidarity, within the fields of human rights and humanitarian communication. To this end, I present a typology of forms of solidarity, dominant in the past 50 years, and focus, in particular, on a new form, what I call a 'post-humanitarian' solidarity, which tends to focus on 'us' rather than distant sufferers as the moral source for action on their suffering. Drawing on specific examples of this emerging form of solidarity, I explore its key features and reflect on its moral and political implications.

Lilie Chouliaraki is Professor of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics. She has written extensively on distant suffering as a problem of communication and is the author, among others, of 'The Spectatorship of Suffering (2006/2011); 'The Soft Power of War (ed, 2008) and 'The Ironic Spectator. Solidarity in the Age of Post-humanitarianism' (2013) link:<https://www.polity.co.uk/book.asp?ref=978074564211>

Nikos Papastergiadis (The University of Melbourne)

Cosmopolitanism: A Perspective from the South

The sensory awareness of the world is fundamental to art. Art is a world making activity. The relationship between the sensory faculties and the formal practices of art always lead to the production of multiple worlds. This special issue explores this relationship between the real and the imagined, the material and the virtual worlds of art. It puts the sensory activity of world making into the heart of our understanding of the political. Given the rapid and profound nature of change in the world, we introduce a wide range of perspectives and concepts. In particular, I will focus on the boundaries, polarities and categories that are used to define the context of art. The discourse on the geo-politics of contemporary art is caught within two conflicting paradigms: an emerging view that stresses the open system of global flows, and the residual framework that is derived from the bounded territories of national structures. In this lecture i seek to challenge these binary options by proposing a view *from* the South.

Nikos Papastergiadis is Director of the Research Unit in Public Cultures and Professor at the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. He studied at the University of Melbourne and University of Cambridge. Prior to returning to the University of Melbourne he was a lecturer at the University of Manchester. Throughout his career, Nikos has provided strategic consultancies for government agencies on issues relating to cultural identity and worked on collaborative projects with artists and theorists of international repute, such as John Berger, Jimmie Durham and Sonya Boyce. His current research focuses on the investigation of the historical transformation of contemporary art and cultural institutions by digital technology. His sole authored publications include *Modernity as Exile* (1993), *Dialogues in the Diaspora* (1998), *The Turbulence of Migration* (2000), *Metaphor and Tension* (2004) *Spatial Aesthetics: Art Place and the Everyday* (2006), *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (2012), *Ambient Perspectives* (2013) as well as being the editor of over 10 collections, author of numerous essays which have been translated into over a dozen languages and appeared in major catalogues such as the Biennales of Sydney, Liverpool, Istanbul, Gwanju, Taipei, Lyon, Thessaloniki and Documenta 13. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Fellow of Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, Member of Clare College Cambridge, Visiting Fellow at the University of Tasmania School of Art, Advisory Board Member to University of South Australia School of Art and Architecture, and co-chair of the Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture.

Myria Georgiou (London School of Economics)

Loving difference? The contradictory cosmopolitan visions of the mediated city

Many of the struggles for material and symbolic resources in the city currently take place around cultural difference. While violent oppositions to difference are visible in the rise of extremist right-wing movements, this presentation focusses on another set of struggles, which are more subtle and which do not oppose but rather celebrate difference. More particularly, this presentation looks at

the ways in which difference has been increasingly recognised as a positive force and resource in cities. In this context, difference itself has become a symbolic resource for profit and exclusion, but also a resource in urban dwellers' efforts to find a place in the world, and even – occasionally – to channel their efforts for an urban politics of conviviality and mutual respect. The narratives and claims around difference are largely shaped and channelled through media representations and communication practices. This complex and contradictory range of representations and narratives reflects rather different cosmopolitan visions. While drawing from research in London, I introduce three different kinds of cosmopolitanism that exist and compete with each other: neoliberal cosmopolitanism, vernacular cosmopolitanism and liberatory cosmopolitanism. This analysis raises questions about the possibilities and limits that media and communications present to articulating narratives and politics for living together in cities of difference.

Myria Georgiou is Associate Professor at the Dept of Media and Communications, London School of Economics. She has conducted crossnational comparative research across Europe and transurban research in American and European cities. Her book *Diaspora, Identity and the Media: Diasporic Transnationalism and Mediated Spatialities* (Hampton Press, 2006) draws from ethnographic research in London and New York City and the ways in which ethnic identities are constructed in multicultural neighbourhoods. Her recent book *Media and the City: Cosmopolitanism and Difference* (Polity, 2013) reflects on the different and competing forms of cosmopolitanism that emerge at the meeting of media and the city, especially in the context of the global city. She has also co-edited the collection *Transnational Lives and the Media: Re-imagining Diasporas* (with O.Bailey and R.Haridranath, 2007, Palgrave) and edited *Gender, Migration and the Media* (Routledge, 2012). Her articles have been published in sociological, cultural studies, and media and communications journals, such as the *International Communication Gazette*; *International Journal of Cultural Studies*; *Race and Ethnic Studies*. She currently leads a research project titled *Community through digital connectivity? Communication infrastructure in multicultural London* (LSE Seed Fund) and supervises the Marie Curie Inter-European Fellowship: (UPLOAD) *Upload. Urban Politics of London Youngsters Analyzed Digitally* (Research Fellow: K.Leurs).

Erik Gandini and Jesper Kurlandsky (FASAD)

Cosmopolitan Visions

In an age when xenophobia, fanaticism and intolerance are a daily occurrence, we have grown accustomed to thinking of the world as divided among warring creeds and cultures, separated from one another by a chasm of incomprehension. These negative sides of modern globalization are widely reported in the media and in public discourse, yet far less attention has been paid to alternative ways of thinking. Having been introduced to the Cosmopolitan vision by some of the most interesting thinkers today, we decided to embark on a project aiming at portraying this ancient yet universal idea in a short film. A film, now work in progress, that will combine real footage and animation techniques aiming at inspiring audiences worldwide to an ancient idea that may be our best guide into the future.

Erik Gandini is an award winning director and producer. He has since 1994 produced and directed a number of internationally acclaimed documentaries such as *Sacrificio*, *Surplus*, *Gitmo*, *Like a Pascha* and *Videocracy*. Since 2013 Erik is a partner of FASAD.

Jesper Kurlandsky is a producer, composer and scriptwriter. Jesper is known for producing 'The Ape' (2009), short films 'The five senses' and 'The Contract' (2010), Jesper Ganslandts 'Blondie' (2011) and Axel Peterséns 'Avalon' (2011)

Paper Session Abstracts

Paper Session 1

Parts of Sweden are the global South': space as a discursive construct in global television news

Alexa Robertson, Dept. of Media Studies, Stockholm University

Marshall McLuhan famously suggested that developments in media technology were abolishing both space and time, with the globe becoming no more than a village (McLuhan & Gordon 2013: 5). This paper argues that, five decades later, something is indeed happening to global space in the media, but that it is a discursive rather than technological change. By analyzing the narrative techniques involved when actors and regions traditionally consigned to the margins of mainstream news reports are placed in the centre, it discusses the implications for cosmopolitan outlooks of reversing the gaze. Part of a larger study of how media representation is conceived and effected in a world of diversity and transborder flows, the paper focuses in particular on the notion of 'the global South', as talked about and depicted by journalists working for Al Jazeera English.

Digital Thrown-togetherness. Young Londoners negotiating urban politics of difference and encounter on Facebook

Koen Leurs, PhD, Marie Curie Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Media and Communications
London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

The question how we can live together with difference is more urgent than ever, now that more than half of the world's population live in cities. For example, the majority of London's inhabitants are ethnic minorities. Following Massey, city dwellers negotiate an intense situation of "thrown-togetherness" (2005), as they live in the proximity of ethnic, racial and religious others. Shifting the dominant focus of media and migration scholarship from transnational communication towards local everyday practices, I develop the notion of digital thrown-togetherness to chart relationships between geographically situated digital identifications and the urban politics of cultural difference and encounter. The argument draws from in-depth interviews with 38 young people living in Haringey, one of the most diverse areas in London, and builds on digital methods for network visualizations. Two Facebook user experiences are considered: transnational networking with loved ones scattered around the world and engagement with geographically proximate diverse digital identifications.

(Mediated) cosmopolitanism as symbolic violence

Johan Lindell (corresponding author), Department of Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

Martin Danielsson, MKV, Högskolan i Halmstad

The notions of a “mediated cosmopolitanism”, a “global imagined community” and an “imagined cosmopolitanism” speak of a cosmopolitan opportunism gaining ground in contemporary media and communication studies. This line of research tends to epistemologically situate human beings exclusively as users or audiences of media. The risk by such a media-centric focus is to confine oneself to the question of “what the media does to people”. By understanding users and audiences of potentially global media as contextualized social agents we engage with the relationship between cosmopolitanism and the media from a different vantage point. Our media sociological perspective insists on accounting for social context, and so we turn to the question of how classified social agents classify the contemporary media landscape as gateways to the wider world. What emerges in our qualitative and quantitative data is a pattern of social reproduction by way of cultural distinction – agents strong on cultural capital is particularly prone to approach the media landscape as an avenue for cosmopolitan socialization. There is thus reason to question the universalizing rhetoric pertaining to notions of a “mediated cosmopolitanism”.

Paper Session 2

#banksyinstockholm – The Spatial Politics of Interventions and Art

Tindra Thor, Dept. of Media Studies, Stockholm University

In March 2014, Swedish news agencies received an anonymous handwritten letter stating that Banksy, probably the world’s most famous street artist, would hold his first “official unofficial exhibit in Sweden”. This was to take place in Stockholm that actively practices zero tolerance on graffiti. Throughout the week there were immense discussions on whether this was a scam or not, and if it were not, would it be worth seeing anyway? If it were, would the city sanitize it? A real Banksy? On Sunday March 23rd, 8000 people gathered to find out.

This presentation discusses the #banksyinstockholm event as an intervening performance producing what Gillian Rose (1995) calls a ‘paradoxical space’. Focus lies on critical analysis of the discursive spaces created, and the becoming of art and politics at the moment of this event. The analysis discusses how a discursive construction of an event attaches and detaches signifiers to and from specific places and performances and how notions of performance, subjects and place are renegotiated in that process. The event becomes as absent, yet present; the performers are no one and everyone; the space enables and disables; and all is becoming through a specific place. As such the event holds a potential for (re)imaginings of space and becomes a node where the everyday becomes the everyday amplified; the everyday 2.0.

NGOs, the Blogs and Asylum in Greece

Mariangela Veikou, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Peloponnese, Greece.

This paper deals with the role of Greek NGOs in the field of asylum today, as portrayed by new media platforms (blogosphere). The article identifies main lines of NGOs action as seen in the agenda of blogs which reflect issues that come to the fore with a focus on the official policies on asylum and immigration that become increasingly more exclusive and less tolerant of otherness and the rise of ultra nationalist far right parties in Greece. These issues are examined under the

light of a cosmopolitan right to visit and a universal right to reside, regarding the substance of a future condition of cosmopolitan humanitarianism.

Surveillance and Corporate Social Media: From Mediated Transnational Social Space to Surveilled Public Sphere?

Ilkin Mehrabov, Dept. of Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

It is not uncommon among media pundits - together with an alarming score of academics - to treat corporate social media platforms as the new public sphere(s) of electronic communication and of Web 2.0 era. Yet, as Jillian C. York rightfully asks, why do we insist on assigning for-profit social networking media the role of the public space, when in reality “online social spaces standing in for the public sphere are private ones, owned by billionaires and shareholders”?

Revolving around this question, this presentation engages into the dissection of relationship between commercial social media and the public sphere debate from three perspectives: a) the perspective of technologies used as part of the development of these platforms; b) perspective of users of these media; and, c) perspective of social media companies. Looking at the original Habermasian interpretation of the public sphere; and connecting it with Christian Fuchs’ politico-economical critique, this presentation explores the limits of treating corporate social networking platforms as working public sphere - especially as evident in Pew Research Center’s November 2013 research report “News Use across Social Media Platforms” findings of which state that more than half of commercial social networking media users obtain their daily news only through these electronic platforms - with the reddit, Twitter and Facebook users leading this trend in an uncompetitive manner.

Taking into consideration the economic model of corporate social media, based on surveillance of users and the big data analysis of their activities for the purposes of targeted advertising, this presentation aims to further contribute and discuss the conceptualization of these dynamics that (might or might not) “yield a cosmopolitan Self and an encapsulated Self” – following the 2014 article of Christensen and Jansson in *New Media and Society*.