

*New media connectivity: a new world of mobility? The  
Internet, identity and deterritorialization in Europe*

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**Introduction**

The aim of this article is to substantiate the thesis that research on the Internet and identity has to be contextualized in a wider frame of media change and cultural change within Europe and beyond. The emergence of the Internet and computer-mediated communication appears to be part of an ongoing, increasingly global, media connectivity and the deterritorializing cultural change it brings in its train. In this context, a theory of translocal media cultures is useful for describing the relation between the Internet and the articulation of identities in Europe. Within this frame, ‘media identities’ appear at the same time as both territorially-bounded and deterritorialized phenomena. In this sense a ‘new world of mobility’ exists in part, but still has territorialized counterparts.

To substantiate this thesis, I advance a five-stage argument. In the first stage, ‘Media connectivity’, I will outline a media theory which is based on the concept of connectivity and helps to contextualize the discussion about the Internet and identity in a wider frame of media history and cultural change. The second stage, ‘Translocal media cultures and identity’, focuses on media cultures and is framed in terms of a theory of media connectivity. This makes it possible to discuss the role of the media – and especially the Internet – in the ongoing process of the deterritorialization of identity. The third stage, ‘Vaybee: the Internet and diasporas’, uses the example of the German-Turkish Internet portal ‘Vaybee’ to discuss the relationship between the Internet and the articulation of diasporic identities. In the fourth stage, ‘Attac: the Internet and social movements’ I discuss the same relationship with reference to the critical globalization movement within Europe. The last stage, entitled ‘Perspectives’, attempts to bring together these different considerations. Over the course of the argument it will become obvious that the ‘Europe’ of my title does not imply the merging of different identities in a singular European one, however ‘new.’ Instead, I shall consider Europe as a frame for the constitution of more mobile deterritorial

identities.

### **Media connectivity**

In order to start my argument visually, I present a photograph of a major street in a district in Bremen (Fig. 1). The district is just called 'Quarter', a late 19<sup>th</sup> century *Gründerzeit* district, which since the 1970s has been inhabited by left-wing people and migrants from various countries in and outside of Europe. The photo is of the main street, reminiscent of any street you might find in other European cities such as London, Paris or Barcelona: it is full of multicultural cafés, boutiques, restaurants, but also many telephone shops and Internet cafés owned by migrants, which indicate the relevance of cheap access to digital media for migrant residents in particular.

*Fig. 1: Internet and telephone café in Bremen*

Zur Anzeige wird der QuickTime™  
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benötigt.

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benötigt.

Taking this photo as the starting point for my argument I should emphasize the following: if we discuss questions of the Internet and identity within Europe today we cannot do this purely through the frame of the national identities of the different European states. While this is certainly one reference point, we have to take into account the fact that the Internet and also other media enable communicative connections beyond such national frames, making identities more easily ‘mobile’ than has been the case in previous centuries. As a consequence digital media, and within these the Internet, relate to a wider process of globalization of media communication. As John Tomlinson notes, this process of media globalization is best understood as a process of increasing global communicative connectivity (Tomlinson 1999: 1–12). But if we want to grasp the cultural specific aspects of this communicative connectivity, we have to contextualize it historically.

On an abstract level, any medium can be understood as an instrument for ‘establishing connectivity’. Language, for instance, is a tool that people use to

‘connect’ communicatively. Following Werner Faulstich (1996) and Carsten Winter (1996), for example, one can understand itinerant preachers as ‘human media’ because they make communicative connections between people in different regions of a country. Electronic media such as films, television, radio and the Internet can also be understood in this way as tools for establishing connectivity. Their representations construct symbolic links between different cultures.

These examples can be used to illustrate the following two points. First, connectivity is a general avenue of communication. It is not new or specific to electronic media or the Internet. This is important since many current theories tend to neglect this: for example, the network theory of Manuel Castells (Castells 1996: 31–8). Second, something has changed in the process of establishing connectivity in the course of media history. The first forms of establishing connectivity were strongly based on ‘physical aspects’, as is the case, for example, with the obviously physical nature of a person’s travels. By contrast, the forms of connectivity that have become important in the course of the past two centuries are forms with reduced ‘physical aspects’. Of course, Internet connections still have a physical basis in electronic cable networks, but the forms of connectivity are progressively less linked to this ‘base’.

If we focus on the cultural changes associated with globalization, we can see clearly this progressive ‘de-linkage’ of cultural forms at work. Néstor García Canclini, for example, has argued that the form of cultural change promoted by globalization is deterritorialization; and this deterritorialization, he avers, issues in a growing loss of the apparently natural relationship between culture, and geographical and social territories – a relationship that is mediated by globalization processes (García Canclini 1995: 229).

But having my general arguments on conceptualizing media connectivity in mind, I believe the concept of deterritorialization needs further refinement if it is to serve as a basis for analytical and empirical work on current media cultures and the changes they are undergoing. The main problem with García Canclini’s work is that the different aspects of deterritorialization are conflated. First of all, there is something that might be called ‘physical deterritorialization’ on which the arguments of García Canclini and some other commentators focus.<sup>1</sup> In the age of globalization many people are moving, travelling and migrating, and the world as a whole is much more

mobile than in previous centuries. García Canclini focuses on this when he speaks about the cultural changes in Latin America or the United States, drawing particularly on the example of migrants. But we can also see an increase in these forms of mobility within Europe.<sup>2</sup>

There is, in addition, a second type of deterritorialization; a type that might be called ‘communicative deterritorialization’. The cultural changes associated with globalization imply not only the increasing mobility of people and goods, but also to the ongoing process of media globalization and the cultural changes it involves, which are very important in everyday life: as Hall (1997) notes, an increasing number of products which are available in different territories are media products.

Physical and communicative deterritorialization are interwoven at many different levels, especially where migration and other forms of mobility are concerned. Taking diasporas as an example of physical deterritorialization, it is obvious that they can only stand as stable ‘exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ because their members share common cultural representations (Tölölyan 1991: 3). These cultural representations are mediated: that is, based on communicative connectivity. Nevertheless, it is important for the following three reasons to draw a distinction between physical and communicative deterritorialization: speed, volatility and degree.

**Speed:** communicative deterritorialization seems to take place much faster than its physical counterpart. Media representations and communicative processes can circulate much more quickly and cheaply than goods or people. This is particularly the case with the Internet.

**Volatility:** communicative deterritorialization often seems to be much more volatile than physical deterritorialization. Many aspects of the former are difficult to enact: for example, the nationally-specific formats of soap-operas or quiz shows on television (Müller 2002), or the national Internet portal of a transnational provider. A person who is present as a foreigner seems, in this sense, much *more* present.

**Degree:** despite this, communicative deterritorialization is involved in everyday life to a much higher degree than is physical deterritorialization. While in Europe, as in many regions of the world, mobility is more limited than one might expect, as Morley notes, access to media products from many different regions of the world is evident (Morley 2000: 86104). Because of its speed and volatility, communicative

deterritorialization pervades everyday life on many levels.

Bringing these three aspects together, we can argue that the concept of communicative deterritorialization makes it possible to understand changes in media culture in times of globalization – changes which have already taken place. Media products are increasingly mediated across various territories: this is the case with international news, for example, as well as Hollywood and Bollywood blockbusters. And the Internet can be understood as the most deterritorialized medium, since its World Wide Web contents at least can theoretically be accessed from everywhere.

### **Translocal media cultures and identity**

So far, I have tried to outline a frame for understanding the media as tools for establishing communicative connectivity. If we argue in this way, and understand such theorizing not as an academic abstraction but as something to help us better understand our present world, we need to establish how such mediated connections can be examined in detail, and how an understanding of ‘identity’ be reached in this context.

In answer to the question of how we can analyse such mediated connections in detail, I would give the following answer: by focusing on translocality. (Hepp 2004)

The term ‘translocality’ is used in the analysis of media connectivity. There are two reasons for adopting this concept, both of them linked to the word ‘locality’ and its prefix ‘trans-’. ‘Locality’ emphasizes that in the time of media globalization the local world does not cease to exist. Irrespective of how far the communicative connectivity of a locality extends, this does not lead us to question whether a person is living his or her life primarily locally. As a physical human being he or she must reside somewhere. Certainly, this place changes its meaning with growing communicative connectivity, especially if this connectivity tends to be global. But globalization does not neutralize the importance of locality. ‘Trans-’ moves the analytical focus from questions of locality – the focus of media anthropology, for example – to questions of connectivity. If research centres on ‘translocality’ this emphasizes, on the one hand, that questions concerning all that is local still matter but, on the other, that today’s locales are connected physically and communicatively to a very high degree. And this is the reason why that which is local does not cease to exist, but rather *changes*.

In this way, ongoing communicative deterritorialization can be made comprehensible. Communicative deterritorialization means that one has translocal connections between different 'present contexts' and across various territories. And this way of thinking permits a fresh approach to theorizing media cultures. By media cultures I mean all cultures whose primary signifying resources are accessible through technology-based media. From this point of view, all media cultures have to be theorized as translocal, inasmuch as media make translocal communicative connections possible. In the context of connectivity theory, that is, media cultures in general have to be theorized as *translocal* phenomena.

This approach makes it possible to describe the change of European media cultures during the last hundred years in a different way. One can take the works of Benedict Anderson, Orvar Löfgren or David Morley as examples of this. The rise of national cultures is related to the diffusion of the so-called mass media. When different locales are very intensively connected, different people can be involved in a communicative process and in the construction of a common 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), 'cultural thickening' (Löfgren 2001) or 'home territory' (Morley 2000). These terms refer to the level on which questions of territory pertain to translocality. Television history provides an interesting example: television was marketed in the 1950s as 'global' and referred to as a 'window on the world'; it had to be appropriated locally, that is to say it had to find its place in local life: and the horizon of its first representations tended at first to be nationally territorial, because the first important television events were national celebrations, national football games or national serial productions. Like print media and radio before it, television thus helped to construct the territorialized 'imagined community' of a nation.

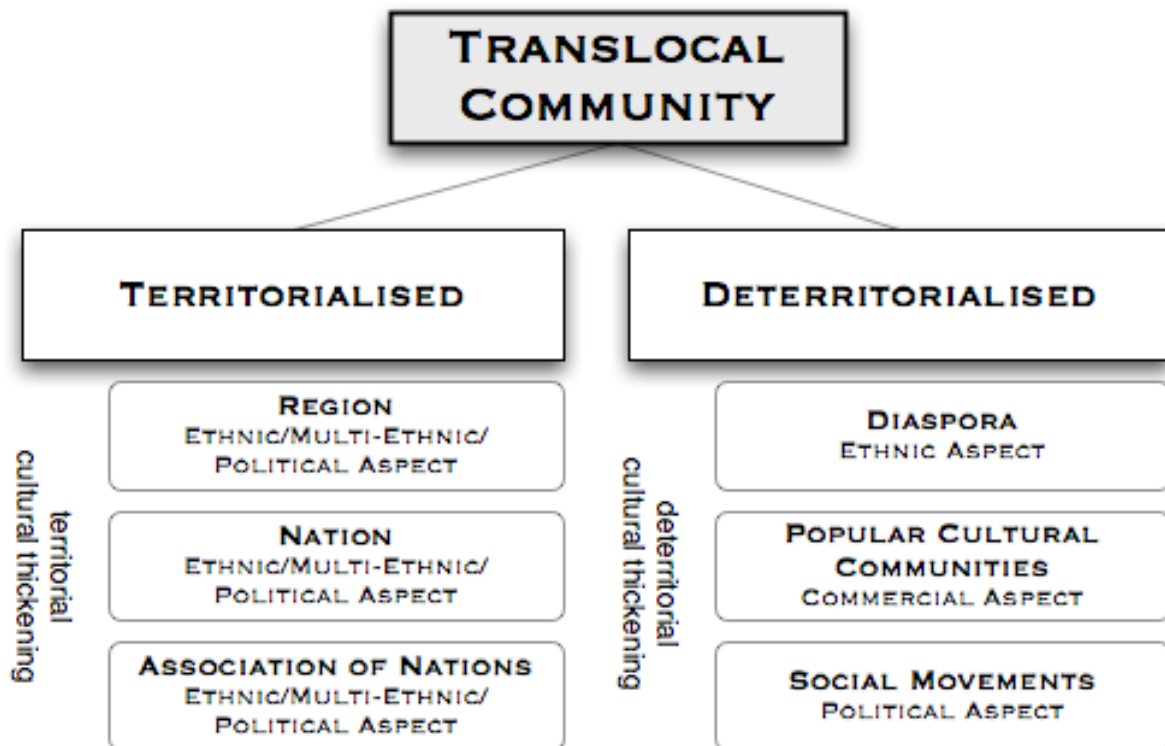
David Morley's metaphor of the 'home territory' is, at this point, important in two senses. On the one hand, it shows the specificity of these national media cultures. It is possible to describe national media cultures whose translocal communicative connectivity has been territorialized in such a way that national frontiers are the main borders of many communicative thickenings. This thickening of the national 'imagined community' was a territorially-bound process. On the other hand, Morley's metaphor of the 'home territory' shows quite clearly that the territoriality of the media-influenced home no longer exists in a pure form. In the era of globalization,

communicative connectivity is becoming more and more deterritorialized. With the distribution of media products across borders and the emergence and development of the Internet's global communicative connectivity the thickening of national media cultures becomes relative. This relativization needs to be seen in relation to various media networks: on the one hand, the 'borders' of the 'imagined communities' we belong to do not necessarily correspond with the territorial borders; on the other, territories remain an important reference point for constructing national community.

From my point of view, this is the perspective from which we should theorize questions of identity. Following Stuart Hall,<sup>3</sup> 'identity' may be understood as an ongoing process of articulation based on predefined, discursive elements. In this sense, the articulation of identity requires a personal dimension ('the identity of a subject') as a point of reference for the construction process but nevertheless also comprises discursively-mediated elements. Hitherto, it has been possible to argue that communities are the centre of these discourses of identity: we articulate the main aspects of our identities in a belonging to a bordered community. Today, however, identities are increasingly understood as 'media identities', indicating that most of the elements and communities to which identity articulation refers are mediated, translocal communities. Consequently, current European identities cannot be theorized without reference to their mediated character. They have to be thought of as 'media identities', referring to specific communicative thickenings of translocal media cultures with a corresponding constitution of community. These can be territorialized nations offering specific subject positions for national identities, but also deterritorialized forms of translocal cultures.

The foregoing suggests that the concept of 'translocal media cultures' offers a starting point for describing an increasing deterritorialization of communicative thickenings, but one that simultaneously insists on the continuing relevance of territorialization in the construction of national cultures and their identities. In other words, media identities in general are translocal phenomena, but their territorialization is historically specific (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Territorial and deterritorial translocal communities



Looking at European media cultures today, we can see both moments in play at the same time. On the one hand we still have territorially-focused thickenings of communicative connections – which is why it makes sense to talk about mediated ‘regional’ or ‘national’ translocal communities as reference points for identities. One example would be the identity of different German federal states like Bavaria or Bremen, another the different national identities within Europe. In addition, Europe itself is constructed as a space of communicative connectivity while the originating European identity is historically a territorially-bound process.<sup>4</sup> But at the same time, we have communicative thickenings across such territorial borders – thickenings which offer the space for deterritorial translocal communities with corresponding identities. Analytically, we can make a three-stage distinction here based on ethnic, commercial and political factors. At the level of ethnicity we have an increasing number of communicative thickenings of minority groups and diasporas within Europe. At the commercial level we have an increasing number of deterritorial popular cultural communities like youth cultures or scenes. At the political level we have an increasing number of deterritorial social movements.

One can argue that all of these examples are based on translocal media connectivity and specific cultural thickenings which offer an important resource point for identity. As I argue in the following section, the Internet is a highly important medium for the articulation of these deterritorial translocal communities and their corresponding identities. To discuss these processes in detail, I shall focus on two examples: diasporas and social movements.

### **Vaybee: the Internet and diasporas**

Taking diasporas as our first example, it has to be said that this kind of mobile culture is not new. As Ludger Pries has argued, 'migration is as old as humankind' (Pries 2001: 5). The history of Europe is arguably one of migration from its earliest times, ranging from the migration of peoples in the crises of the Roman Empire to the forced displacements and escapes of World War II. Since then we have seen years of postcolonial migration (especially to the UK, France and the Benelux countries), labour migration, elite migration, and migration for ethnic and political reasons among others, especially in Germany. In most European countries around ten per cent of the population comprises migrants (European Commission, 2003).

But the qualitative cultural change we have seen is not reducible to such statistical data. My point is that historically, migration has demonstrated a tendency towards emigration and a corresponding tendency amongst immigrants towards their assimilation in the 'foreign' cultural context. Migration in Europe today does not necessarily share this assimilatory tendency. This can be explained first by today's transport infrastructures, which enable migrants to travel back home for holidays or to live as transmigrants.<sup>5</sup> Second, this phenomenon is facilitated by the media, especially digital media, which make it possible to constitute a communicative space among such migrant cultures. Taking the example of the photos of the Internet café and telephone shop at the beginning of this essay one could argue that, in combination with other social processes, the speed, reach, and volatility of the Internet and other digital media make it possible for migrant communities to constitute stable diasporas across different territorial contexts.

To underline this point, I shall narrow my focus to a form of Internet content which has become increasingly relevant in Europe: the so called 'ethno-portals'. These are

web pages which are oriented towards members of specific migrant/ diasporic communities. In the German context there are several ethno-portals for all of the bigger European migrant groups. They include *germany.ru* and *kniga.de* for the ‘Russland-Deutsche’ (Russians with German ancestors), *polonium.de* for the Polish diaspora, *ellines.de* for the Greek diaspora or *hagalil.com* for the Jewish one. But the most successful of these portals is *vaybee.de*. ‘Vaybee’ is Turkish and means ‘wow’. The portal was founded in February 2000 by three brothers and their brother-in-law with an investment of 3.5 million Euros. In 2004 it had 32 million page views and 1.5 million visits per month. By August 2004 Vaybee had a total of 350,000 registered members (Kulmac 2004). Three factors help to explain why this specific ethno-portal can be considered characteristic of ethno-portals in general.

First, and like many others, Vaybee is a commercial enterprise targeting the 2.8 million people with Turkish ancestors who live in Europe, whether in Germany or elsewhere. The commercial interest of the ethno-portal lies in the possibility of addressing a specific ethnic group on very different levels. As people with Turkish ancestors are regarded as brand-orientated and youthful, this group is considered as a key advertising market and an increasingly important sales market. With this in mind, Vaybee also offers a Turkish shopping portal, web services and an ethno-marketing division.

The second typical feature of this portal is that the content of the site does not address Turkish people at all, but people of the Turkish diaspora in Europe – and especially in Germany, where the largest group lives. Most obviously, the language of the ethno-portal is Turkish and German. But beyond the language one notices special services targeting the diaspora of the so-called ‘Deutsch-Türken’ (Turkish-German community). For example, one section of the web portal contains forms and standard letters for communicating with public services, banks, and so on. This focus on the diasporic community is also manifested in the different Vaybee channels. On the lifestyle channel, for example, the topics discussed are not general Turkish topics but items oriented towards the diasporic community, such as interviews with popular German-Turkish representatives, or news about religious orientation within the diasporic community.

The third factor is that Vaybee’s content cannot be separated from the

communicative thickening of the Turkish diaspora in general. Over the ten different channels – including news/politics, lifestyle/scene, Turkey/travelling, car/motoring, music/cinema, love/eroticism, sports/fitness, money/finance, job/careers – the agenda pursued is clearly that of the Turkish diaspora’s media: the people who are discussed are diasporic media stars and the events foregrounded are predominantly media events. This integration in a wider diasporic communicative thickening goes much deeper if one also attends to forms of personal communication made on the different levels of digital media. There is a differentiated chat channel, for example, as well as Vaybee Mobile, where ring tones and logos can be downloaded by those who wish to advertise themselves as members of Turkey’s diasporic community.

These findings in relation to web content are confirmed where usage is concerned. In a study conducted in sample schools in Berlin, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, research students of mine focused on Internet use among Turkish youth. Methodologically, the study is based on responses to a survey of 111 German-Turkish pupils of the second or third migrant generation and on group discussions with them.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the general quantitative findings – for example, that Vaybee is used by 4.5 per cent of those surveyed – there are interesting qualitative results. In group discussions, for example, the young participants argue that they see the principal difference between general English or German web pages and Turkish or German-Turkish web pages like Vaybee at the level of content. They tend to use these web pages with the purpose of finding ‘Turkish’ information – on Turkish soaps, for example, or pop stars. To quote from the interviews: ‘there are soaps and so on "anything Turkey" and so on [...] and so Turkish stations’ (LÖ-Y-01, 13-year-old-schoolgirl, cited in Dannowski *et al.* 2003: 74). Such quotations indicate a focus on a diasporic popular culture which manifests itself in a specific diasporic web aesthetics.

In addition, 78% of those surveyed describe chatting as their preferred way of using the Internet (Dannowski *et al.* 2003: 79). A total of 60 per cent use chat-rooms several times a month or more. Chat is an important tool for personal translocal communication among the youth and diasporic chat-rooms are popular: 50 per cent of users chat normally with other ‘Turkish’ people while only ten per cent chat with Germans; interestingly, 48 per cent of all chat occurs as often in German as it does in Turkish. That is, where young people chat with other members of the Turkish

diasporic community, they are likely to make substantial use of German as a chatting language. A total of 15 per cent use chat rooms to get to know members of the Turkish diaspora who are based in Europe – in France, for example, Italy, the UK, the Netherlands, Andorra, Cyprus, Latvia, or Luxembourg – or further afield, in localities such as India, Senegal or Afghanistan. When asked in detail in the group discussions about their chat-room experience, respondents report that they use nicknames to indicate membership of the diasporic community.

All of this suggests that chat is a tool of ‘identity communication’ for young people, and enables them to make the translocal articulation of an identity beyond territorial frames.<sup>7</sup> The key point here is that identity is defined as ‘living (hybrid) Turkish identity outside Turkey’ rather than reproducing identities shaped by traditional borders. In this sense the chat room works as a meeting point for the diasporic community. As one of our interviewees observed: ‘I was informed by my sister: go inside like that is a good chat and you can meet many people and so on: now o’course I know so many Turkish people living in Stuttgart and in Berlin and wherever • I’d expect to meet so much people’ (LÖ-Z-02, a 17-year-old schoolgirl, cited in Dannowski *et al.* (2003: 87). This quotation indicates how chat-rooms promote a translocal communicative space able to traverse the key concentrations of the Turkish-German community.

While religious conflicts between Sunnites and Allevites or between Turks and Kurds are discussed to some extent in chat rooms, this communicative space also offers the possibility of identity-based communication beyond these traditionally conflictual borders. To quote an 18-year-old schoolboy: ‘during a chat I’ve got to know he was a Kurdish allevite: and we have talked a lot and he thought I have left wing position answered me I have a right wing position and so on: we just talked about what is actually the difference and why do you think this and that: I really went ahead: formed a view on Kurdish people: was actually quite good’ (B-YI-06, an 18-year-old schoolboy, cited in Dannowski *et al.* (2003: 93). To sum up, it can be argued that chat rooms offer – particularly younger – members of the diasporic community space for the personal translocal articulation of a specific Turkish diasporic identity which lies beyond the experience of ‘living a national Turkish identity abroad’.

The example of Vaybee suggests that the Internet opens up the possibility of a

diasporic communicative thickening that is specifically *deterritorial*, rather than simply a thickening of national Turkish communication abroad. But the example also raises two wider points relating to the Internet and diasporic communities in Europe. First, Vaybee underlines the local-specific character of the communicative thickening experienced by a diasporic community. It seems that such a communicative thickening cannot be understood simply as a third space between cultures, but rather as a specific translocal connectivity where diasporic culture and identity are negotiated, contested and transformed with highly local references to the new living context. Second, an Internet portal like Vaybee with its World Wide Web content, chat-rooms and services is important for the diasporic community and for its articulation of identity. But if we explore this phenomenon further the communicative thickening in question is revealed to be trans-medial, in the sense that it integrates traditional media such as television and radio together with new digital media such as the Internet and mobile devices. In this sense, the Internet communication has to be contextualized in a wider, trans-medial frame.

Both of these points underline the extent to which the use of the Internet is contextualized in everyday life and media use. The Internet is not used to articulate identities beyond the everyday; it is a tool used to articulate identity, on a personal level, translocally within the everyday. In this sense, communicative deterritorialization cannot be separated out from everyday experiences, but has to be explained within them.

### **Attac: the Internet and social movements**

My second, more politically-focused example of a deterritorial community with a corresponding identity is the critical globalization movement. Since the 1960s, at least, there has been ongoing research on social movements, which has recently focussed on their globalization in particular.<sup>8</sup> Manuel Castells has developed a somewhat optimistic theory in relation to the Internet, social movements and identity, which argues that social movements can offer space for transforming ‘resistance identities’ into ‘project identities’. These project identities confer a new power on identity by initiating social change, ‘aiming at the transformation of society as a whole, in continuity with the values of communal resistance to dominant interests

enacted by global flows of capital, power, and information.’ (Castells 1997: 357) This works through new forms of power, which lie ‘in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions, and people build their lives, and decide their behaviour.’ (Castells 1997: 359) Extending this to media and cultural studies, we observe that until recently there have been high hopes concerning the Internet’s potential to open an ‘alternative public sphere’ for social movements.<sup>9</sup>

Keeping both of these contexts in mind, our research group has investigated communicative networking within the critical globalization movement in Germany and its European context.<sup>10</sup> A central part of this critical globalization movement within continental Europe is Attac, an abbreviation for the French ‘Association pour une Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l’Aide aux Citoyens’ (broadly, ‘international movement for the democratic control of financial markets and their institutions’). Our methodology included participating at different national and regional events organized under the aegis of Attac, interviewing experts, network members and sympathizers about Attac, analysing its web site and other pages associated with the critical globalization movement. While it is at present active in 33 countries and in 15 languages, we were particularly interested in how this movement is constituted locally as a deterritorial community within Europe and how an identity is taking shape within it.

The first point to make is that the Internet is a key organizing tool for the critical globalization movement. As Naomi Klein has written in *No Logo*, her study of the interrelation of the Internet and the critical globalization movement, ‘the net is more than an organizing tool – it has become an organizing model, a blueprint for decentralized but co-operative decision making.’ (Klein 2000: 396) But empirical work on the communicative connectivity of Attac obliges us to extend Klein’s argument: for while the Internet might be ‘a blueprint for decentralized but co-operative decision making’, the fundamental point is that the Internet has combined with the traditional mass media as a key tool for articulating identity articulation within the movement.

Investigating the communicative connectivity of Attac within the critical globalization movement requires us to make a distinction between internal and

external communicative flows: the first take place between the members of the network, the second extend the connectivity of the network to wider communicative thickenings at a local, regional, national and transnational level. As one respondent pointed out, for the purpose of internal communicative flows 'internal e-mail is the most important thing'. This presents an intrinsic problem for the Attac network to the extent that interested parties – and especially the elderly and/or those on low income – tend to be excluded, especially from the organizational elite. The result is a kind of digital divide within the network, based primarily on media competence/literacy (which is a problem for some of the elderly) and secondarily on economics (which may present problems for unemployed and/or low income groups).

Moreover, e-mail is not the completely open form of communication that Naomi Klein suggests. Where Attac is concerned we need to differentiate between at least three levels of e-mail communication. The first is organizational, which tends to be restricted to people who are at least informally accepted members of Attac's organizational elite. Then there is information that is communicated to the entire membership of the network. This includes a number of open information lists concerning specific topics but also a general list, via which Attac's members and sympathizers are informed about current problems, planned campaigns or demonstrations and so on. Finally, there is what we might call identity communication. This takes place above all via the general national and transnational e-mail-list, where one finds ongoing communication concerning the self-perception of Attac and its members. This type of communication focuses on aspects of its political identity as a member of the critical globalization movement; it can be understood first and foremost as the basis for articulating a deterritorial political belonging beyond the national state and beyond the territorial frame of the European Union. But this identity communication also covers further aspects of everyday living and popular culture. Specifically, if you are a member of the critical globalization movement, then this will affect the music you listen to, for example, the clothes you wear and the food you eat. In this sense the deterritorial identity of the critical globalization movement, in Europe at least, is not only political but also has shared cultural aspects.

In a certain sense Attac is a brand or logo of the European critical globalization movement, especially within France and Germany. This branding function can be

accounted for within the critical globalization movement itself, where the web page of the different Attac groups can be understood as an easy-to-find portal through which to access the wider critical globalization movement. This is exemplified in the linking structure of the German web site *attac.de*, as it figures in a visualized Google search (see Fig. 3). Using the web page of *attac.de* one can access most of the key Internet sites of the critical globalization movement at a national level and beyond, especially in the European context. Or, to make this point clearer, in the words of one member we interviewed ‘*attac.de* is the main critical globalization web page in Germany, from where nearly everything is linked.’

*Fig. 3: Link structure of attac.de*

Zur Anzeige wird der QuickTime™  
Dekompressor „TIFF (LZW)“  
benötigt.

Source: <http://www.touchgraph.com/TGGoogleBrowser.html> [7/2003]

But the Attac brand is effective beyond the critical globalization movement itself. It helps the media in general (at least in some European contexts) to identify specific people and actions with the critical globalization movement. And this is precisely the intention of Attac, as a part of the critical globalization movement. This becomes

clear if we consider the demonstrations associated with the G8 talks in Genoa in 2001, the first critical globalization protest events in Europe. Conflict there between the police and some militant demonstrators was the event which raised the critical globalization movement's profile in Europe. It caused a high number of external communicative flows: during their coverage of the events the media started looking for the 'voice' of the critical globalization movement, or what could be constructed as one. Along with other bodies, Attac was viewed in parts of Europe as such a voice. In the event, the coverage of Genoa and of the movement as a whole was constructed around Attac, which figured as a peaceful but important part of it. This not only helped the network to grow rapidly but also resulted in a specific identity articulation within it that continues to work today. The television and print coverage of Genoa remains an important identity resource within the critical globalization movement, especially within Attac, as this was the turning point for interest in the critical globalization movement within the traditional media. It placed the critique of globalization not only on the agenda of the so-called 'mass media' but also on that of European politics more generally. In this sense the media coverage of Genoa highlights the power of the critical globalization movement. On a reflexive level, it is the key point for identity articulation, defined here not only as a protest identity but as a project identity in the sense proposed by Castells. The event makes the direction of media policy obvious for Attac members and for others in the critical globalization movement. A useful media policy lies not in constructing an alternative public sphere through an alternative use of the Internet, but in using the Internet for internal organizational, informative, and identity-based communication to prepare protest events on the regional, national and global levels that are the reference point of external communicative flows. As one Attac member we interviewed said: 'for a few good images and stories we let somewhere a tax haven isle swim.'

Drawing together these points on Attac it is clear that, as part of the deterritorial community of the critical globalization movement, the network constitutes itself in a number of different local groups. It does so by using media such as the telephone and e-mail, but chiefly through face-to-face communication at local meetings and events. Communicative connectivity across the deterritorial community occurs above all in exchanges between the organizational elite, whose members are in contact with each

other through e-mail, the World Wide Web, and regional and national events. In this sense, there is a national thickening within the critical globalization movement which also manifests itself in specific organizational structures: the Attac office in Germany, for example, or in France. Nevertheless, the organizational elite are in contact with other members throughout Europe, as well as further afield. Again, a deterritorialized communicative thickening is constituted through e-mail and the WWW, but also through face-to-face-communication at global events. And all the time there remains the traditional media coverage of the movement which uses CMC to articulate something like a mediated, translocal horizon of meaning. This horizon offers the movement's members an understanding of their own 'imagined community' and corresponding identities.

### **Perspectives**

This concluding section does not propose to outline general perspectives for research on the Internet and identity. Indeed, I am not sure whether such perspectives can exist in times when CMC and the Internet are becoming more and more differentiated. The perspectives referred to here are thus ones that can be seen emerging within our Media Culture research group, and derive from our research over the last two years. They are organized here around three terms introduced above: thickening, trans-mediality and identity-bordering.

**Thickening:** One of my main arguments has been that we ought to conceptualize media communication processes using the metaphor of connectivity. This enables us to theorize these processes in a translocal frame, rather than an unproblematized territorial one. By viewing media cultures translocally rather than territorially, we can separate different layers of agglomeration within media connectivity. Both regionally and nationally there continues to be a cultural thickening of media representations, and this is strongly manifested in Europe with its traditional national public media systems and its variety of languages. If one takes television as an example, recent studies show that prime-time serial productions in different regions of Europe are representations of the national as regards their availability and the topics they represent. (Hallenberger 2002) And research on web content reveals a tendency to

reproduce the national perspectives of print, radio and television. (Halavais 2000) Yet at the same time deterritorial media connectivity gains relevance as globalization advances. Two examples of this are discussed above: the media connectivity of a diasporic community and that of a social movement. In both cases, translocal connectivity constitutes an ‘imagined community’ as a resource for identity. These communities are, nonetheless, deterritorial.

Once again the main point is that, in the era of globalization, it is no longer possible to situate arguments within an exclusively territorial frame. While one can say that territorial features still have relevance in the form of national thickenings of communicative connectivity, there are other kinds of such connectivity which cross territorial borders. Because of this, it is necessary to understand media connectivity as a complex landscape, particularly as deterritorial examples are increasing. Defining ‘imagined communities’ and identities as subjects of research becomes increasingly complex in this translocal frame as different types of thickening come into focus.

**Trans-mediality:** After summarizing the empirical data on Vaybee and Attac, I discussed the Internet as one aspect of general media use – including the traditional, so-called mass, media. This brings me to another point which seems to me to be important: we academics are used to constructing our perspectives by distinguishing between specific media and, above all, by highlighting differences between ‘traditional mass media’ (such as television or radio) and ‘new digital media’ (such as Internet or mobile phones). Such differences are helpful, because they allow us to consider how the media influence communication processes – an influence with far-reaching results as Harold Innis (1951) and Joshua Meyrowitz (1987) have both shown. But it is obvious that communicative thickenings are often constituted across different media. The result is a kind of ‘everyday trans-mediality’, especially where processes of identity articulation are concerned.

...Bearing this in mind helps us to understand the stability of these thickenings where communicative connectivity is concerned. The communicative thickening of a deterritorial community like the Turkish diaspora, for example, maintains its stability within ‘foreign’ cultural contexts and across completely different media, from print, television and radio to web pages and mobile phones. ‘Trans-mediality’ in this sense

helps us to understand a specific cultural form. But it also challenges the way we do media research, because taking trans-mediality seriously means that we have to think more about starting our research with everyday phenomena and analysing the role of different media there, rather than starting with our academic typology of different media and looking for phenomena that fit it. While it is not always possible, I should like to argue we should aim to contextualize our research on Internet and identity more often in this way.

**Identity bordering:** My last point, important for the argument I have elaborated, is something I want to term ‘identity bordering’. The term may well grate, but I shall use it nevertheless to evoke something that in German is called ‘Grenzziehung’, the process of drawing a border.

One of my main arguments has been that identity is not something which can only be discussed on a ‘personal’ level; rather media discourses on translocal communities serve as a reference point for identity articulation. During the last two centuries we have been accustomed within Europe to assume that the main translocal communities where processes of identity articulation were concerned, the basis for ‘imagined communities’, were territorially-bounded national ones. But an ongoing process of media globalization within Europe has resulted in a situation in which deterritorial communities are gaining relevance.

This is resulting in an increasingly complex process of ‘identity bordering’: that is, differences between identities can no longer be territorialized with the ease we are used to. Instead, we have to focus the processes of constructing the borders of identities in and through the media themselves, rather than looking for stable borders within which we can discuss the various forms of mediated identity articulation within Europe. If we do this, it becomes possible to understand the power but also the conflicts of identity articulation in contemporary contexts.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> On this, see for example Appadurai (1996: pp. 27–65).

<sup>2</sup> For statistical data on this see European Commission (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Hall argues that 'identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or "chaining" of the subject into the flow of discourse' (Hall 1996: p. 3).

<sup>4</sup> See Kleinsteuber and Rossmann 1994; Morley and Robins 1995

<sup>5</sup> For examples, see Pries (2001: pp. 49–53).

<sup>6</sup> For a fuller account see Dannowski et al. (2003).

<sup>7</sup> At this level there is a difference to local, face to face 'identity talk' (see for this Barker and Andre 1996, Barker 1998, Gillespie 1995 and Hepp 1998): Identity chat offers a translocal possibility for identity communication, while 'identity talk' as a form of face-to-face-communication is inescapable local.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Porta et al. (1999) and Cohen and Rai (2000).

<sup>9</sup> On this see, for example, Atton (2002).

<sup>10</sup> See Dobrzewski et al. (2003), and Hepp and Vogelgesang (2004).