EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND SMALL NATIONS:
IS THERE A CRITICAL ROLE FOR ACADEMIC INTELLECTUALS?
CRC WORKSHOP, HELSINKI JUNE 7–8, 2013

A REPORT

In early June, 2013, a group of critical academics from small European nations gathered in Helsinki to discuss the condition of and prospects for the European public sphere as well as the role of critical intellectuals in defining the future of Europe. The meeting was an extension to a workshop held in Ljubljana two years earlier, and participation had expanded from the preceding meeting's small group of Finnish and Slovenian scholars to well over 20 scholars from several small European countries. The workshop consisted of two parts: a public seminar and a round table for pre-invited scholars. It was organised in memory of Dr Sinikka Sassi, who was an active member of the European Public Sphere and Small Nations research network. The public session, which was attended by some 50 listeners, was dedicated to themes that were close to her heart.

A collection of articles based on a selection of the presentations given during the workshop will be published in *Javnost – The Public* in 2014.

PUBLIC SESSION: EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND CRITICAL INTELLECTUALS

The opening session of the round table was organised as a public seminar and focused on the historical and contemporary roles of critical intellectuals in the European public sphere. The topic was approached from various angles by Prof. Keijo Rahkonen, who gave the opening address, as well as by the three keynote speakers, Professor Emerita Ullamaija Kivikuru, Professor Slavko Splichal and Professor Nico Carpentier. The session was devoted to our late colleague, Dr Sinikka Sassi, who dedicated much of her academic interest to these critical issues.

OPENING WORDS, PROFESSOR KEIJO RAHKONEN

Opening the discussion on the role of intellectuals, **Prof. Keijo Rahkonen** presented several examples of intellectuals during the course of European modernity. According to Rahkonen, claims about the death of the intellectual by such figures as Lyotard and Baudrillard should be taken seriously; due to the fragmentation of the scientific field, the intellectual as a 'generalist' who is capable of addressing a broad range of issues with authority has become a rare species in public arenas. Nevertheless, publicly recognised intellectuals still exist, albeit in constant danger of becoming relegated to the status of

'media intellectuals' offering light entertainment as opposed to serving a more serious role as 'public intellectuals'. Prof. Rahkonen also opened the debate on the meaning of the public sphere by pointing to several historical and contemporary varieties of public spaces—from Café Procope to Hofbräuhaus in Münich to the urban neighbourhood pubs in Finland—which, since the early institutions of the bourgeois public sphere, have given rise to many different kinds of publics. Indeed, the coming together of politically relevant publics has by no means become a thing of the past. In this regard, Prof. Rahkonen was optimistic about the new possibilities offered by social media in promoting and maintaining Habermasian ideals of the public sphere.

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN, PROFESSOR EMERITA ULLAMAIJA KIVIKURU

In her presentation, **Prof. Ullamaija Kivikuru** related a narrative of Dr Sinikka Sassi's academic career as set against the history of the Department of Communication at the University of Helsinki. In the original 'A room of one's own', Virginia Woolf wrote about the difficulties creative women faced in trying to combine public and private lives and called for more breathing space and access to education for women. Correspondingly, Prof. Kivikuru told a story of Sinikka Sassi and other early women employees of the department, who came to be known as the 'communication girls' and who taught communication to hundreds of students while trying to find rooms of their own.

In the late 1970s, the department was to a large extent run by the 'communication girls'. Their positions were modest, but they did everything as a team. Communication was the most popular minor at the University of Helsinki, and the communication girls were swamped with work. As a result, they were unable to complete their academic degrees in due course and thus tended to lose the game against the 'Tampere boys' (in the Journalism and Mass Media Department of the University of Tampere) in competition for academic positions. Eventually, however, they all finished studies and were able to concentrate on their academic pursuits. Prof. Kivikuru noted that as the individual professional profiles of each of the communication girls accumulated, the team grew weaker, and she pondered whether such loosening of collective ties is something inevitable in academia. The communication girls wanted to change society in their own ways, and they all found their 'own rooms' at some point. Along with the academic work, Sinikka Sassi was an activist who engaged in all kinds of civic activism throughout her life, from the well-being of street dogs to community councils and e-elections.

EXPERTS, INTELLECTUALS AND PUBLICS: FRAGMENTS ON THE MOOT ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE, PROFESSOR SLAVKO SPLICHAL

In the second keynote speech of the public session, **Prof. Slavko Splichal** addressed two issues concerning the contradictory role of intellectuals in the public sphere. First, he presented the question of the debate about intellectuals being so far removed from the general interest that they become a class with private knowledge. Second, he pondered whether professionalisation of knowledge and professionalisation of communication are unified in that they both strengthen the power of dominant social actors.

Prof. Splichal critically examined the relationship between universities and the public sphere. Normatively, the university can be seen as a blueprint of the public sphere, as it encompasses the two main attributes of the public sphere: freedom of expression manifested in presumably rational scientific discourse. Paradoxically, despite its potential

to serve as a sort of 'role model profile' for the public sphere, the university has never been given an important role in theorisations of publicness. Tönnies recognised university professors as the class of social actors who substantiate the legitimate and effective social or political power of public opinion. However, the university is not a true embodiment of the principle of publicness, as the social power of universities is based on the appropriation of a certain monopoly of knowledge and because access to universities is far from universal. In contrast to Tönnies, Habermas recognised intellectuals as 'intruders' in the public sphere. Thus, intellectuals are not considered members of the public but rather intruders with a controversial role in the public sphere. Dewey cautioned against alienation of research and education from public life by arguing that 'a class of experts is inevitably so removed from common interests as to become a class with private interests and private knowledge, which in social matters is not knowledge at all.' What is missing is that scholars should bring their disciplines 'into conversation with publics' to actively participate in the creation and transformation of publics.

There has not been much research about the role of scholars in the public sphere. Early debates on freedom of the press pointed toward the idea of publicness as a moral principle and as an extension of personal freedom of thought and expression, which ought to restrain the self-interest of individuals, rather than as a mere pursuit of self-interest based on a sort of contractual exchange. With the constitutional guarantee of a free press in parliamentary democracies, discussions of freedom of the press were largely reduced to the pursuit of freedom by the media, thus neglecting the idea of publicness as the basis of democratic citizenship. In the period of the liberal bourgeois public sphere, both the university and the press were closely linked to the nation-state and thus were 'national' not only in form but also in substance. Divergent paths of development taken by the university and the press in the 19th and 20th centuries seem to draw close to each other in the age of globalisation. The phenomenon of global governance is increasingly seen as lacking democratic legitimacy because it does not provide for citizens' participation in a democratic dialogue and decision-making; nor does it provide for the public accountability of decision-makers. In addition, professionalisation is characteristic of contemporary sciences and universities. Professionalisation of universities implies a neglect of critical studies. Prof. Splichal emphasised that in the current situation, we need more 'public social sciences'—not only production of critical knowledge, as in critical theories, but also production intended for non-academic and non-professional audiences.

BUILDING A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGY. THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE NEED FOR CRITICAL INTERVENTION, PROFESSOR NICO CARPENTIER

Prof. Nico Carpentier opened his presentation by offering some critical rearticulations of the concept of the intellectual. He took the audience back in time to the Republic of Letters, defining it as an essentially transnational public sphere which mainly existed in the imaginations of the European and American intellectuals of the day. He also discussed the Dreyfus Affair and noted how this event changed the very use of the notion; the intellectual came to be seen as a committed member of a group instead of as an individual actor. Prof. Carpentier acknowledged that the definition of the concept of the intellectual is far from simple, and while the thesis of the death of the intellectual should not be accepted, there is no point in denying the restrictions that academic intellectuals have to face. Still, he argued, 'the intellectual' can be a useful term in helping to structure our activities, pointing to the significance of critique and counter-hegemonic discourses.

The role of intellectuals tends to provoke discussion during times of crisis. Turning to the current predicament, Prof. Carpentier outlined three dimensions in the contemporary crisis. Firstly, there is a crisis of representative democracy; the political system is proving to be structurally inadequate to provide its citizens with solutions to a wide variety of problems. Secondly, overlapping with the first, there is the economic crisis. The third crisis is situated on a more ontological level and is that of mimesis. At specific historical moments, prevailing discourses have offered people reassuring certainties and helped them believe in the world as a stable place that can be mimetically accessed. In contemporary conjuncture, however, it is harder and harder for ideological projects to provide such a feeling of connection with reality. The promise of mimesis is being constantly frustrated.

The accumulation and integration of the three crises create a need for the development of critical ideologies and counter-hegemonic processes. While neoliberalism has obtained hegemony, political and economic crises bring out the many dislocations of this project and can render it unsustainable. Thus far, the hegemonic project has managed to incorporate these dislocations due to the absence of well-developed alternatives. Hence, the task of the intellectual is to help organise the disruptions into a credible counter-hegemonic program. Prof. Carpentier emphasised, however, that such formation of new ideological programs is by no means a straightforward project. Firstly, there is a complex relationship between agency and discursive practices; generating rhetoric is simple, but it is not easily translated into discourse. Secondly, there is the difficult relationship between complexity and simplicity. Ideology is often perceived as having a tendency towards simplicity, while intellectual projects tend to celebrate complexity. However, the complexity of ideology lies in its simplicity and ability to speak to diverse audiences; thus it requires thorough analysis to generate rhetoric that has the in-built structural capacity to form sustainable ideologies. Thirdly, the crisis of mimesis should also be faced. Thus the ideological project needs to mediate between modernism and postmodernism, constructing discourses that are both self-reflexive and committed to raising a firm voice against injustices. Acknowledging these challenges, intellectuals can play a critical role in developing a counter-hegemonic model that tries to make sense of the new world. This, however, requires a modest attitude as well as the formation of alliances and networks of intellectuals on a transnational level. The time could be ripe for a new Republic of Letters.

ROUND 1. THE IDEAL OF THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE TODAY: COMPARING IDEAS AND EXPERIENCE

Prof. Jostein Gripsrud started the first session of the round table by tackling the issue of the ideal of the European public sphere. He started the presentation by quoting Habermas, in order to acknowledge the lack of proper functioning of a European public sphere. One of the main problems is the democratic deficit of the European Union. In addition, a key element in democracy is missing: a European public sphere that functions on a par with national ones in terms of qualities. Prof. Gripsrud pointed out that the notion of confrontation and claiming the public sphere against public authorities are crucial elements when defining the public sphere. However, these are problematic issues when it comes to the European public sphere; meetings between the EU bureaucracy and lobbyists take place behind closed doors and do not take the form of confrontations. In this sense, the public sphere is used to proclaim what has been decided in secret meetings.

The ideal of a European public sphere has met several challenges. A unified, singular European public sphere would require a common language, a Europe-wide media system and citizens with a strong European identity. However, the European public sphere could be understood as a 'pluralistic ensemble of issue-oriented publics that exists once the same issues are discussed simultaneously and within a shared frame of reference'. If the European public sphere is to be understood in this way, where does 'Europe' end and 'the world' begin? How can the European public sphere parallel national public spheres in terms of popular engagement based on a sense of identity and affective investment?

The public sphere first developed as a cultural public sphere that has three key functions: belonging, empathy and argumentation. The cultural public sphere is thus important, as it enables the establishment of personal, social and cultural identity and develops one's ability to imagine oneself in the position of another human being. In addition, works of art can argue in ways that inspire discussion and shed light on new issues and provoke discussion. Prof. Gripsrud concluded his presentation by emphasising the importance of research on the cultural public sphere. Public opinion is to a considerable extent shaped by expressive culture, and products of such culture cross borders very easily in several genres.

The first discussant, **Dr Inka Salovaara-Moring**, concentrated on Habermas's earlier work about the legitimation crisis. According to Habermas, liberal states face a legitimation crisis when the government has power to rule but is unable to boast active support from the people. When the legitimation crisis occurs, the public sphere should be at its most active in defining values and finding solutions. In many aspects, the theory can be applied to the current situation of economic crisis, but Habermas's solution was not tailored for a crisis in global economy where national economies play a limited role. Today, Habermas's solution, active confrontation through political discussion in the public sphere, has lost its power. The public, spaces, and spheres as well as the means of political action of the new European public sphere should be redefined. The public sphere has been replaced by groups that occupy public spaces and aim their communication at international media instead of at national or European governments. However, these media are primarily not arenas for transnational public spheres. Dr Salovaara-Moring pointed out that Habermas's theory should be recontextualised to fit the global economy.

The second discussant, **Prof. Slavko Splichal**, remarked that the key problem in the discussion about the public sphere is the concept itself. The concept was originally developed as a critical concept against the notion of the public opinion, but later it became uncritical due to the efforts to make it empirically relevant. Today, the conundrum is to find a way to solve the contradiction between the empirical and the normative dimensions of the concept. There are two solutions: reconceptualising the public sphere on the normative level or redefining it on the operational level. Prof. Splichal provided a critical analysis of the existence of a European public sphere: there has been no European public sphere because the lack thereof was the condition of the establishment of the European Union. If the European public sphere had existed, there would have been no possibility of creating the European Union.

In the final pre-prepared comment, **Prof. Risto Kunelius** voiced his scepticism about research on the European public sphere that is funded by the European Union. According to him, an administratively motivated research program on the European public sphere is a contradiction in terms; if a public sphere can be managed, there is no public sphere. Prof. Kunelius also hinted at three changes in the European public sphere. First, in both national

and European public spheres, moments have become more important than spaces—what happens to the public discourse when people focus attention on specific issues only? Second, there have been grassroots signs that some kind of public sphere actually exists—citizen debate about bailing out Greece goes on in the pubs of Tampere. Third, distribution systems of news and information have changed, which affects our understanding of the public sphere. Finally, Prof. Kunelius pointed out the potential of media and communication to build solidarity. However, he considered Habermas's view about solidarity growing out of reasonable arguments as a weak point in his theory.

After the four presentations, the floor was open to comments. Prof. Kunelius's arguments about the transformations in the European public sphere sparked a lively debate. Many participants were eager to share their ideas about the changes in news media and journalism but seemed to question claims about the contemporary public spheres being more about moments than spaces. The significance of the concept of the public sphere was also addressed by many participants. **Prof. Hannu Nieminen** suggested that different public spheres move at different speeds: the political public sphere moves much more quickly than the cultural public sphere. How does one theorise the relationship between different public spheres? Prof. Gripsrud disagreed with the idea of different speeds of different public spheres as, he argued, there is cultural luggage that follows all of the spheres, thus making it harder to claim that one moves faster than the other. Rather, the cultural public sphere should be seen as expanding to many different forms of culture.

On her part, **Dr Mária Heller** pointed out the difference between the two types of public spheres. As the cultural public sphere does not work in the rational logic of the political public sphere, there is a risk of defining the cultural public sphere in an elitist way. **Prof. Carpentier** suggested adopting a more anthropological view of the cultural public sphere and its relationship with what he called the 'culture of doing things'; such cultural phenomena as intra-European travel and marriage may be seen as key elements in the European project and should be taken into account when discussing the cultural public sphere. In his comment, **Prof. Tom Moring** questioned the idea of a common European identity. As there are many different minorities in the European Union who don't always feel united to the mainstream identities of their countries, it is worth asking who are the 'we' that are referred to. In other words, researchers need to position themselves when talking about the public sphere. Finally, **Dr Christian Fuchs** returned to the usefulness of the notion of the public sphere and argued that in the time of crisis, the concept should be recontextualised. The concept can remain useful as long as its critical function is maintained; as such, it points to the need to form and establish public resistance in the spheres of economy, politics and culture.

ROUND 2. THE ROLE OF SMALL NATIONS IN A GLOBALISING WORLD: EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE AND PERSPECTIVES FROM SMALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES (SOUTH, EAST, NORTH, WEST)

The purpose of Round 2 was to focus on the perspectives small nations provide to questions related to European integration and the European public sphere. In her opening presentation, **Dr Ksenija Vidmar Horvat** outlined some recent patterns in European integration and argued that these indicate a reorganization of the geopolitical map of

Europe. While integration has been historically driven by the dominant core powers, recent developments have potentially increased the significance of the periphery in determining the future of the European project. Meanwhile, new divisions within the European Union have emerged which she dubbed the 'second fall of the Berlin Wall'; the previous division between the west and the formerly socialist east is now being replaced by the division between the north and south. New forms of colonialism are connected to these geopolitical transformations.

Anticipating her analysis of the new dynamics between the core and periphery, Dr Vidmar Horvat offered a critical interpretation of the political and cultural backdrop to the current crises. A major political project directed from Brussels since the 1980s has been focused on the 'cultural engineering' of a common European identity, characterised by a celebratory discourse of European multiculturalism. At the same time, exclusionary and xenophobic elements in anti-immigration policies as well as measures repressing civil rights on the basis of the new core value of 'security' have been papered over. After the financial crisis, a new policy and discourse has emerged, determined to preserve the European project of monetary integration and articulated around the core value of 'stability'. With the underlying notion that safeguarding monetary integration is the primary concern and that social issues can be dealt with later, the official EU discourse has presented austerity measures as being implemented for the good of the citizenry. However, these EU policies have led, particularly in the peripheral countries, to a growing sense of unequal distribution of power in Europe. There is rising popular resentment of 'internal colonialism' manifested, for instance, in the general suspicion that instead of promoting financial stability for Europe, the elites have in fact been rescuing German and French banks. The news media coverage of the euro crisis has tended to intensify these internal divisions and prejudices on a national basis and has been appropriated by nationalist forces in many countries. The result has been a 're-nationalisation of political visions' in the public spheres.

Due to their relatively weak position, small nations can be seen as testing grounds for the elite-driven European project. At the same time, however, small nations represent perhaps the greatest potential for the revitalization of the European project. Thus far, European constitutionalism and the EU value system have been largely defined by the core countries' histories, but small nations manifest a plurality of national histories, memories and strong civic traditions which could be integrated within the European project. The public space for this rearticulation of and deliberation on the new European project needs to be opened up, and intellectuals can play a great role in the process. Particularly promising in this sense is the new generation of 'travelling intellectuals' who combine different histories and intellectual traditions and form new networks that produce post-national and post-western-centric knowledge. Indeed, future research on Europe should (self-)challenge Eurocentrism and the assumptions of the general and homogeneous notions of the European project and should reflect on them in plural and heterogeneous terms. Finally, research should develop new research agendas in a relationship with civil society movements.

As the first discussant, **Prof. Josef Trappel** focused on the potentials of the European public sphere to alter European political communication and to invigorate European democracy. Currently, the European public sphere fails to fulfil its democratic functions or to even exist in any sense close to Habermas's normative ideals. Closing in on these ideals would entail the European public sphere becoming more focused on specific problems and more able to integrate into the debate differing points of view from various social margins.

As legacy media tend largely to exclude civil society voices, one must look at the possibilities of alternative media in pluralising the public sphere. In this regard, the digital revolution in particular offers new potentials. While debates on such themes as e-participation and network society have been around for some time already, we are still at the beginning of the formation of the 'digital public sphere'. Partly because of its economics, access to the digital public sphere is more open than to the traditional media sphere and makes it easier for new groups to articulate their voices in public. In this redefinition of the public sphere, small nations could potentially play a leading role. Despite the fact that small size poses economic challenges in terms of media innovations, small nations benefit from their relative social coherence and flexibility. Thus they could work as testing grounds for new ways of dealing with public problems in these redefined public spaces.

In her intervention, **Dr Mária Heller** added important insights to the debate from the point of view of Hungary by presenting an overview of the contradictory notions attached to the European Union in the lay discourses of the new member state. As a counterpoint to Dr Vidmar Horvat's optimism about the positive potential of the young intellectuals, Dr Heller brought up the discrepancy between their cosmopolitan views and the increasingly nationalistic and anti-EU attitudes among large segments of young people in her country. In fact, euroscepticism has been gaining ground among European populations in recent years as a result of the growing rift between the lofty ideals and the actual lived experiences in deteriorating social conditions. While many still attach positive values of individual opportunity and prosperity to the European Union, there is a strong sense among people of unequal power relations within the Union and even of relations of internal colonisation between the subordinated and the powerful countries. Meanwhile, economic hardships manifest in the growth of exclusionist and xenophobic discourses and strict divisions between 'us' and 'them'. However, within the domestic political opposition against the recent anti-democratic legislative reforms of the Fidesz-led government, the EU continues to represent the ideal and promise of a rights-based democratic society.

In the third pre-prepared intervention of the session, **Prof. Hannu Nieminen** outlined a brief history of the evolving role of academic intellectuals in Europe's political public sphere since the early 20th century. Initially highly influential in scripting the liberal democratic constitutions of European nation-states after the First World War, academic intellectuals lost much of their prestige and status in political life during the past century. Towards the end of the millennium, public opinion leaders increasingly emerged from the ranks of administrators, lawyers, and economists and became seen as experts rather than intellectuals. Now, as Europe experiences a crisis of the neoliberal project at the start of the 2010s, the developments of the 1930s offer a number of worrying parallels: authoritarian and nationalist tendencies, the diminishing role of intellectuals in public life, and distrust of all kinds of experts and elites as well as universities losing much of their autonomy. In the face of such pessimistic outlooks, there is a need to think about new ways of organising intellectual efforts against these threatening historical forces. Finally, in accordance with Dr Vidmar Horvat's arguments about the new borderlines being drawn within Europe between powerful countries and small nations, Prof. Nieminen suggested that small nations and their intellectuals share many commonalities in their experiences and critical analyses.

In the ensuing discussion, Dr Vidmar Horvat called for a shift in paradigm in which the central assumptions behind the European project are put under critical scrutiny. The very nature of the purportedly shared European values needs to be questioned and opened up

to public discussion. Meanwhile, the crisis offers an opportunity to small nations and their intellectuals in questioning the hegemonic European integration narrative. Aligning with transnational progressive movements, small nations can perhaps adopt a cosmopolitan political agenda as an alternative European project.

Anette Alén took issue with Prof. Trappel's analysis of the potentials of digital communication in pluralising the public sphere by pointing to both the economic and time-related resources required by active participation and communication in the digital sphere. As a task for intellectuals, she suggested concentrating on the positive aspects and roles the EU plays in the protection of democracy against global market forces. Also, in addition to engagement with and participation in social movements, intellectuals can also function as mediators between activists and elites.

Dr Christian Fuchs addressed the worrying developments of internal colonisation and the rise of nationalism in Europe and asked how they could be challenged by public intellectuals. He pointed to the experiences of increasingly precarious workers and disempowered citizens and suggested that a key task for intellectuals would be to look for ways in which these common experiences could better be communicated to reinvigorate the public sphere. Research should increasingly connect with activists to achieve these goals. **Prof. Jostein Gripsrud** largely agreed with Dr Fuchs and pointed out how social protests and activism create exceptional spaces for learning. Scholars indeed should be in dialogue with activists, and they already are. In this regard, **Dr Gavan Titley** referred to the expanding sociological literature on the Occupy movement and to the many practical, political, ideological and philosophical contradictions it faced precisely as it tried to (or was being forced to) consolidate as a movement. Prof. Nieminen called for analysis on what it would take to generate an accumulative process out of the many movements and make them more directly influential in political decision-making. **Dr Inka Salovaara-Moring** pointed out how transnational civil society movements and research thereof continue to face the recurring problem of the absence of an accountable power centre on a supranational level. The public sphere theory should indeed incorporate the movements and networks of digital communication, but this will not remedy the deficit of the political system which increasingly lacks an accountable power for the civil society to address.

ROUND 3. THE ROLE OF CRITICAL ACADEMIC INTELLECTUALS IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE TODAY: HOW TO REVIVE THE TRADITION?

In the third session, **Dr Gavan Titley** examined the possibilities of reviving the tradition of critical intellectuals. He presented two ways of reviving the tradition. The first way would be to ask who would be involved in the debate of critical intellectual engagement if it were to take place today. The second way to revive the tradition would be to think about what would be at stake in terms of political conjuncture, power, knowledge and political agency. Referring to the iconic debate between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault in 1971, Dr Titley argued that in order to revive the tradition of critical intellectuals, it is necessary to embrace both Chomsky's insistence on the horizons of collective action and Foucault's attention to the difficulty of conceptualising power. According to Chomsky, societies need to identify material and social conditions under which human properties can flourish in order to be able to criticise oppression. Foucault, on the other hand, would argue that it is

impossible to define an ideal social world and that no overarching concept of justice is needed in order to struggle. Moreover, according to Foucault, there is a need for a critique of the institutional power, but it should be kept in mind that power is always present. Chomsky's commitment to universalism and Foucault's question of where power lies create intellectual tensions when addressing the current condition of crisis. Another challenge today is that the crisis at hand is a transnational one, but there is no actual potential to international solidarity.

By way of facilitating debate, Dr Titley set about posing a series of important questions instead of trying to answer them. Headline issues to be covered included power, the public sphere, politics, the return of history, and intellectual relationship to political mobilisation. According to Patrick Baert, the modern notion of the intellectual incorporates four core tensions that centre around four axes: hierarchy versus equality, generality versus expertise, passion versus distance and individual versus collective. These tensions create critical insights in terms of the conversation about the role of intellectuals today.

An important theme of the presentation was the question of power and the public sphere. The discussions of the Eurozone and the European Union seem to be deeply positional, but one of the things that have structured international responses to the crisis is a certain kind of rational fallacy. According to Wolfgang Streeck, the financial crisis has to be regarded as a fundamental and almost final product of the contradictions of post-war democratic capitalism. Streeck argues that 'it is quite clear that democratic states of the capitalist world have not one sovereign, but two: their people, below, and the international "markets" above'. If we were to take this kind of approach to the crisis, where does it leave democracy and visions of communicative action? In addition, Prof. Titley offered a critical interpretation of an obvious crisis of left politics. He argued that there have been signs of a rational fallacy: it is assumed that people have seen what caused the financial crisis and are flocking into the arms of left parties, which has not been the case in reality. There have been significant reactions to the current crisis, for example, Jodi Dean's book, *The Communist Horizon,* and David Graeber's *The Democracy Project*. In the current situation, one can assume that the forms of post-cold war critique are no longer tenable, which brings new demands to intellectuals: what to do with the discussions about human rights, freedom, discourse of liberal democracy and intellectual relations to politics?

The first discussant, **Dr Manuel Puppis**, concentrated on the possible role of communication scholars and took notice of three issues. First, there is currently a severe lack of real decision-making power. In this situation, communication scholars should try to provide better understanding about the public sphere and offer ideas about how a public sphere should work in order to be adequate for a modern democracy. Scholars could also focus on the media system itself and try to answer the question of suitable media structures. Second, a lack of political vision prevails at the national and European levels. Communication scholars can offer visions of a more democratic media system that would function in the public interest of the citizens. A clear challenge today is reaching the public in a landscape dominated by commercial media houses not interested in the topic of the public sphere. Third, social movements do not always require or desire solidarity or engagement from academics, and the populist movements feel deep distrust of the elite and the so-called intellectuals. In addition, a reform movement does not guarantee that a reform will actually happen. Thus, scholars need to get involved in the policymaking process by bringing different viewpoints and providing information. In the ways presented above, communication scholars and intellectuals can make a difference, but it

must be taken into consideration that the impact is often time-consuming and rarely direct.

In the second comment of the session, **Prof. Nico Carpentier** highlighted that intellectuals can use many different strategies in their efforts to influence the public sphere and society. First, an important function is the development of theory. In this way, academia can be considered a factory of ideas. Second, intellectuals' interventions are often aimed at policymaking processes, commenting on specific policies or providing knowledge about specific topics. However, intellectuals should be careful to concentrate not only on tweaking a machine but also on building a new one. Finally, there is a strong tendency to individualise the intellectual. In the current crisis, there should be more focus on modularity, collective effort, and the sharing of ideas.

The final discussant, **Jernej Prodnik**, presented a counter-question to the extensively covered question about the role of critical intellectuals: what was the role and influence of critical scholars before the crisis? Would there have been a crisis if academia had been more active? Academic scholars have an important task of collecting historical memory. Intellectuals play an important role, but it is far from easy to assess the significance of their influence. Mr Prodnik presented a sceptical analysis about the change that intellectuals could make without other factors working in their favour, such as the relations of power and material relations of production. According to him, in this post-political or even post-democratic order, the current form of capitalism does not care about social conscience, and the instrumental, capitalistic logic is present in many societal arenas, including academia. It is thus increasingly difficult for critical intellectuals to break through to the public sphere and be heard, and this leaves us with media intellectuals who are turning their discourses into entertainment. Finally, Mr Prodnik suggested that one key role of intellectuals would be to give voice to the disempowered, those who do not have a voice.

After the floor was opened to discussion, **Prof. Gripsrud** called for more caution when assuming that all participants in the seminar share similar attitudes, and he voiced his concern over the possibility of academics representing other people, such as the have-nots of the society. He also noted that even though academics are conscious of their ideal roles as public intellectuals, the conditions in which they work tend to restrict the possibilities of fulfilling the ideal. Dr Titley agreed that it is important to talk about the conditions, but he remarked that they should not be used as an excuse. **Prof. Nieminen** brought up the idea that social sciences are always normative because social scientists assume several things, such as the notion that society exists and that certain values are protected—an argument which **Dr Salovaara-Moring** later questioned. Dr Salovaara-Moring also challenged the independent role of critical intellectuals who need to take into account government agendas when applying for funding from national or European funding bodies.

In his comment, **Dr Fuchs** opined that the intellectual power of the masses should not be underestimated. In the 'knowledge society', the masses have become intellectual; intelligence has been appropriated as a means of production. Thus, intellect is there within production, which also means that critique is there. Instead of concentrating on the small elite of intellectuals, then, we should focus more on the notion of the mass intellectual, as there are many examples of actual critique taking place in the streets. Prof. Carpentier took a stand on the use of different prefixes and categories of intellectuals and emphasised the usefulness of the notion of the 'amateur' as someone who is perhaps not a totally

developed expert but who cares and is committed to a certain matter. **Dr Heller** pointed out that there is a need to define what is meant by the intellectual and what kinds of intellectuals we are talking about. It could be potentially fruitful to study the different discourses used by different types of intellectuals. Finally, **Dr Vidmar Horvat** concluded the session by calling for a revival of theory of history and theory of practice. She voiced critical remarks about considering Marx a recipe book on how to make social change and the fact that the notion of intellectual practice is being replaced by the notion of social policy. She also noted that the question of communicative power should be addressed in two ways. First, scholars should focus on communicating their academic research findings to the public in an understandable way. Second, scholars could reassess their communication between themselves and build a united front against national and EU level governments and ministries of education.

ROUND 4. THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: CULTURE, SOCIETY, ECONOMY. WHERE CAN WE FIND SOURCES FOR OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF EUROPE?

In her opening talk, **Prof. Auksė Balčytienė** presented a critical interpretation of the current social and cultural condition in Europe, focusing particularly on the central and eastern European experience. Conditioned by the two megatrends of globalisation and individualisation, European societies are facing increasing fragmentation and polarisation. At the same time as social risks are individualised through the market rhetoric of individual choice and freedom, ideas about community and togetherness become increasingly unclear. The central and eastern European (CEE) societies are relatively more vulnerable to these negative global trends, with little time to reflect on and react to the avalanche of social changes after the fall of communist regimes. Lacking a solid ideological basis or a clear idea of a public good, and with weak economies and a political culture characterised by elite polarisation, media instrumentalisation, and clientelism as well as weak associations and civic participation, CEE countries may be characterised in Leonidas Donskis's terms as 'societies without a sense of community'.

The current predicament thus presents a serious challenge to public intellectuals of small nations. With declining skills and practices of public communication, it is increasingly difficult to create a sense of community and communal solidarity. One of the central tasks, then, is to build society's communicational competences. It also means tackling a series of questions: How do we form a notion of common good in a fragmented and polarised society? How do we secure transparency and accountability in a fragmented public sphere? How do we rediscover a sense of belonging? One route to answering these questions is to look for ways to develop new forms of collaboration and a sense of community among intellectuals themselves both in academia and on a European level. Renegotiating the conditions of academic labour as a response to the neoliberalisation of universities would be an integral part of this effort. Public intellectuals should also recognise their traditionally important role in social and cultural life and their ability to organise critically oriented communities. While the public spheres of institutional media provide restricted access to intellectuals, new possibilities may be emerging in the alternative media and public spaces of the Internet.

As the first discussant, **Dr Christian Fuchs** agreed with Prof. Balčytienė's analysis about the CEE societies experiencing a rise of social Darwinism and presented a political economic analysis of some of the main macroeconomic and social indicators of such a trajectory. The main dynamic since the early 1970s in European and other advanced capitalist economies has been a steady shift in the distribution of wealth in the favour of corporations and financial markets as opposed to wage earners. As a consequence, debt levels of households have rapidly risen in many countries. Meanwhile, increasing financialisation of the global economy has led to recurrent stock market bubbles, of which the newly increased hype around social media companies may prove to be the next instance. All these tendencies suggest that neoliberalism is, in fact, a form of class struggle. Despite recent controversies around the catastrophic consequences of austerity measures, 'hyper-neoliberalism' continues to dominate the political agenda in the crisis. It manifests not only in the push for even more austerity and welfare reforms but also in its successful marginalisation of alternative anti-austerity policies as 'left-wing demagoguery' as well as in the moralistic discourses condemning the peoples of the crisis countries. As a consequence of such developments, Dr Fuchs warned about the rise of right-wing populism or even fascism in Europe but also pointed to some more hopeful prospects for European democracy. The key here is to observe progressive protest movements which can help to renew the left in Europe. Communication and media scholars should continue to make sense of the role media play in these movements and their mobilisation.

In the second intervention, **Dr Juha Koivisto** called for an analysis of current social contradictions, which may offer opportunities to identify forces of positive change. He outlined the current conjuncture in terms of an 'organic crisis' with several dimensions, including the crises of economy, social reproduction, environment and democracy. All of these have significant implications for the public sphere. In the economic crisis, for instance, this connection manifests in the way private debts of investors have been turned into public debts. The economic crisis has also been used to justify cutbacks of the public sector in many countries, which has brought welfare states into crisis. Meanwhile, the increasing passivity of the electorate and the anti-democratic measures of the European elites are signalling the crisis of democratic politics. In these circumstances, scholars of the European public sphere would do well to turn their attention to social movements (both left- and right-wing) and study them from a historical perspective as 'publics' in the Habermasian and Deweyan sense. Another implication of the political crisis is that the notion of democracy itself should be approached critically to highlight the current anti-democratic tendencies and limits of liberal democracy. Finally, Dr Koivisto expressed his incredulity over how little resistance academic intellectuals have posed against the neoliberal restructuring of universities and called for a new culture of scholarship and resistance within academia.

The three opening presentations set the stage for a lively debate. **Jernej Prodnik** agreed with Dr Koivisto that a key term in approaching the current social condition is 'contradiction'. However, one of these contradictions (in terms) is the idea of a 'right-wing public'. A right-wing populist group, while forming a communicative network around common concerns, should not qualify as a public in a normative sense, as it lacks the necessary rational-critical discourse and respect of individuality. **Prof. Jostein Gripsrud** voiced his discomfort over some of the tendencies in the debate. He drew a distinction between a political party and a scientific community and asserted that assumptions of political and ideological consensus are somewhat problematic in a social scientific discussion. More specifically, Prof. Gripsrud criticised the indiscriminate use of the label of 'fascism' when analysing European populist parties and movements; many of them hardly

qualify as fascist in the sense in which the term has been used in the context between the two world wars. He also took issue with Dr Koivisto's dismissive remarks about democracy in Europe and called for greater analytic precision when talking about such issues in an academic environment. **Dr Gavan Titley** referred to Robert Paxton's *The Anatomy of Fascism* and argued that while most of the current parties should not be labelled fascist, they or some of their members often either have fascist tendencies or harbour connections with fascist elements, an analysis with which Prof. Gripsrud agreed. For his part, Dr Koivisto defended his assessment of the crisis of democracy in Europe as an intentional provocation and pointed out that democracy is not just an empirical question but also a question of political philosophy.

CLOSING SESSION

The concluding session invited reflections on the outcomes from the two-day round table as well as on the possible future directions and modes of cooperation by the network. **Prof. Hannu Nieminen** opened the discussion by presenting a list of topics debated during the round table (more on that below; see the Closing Summary). He specifically pointed out the need for greater conceptual clarity and historical understanding on the central issues discussed during the course of the round table. He also called for greater sensitivity to national histories and their specificities. As regards the idea of small nations as a potentially fruitful category in the debate on European politics and the public sphere, Prof. Nieminen acknowledged that there exist differences and commonalities between these countries. Some of the central ones were brought up in the discussions, and they are closely aligned with the historical and more recently emerged internal divides of Europe.

After Prof. Nieminen's remarks, **Prof. Nico Carpentier** expressed his gratitude for the organisation of the event and appreciation for the openness, tolerance and respect for diversity in the discussions. **Prof. Josef Trappel** recognised the significance of the debates also in light of the upcoming Horizon 2020 framework. The notion of small countries as a unifying research theme has a lot of substance and could further benefit from setting it in comparison with large countries. For the purposes of future development of such issues, the network should appoint a coordinator. **Prof. Risto Kunelius** expressed his appreciation for the discussions but also his concern that the issues debated in the round table remained rather disconnected from what we as researchers are actually doing. A future challenge would be to rearticulate the 'social relevance' of research, to paraphrase the dominant science policy discourse. In this discourse, research cannot be autonomous, and it must have impact. A redefinition of what such relevance could mean would require a collective effort. Along these lines, and instead of dealing with such lofty concepts as public intellectuals, the network should engage in a more mundane rearticulation of what we actually do.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Several topics and themes emerged out of the two-day round table. The following list of items has been compiled by the rapporteurs, based on Prof. Hannu Nieminen's closing summary, and comments and suggestions from the facilitators as well as on a comparison of the rapporteurs' personal notes.

1) THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE

Based on the round table, the concept of the European public sphere is in need of continued development and analytical clarity in its normative, empirical and theoretical dimensions. The very feasibility of the notion of the public sphere often remains rather vague, but alternative ideas for its application in the analysis of the current crises and phenomena were nevertheless repeatedly brought up in the discussions. One of the most popular suggestions was to look for ways to connect the notion of the European public sphere with the study of actual cultural practices of Europeans. Another direction of conceptual development points to the need for a better understanding of the role of epistemic institutions in the public sphere. Such a structural analysis should include the media and communications systems as well as universities and other institutions in charge of the production and dissemination of knowledge.

2) SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Closely connected to the issue of the public sphere, one of the issues that most frequently emerged during the round table was the significance of the study of social movements, whose importance was acknowledged by many participants. Some suggested approaching the movements as publics that are looking to transform Europe and that are engaged in various forms of resistance. However, the problems of this articulation also became evident in light of the fragmented, structurally incomplete and politically weak nature of the European public sphere. The use of social media by the movements offers another potentially fruitful avenue of study.

3) SMALL NATIONS

Another significant topic discussed concerned the idea of small nations. While not extensively debated, some key differences and commonalities between these countries were brought up during the meeting. Some of them concerned the recently emerged internal divides of Europe between northern and southern members alongside the more traditional east/west dichotomy. A possibly unifying element for this group of nations is their experience of being dependent on the big powers of Europe. However, more research is needed on the particular histories and structural and cultural features of these societies.

4) ROLE OF ACADEMICS

The issue of the role of social scientists as academic and public intellectuals was hotly debated and seemed to divide as well as unite participants. There emerged no consensus on the feasibility of the concept of the (public) intellectual. Some connected the notion to the practices of critique, resistance and counter-hegemonic struggles, while others were content with speaking of the public role of researchers in terms of 'concerned citizens'.

The extent to which a scientific community should deliberate on the basis of a presupposed political and ideological consensus was also questioned. Thus, the very substance and relevance of 'being critical' merits additional elaboration, and the normative foundations of research itself should be recognised.

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