CRITICAL PEACE IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE

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Towards Critical Peace Studies

- ‘Peace’ is not merely an ‘absence of war’ (Creighton and Shaw, 1987).
- ‘Peace’ a vague concept, but there are many different degrees, dimensions and levels of ‘peace’ (Ehrlich, 1987).
- Great divide in social sciences: ‘Order-based’ Versus ‘conflict-based’
Critiques of Liberal Peace & Conflict Resolution: ethnic conflict-ridden societies

1. Informed by neo-liberal economics: in austerity & crisis?
2. Conceived in geopolitical & spatial contexts, Western northern traditions >> then imposed on non-western regions.
3. Overlook ‘internal’ consequences suffered by ‘pacified spaces’ i.e invasive practices: ignore, orientalize, romanticize ‘other’.
4. Lack sociological & contextual historical depth; Suffer from: (a) Eurocentrism; (b) intellectual dependency c) exceptionalism.
5. CR paradigms from comparative political science. No sociology
6. Fragmentation, disciplinary specialisation disconnect the conflict from reconciliation processes. Superficial modelling rather than in-depth comparative sociological studies
Alternative Envisioning: Toward Critical Peace

- Ambitious project: pursued historically, globally and regionally.
- ‘World out of joint’ (Wallerstein) Current context: Multifaceted crisis (economic, political, social, hegemonic demise, etc.)
- Collapse of post-cold war ‘liberal triumph’ produces fundamentalisms, violence and conflict zones threatening ‘stable and secure zones’.
- Collapse of nation-states, welfare generates survival strategies.
- Stimulating alternative peace models and processes - Must be studied & connected to their potentialities.
How do we ‘restore’ societies torn by war, conflict and division?

- Fundamentally ‘successful’ peace-building, peace-keeping and ‘restoring’ societies in mainstream circles.
- Rethink peace-building in terms of social transformation:
  - Read societies as dynamic spaces of struggles and contestation for betterment v. domination/exploitation
  - Understand peace within social struggles
  - The generation of new socialities: social forces developing social links, even in extreme situations
  - Digital materialities, social media and networks
Restoring Cyprus: a society torn by war, conflict and division

- Eg. ‘Intercommunal Killings in Cyprus’ (Loizos 1988)
  - 20 years after the ‘logic’ of intercommunal violence: “collectivist, generalizing and non-specific”).

- Sitas (2007): Conditions for genocidal killings & ‘ethnic cleansing’ 1963-1974 Cyprus present (M. Man The Dark side of Democracy,) yet did not occur such a scale. ‘Cypriot humanism’ = ‘ethic of reconciliation’?

- 2016: 25% G/C have T/C friends (Psaltis 2016) & reconciliation & social media: emergence of new third space? Potential? Barriers (language, barbed wire, bureaucratic, ideological, everydayness etc)
CP: Reshaping Public Spheres – ‘truth as a war casualty’

- How do we generate a new public sphere that is open, seeking peace & cooperation [‘third space’, ‘ethic of reconciliation’ etc]? 
- What about the legal and normative framework: 
  - Professional issues, ethics and sanctions 
  - Address forms of ethnic/communal censorship 
  - Economic/political interests, ownership, control 
- The case of Cyprus: A new federal public sphere - generate conflict transformation?
Conflict transformation: Three connected routes

- Frontal attack on definition of the nature of conflict & division: Against ‘ethnicizing’/, ‘national’ alignment - a political disagreement & de-ethnicisation
- Contextualisation and relativisation
- Transference towards social and other issues
  - Consequence: potential for new third spaces, but need to rethink public sphere.
From Critical Peace to Critical Peace Journalism

Newspaper circulation: the last casualty of war
Peace Journalism

**a definition**
PJ is a frame of journalistic news coverage which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace (Hanitzsch, 2004).

**a critical evaluation of Conflict Reporting**
- the criteria of news selection (Galtung and Vincent, 1993).
- the mono-causality within journalistic descriptions of the origins and causes of conflicts (Schicha, 1999).
- media focus attention on a conflict arena only when manifest violence is about to take place (Jakobsen, 2000).

**its limits**
- cultural/social pressures on the journalistic process
- structural constrains which shape and limit the work of journalists
Public Sphere and Conflict Transformation

- “Public Sphere” is the space in which social actors and groups of social actors deliberate about their common affairs (Habermas, 1991).
  - Participation in the Public Sphere of modern and mass societies is (in theory) empowered through media (Fraser, 1990)
News media in Cyprus contribute rather to maintain and reinforcing the conflict than to its’ resolution. (
Towards Digital Federal Public Sphere in Cyprus?

- only alternative media tends to promote such a public sphere
- the thematic core remains the “Cyprus Problem”
- mainly not bilingual but in English
- the few bilingual provide different content in the two languages
- the only exception is the online news portal of PIK/KRYK/CYBC

It seems rather as a third autonomous and separate sphere than a common and federal one...
Main hypothesis:

The formation of a (Digital) Federal Public Sphere is crucial in transcending ethnic conflict/hatred ideologies by establishing processes which enable to:

- redefine and challenge the conflict divisions
- contextualize and relativize the conflict
- transfer the conflict to other issues
Instead of Concluding: *empirical potentialities*

**Research Questions**

- What is the impact of the only mainstream online news media (CYBC) in terms of conflict resolution?
- In what extent and under what conditions other mainstream online news media could follow the example of CYBC?
- Is the audience of Cyprus interested in accessing news content in the media of the “other” site?
- Do online mainstream news media in Cyprus produce news and promote issues that could be interested for a bi-communal audience?
- In what extent and under what conditions they would be able to produce this type of news?
Selected Bibliography


- Trimithiotis, D. (2014). Why is the category of “pluralism” insufficient to describe the media sphere?: French Journal for Media Research, 1.

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