

Behaviours, Interactions and the Praxis of Dialogue

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Intercultural Dialogue is not only a question of perceptions and attitudes, but also concerns behaviours and the ways people act on a day-to-day basis. From this perspective, Sara Silvestri explores the real and the desired interaction between people within the Euro-Mediterranean region, analysing motivation, curiosity, channels of contact and types of information exchanged. Focusing on the dynamism of these relations, Silvestri highlights the importance of the human and ethical dimension in order to achieve a real ownership of the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Behaviour can tell us much more than what we can articulate in and understand from written and spoken words. Observing and comparing actual modes and levels of interaction, and listening to how others conceptualise a common space can be highly beneficial. It shows similarities and differences that can dismantle misperceptions and false knowledge, of those that we do not know and of those that we think we know - through indirect, received information - but have never really encountered or spoken to.

"Social interaction takes place within a cultural setting", said Argyle (1972). Culture has been defined by social psychologists and anthropologists as an information-transmitting system determining ways of living, perceiving, categorising, and thinking of a certain group of people. It includes prescribing verbal and non verbal communication, the rules and conventions of behaviour, moral values and ideals, technology and material culture, art, history... (Argyle, 1972). It follows, that a concern with social interaction is at the heart of the engagement with intercultural dialogue.

Thanks to the first ever intercultural Survey across the Euro-Mediterranean space that the Anna Lindh Foundation is presenting in conjunction with this Report, one can finally focus on the actual praxis of intercultural dialogue, as opposed to repetitive and often unproductive formal talks and conferences about the beauty and riches of our distinctive cultures. At last, by observing behaviours and attitudes, we can go to the essence of the dynamics surrounding the encounter between people of different cultures. In turn, this enables us to challenge stereotypes and assumptions, about our near or distant neighbours, but also - and importantly - about ourselves.

Behaviours versus Perceptions

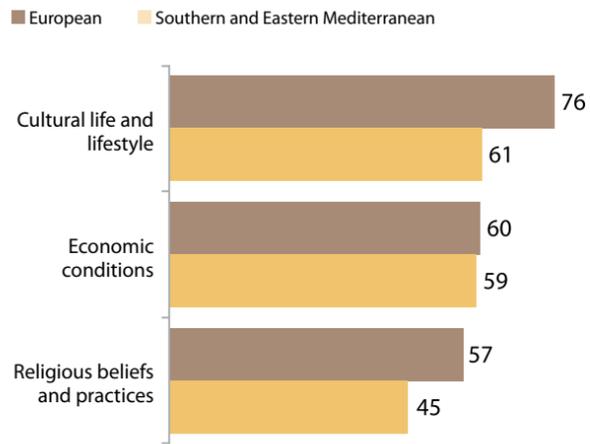
The considerations elaborated upon in this chapter focus on two closely interconnected aspects of 'live' intercultural interaction: the gap - as well as the links - between perceptions

and reality. Perceptions and reality are two essential, though obvious, dimensions of any form of communication between humans, and it is extremely important to observe them in order to learn how to proceed with intercultural agendas on a policy level.

Perceptions of others do not just inform what we think about others, but also determine how we think, how we engage with those people, as well as our expectations from and satisfaction with a real, or a potential, interaction. Perceptions of others also tell us a lot about how we position ourselves in the world and what our aspirations are. To this point, Sicilian playwright Pirandello wrote very effectively about all the 'masques' that humans put on, consciously or not, and that other people see, or want to see. But all these perceptions relate to one reality, which may or may not be understood in the same way by the individuals who experience it. The Euro-Mediterranean area is one such multifaceted reality.

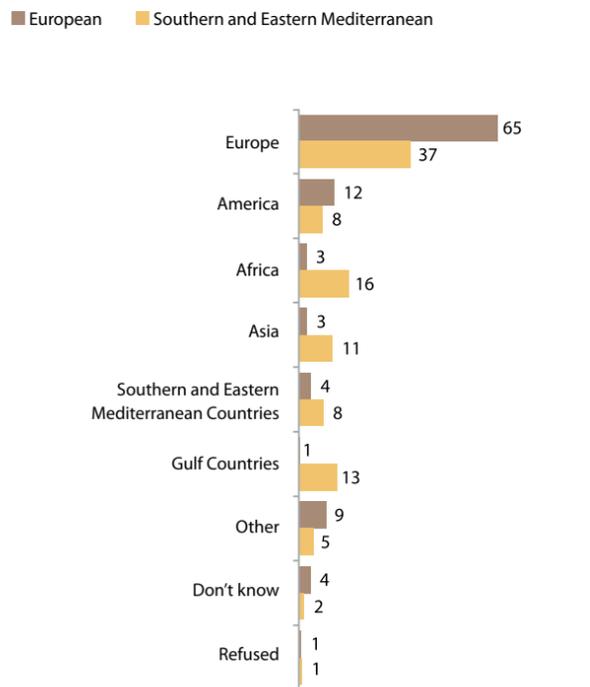
Historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists have produced amounts of research and publications demonstrating the frequency and exchanges of population movements and of socio-cultural-economic transactions across the Mediterranean for centuries, arguing that a cross-fertilised Mediterranean culture has always existed, although with fractures and continuities (e.g. Accame, 1966; Hourani, 1992; Arbel and Jacoby, 1996; Braudel, 1999; Bono, 2001; Albera and Tozy, 2005). The pressing concern for us, citizens of the 21st century, is to come to terms with a same story that has been seen through different eyes; with multiple accounts of the same and evolving geographical space and human experiences. The ensuing question is therefore whether we are able, and willing, to write a shared 'intercultural' Euro-Mediterranean history, through our attitudes, behaviours, and actions in the present and in the future... It depends on the progress, on the status of intercultural relations; that is, on what happens on the ground, in our minds, in our daily gestures, and not just at diplomatic level.

INTEREST ABOUT OTHER COUNTRIES' CHART 3.1



Survey Question: Now thinking about the countries bordering the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea / European countries, how much interest would you say you personally have in news and information about the following topics? **Base:** All respondents, % of 'very interested and somewhat interested' (© Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010).

PREFERRED PLACES TO START A NEW LIFE CHART 3.2



Survey Question: If you could start a new life with your family where would you imagine to live it? **Base:** All respondents, % Total (© Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010).

To begin to understand this, it is useful to focus on some essential components of the relationship between reality and perceptions. Some components of the reality-perception nexus were indirectly captured by the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll. In this chapter we will therefore try and highlight those parts of the survey that informs us about various dimensions of real or desired interaction across the Euro-Mediterranean space. By analysing motivation, curiosity, channels of contact, and type of information exchanged we can establish the current levels of interaction as well as the desirability and the benefits of increased collaboration across the Region.

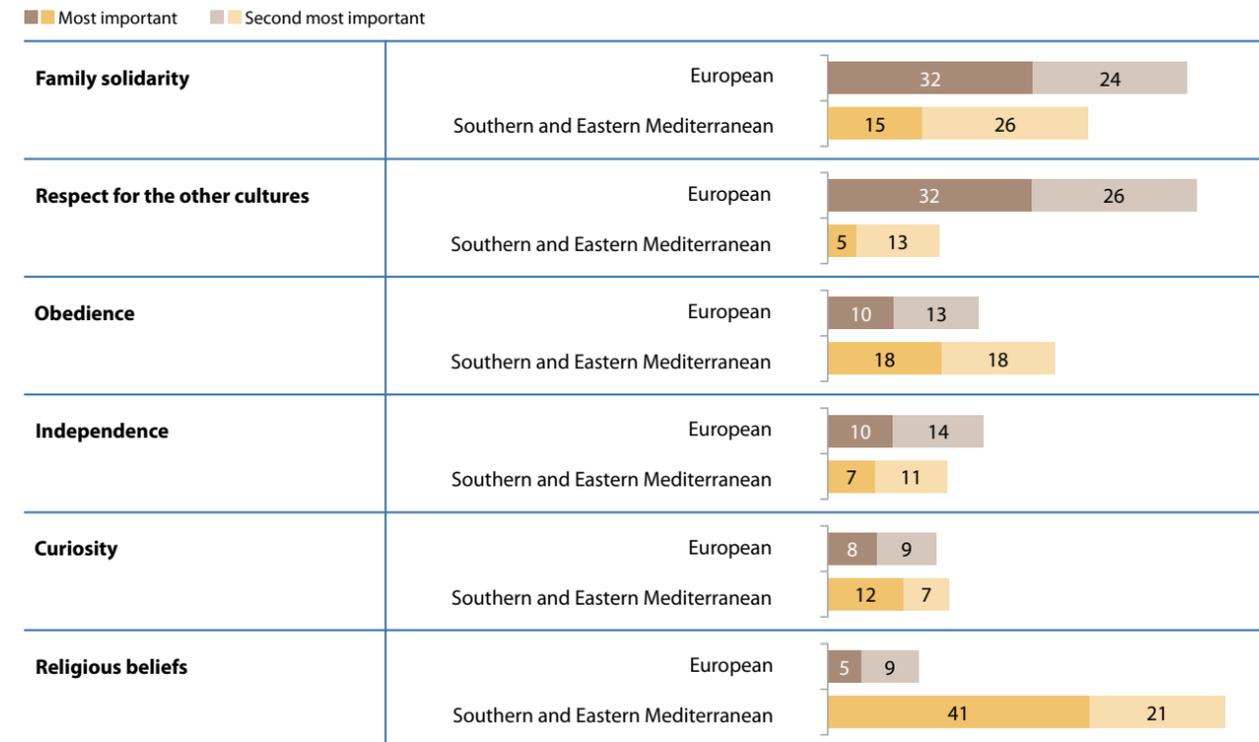
Curiosity about the 'Other'

Interest in the economic conditions of other countries, whether next-door neighbours or not, is steadily and equally shared across all the countries that participated in the Survey, with an average of approximately 60 % (Chart 3.1). The prominence of interest in the economic dimension is not at all surprising in a time of a global economic crisis and if we think that, from economists' perspective, one of the main drivers for human interaction is the possibility of 'gaining' something.

In comparison, the Survey reveals that culture and lifestyle of other countries attract slightly more curiosity from the inhabitants of the northern countries (76%), whereas the same group is less interested in religious beliefs and practices (57%). Nevertheless, this latter figure is higher, compared to the 45 % of interest shown by the countries of the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean towards the religious beliefs and practices of the other group. However, it is difficult, nearly impossible, to rationalise these differences, to try and identify patterns concerning attitudes towards the culture, lifestyle and the religion of other countries. This is because, as sociologists and anthropologists inexorably point out, notions of identity, culture and religion are very fluid, tend to resist categorisations, are highly context-dependent, and are shaped by a battery of many more factors.

What we can note from the Survey data are therefore some general observations and some apparent contradictions, which we will attempt to explain at least in part. Let us consider for instance the different levels of curiosity. Intuitively, it is understandable that people who are particularly satisfied with and proud of their own culture and/or belief system might not be very curious about others. On the other hand, one might expect that people living in countries in which religion plays a significant social role and that in general are sensitive to the fait religieux (a particularly effective French expression that literally is translated with 'religious fact' but in reality means much more) would be eager to learn about other people's religions. We might also speculatively expect individuals to express attraction towards countries where their own religion is most prominent... But this does not show up from the Survey. In fact the interest in the other factor breaks down by country and by group of countries

MOST IMPORTANT VALUES TO RESPONDENTS WHEN BRINGING UP THEIR CHILDREN CHART 3.3



Survey Question: In bringing up their children, parents in different societies may place different emphasis on different values. Assuming that we limit ourselves to six values only – let's say: curiosity, obedience, religious beliefs, independence, respect for the other culture and family solidarity – I'd like to know which one of these six you would say are most important to you personally? And the second most important? **Base:** All respondents, % Total (© Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010).

in relation to economic conditions, culture and lifestyle, and religious beliefs (please see country data in the Anna Lindh/Gallup Report).

The relationship towards countries of the other group changes, and becomes almost reversed at some points. This is evident when, instead of abstract curiosity, we try to measure levels of desired contact or real interaction. We asked respondents to somehow identify themselves with the other group of countries, for instance by hypothesising the option of relocating there. The Survey reveals that over a third (37%) of people from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean would like to live in Europe, in the hypothetical situation of having to start a new life. In comparison, Europeans, who showed a higher level of curiosity towards the other group of countries, are de facto less interested in relocating to the south-eastern region of the Euro-Mediterranean. The majority of people in the countries polled in the north were oriented towards remaining in Europe (65%); nevertheless, they did not necessarily wish to keep living in their existing country of residence. In comparison, among the south-eastern population (the very same group that overall, in response to another question, expressed a great interest in relocating to Europe) there

are also large numbers of individuals who actually wish to remain where they currently live (Chart 3.2).

Gap between Perception of 'Others' and Self-Perceptions

Having dealt with curiosity about the 'other', the next section will deal with modes of contact with the 'other'. Connecting the two dimensions of curiosity and contact, however, is the issue of perception. The Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll has unveiled some rather surprising findings, showing a gap between self-perceptions and perceptions of others in the section dealing with values. It is a standard social sciences practice to investigate people's positions about values not by asking a direct abstract question such as 'do you believe in xy value?' but by providing a potential scenario in which the values become applicable. Raising children is a typical scenario through which values are measured, because this experience represents a key moment in an individual's life when key decisions are made that consciously or unconsciously connect deep with the values of the individual at stake.

Therefore, the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll sought to examine the values of the people living on the two shores of the

METHOD OF INTERACTION

CHART 3.4

	European countries	Southern-Eastern Med. Countries
Through work or business	38	22
Through tourism	23	21
They live in the same neighbourhood	18	14
Just in the street / public place	17	18
Chatting on Internet	4	24

Survey Question: How did you meet or talk to that person? **Base:** Those who talked or met persons from other countries, values in % by regional grouping. (Chart developed by S. Silvestri on the basis of the Anna Lindh / Gallup Poll 2010)

Euro-Mediterranean by providing the interviewees with a list of statements representing particular values and by asking them whether they would regard them central in the education of a) their own children, b) the children of people living on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and c) in the education of the children of the inhabitants of the European Union. The three sets of questions were then compared and contrasted in order to establish which values were considered most important for each group and which values they thought would be most important to the other group. The answers of the European countries are in blue, those of the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, are in yellow (Chart 3.2). The findings were surprising because they highlighted various mismatches between perceptions and self-perceptions. For instance, European parents think that the two most important values for them are 'family solidarity' and 'respect for other cultures'. When asked to comment on the south-eastern part of the Euro-Mediterranean space, they also expect 'respect for other cultures' to be central. It is not clear whether this is because they genuinely believe that this is central in children's education in that Region or whether Europeans wish that value was thought in there. A similar dynamic is observable from the other shore. People in the southern and eastern part of the Euro-Mediterranean state that the two key values for themselves are 'religious beliefs' and 'obedience'. However, when asked about the central values of European parents, they give 'independence' and 'curiosity', which are not the same values that European respondents provided.

In summary we can identify three patterns: a) there was a mismatch between perceptions and self-perceptions, in that the values attributed to the other group did not coincide with

the actual values that groups said to be central to them; b) an observable pattern was that each group seemed to have attributed to the other some qualities that were probably missing in their own group; c) in the parts where respondents were asked to comment on their own position in relation to a particular value, it remains unclear whether interviewees were speaking about what they actually did with their children or whether in relation to what they thought they should do to raise their children.

Personal Contact Crucial for Changing Attitudes

So far we have analysed the general – theoretical we could say – interest or lack of interest that the Euro-Mediterranean population expresses towards countries other than the one in which they live. What is particularly interesting to compare at this stage, is actual levels, or rather modes, of mobility and communication. In practice this includes travel abroad, friendship, and other examples of concrete interaction such as casual encounters in the street with people who come from a country of the other group.

Personal direct experience is crucial for humans to produce meaning. Research has shown that, over time, prolonged repeated communication among individuals from different cultural groups, under particular situational conditions such as a position of equality and shared interests, can lead to more positive attitudes towards the interlocutor and towards the group to which she/he belongs. Whereas this is all encouraging we ought to be aware of the flipside of the story: that superficial one off or casual encounters, unbalanced in power relations, and lacking clear purpose and the possibility for interpersonal communication are not going to be productive in terms of intercultural dialogue.

We know from research in psychology that humans develop opinions, attitudes and views of society through a combination of perceptual and conceptual cognitive processes. We receive information from our senses but we also seek social consensus, that is, confirmation from society about our interpretation of this information. There are a multiplicity of interconnected factors involved in shaping our opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. Attitudes are "a residue of past experience which is retained by the individual in the form of a disposition or implicit response and as such affects the behaviour" (Jaspers, 1978). To understand the functioning of attitudes we need to be aware of 'the system of values and norms in which they are embedded' (Tajfel and Fraser, 1978). In practice, social psychologists explain that attitudes cannot be analysed independently but must be observed through the environment and the social group in which they are produced. This approach enables us to understand why our Survey produced data showing that particular attitudes relate to different social groups - typically defined by age, gender, level of education, and location of residence. These groups displayed at times attitudes so divergent from other groups and from the average of the

population in their country that prevent us from making generalisations about specific countries attitudes', despite the possibility of producing numerical averages. In the Poll, an average of 42 % of people from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean had friends and relatives in the north, and 36 % of Europeans (Chart 1.10 & 1.13) had visited the southern region. Although the numbers indicating this geographical mobility and awareness are not too dissimilar between the two groups, it is important to remark that the motives and modes of the interaction were different. The experience of immigration (whether personal or indirect, for instance by being born to immigrant parents) facilitates both direct contact and curiosity towards members of the other group, in either group of countries. In Chart 3.4 we see that business (38%) and tourism (23%) constitute factors of contact primarily for European countries. The same activities were also important channels of communication for the group of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, at 22 % and 21 % respectively.

Members of the southern and eastern countries have more occasions (42%) for geographical contact with the North than the other way round (36%). Nevertheless, when it comes to type of encounters – and specifically to personal interaction – the figures change. 24% of individuals in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean have talked with Europeans and 35% of the latter have engaged in conversation the other way round. We also broke down the data, in order to detect typologies of interaction in each of the countries polled. It thus appeared that the priority tool of intercultural communication in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is the internet, used by 24 % of the population. This is somewhat obvious and strange. Obvious: because we should have expected the dominance of the internet in this in the age of globalisation. Strange: because this figure contrasts sharply with that of Europe. Only 4 % of people in the north of the Mediterranean use the internet specifically to engage in virtual contact with individuals of the southern and eastern Mediterranean. This is a particularly low figure if we consider that the level of internet penetration in Europe (53% of the population) is around twice that of the Middle East and six times that of Africa (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2010) and that Europeans spend many hours on the internet, for work or fun reasons.

Predominant Forms of Contact

The results of the Poll presented so far indicate that the frequency of the contact was rather uneven across all the countries surveyed, and showed high levels of divergence in behaviour even among people living in a same region. Nevertheless, the predominant forms of contact were easy to detect: business, tourism, internet communication, and also immigration, although no separate table was extrapolated for this item. All these channels generate direct contacts, which then produce first hand knowledge – and ultimately images

and attitudes – about whatever is happening and whoever is living across the common Euro-Mediterranean space. No further data was collected for the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll to enable us to establish further correlations between the type of interaction and the type of image (positive/negative) developed about our Euro-Mediterranean neighbours.

Psychologists warn that attitudes do not necessarily predict behaviours and that there is often a discrepancy between what people say and what they do (Jaspers, 1978). Nevertheless from 'contact theory' we know that optimal intergroup contact requires a 'behavior change' which "is often the precursor of attitude change" (Pettigrew, 1998). Ideal intergroup contact happens when five conditions are met (equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation, authority support, friendship potential) and when a long-term process involving affective ties and re-categorisation of in-/out-groups is triggered (Pettigrew, 1998). In addition, as stated above, the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll indicates that people who have somehow experienced the process of migration appear to enjoy a privileged standpoint in the process of intercultural dialogue. This seems to confirm studies indicating that immigrants and ethnic minorities are advantaged in engaging in intercultural dialogue. Once immigrants have overcome the initial problems of learning a new language, of conforming to the norms and values of the new country, and the temptation to reject them, they reach a position of 'pluriculturalism'. They and their children acquire "the capacity to identify with and participate in multiple cultures" (Council of Europe, 2009).

The Internet as a Privileged Instrument of Intercultural Experience

What is even more surprising is that the countries in the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean appear to engage with the other side much more intensely via online communication (24%) than through real contacts such as casual encounters with neighbours (14%) or people in the street (18%). At first glance this seems astounding since one would expect higher levels of interaction emerging from real physical encounter, and not from virtual contact. In fact the Survey shows that casual contact in public places is not particularly significant for Europe either, which scores respectively 18% and 17%. As we shall see below, social psychology and media studies might help interpreting the mystery of the success of the internet as an instrument of intercultural communication in the Euro-Mediterranean space (Chart 3.4).

A key argument of this paper's analysis of the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll is that the internet has emerged as a privileged instrument of intercultural encounter. At first sight this statement might appear to challenge what has been argued above, i.e. that real, direct, personal contact with your interlocutor is the way forward of intercultural dialogue. Internet communication, one could object, is mediated,

filtered and cold. If we follow our initial concern with the reality-perception nexus, we could question whether the internet is an effective way to discover reality, or perhaps just something that helps reinforce existing perceptions because of the way it functions. Although the internet is potentially an infinite source of information of all kinds, its output depends on the users' motivation and discretion. Surfers are free to choose, according to their own personal taste, where to navigate, and which blogs, which mailing lists, which facebook pages or twitter strands to access. In a way one could somewhat dismiss the importance of the internet: after all there are less internet users than TV viewers in the world, and internet bloggers are an even smaller fraction (Lynch, 2007). Moreover one could argue that internet communication can reinforce existing perceptions, because whoever navigates will tend to link up with like-minded people and sources. And true, the internet could end up being a simple instrument to stay in touch with existing friends and relatives who may have moved far away, and not necessarily to make new acquaintances or to learn new things about distant spaces. However, this is only one side of the story.

According to Hiller and Franz (2004), the condition of diaspora, of migration, leads to the use of the internet in order to (re-)establish three types of personal ties: new, old and lost. The same authors have also highlighted that there are two main schools of thought explaining engagement in computer mediated communication. According to one position, people interact online as a consequence of existing geographical proximity and frequent face to face communication. The other school argues that space does not matter and the main reason why people interact online is that they share interests. The intense internet exchanges on the part of the inhabitants of the southern shores of the Mediterranean towards those of the north were identified with the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll could therefore be explained both in terms of an attempt to keep alive the sense of old or lost community, to recreate the lost physical proximity with relatives and friends who went abroad, and as a genuine drive to pursue things and discussions in their own area of interest regardless of geographical distance and of pre-existing personal contacts.

A number of important factors enable us to value the growing importance of the internet as a new form of intercultural dialogue, as something that opens up a new world of experiences and thoughts and that encourages people to engage in conversation that can break false perceptions. For instance, "internet users have truly global access compared to a more local or regional set of programmes that one receives on television" (Isherwood, 2008; Chadwick, 2006). The 'multicentric' dimension of internet interactivity is also very important (Haugbolle, 2007). This technology gives access to a variety of online news and scholarly sources, which expose users to what is happening around the world and to critical interpretations

of it. In addition, although their producers tend to be an elite, the spreading of blogging deserves attention. It is a new form of semi-anonymous and de-territorialised communication through which questions are raised, news power and production structures are challenged, and debates among contrasting voices can be generated whilst protecting identities (Khan and Kellner, 2004; Wall, 2005; Reese et al., 2007). We could also hypothesise that the physical distance of online communication might allow for a mitigation, breaking down, or reconstitution of notions of 'in-group' and 'out-group', i.e. those cognitive processes of categorisation that generate stereotypic perceptions (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

The Positive Side of Online Communication

We are often warned about the traps of online communication and the dangerous types of association that it can hide. However, in this paper I would like to highlight also its positive sides. For instance, email and blogging are 'immediate' means of communication that promote a sort of 'abstract' type of socialisation with people and with ideas in which racial or geographical or national divisions are not relevant or, rather, take up a different position in the elaboration of meaning. In online communication personal and group identities are simultaneously idealised, reinforced and hidden; nevertheless research has shown that the internet allows to develop 'normal' personal relationships (Bargh and McKenna, 2004). Moreover, the internet appears to be conducive to personal contact and friendship (more than other casual forms of interaction with others listed above), because whoever engages in email correspondence or in blogging does so explicitly because she/he is seeking opportunities for communication. Another important factor explaining the success of the internet as an instrument of intercultural dialogue is that it allows for sustained contact between interlocutors who can speak out and be their 'true self' whilst feeling protected because of the anonymity of the system (Bargh and McKenna, 2004). Frequent sustained interaction and friendship are key components for the transformation of attitudes advocated by contact theorists. Even when the internet is used as a simple means to maintain contact with relatives and existing co-national friends who have emigrated, it can, in fact, indirectly generate access to information (and thus to the elaboration of opinions and attitudes) about other countries. The interlocutors are likely to listen to their friends' and relatives' personal accounts of what it is like to live elsewhere, of the positive and negative experiences that they have had, of the characteristics and customs of the country into which they have moved. Finally, and most importantly, the internet is clearly *the* language of 21st century youth, all over the world. Since the countries of the southern and eastern part of the Mediterranean have a much younger population than Europe, we can explain – and be less surprised about – the different percentages emerged in the survey about the two regions. According to United Nations statistics, the percentage of the population

below 15 years of age in the countries on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean is close to an average of 30, whereas the size of the corresponding European population is roughly half (United Nations, 2009). On either side of the Euro-Mediterranean shores, young people are those involved with the internet and unconsciously exploring new possibilities of intercultural dialogue through it. But in the southern shore, the virtual space represents an outstanding channel for collecting information, for communicating across boundaries, and for expressing civic awareness (Mouawad, 2007; Isherwood, 2008).

A Shared Practice of Dialogue

If intercultural dialogue is about learning how to tell a shared story, about promoting balanced views of the other, sensitivity to 'others' needs, self criticism, and eliminating prejudice, then it should somehow lead onto the de- and re-construction of the categories underlying our attitudes and behaviours. This means that intercultural dialogue has a sense only as praxis, as action, as engagement with 'others' shaped by and leading to a *forma mentis* that moves away from stereotypes (accentuations of the attributes that our cognitive processes associate to the 'out-group', the group of people with which the subject does not identify) and prejudices (social categorisations conducted overwhelmingly with referenced to the self). Intercultural dialogue has often been criticised as a vague and empty catchphrase adopted by policy-makers to replace discredited terms such as multiculturalism or to distract audiences from hard-line security policies. However, if the term is intended as a mode of thinking that produces certain actions and vice versa, it is no longer static and useless but has the potential to become a dynamic force.

Lots of words have been spent in attempts to provide a definition of intercultural dialogue, often ending up with mellow and shallow politically correct statements. What the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll and the authors of this report have tried to do is shift the focus from words onto actions, to behaviour. Borrowing from social psychology we are interested in patterns of interaction indicating that people are capable of moving beyond their cognitive boundaries, of interpreting the other's behaviour for what it is, in a non confrontational, or fearful way. An encounter is not 'intercultural' simply because it bears the tag with the word 'intercultural'. With this the Anna Lindh Foundation project we want to see whether attitudes and behaviours exist in the Euro-Mediterranean space that are or have the potential to be intrinsically intercultural processes leading to the acquisition of a new mindset, without diminishing identities and cultural, philosophical or religious backgrounds. In this sense we eschew prescriptive attributes of intercultural dialogue and tackle the issue primarily as something in becoming. This approach requires a very long-term perspective. It shows that intercultural dialogue is much more than a simple policy mechanism for

exchanging cultural products and education programmes, or for developing public relations, domestically and internationally, expressing neutrality and respect of cultural and religious diversity. Intercultural dialogue entails a broader effort in all domains and at all levels of society because it is not something tangible, limitable to an academic discipline or a policy area, neither is it just an abstract theory. It is both a mindset and a process, starting first and above all from self-discovery. As a consequence, its direct output must be concrete deeds, behaviour. It therefore requires a philosophical shift oriented towards sensitivity, towards the capacity and the willingness to listen to the interlocutor and to be self critical, towards a common sense of justice, of responsibility (Maritain, 1948; Dallmayr, 2002; Smock, 2002; Abu Nimer et al., 2007; Council of Europe, 2008; Mernissi, 2008). The Poll shows that there is potential for these shifts to happen and that indeed in various cases this transformation is already taking place.

Salvatore said that 'a shared practice of dialogue should make sure that these values do not become political straightjackets and Trojan horses' (Salvatore 2009: 234). Indeed, a too strong sense of identity and belonging and the defensive barriers that we build around us can be so strong that it incapacitates to understand. At the same time, dialogue should not dismiss 'difference' or items such as religion, because they prove too difficult to deal with, too controversial (Sacks, 2000; Jamouchi, 2004). Showing respect towards those who hold views different from ours is a first important step. Perhaps, to engage in an effective dialogue we should move inspired by Braudel's notion of 'permeability' of spaces and culture, through travels and exchanges of commercial and cultural goods, despite their fixed political and geographical borders (Braudel, 1993). Entering in dialogue does not jeopardise identities (if anything it requires them!), does not mean correcting your truths, abandoning your beliefs, or winning over your opponent and imposing your truth. Ultimately dialogue is about willingness to listen; it does not involve a 'change of truth' but of spirit and of self-centred cognitive processes.

In this sense, intercultural dialogue is guided by ethical pragmatism and takes place and is successful only if it promotes a 'more human' or ethical dimension of politics oriented towards the 'common good', beyond short-term concerns with power, economic interest and security. As the sense of 'ownership' of the Euro-Mediterranean space grows, we hope that people will gradually share their concerns and responsibilities for its common good and automatically engage in lived forms of dialogue in order to find shared solutions. With intercultural dialogue we can discover a shared sense of humanity, a common sense of justice.

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