

The 3rd Media@LSE PhD Symposium

On

Media and Identity

Between Repression and
Emancipation



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Keynote address:

Dr Shakuntala Banaji, LSE

Framing young citizens: identity and participation in civic spaces online and offline

This paper takes as its focus discourses about youth identity, intercultural citizenship, voice and participation on a range of youth civic websites surveyed during the EC-funded project CivicWeb. This was a three-year study of young people, the internet and civic participation which triangulated data generated via surveys and textual case studies of youth civic websites in six European countries and Turkey, surveys and focus groups with several thousand young people and in-depth interviews with eighty-five civic website producers. Here my particular focus is on the ways in which technologies, pedagogies and ideologies on civic and political websites play differential roles in constructing young people as a generation and in facilitating sustained political engagement and participation. In tandem, I raise questions about whether and how a diverse spectrum of young people are involved in civic action on and offline, and interrogate both general and specific identities, motivations, concerns and constraints on participation. Finally, this paper addresses issues from the perspective of producers of civic content for youth online: how might organizations with varying aims and funding models conceptualise young people's identities and experiences more effectively to encourage greater civic information, engagement and action for a broader spectrum of young people?

Panel 1 – WESTERN MEDIA AND ORIENTALIST REPRESENTATIONS

Margaretha Adriana van Es, University of Oslo

Muslim women as ‘oppressed victims’ in the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad: Constructions of the ‘National Self’ and its ‘Others’ (1990-2010)

How have Muslim women been portrayed in the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad during the last twenty years? Which stereotypes emerge? What does this tell us about how the Dutch media present the ‘National Self’ and its ‘Others’? How do national identities intersect with gender, religion, ethnicity and class? How can developments over time be explained?

In the postwar period, large groups of migrants with a Muslim background arrived in the Netherlands, as in many other European countries. In 2010, about one million Dutch citizens were estimated to have a Muslim background. Previous research on media representations of Muslim migrants in the Netherlands suggests that Muslim minority women are more and more often presented as a homogeneous group of ‘oppressed women’, in contrast to ‘emancipated’ and ‘liberated’ Western women. ‘Islam’ is more and more often blamed for various forms of gender inequality. These statements imply a change over time, but most of the literature focuses on media discourses at a certain moment in time and does not offer a profound analysis of historical developments. By studying in detail when and how the imaging of Muslim women has changed over time, it make connections with broader social and political developments.

Critical Discourse Analysis is used in combination with Content Analysis and Frame Analysis to study relevant articles in NRC Handelsblad between 1990 and 2010. The paper argues that although Western representations of Muslim women as ‘oppressed victims’ are centuries old, there have been interesting developments during the last twenty years. These changes largely coincide with events such as the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the murder on Theo van Gogh in 2004, which sparked off heated integration debates in which Islam was presented as a threat. On the one hand, the number of articles portraying Muslim women in the Netherlands as ‘oppressed’ has increased during the last decade, but on the other hand, new stereotypes and counter-stereotypes have emerged, such as the ‘dangerous extremist woman’ and the ‘fashionable, pragmatic Muslima’. However, in all these cases, the

'Muslim woman' is presented as the 'Other', and functions as a contrast to the 'National Self'.

Ruth Sanz Sabido, De Montfort University

Postcolonial theory and identity struggles in the Palestinian conflict

This paper is not directly extracted from my PhD thesis, but it draws on its theoretical framework, postcolonial theory, and on its historical analysis of historical British newspaper articles reporting on several violent events within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My PhD deals with the relationship between postcolonial theory and the use of political violence and, although this article is not concerned with this aspect in particular, some reference will be made to such events.

Postcolonial theory provides the framework for the concepts of oppression and resistance (Fanon, 1967; Young, 2011), which is related to the concept of identity as a process of political struggle. This article explores this connection in relation to the Palestinian people prior to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The Palestinian population consisted of Muslims, Jews and Christians who lived together in harmony, which was allegedly broken by different waves of European Jewish immigrants which arrived in the Palestinian lands in the first half of the twentieth century (Philo and Berry, 2004). This process of assimilation of the new arrivals by the existing inhabitants led to clashes which began to acquire a violent nature.

This paper considers the identity struggles derived from the effect of the Zionist project on the original Palestinian population, which impacted on every way in which they lived and understood their society, regardless of their religious identity. In fact, it pays some attention to the clash between Palestinian Jews and European Jews as, although they had religious views in common, their values and way of life were different. The paper draws on historical newspaper articles which reported on violent events between both communities in order to illustrate these arguments.

Representation of Other: The British media's approach to Turkey's possible EU membership

Understanding the media representation of Turkey's EU bid is very important if Turkey wants to persuade Europeans to let her be part of the EU. Although the European Commission manages the membership negotiations with Turkey, it is argued that the final accession can be completed only by the approval of European citizens. Therefore Ankara also has to convince journalists, commentators, parliamentarians and businessmen of Europe and through them the public (Grabbe, 2005: 19).

The national news media is still more important than the products of pan-European media (e.g. *Euronews*, *the Financial Times Europe*, *the International Herald Tribune*, *the European Voice*) in forming public opinion within the EU (de Vreese, 2001: 287). Before finding solutions to the persuasion process, one should be aware of how Turkey's EU bid is represented Turkish membership discussions on EU member states' media. Due to these reasons, the research will focus on this main question: 'How was Turkey - EU relations represented in *the Guardian* and *the Telegraph*?'

Quantitative content analysis will be the method of the research. For the construction of analysis, categories will be prepared from a saturation sample in order to generate numerical data from news reports, commentaries, reviews and leaders. The data will be analysed together with the contemporary discussions surrounding Turkey's relationship with the EU.

The time sample of this study will consist of six important events (e.g., The Helsinki Summit) in Turkey-EU relations between 1999 when Turkey was accepted as an official EU membership candidate and 2006 when membership negotiations were damaged by the port crisis between Turkey and Cyprus. In order to reach the previous and following reflections of these events, one week before and one week after the imported events will be included in the time sample.

**The culture of shame, satirizing the shame: “Persian Dad” viral videos, FOBs
and manliness in the Iranian Diaspora**

On August 22nd 2006, Neemaxcore, an Iranian-American living in Southern California uploaded on his YouTube account the self-made parody entitled, “Persian Dad”. In this video, Neemaxcore portrays a “FOB” (fresh off the boat) Iranian father who finds through his son’s school website that report cards have been sent home. Upon receiving his son’s report card, the father learns that despite receiving A grades in other subjects, his son has a B grade in English. The father becomes very angry at the sight of the B grade and accuses his son of not applying himself at school. At the end of the video, the father beats the son and throws him to the floor shouting *jendeh*, or “bitch”. Since the making of this video, there have been a plethora of copycat “Persian Dad” videos by Iranian diasporics, satirizing in a similar style to Neemaxcore. In all videos parodies, the father is presented as a hypermasculine, *mard-e sonati* (traditional & conservative man) while the diasporic son is presented as completely Westernized or “whitewashed”, lacking in traditional Iranian manliness.

Although these parodies are an exaggerated illustration of a fictitious father-son relationship, it does point to what Khosravi (2009) alludes to as the tensions between different generational views concerning what constitutes “manliness” in the diaspora. Moreover, these videos also reveal tensions that McAuliffe (2008) Mostofi (2003) and Pyke (2010) in particular would consider as “internalized racism”, where white, middle class aesthetics are privileged and “FOBs” are considered low class and a cultural shame.

Through the exploration of these viral videos that satirize FOBs, this paper is interested in understanding how this satirization also confront class tensions along with notions of masculinity in the Iranian Diaspora.

Panel 2 - NEOLIBERISM AND IDENTITY FORMATION

Jess Baines, LSE

Radical printshops: The struggle for counter-hegemonic media production in 1980s Britain

Between the late 1960s and early 1980s numerous 'alternative' printshops were set up across the UK (and elsewhere), with the founding objective of producing, providing or enabling the cheap and safe printing of radical materials. The printshops were started by left-libertarians, aligned and non-aligned Marxists, artists, anarchists and feminists, and as such were constitutive of the fractured and fractious politics of the post-1968 left. Their politics informed prefigurative ways of working; flat structures, collective decision making, anti-specialisation and skill sharing. Direct access to printing technology was seen to facilitate the creation of political, contestatory and empowering alternatives to the forms and practices of dominant media and culture.

The printshops provided an opportunity for both control of 'the means of (some!) *representation*' – and a physical engagement with 'the means of *production*' to people who otherwise would have been unlikely to get near it. The printing trade in the UK was overwhelmingly a white, working class and male industry (except in the area in the low paid area of print finishing). The print unions operated a closed shop policy and had systematically excluded women for decades (Cockburn 1983). Printers were also amongst the highest paid of the skilled trades and despite their negotiating power, they rarely flexed their ability to 'halt the capitalist press' in support of other workers struggles. Becoming 'a printer' offered new political identities for those involved in the radical printshops. It created a connection to both a long history of radical printers and contemporary working class identification. It offered some women a chance to challenge normative European gender roles. It provided artists the means by which to renounce their culturally elite status and become 'socially useful producers'.

Drawing on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, the proposed paper seeks to problematise the political identities that the printshops facilitated in relation to the changing radical discourses of the period.

These printshops, which by the mid 1980s were to number 30 in London alone, had all but disappeared by the late 1990s. Speculative reasons for this obviously include the emergence of desktop publishing (Zeitlyn 1992) and then the internet, as providing new autonomies for radical communications. However from my preliminary studies of archival texts and dialogues it can be argued that there may be a series of other interconnected reasons — gathered around challenges to the presses ideological relationships to printing technology. These challenges came out of shifts, both pragmatic and ideological, in the radical discourses that informed the printshops instigation. The period between 1968 and 1998 was not just one of technological change, but also one where the politics of feminism, autonomy, participatory practices and agitprop image-making underwent significant contestation and change. The proposed paper seeks to outline these challenges in relation to the printshops and thus begin to offer a viable explanation for their demise.

Alternative media studies is a steadily burgeoning field, however its history is much less developed and the radical printshop collectives, who brought their politics to both how they worked and print-media they facilitated appear, despite their prevalence (not just in the UK, but in other parts of the globe too), to be barely mentioned. More broadly then, this research project hopes, in small part, to begin to address this gap.

**Mihaela Ioana Danetiu, National School of Political and Administrative Studies,
Bucharest**

The European identity and the social economy after the Lisbon Treaty

The main goal of this article is to demonstrate the existing connection between the EU Social Economy and the European Identity. The current EU strategy that was adopted after the Lisbon Treaty highlights the need of constructing a European identity that can overcome the unilateralist dimension given by the national identity. The social inclusion measures and the social integration on the market labor require a communication strategy that targets the European citizens. Social economy obliges several political actors such as the EU institutions, corporations and states to take

part in forging of the European identity. The study will analyze the social economy as a communication tool that has the ability to convert the national interests and projecting them to the European level. From the humanist philosophical principles of the social economy to the cultural patterns of each member state, responsibility and equal opportunities merge into a single dimension of an identity that can play a key role in consolidating the European public sphere. The analysis of the communication products of the EU institutions and the European identity discourse can provide useful data that can indicate the degree of implication of the citizens in the forging of the EU social policy. Thus, the social dimension of the EU 2020 strategy can point out the strengthening of the European identity.

Catherine Walsh, Goldsmiths University of London

Freedom is God's gift to humanity: How George W. Bush reconciled neoliberal and neoconservative identities with his presidential speeches

The academic study of presidential religious rhetoric has often focused on how it casts the president in a priestly role for the nation, but less on how it reflects ideological shifts in American political discourse, or reconciles American political identities. In his presidential speeches in 2003 George W. Bush uses an interpretation of God's will for America as a rhetorical bridge to connect the neoliberal themes of freedom and universality to the neoconservative themes of morality and militarization, neatly presenting this hybrid-argument in his justification for war. For decades the Republican Party has been supported by people who identify as neoliberals and as neoconservatives, but not always as both. It is in the political interests of the Party to encourage group cohesion via an easily-shared and easily-mediatised narrative, which presents a challenge because some aspects of the two ideologies do not sit easily together. Neoliberalism seeks to liberate entrepreneurs and markets, remove barriers to trade, and shrink the state, all of which are ideas not necessarily compatible with state-determined moral constraints or increased military expenditure. By contrast, neoconservatism exhibits a persistent anxiety about public morality, and is enthusiastic about military dominance, ideas that are not necessarily

compatible with unbridled freedom and the universal cooperation necessary for free-trade relationships. When Bush describes God's will for America, he does so in the neoliberal terms of freedom and universality, and in the neoconservative terms of collective morality and aggressive militarization. More than just arguing divine sanction for the invasion of Iraq, he uses the long-standing tradition of presidential God-talk to help reconcile two political rhetorics that themselves reflect two parallel but separate political identities, doing so in a format that can be easily mediatized and disseminated.

Panel 3 - CONTESTED IDENTITIES

Gabriela Mendez Cota, Goldsmiths University of London

Beyond Identity: Bioethics and democracy amidst the ruins of Mexican nationalism

This paper offers a critical reading of current crusades of Mexican 'civil society' to protect the nation from foreign technologies and traitorous politicians. I argue that such crusades rely on simplistic notions of identity and power, and thus fail to think and take politics beyond the terms of 'revolutionary nationalism', that is, beyond the state-centred cultural hegemony which was defeated by neoliberalism and was challenged by democracy.

Mexican 'civil society' is supposed to have emerged in democratic opposition to the authoritarian revolutionary state. While it is therefore usually narrated as a counter-hegemonic movement, in practice the concrete and disparate organizations which make it up display political discourses which are not very different from revolutionary nationalism. This includes a notion of true Mexicans who defend their identity from traitors and intruders, a notion that the state is politically necessary to actualize the identity of such true Mexicans by means of economic and cultural protectionism, and a notion that science and technology should be limited by the state to the actualization of 'national sovereignty'.

The issue of genetically modified maize illustrates well the failure of 'civil society' to challenge neoliberal globalization in terms other than those of revolutionary nationalism. Environmentalist and peasant organizations have pictured imported GM maize as an intruder and a deadly threat to indigenous varieties of maize and therefore to the nation's sovereignty. They have demanded more state intervention to protect the nation from GM maize, and they have condemned the state's failure to do so as treason from a corrupt political class. Biotechnology, in the process, has been reduced to an instrument of foreign corporations for the assault on poor Mexicans, and ('true') national scientists are expected to reveal the dangers and injustices connected with the 'contamination' of traditional maize by transgenic technology.

While the effects of GM crops on local agrobiodiversity are part of a much-studied, ongoing debate over the political implications of industrial food systems, the effects of GM maize on 'national identity' remain underexplored, particularly from the point of view of contemporary cultural studies (Hall and Birchall 2006). My adoption of this cultural theoretical approach follows from my interest in destabilizing identitarian tendencies within contemporary social movements in order to enhance their democratic potential. As a critical supplement to popular identitarian demands for more state regulation and control of biohazards, I propose to draw on the contributions of non-essentialist, non-utilitarian bioethics developed within the framework of contemporary cultural studies (Zylinska 2010) in order to imagine an alternative, post-national and indeed post-identitarian democratic challenge to neoliberal appropriations of both agriculture and biotechnology.

Marc Owen Jones, Leicester University

Falling in love with one's country? Valentine's Day 2011 in Bahrain and the role of social media in identity construction

On Valentine's Day 2011 in Bahrain, thousands took to the streets to demand an improved democracy, the release of political prisoners, and a more equitable distribution of the country's resources. This collective effervescence created a corollary surge of activity in cyberspace, as both Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis sought to seek information and take part in the unfolding protests. By exploring the emergence of anti-government and pro-government identity politics online, this paper addresses how using Twitter in times of political struggle encourages users to become self-conscious of their own identities and, as a result, affirm their own positions within a potentially emergent social order. At the same time, by using Castell's notion of legitimising identity, I propose that hegemonic institutions use both Twitter to limit new identity formation and impose upon them, through various means, rules of normative behaviour and acceptable identity practise. Thus Twitter can function in a dual capacity as a tool for both repression or emancipation, depending on the identity choice made by the user. By going beyond traditional

media and communications and drawing on cultural geography, sociology, and political science this paper argues that online spaces can be colonised by the dominant (legitimate) identity, and thus contribute to the repression of marginalised groups by extending the reaches of state surveillance via social media. Conversely, agents of 'legitimate' identity can experience the emancipatory effects of such online spaces by exercising their 'right to dominate' with impunity. However, despite these elements of technological dystopianism, political struggles can also act as a digital identity networking opportunity for marginalised groups, allowing them to form like minded networks whose existence offers both elements of hope, and the capacity to generate symbolic forms of resistance both on and offline.

Rachelle Freake, Queen Mary, University of London

Communication solitudes? Canadian identity and communication

The question of Canadian identity, and more specifically Canadian national identity, has plagued researchers, theorists, politicians and “Canadians” alike since even before the Canadian Confederation was formed. In particular, the presence of large, historical population of French speakers has complicated understandings of Canadian identity, primarily because many French speakers tend to conceive of themselves as a separate nation from the rest of Canada. While the Canadian federal government seeks to unite citizens, regardless of their language, ethnicity, and geography, in a bilingual multicultural framework, other social forces such as the Quebec provincial government continue to assert the distinct identity of the Quebec-based French-speaking majority. At the same time, French-speaking minorities across Canada seek to assert their historical rights and identity within an English-dominant setting. Historically, communication media have been recognized as invaluable tools for uniting the country (Charland, 1986; Vipond, 2000). However, government efforts to use the media to overcome cultural and geographic divides have been continually thwarted by popular resistance to linguistic duality (Raboy, 1992). As a result, Canada’s media have evolved along distinct but parallel lines in English and French

(Fraser, 2006). Within the present context, communication media continue to play a crucial role in defining and redefining identity boundaries in Canada (Fletcher, 1998).

The aim of this paper is to outline some of the principal ways that communication technologies – namely print newspapers – present national identity options to Canadian communities. Since these communities tend to be homogeneous linguistically, conceptualizations of national identity differ according to the medium of the newspaper. In other words, French language newspapers present identity options that differ from English language newspapers. As a result, newspapers may play a role in indexing and reifying Canadian communities according to language, thus potentially excluding “others” from an identity category on the basis of their language.

Kumru Berfin Emre, University of Essex

The valley of wolves: Television, audience and national identity

A new `genre` called `crime series` has emerged in late 1990s in Turkish television that has been significantly popular particularly among male audiences. Unlike other soap operas, these serials are about male heroes who are tackling gangs and criminals either for the sake of community or on behalf of the nation. The most popular one, the *Valley of Wolves* which is currently being broadcasted, can be described as a super-hero tale in which the nation is saved from the internal and external enemies by an intelligent officer who is involved in paramilitary activities. The *Valley of Wolves* can be regarded as a media event rather than a serial, since it has not only been occupying the first rank in the TV box office since 2003, but also because that the film versions, books, DVDs, VCDs and commercial goods have been consumed by the audiences widely. The serial's reference to the contemporary problems of Turkey such as Kurdish question, the Armenian Massacre in 1915, process of joining to European Union, rise of Islamism & Islamophobia placed the serial at core of public debates.

As a popular media text, the *Valley of Wolves* provides a substantial ground on which the question of construction of national identity through media can be

explored. Depending on the ethnographical research in progress, this paper aims to examine the nationalist discourse of the serial through an overview of the representations as well as the analysis of the audience interpretations based on the data gathered through in-depth interviews. The interviews conducted with both Kurdish and Turkish audiences of the serial enables us to discuss the different dimensions of the process in which media texts attempt to set the limits of national identity in Turkey.

Panel 4 - IDENTITY BEYOND NATIONS

Maarja Siiner, Tartu University

The role of media in linguistic integration processes in modern nation states. a comparative case study of the cartoon crisis in Denmark and The Bronze Night in Estonia

What is a bigger threat to the security and functionality of a nation state – the existence of a local, private financed media in a minority language, f.ex. radio or TV channels in Russian in Estonia or in Arabic in Denmark; Or: that the Russian speaking minority in Estonia predominantly follows 1TV, or the Arabic-speakers in Denmark follow Al-Arabiya? This question is raised by two recent events of local or even international importance in the two mentioned countries, where media had a crucial role.

In Denmark the so called Cartoon Controversy, where publishing of 12 cartoons in 2005, depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad were published in a roces newspaper as an illustration to an article about the dangerous self-censorship among Danish journalists what concerns Islam and its conventions. While the Danish government and state media tried to silence the criticism, referring to the freedom of the press and expecting the smoldering conflict to quietly die out, the involvement of Arabic-speaking media in mainly Egypt lead to violent protests across the Muslim world, an rocess of Danish products.

In 2007 local authorities in the capital of Estonia removed the II World War monument of the so-called Bronze Soldier, that for Estonians represented a celebration of the Soviet Army that occupied Estonia, from a central square in Tallinn, to a military rocess in suburbs. This work triggered violent protests by native Russian-speakers in the capital, leaving one demonstrator dead and some 153 injured over three nights of rioting, vandalism and looting. The rocess was supported and fuelled by media in Russia.

In a comparative analysis of the two events the interrelatedness of media and language/integration policy in a present-day nation state is offered, raising the question of the independence of media in modern European counries.

Beyond the national: Social network sites and cosmopolitanism

Academic research in the social sciences increasingly focuses on links between social media and transnationalism (e.g. Spence and Briggles 2009). Such work seeks to move beyond national frames of reference by locating ways in which new media technologies reconstruct cultural identity. This paper investigates the role of social network sites in facilitating cultural cosmopolitanism – a process defined by openness to the Other and resistance to geographical self-identification. It asks whether social network sites have the capacity to move thinking beyond the national.

This inquiry is grounded by a case study of CouchSurfing.org. With over 2.4 million members, CouchSurfing is a noncommercial hospitality exchange network that pairs travelers with locals ‘for cultural exchange, friendship, and learning experiences’ (couchsurfing.org, accessed 11 January 2011). While site users co-write online narratives of cultural openness and cosmopolitanism, the website structurally reproduces identity as a function of the nation-state and the region. The story collaboratively told by CouchSurfing’s users – through reciprocal posts of travel diaries, travel maps, and ‘vouching’ practices – is one of contradiction. Online cosmopolitanism reifies the power of geopolitical borders at the same time as it presupposes the irrelevance of these frames of representation.

This paper challenges social media’s production of temporally durable ontologies of cosmopolitan belonging. However, the case of CouchSurfing reveals that social media can provide ‘safe zones’ for cosmopolitan performance. Interview findings also reveal that site participants involved in CouchSurfing’s offline groups are more likely to identify themselves as ‘world-oriented’ (Hepp et al., forthcoming), suggesting that offline sociality is critical for moving beyond the tropes of national identity.

While the concept of identity has from a constructionist and post-modern perspective been put forward as fluid and “always under construction’ (Hall, 1993:362), it has remain fixed and unchangeable within academic writing, in particular within diasporic contexts. In this paper I problematize the term identity in the diasporic context, and how diasporas usually are referred to as ‘displaced’ and ‘uprooted’ with strong transnational links, through new media, to uphold relations with the ‘origin. This indicates that identities (ethnic and national), regardless of years of living in settlement countries, connects a certain group with a particular territory without taking into account the social processes ‘here and now’. This becomes even more problematic when shifting gaze from immigration generation to younger generations born and raised in diaspora.

Based on more than a year long online ethnography, offline interviews, and online questionnaires, this paper brings to light how Kurdish diasporas in two different locations, Sweden and the UK, deconstruct and reconstruct their Kurdishness firstly at the intersection of online and offline environments, and secondly at the crossroads of new belongings of settlement countries and old senses of belongings of their previous homelands. From the perspective of this research, the diasporic discussion works as a point of departure as it is inextricably related to other critical terms of nation and national identity, home and belongings, identity and citizenship.

Furthermore based on arguments of a nexus between the online and offline, I draw from feminist, postcolonial, and political theories in the operationalisation of key concepts connected to the term identity. Theoretically this is of interest because we see *how* these spaces intertwine when we look at dynamics and driving forces behind the seizure of the qualitative qualities that new media offer. Whilst there are differences in the juxtaposition between the online and the offline, a symbiotic relationship has emerged that goes beyond just a volatile meeting, which enables us to see how performativities change between these environments.

Heba Elsayed, LSE

A tale of two cities? A divided Cairo and its many young cosmopolitans

Comparing the experiences of young working and upper middle class Egyptians, I explore how, whilst occupying the socially segregated but highly mediated urban spaces of Cairo, they are engaged in the construction of two classed versions of a cosmopolitan imagination. Drawing from a nine month ethnographic study, I explore how the daily lives of these two groups, dominated by hegemonic discourses of power and privilege, involve very classed, very disconnected realities. Nevertheless, common media products provide a joint window onto an interconnected world and a route to articulating a cosmopolitan cultural identity. Thus, this research attempts to further an understanding of lived cosmopolitanism as a pervasive reality of everyday lives outside the west. I firstly argue for the persisting importance of class as a defining factor of cosmopolitanism. Secondly, I investigate the centrality of the city as a vessel for the physical expression of the different classed cosmopolitan identities.

Everyday media practices allow young Egyptians to make sense of the world close by, but also a less tangible world beyond their reach. This results in a reconstitution and re-evaluation of the meanings of space and place. I use Lie's (2003) idea that space is lived place; through (inter)action and mediated communication, territorial places are altered into imaginative communication spaces. For example, I discuss how, inspired by the media, the city becomes transformed into imaginative spaces of inclusivity for the working class as a contrast to the daily forms of physical exclusion part of their grounded urban realities. Thus, whereas everyday experiences of metropolitan place are shaped by forms of exclusion and marginalization, urban spaces of mediated imagination may sometimes offer representation, meaning and inclusivity. The city, therefore, becomes a constructed ideal personal space that young Egyptians, occupying different class backgrounds, can reclaim and make their own.