

Media & Citizenship:

Transnational Television Cultures Reshaping Political Identities in the European Union

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Media & Citizenship studies the ways transnational media, in particular Arabic language television, reshape the political landscapes of citizenship in the European Union. It provides the first European wide empirical research on the use of Arabic language television and its effect on integration in multicultural societies. After collecting data across 7 EU nations, focus group studies explore how Arabic speakers themselves construct citizenship in the light of their media use, and their adopted national cultures.

Models of democratic participation continue to be based on the nation state, while political debate is no longer contained within its boundaries. All citizens of the EU already have dual citizenship, of their nation and of the Union. That dual identity is underpinned by millenia of intermingling. Concerns around extreme expressions of Islamic fundamentalism on one hand, and the advance of moral panics around a threatening religious difference on the other, have brought Muslim communities into the core of political and media debates about citizenship in Europe. Those communities, unlike earlier diasporic communities, have access to a shared 'public sphere', the space of Arabic language television. That supernational sphere influences perceptions of citizenship and civic values. Yet regimes for testing values of citizenship remain rooted in the national.

The objectives of the project are to gather quantitative and qualitative comparative empirical data on the use of Arabic language television in Europe, in order to deliver well founded policy advice on issues relating to the media and its regulation. The project works with Arabic

speakers on their understandings of citizenship, derived from the media on the one hand and imposed by citizenship testing regimes on the other, in order to involve the community to influence policy at the national and European level.