



***Understanding the media:  
Media consumption across a culturally  
diverse Europe***

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- ***Aim of presentation:***

*Understanding media in culturally diverse Europe through the lens of minority media consumption: A case of a politicised and media savvy transnational audience*

**Pre-dominant discourse among Arab audiences reveals a set of anxieties and struggles associated with:**

- abundance of information
- discourses of exclusion, marginalization and stereotyping
- liberalism's contradictions

# European mediascapes & Arab audiences

## ■ Mediation

- The intense mediation of everyday life
- Exposure to competing systems of representation
- The fear of the satellite dish and politicisation of media consumption

## ■ Islam(-ophobia) and citizenship

- 'The veil'
- 'The community'
- The language
- The everyday cultural practices

## ■ Key contradictions of liberal democracy

- The political and the cultural
- The private and the public
- Diversity and discrimination



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# The tale of three cities

- London, Madrid, Nicosia  
cities of difference/different cities
- Arab speaking populations
- 18 (alongside survey and public events)
  - 9 female, 9 male
- Ethnic and generational diversity
- Age groups: 18-25; 26-45; 46-65
- Spring/summer 2009

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# Transnational audiences: Essentialism Vs Nomadism?

## ■ **Strategic essentialism**

Calls for minorities to adopt a temporary and conditional essentialism for political claims (Spivak, 1987, 1990)

Temporal tactics to construct spaces of belonging (Naficy, 1999) while mobilising a sense of identity (Noble, Pynting and Tabar, 1999)

## ■ **Nomadism**

Nomad who does not depart but moves while staying still (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986); subject in-becoming in a mediated world (Braidotti, 2006)

Banal – a way of living and imagining the world; political – threat to the state

A resource for imagining alternative conceptions of planetary politics (Braidotti, 2006)

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# Essentialist and nostalgic media use I

## ■ **Reproduction of essential connections**

No matter where you are born or which dual nationality you acquired in later life, you always refer to your home country. I would say most Arabs are like that. I think that our attachment to our mother countries is greater than any other citizenship or passport gained later as a result of our upbringing and our religion (London, Males 26-45)

## ■ **Resistance to changing time/place**

For me even if I'm born here, I still, if anyone English, Japanese or anything else, asks me "where are you from?", I say I'm Iraqi...At home, we listen to Arabic music, watch Arabic TV and eat Arabic food and I myself still planning when I move to my own home to still cook Arabic food and will have Arabic satellite television (London, Females, 18-25)

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# Essentialist and nostalgic media use II

## ■ Mediated visibility

My children when they are asked where they are from they know they are Sudanese even though they are born here. I started recently to tell them about these things and the tribe they come from. They belong there, not here. We lived in the UK when I was born here and we stayed for a while and we return to Sudan where I have lived for less than a third of my life. However because of the social connections or the technology we use to stay in touch, not a single person thinks that I have been outside Sudan for even a day (London, Males 26-45)

## ■ Resistance to politics of exclusion

I feel an immigrant in Spain because when you want to practice your religion in public, people look at you as if you were an alien coming from another planet. The home country for me is the country of origin, where I was born, where I drank water for the first time in my life, where studied for the first time (Madrid, Males 26-45).

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# Strategic nostalgia

- Emphasis on identity and the particularistic cultural space of belonging – bounded identities reflected in media consumption
- Counter-position to cultural/political marginalisation/trivialisation of cultural difference
- Essentialist ideologies as a recognisable and respectable particularism – beyond *Otherness*, stereotyping and minoritization

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# Nomadic media use I

- **Being at multiple places**

I say I'm Lebanese Palestinian living in London but not I'm Lebanese and not Palestinian or not from London. Nowadays, a person can be million things at the same time, million citizenships, have more than one job, no more this or that (London, Females 18-24)

- **The media nomad**

I try to watch as many Arab channels, plus Al Jazeera English and BBC, and also Algerian channels. I also watch French television (Cyprus, Males, 46-65)

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# Nomadic media use II

- **(Reflexive) media individualism**

Personally I don't have any loyalty to any channel. You use more than one source but it's not like if something is reported in one channel I think this must be true (London, Males, 46-65).

- **It is not escapism (usually) – global citizenship?**

I feel I am Lebanese and Palestinian but only in a part of me. I am Cypriot but only in a part of me also. I don't feel I completely belong to one place. I belong to a certain community of people: like minded people. Young people like me who travelled, have the same values. I don't feel I have to belong to a certain place (Cyprus, Females, 26-45).

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# Banal nomadism

- T/n media consumption reaffirms nomadic condition
- Beyond binaries of origin/destination – mediated communication as a space of reflection and mobility
- Control over media and communication technologies: *user* in the core of media world, not the media

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# A Common Thread: Media literacy

- Media world: a world of comparing and contrasting
- Scepticism and cynicism towards all media, but especially national & western media
- National, local and transnational media reflect elements of a single competitive environment
- Watching in national context, making sense in transnational and urban contexts

# Conclusions and implications

- *Minorities fight back* – beyond the fear of small numbers
- *All media subject to (potential) critique and rejection*
- Temporal and situated media consumption
- Not the end of national media, but the end of their hegemony
- Potential value of national media in a multi-nodal media world