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*The role of 'political dialogue': A  
dialogic understanding of European-  
Mediterranean relations.*

Presented by

**Michelle Pace**

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**DRAFT**

**The Role of ‘Political Dialogue’: A Dialogic Understanding of European  
– Mediterranean Relations**

MICHELLE PACE

University of Birmingham  
m.pace@bham.ac.uk

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## **Introduction**

A key external relations priority for the European Union (EU) is the creation of an area of dialogue, cooperation and exchange in the South and East Mediterranean and the Middle East - an area of vital strategic importance for the EU. With the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the EU created an innovative policy basket, in that, through the Barcelona declaration, the 27 signatories recognised that for the Euro-Mediterranean relationship to work, dialogue between people (not just the elite) was essential. Activities under the third (Social, cultural and human affairs) basket of the EMP have since flourished (MEDA-Democracy, EuroMed Heritage, EuroMed Audiovisual, Euro-Med Youth Action Programme, etc). These have been complemented (since 1995) by the Forum Civil EuroMed (FCE) through civil society conferences that run alongside all Euro-Med Ministerial Conferences. One of the main functions of the FCE is to encourage and enhance intercultural dialogue between the Mediterranean partners and the EU member states. Despite these various activities, there has been no systematic analysis of what the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue actually implies and how it increasingly shapes EU Mediterranean agendas. At a time when the perception of the irreconcilable nature of cultures is growing it is important to take the concept of dialogue between European and Mediterranean cultures seriously. This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by critically examining the role of political dialogue in Euro-Mediterranean relations. It first establishes the nature of dialogue and its significance for Euro-Mediterranean relations. For this purpose, it draws upon the work of some key thinkers on dialogue, particularly Mikhail Bakhtin, Jürgen Habermas and Tzvetan Todorov. In so doing, the paper sketches out what dialogue actually entails, contrasts this concept to what it is not, that is, monologue, analyses what dialogue seeks to attain, and finally concludes with some implications for the future of Euro-Mediterranean dialogic relations.

## **Nature of dialogue and significance for Euro-Med relations**

During 1992 and 1993 the Commission proposed that future relations with Mediterranean Non-Member Countries (MNCs) should go beyond the financial sector and economic sphere to include a political dialogue between the parties, the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free-trade area and social, economic and cultural cooperation. These recommendations, initially

looking just to a Euro-Maghrebi partnership, were approved at the Lisbon summit in June 1992 and confirmed at the Corfu summit in June 1994 (these summits are in fact European Council meetings). In the meantime, negotiations got underway with Tunisia, Morocco and Israel on the basis of mandates specifying these four basic elements. Since then, it has become commonly accepted that the EU's 'political dialogue' with Mediterranean partners is one of the main instruments as well as achievements in EU-Mediterranean cooperation. However, although the term appears in virtually all EMP documentation, there seems to be no coherent understanding of what dialogue actually means. Its meaning is therefore in need of clarification.<sup>1</sup>

### *Understanding 'political dialogue'*

In our day-to-day interpretation of the term 'dialogue', we usually refer to dialogue as communication or discussion between people or groups of people such as governments or political parties.<sup>2</sup> In one of its latest initiatives for the Mediterranean area, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the EU aims at promoting dialogue across the EuroMed area on political, economic and social themes. The EMP marked a move from Euro-Med contacts of an ad hoc and informal nature, to more or less regular and institutionalized contacts. According to one author, three conditions have to be met for the effective use of the term dialogue:

- A formal decision of the (Euro-Mediterranean) Committee and/or the ministers to engage in a 'dialogue'
- A formal agreement with the (Mediterranean) partners concerned

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I would like to thank Iver B. Neumann and Richard Gillespie for their stimulating discussions and always useful remarks on the topic of this paper and the participants at the Roundtable on the Third Basket of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on Culture and Community in the EMP which took place in Alexandria, Egypt, 5-7 October 2003 for a thought-provoking debate.

<sup>1</sup> Monar, Jörg, 1997. 'Political Dialogue with Third Countries and Regional Political Groupings: The Fifteen as an Attractive Interlocutor' in Regelsberger, Elfriede et al, (eds.), *Foreign Policy Of The European Union. From EPC to CFSP and Beyond*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 263-274.

<sup>2</sup> 1987. *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. London: Collins Publishers and The University of Birmingham.

- In addition to normal diplomatic relations, regular political contacts have to be provided for at one or various levels<sup>3</sup>

In Euro-Mediterranean affairs, relations are governed broadly by the EMP, of which the Association Agreements (AAs) are a vital feature. The Partnership, also known as the Barcelona process, provides for a comprehensive framework for Euro-Mediterranean relations structured along three pillars: a political and security partnership, an economic and financial partnership and a partnership in social, cultural and human affairs. These three pillars or baskets offer different forms of dialogue: political/security, economic and social.

In its most recent initiative, the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, the EU aims to deepen its relations with Mediterranean partners through 'a more intensive political dialogue'.<sup>4</sup> The main instruments for the deepening of this dialogue are Action Plans which aim at reinforcing the Barcelona Process.

### *Theorizing Euro-Mediterranean dialogic relations*

Euro-Mediterranean politics have few resources to assess the quality of Euro-Mediterranean cultural interactions that shape and are shaped by the changing structures and processes of the EU system, as well as the wider international system. One way of arriving at a potential framework for critically thinking about Euro-Mediterranean dialogic relations is to draw upon the work of critical thinkers like Mikhail Bakhtin, Jürgen Habermas and Tzvetan Todorov.

Despite Bakhtin's acknowledged relevance to the social sciences, Euro-Mediterranean politics have been rather silent and closed to his thinking.

Drawing upon literary theory, Bakhtin's theories focus primarily on the concept of dialogue, and on the notion that language (that is, any form of speech or writing) is always a dialogue. Acknowledged as the philosopher of dialogue, he evolved a view of dialogue (from his earliest writings in pre-revolutionary Russia through his last unfinished manuscript in the mid-

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Monar, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, 2004. *Interim Report on An EU Strategic Partnership With The Mediterranean And the Middle East*. EuroMed Report, 23 March, Issue No. 73.

1970s), as a human condition, as an ethical imperative, and even as a prerequisite for thinking.<sup>5</sup> Thus, his notion of dialogue focuses on the idea of the social nature of dialogue, and the idea of struggle inherent in it. For Bakhtin, dialogue consists of three elements:

- a speaker,
- a listener/respondent, and
- a relation between the two.

Language and the outcome of language (or what language says; ideas, characters, forms of truth), are always thus the product of the interactions between (at least) two people or two groups.

Bakhtin contrasts the notion of dialogue with what it is not, that is, the idea of monologue, or what he terms as the *monologic*, which refers to utterances by a single person or entity. For Bakhtin, ideas about language have always postulated a unitary speaker, a speaker who has an unmediated relation to "his unitary and singular 'own' language." Like Derrida's "engineer", this speaker claims to "produce unique meaning in [my] own speech; [my] speech comes from [me] alone." Hence, according to Bakhtin, this way of thinking about language focuses on two pillars: language as a system, and the individual who speaks it. For Bakhtin, both pillars, however, produce monologic language: a language that seems to come from a single, unified source.<sup>6</sup>

Bakhtin develops his work on dialogue further by arguing that there are two principal forces in operation whenever language is used: a centripetal force and a centrifugal force.<sup>7</sup> Drawing upon physics, Bakhtin argues that, on the one hand, a centripetal force tends to push things toward a central point; on the other hand, a centrifugal force tends to push things away from a central point and out in all directions.

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<sup>5</sup> Communication between the author and Iver B. Neumann, September/October 2003. See Neumann, Iver, B., 2003a. 'International Relations as Emergent Bakhtinian Dialogue' in Gunther Hellmann (ed.), Frank Harvey & Joel Cobb, Friedrich Kratochwil, Yosef Lapid, Andrew Moravcsik, Iver B. Neumann and Steve Smith 'Forum: Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?', *International Studies Review* 5 (1): pp. 137-140.

<sup>6</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail, Mikhailovitch, 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist). Austin; London: University of Texas Press, pp. 666.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp. 667 and 668.

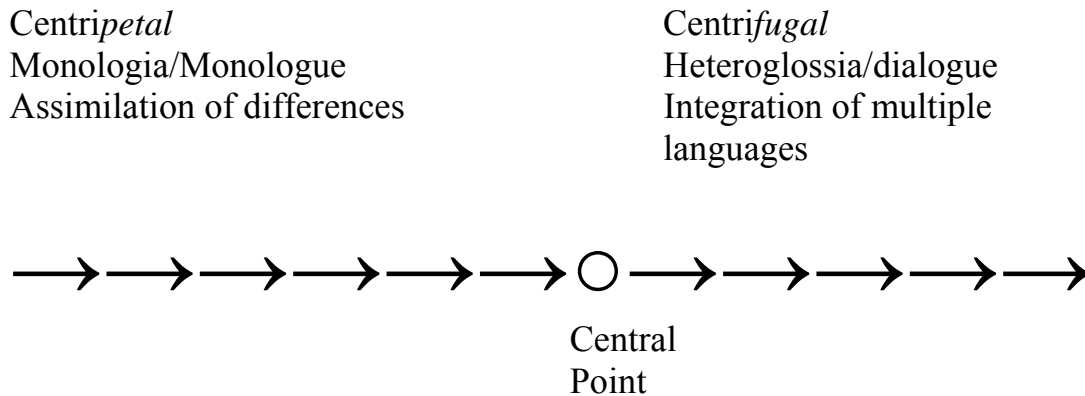


Figure 1: Bakhtin's chosen site for intercultural dialogue

According to Bakhtin, monologic language (monologia) operates according to centripetal forces: the speaker of monologic language attempts to push all the elements of language and all its various rhetorical modes (the journalistic, the religious, the political, the economic, the academic, the personal) into one single form or utterance, converging into one central point. The centripetal force of monologia tries to get rid of differences among languages (or rhetorical modes) in order to present one unified language. Monologia is a system of norms, of one standard language, or an "official" language, a standard language that everyone would have to speak (and which would then be enforced by various mechanisms: we can apply this argument to the 'universal' notions of rule of law, good governance, democracy, human rights, etc.).

An alternative form of dialogue is *heteroglossia* which attempts to encompass a multiplicity of languages, that is by including a wide variety of different ways of speaking, different rhetorical strategies and vocabularies. In Bakhtinian terms, dialogue is therefore not understood in terms of multiple meanings for individual words or phrases, by disconnecting the signifier and the signified. Rather, instead of racing towards consensus, we may pause for reflection and respect the face of the Other.

Bakhtin argues that in any utterance, both monologia and heteroglossia, that is both the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of language, are at work.

"Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear".<sup>8</sup> Language, in this sense, is always both anonymous and social, something formed beyond any individual, but also concrete, filled with specific content which is shaped by the speaking subject. Thus, for Bakhtin,

the idea *lives* not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness; if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse.<sup>9</sup>

A heteroglossic view of dialogue points to a conceptualization of politics and the social focusing on the crucial importance of language for politics. Language is a creative force rather than as an empty vehicle for consensus-building. Moreover, such a conception of dialogue emphasizes the inter-subjective and perpetual cognition and meaning formation inherent in this process. It also stresses that *everybody*, every member of the polity, has a voice, not only the decision makers and those who have their ear.<sup>10</sup>

This brings us to the discussion of the Self and the Other through the dialogic interaction of the two. In this context, dialogue plays itself out at various degrees. The first degree of dialogue requires the unity of the Self.<sup>11</sup> The dialogic process thus requires reconciliation with the Self before

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 668.

<sup>9</sup> In Todorov, Tzvetan, 1984. *Mikhail Bakhtin: the Dialogical Principle*. Translated by Wlad Godzich. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 87-88. See also Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich, 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. (Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson). Manchester: Manchester University Press and Katerina, Clark, 1984. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Cambridge: Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Neumann, 2003a.

<sup>11</sup> Hanafi, Hasan, 2003. 'The concept of dialogue'. Presentation at the Roundtable on the Third Basket, Alexandria. For a full report of this roundtable see Pace, Michelle and Tobias Schumacher, 2004. 'Report: Culture and Community in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership: A Roundtable on the Third Basket, Alexandria 5-7 October 2003' in *Mediterranean Politics*, Volume 9, Number 1 (Spring), pp. 122-126.

interaction with an Other. At the second level of dialogue, an acceptance of the Other in dialogue has to be in place. When applying these degrees of dialogue to Euro-Mediterranean relations, a pertinent question brings us to ask how far is the political dialogue in this context shaped by Europe's colonial past in the Mediterranean area and the legacy of this historical period on the struggles Mediterranean partners have had to undergo through decolonization? In conventional theoretical frameworks, Euro-Mediterranean politics seem to miss the legacy of colonial rule which formed competitive cultures and which sanctified inequality and subjugated those outside the European center. If Euro-Mediterranean relations are to engage in a truly dialogic dialogue, our theoretical frameworks must seriously confront the role of colonialism, various responses to colonialism, neocolonialism and its legacies.<sup>12</sup> To come back to Bakhtin's work, critics interested in seeing the heteroglossia in Euro-Mediterranean relations would seek to encourage a dialogic relation embedded in social relations, a relation with a distinct social purpose. As Neumann argues, it is precisely because dialogue plays itself out at different levels, that social practices become crucial. Dialogue places subjects along a process of inter-action with others that constitute the Self.<sup>13</sup> As the colonizer defined the colonized, so too, the colonized defined the colonizer. This mirror-image of the Self through the Other, à la Lacan, sheds light on societal codes and the way in which these are shaped, reshaped and lived out. Dialogue therefore involves a dynamic interplay of cultures between discourse (being) and practice (becoming).<sup>14</sup> Cultures are distinctive in the sense that there cannot be a one-to-one relationship between the respective phenomena that make them up, but if one is grounded in one culture, one can begin to grasp another by melding its phenomena into one's own cultural horizon. Communication then becomes a possibility.<sup>15</sup>

In aiming to understand the mythical aspect of the Other's (social) personality, a dialogical dialogue seeks a *common* horizon. Hence, dialogue, of necessity, must be never ending.<sup>16</sup> The process of a dialogical dialogue itself aims to bring about *a* horizon, defined as a new, emerging

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<sup>12</sup> Inayatullah, Naeem and David L. Blaney, 2004. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*. London: Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> Neumann, Iver, B., 2003b. 'Dialogue with Hasan Hanafi: on the concept of dialogue' in Pace and Schumacher, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

understanding through the exploration by imagination of new modes of human possibilities. Bakhtin argues that all utterances are directed toward an answer, a response. (In everyday speech, words are understood by being taken into the listener's own conceptual system, filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and being related to these); the understanding of an utterance is thus inseparable from the listener's response to it. All speech is thus oriented toward what Bakhtin calls the "conceptual horizon" of the listener; this horizon is comprised of the various social languages the listener inhabits/uses. What Euro-Mediterranean dialogism should aim for is therefore an orientation toward the interaction between the various languages of a speaker and the languages of a listener. This is why Bakhtin argues that "discourse lives on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context."<sup>17</sup> European and Mediterranean partners need to be sensitive to the sense of boundedness, historicity, and social determination inherent in dialogic notions of each others' languages. To enter into dialogue with each other, Europeans as well as Mediterranean partners need to attune to their own as well as the Others' languages. Through political dialogue, it is possible for Euro-Med partners to direct their speech acts towards possible responses of the Other. Through these dialogic processes both partners find more things to say, more ways to say things, so that the Other can understand the message(s). This diversity of voices in a truly dialogic relationship is the fundamental characteristic of heteroglossia.

A good example of a heteroglossic Euro-Mediterranean dialogue is the language of democracy. As argued by one author:

“We also need to be modest about our ability to find the answers for other societies. Liberal democracy is the best form of government yet discovered. But if you rush to a multi-party election without first developing the underpinnings of liberal democracy – the rule of law, civil society, private property, independent media – you can end up with what Fareed Zakaria has called “illiberal democracy”. We can, and should, offer a toolbox of experiences in all aspects of transition, from how to write a

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<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 672-673.

constitution to how to deal with a difficult past. But then it's up to them."<sup>18</sup>

In using all these languages, the aim is to increase the potential options for Mediterranean partners, as the democratic norm probably contains some kind of language which every Mediterranean partner has as part of his/her existing vocabulary or "horizon." In recognizing its post-colonial role, Europe has to bring together the best of Europe as well as the Mediterranean. It is therefore helpful for analytical as well as practical purposes, to interpret dialogue not just as conversation but also as process.<sup>19</sup> To avoid criticisms of Eurocentrism or elitism, inter-cultural dialogue, must therefore, of necessity be the product of an *inter-action* between the parties concerned: a process of self-criticism and self-reflection through imagining the Other. A dialogic dialogue opens up the possibility for learning, so that different languages may be reconfigured through the process, and may be modified (no one language emerges as triumphant). The logic of a dialogic encounter is, then, an integrationist logic. Rather than claiming to have a political dialogue on Mediterranean issues, Euro-Mediterranean relations should aim for that to which the dialogue converges.

Another thinker who reflects upon dialogue is Tzvetan Todorov who maintains that "choosing dialogue also implies avoiding the two extremes of monologue and war."<sup>20</sup> Through dialogue, participants engage in a process of learning about each other's "language". This goes in opposite direction to what Samuel Huntington famously refers to as a "clash of civilizations", warranting precisely monologue and war!<sup>21</sup> Rather than losing ourselves in

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<sup>18</sup> Garton Ash, Timothy, 2004, forthcoming (July). *Free World: Why a Crisis of the West Reveals the Opportunity of Our Time*. Penguin. Edited extracts from this book appeared in *The Guardian*, 5 June 2004 – 10 June 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004. For further theoretical arguments see Guillaume, Xavier, 2002. 'Foreign Policy and the Politics of Alterity: A Dialogical Understanding of International Relations', in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, volume 31, number 1, pp. 1-26.

<sup>20</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan, 1989. *Nous et les autres: la réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*. Paris: Seuil, pp. 15. Todorov is deeply influenced by Bakhtin's work and in fact is one of the first authors who introduced Bakhtin to the 'Western' world.

<sup>21</sup> Huntington, Samuel, 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

translation, as Rorty claims, ‘untranslatability does not entail unlearnability, and [...] learnability is all that is required to make discussability possible’.<sup>22</sup>

Another way of arriving at this conclusion is to look at ‘dialogue’ in a Habermasian way. A main theme running through Habermas’ critical theoretical works is that valid knowledge can only emerge from a situation of open, free and uninterrupted dialogue. His chosen site for intercultural imagination is the public sphere. He argues that the idea of a neutral apolitical science, based on a rigid separation of facts and values, is untenable since questions of truth are inextricably bound up with the political problems of freedom to communicate and to exchange ideas.<sup>23</sup> Thus, ‘dialogue’ is not a neutral concept; many preconditions have to be met in order to have a conversation appropriately called a dialogue. One of these is the equality of the participants. Habermas is also critical of Western social theory for its failure to avoid reductionism and to develop a valid theory of communication and rationality.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the nature of social science, being inherently a ‘Western’ *praxis*, is a means to the end of an intercultural dialogue. With such frameworks for thinking about dialogue it is difficult to find the terms through which one seeks to explore Others through interactions, without falling in the trap of ethnocentrism. In order to ensure an equitable climate for dialogue, there needs to be some ground "rules for practical discourse" that demand objectification, justification and non-contradiction in order to structure dialogue as debate. If dialogue with Mediterranean partners is to inform the EU’s democratic decision-making, EU-Mediterranean actors themselves have to contribute to establishing the conditions for dialogue, particularly in those cases where such conditions are not already present. A prerequisite for dialogue is that a lot of common ground already exists. Dialogue should aim at freedom, that is, to “call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not

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<sup>22</sup> Rorty, Richard, 1991. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth. Philosophical Papers, Vol. I.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 48.

<sup>23</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, 1971. *Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science and Politics.* Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. London: Heinemann Educational and Habermas, Jürgen, 1974. *Theory and Practice.* Translated (from the German) by John Viertel. London: Heinemann.

<sup>24</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, 1984. *Theory of Communicative Action.* Translated by Thomas McCarthy. (Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society). Boston: Beacon Press and Habermas, Jürgen, 1987. *Theory of Communicative Action.* Translated by Thomas McCarthy. (Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason). Cambridge: Polity.

even as an object of cognition or imagination”.<sup>25</sup> Theorizing Euro-Mediterranean politics is not only about ordering a set of already existing signs but is also about creating new ones. A dialogic dialogue requires enlightenment beyond preconceived ideas of the Other. Different and mutually exclusive universalisms have to be reconciled in order to enter into a dialogue. Every worldview, whether European or Mediterranean, can construct its own reasons to enter into dialogue, and its own historically defined meanings attached to it. Thus we will be rid of the paradoxical task of being ‘objective’ in defining the terms of the dialogue.<sup>26</sup>

As Bakhtin and Todorov argue, the alternative to dialogue is monologue or war. In this context, the appeal of dialogue as a mode for being-in-the world is particularly strong. In the complex reality of Euro-Mediterranean relations, however, the question remains to what degree does this choice really exist? The conceptualization of dialogue, as developed by Bakhtin, is an ethically stimulating one but tells us little by way of the role of power in politics. Likewise, Habermas’s ideal speech situation falls short of the reality of such a situation.

In theorizing Euro-Mediterranean politics, particularly the role of political dialogue in Euro-Mediterranean relations, it is the task of social scientists to embrace the role of empirical studies on how dialogues actually ensue. We need to observe how do Euro-Mediterranean dialogic practices interact with other practices and how are power relations immersed within these practices. If we are to celebrate differences and to offer a space for alternative voices to be heard, dialogue has a crucial role to play both in our intellectual conceptualizations and even more so in policy-making circles which impact on people’s social lives. Keeping in mind Bakhtin’s conception of dialogue as a description of the human condition, we recognize that meaning formation is an intersubjective phenomenon and therefore does not exclude the possibility of monologue and war. For this reason, it is even more pertinent to engage in dialogue and open up to alternative ‘languages’. Rather than losing ourselves in translation, let us lose ourselves in a truly dialogic relationship with others.

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<sup>25</sup> Arendt, Hannah, 1961. *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*. London: Faber, pp. 151.

<sup>26</sup> Griffioen, Henk, 2002. ‘Is the Notion of Intercultural Dialogue a Western Concept?’ The Netherlands: University of Leiden. Available at: <http://sos-net.eu.org/red&s/dhdi/recherches/theoriedroit/articles/griffioen.htm>

## **Euro-Mediterranean Politics as ‘Multilogue/Heterologue’?**

In order to apply the concept of dialogue to the EMP this section outlines how dialogue ensues within the Euro-Mediterranean context.

Prior to 1989, the European Community (EC) addressed the Mediterranean only in the context of *bilateral* agreements.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the 1960s, the EC signed trade agreements with various Mediterranean countries granting their manufactured products free or preferential access to the EEC, and a limited access for some specified agricultural products. In the mid-1970s, the EC adopted its Global Mediterranean Policy (GMP) and proceeded to sign cooperation and association agreements with various MNCs: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia in 1976 and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria in 1977. In addition to traditional trade provisions, the new agreements included a financial component in the form of five-year protocols designed to support the process of economic development in the recipient countries. From the mid-1980s onwards, the development of several important events had a direct or indirect impact on Euro-Mediterranean relations; Spain and Portugal became members of the European club, the Communist bloc disintegrated and the Berlin Wall fell. There was also a rise of social, political, and economic crises in several countries of the southern Mediterranean; as in the case of Algeria where increased activism by fundamentalist movements led to an overturning of the election results in January 1992<sup>28</sup> with the resulting outbreak of a civil war and the outbreak of the first Gulf war.

In response to some of these events, the EC felt the need to revise its policy towards the Mediterranean and eventually adopted its Renewed (or Redirected) Mediterranean Policy (RMP).<sup>29</sup> In addition to the traditional

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Commission of the European Communities, 1993. *EEC Mediterranean Agreements*. Bureau D'Informations Europeennes S.P.R.L., Brussels.

<sup>28</sup> The first round of elections was held in December 1991 and gave a plurality to the FIS (Front Islamique du Salut), although only about one quarter of the electorate voted FIS. The second round did not go ahead.

<sup>29</sup> It is important to clarify that the RMP was approved in principle in 1989 but was not immediately implemented. Morocco rejected its funding at first owing to the EP and French criticisms of Moroccan policies towards human rights and on the issue of the Western Sahara. (That is, Morocco ‘rejected’ assistance under the RMP but only because the EP had already ‘vetoed’ such aid to Morocco, pending improvements in respect for human rights, etc. The EP was, perhaps rightfully so, accused of this but this implies

financial protocols, a new facility was introduced to promote *regional* and decentralized cooperation through projects that involved two or more MNCs; several programmes were then set up to that effect including Med-Invest, Med-Campus and Med-Urbs.<sup>30</sup> Under the RMP there was an initial attempt to add a *trans-regional* approach to certain questions/issues,<sup>31</sup> but this initiative was badly underfunded. It took six years (from the date of the RMP, that is 1989) to commit the EU to a reinforced Mediterranean policy.

In the meantime, with a clear vocation to influence matters on the Euro-Mediterranean agenda, a joint Franco-Egyptian initiative, the Mediterranean Forum, was developed in 1994. In July of that year the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of ten Mediterranean countries met in Alexandria, Egypt for the first meeting of the Mediterranean Forum. The countries were Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Turkey. In the course of that first meeting, Malta was admitted as the eleventh member. This forum excludes parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict (that is, Israel, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) and also excludes Libya and Cyprus. The original intention of the forum was for the core group of eleven states to set up a *regional* organisation in which other Mediterranean states would gradually be admitted. It is run by a Presidency taken in turn by the membership.<sup>32</sup> When Susanna Agnelli succeeded Martino during the Dini government (which took office in January 1995) she wrote a joint article with the then Spanish foreign minister, claiming that the southern Mediterranean deserved equal attention to East-Central Europe. They further called for '*political dialogue*' – especially through the Mediterranean

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MEPs voted to stop aid. But during the session when this issue came up, the EP did not have the requisite quorum to approve the aid).

<sup>30</sup> Since suspended, although some programmes may be resuming. See Giammusso, Maurizio, 1999. Civil Society Initiatives and Prospects of Economic Development: The Euro-Mediterranean Decentralized Co-Operation Networks. *Mediterranean Politics*, 4(1), Spring, 25-52.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Commission of the European Communities, 1991. Communication from the Commission to the Council on *The Implementation Of Trade Arrangements Under The New Mediterranean Policy*. COM(91)179 final, 22 May and Commission of the European Communities, 1994a. Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on *The implementation of financial and technical cooperation with Mediterranean non-Member countries and on financial cooperation with those countries as a group*. COM(94)384 final, 18 November 1994.

<sup>32</sup> See Chérigui, Hayète, 1997. *La Politique Méditerranéenne de la France: entre diplomatie collective et leadership*. Paris: L'Harmattan, for more on the Mediterranean forum.

Forum; economic assistance – through the gradual constitution of a Mediterranean free trade area and by financial transfers; and for the stimulation of a greater mutual understanding between European and Arab cultures (in effect, the basis for the three pillars of the Barcelona Declaration). In the course of Mediterranean Forum meetings, an in depth discussion on the EuroMed Charter for Peace and Stability was carried out.

With the coming into being in November 1995 of the EMP, the Mediterranean Forum has since survived more as a discussion forum. The most recent ministerial meeting of the Mediterranean Forum was held in Antalya, Turkey on 9 October 2003 for two days. The agenda included organised crimes, weapon smuggling, money laundering, the fight against terrorism and other regional and international issues. The Mediterranean Forum has continued to exist as a forum where EU and non-EU Med countries can deliberate informally over their problems and discuss initiatives that could be presented for EMP endorsement: a meeting point in the shadow of the EMP. Its only collective act was perhaps the adoption of a code of conduct on terrorism at the 9<sup>th</sup> session of the Mediterranean forum foreign ministers (Delos, 20 and 21 May 2002): The oral conclusions of the presidency adding that the forum was aiming at the code's inclusion in the new Action Plan adopted at the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference in April 2002 in Valencia.<sup>33</sup> Commission officials argue that there is a sporadic spread of fora on Euro-Mediterranean matters. Mediterranean partners seem to agree and prefer less fora, less frequent meetings and more concentrated encounters.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*

During the Essen summit of December 1994 a declaration was made of the EU's support for Spain's intention to convene a Euro-Mediterranean conference in the second half of 1995<sup>35</sup> to carry out an in-depth appraisal of all major political, economic, social and cultural issues of mutual interest and to work out a general framework for *permanent and regular dialogue* and cooperation in these areas. The Council adopted a document<sup>36</sup> which

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<sup>33</sup> The code of conduct on terrorism was included in the Plan at Valencia.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews held in Brussels, January 2004.

<sup>35</sup> That is, during the Spanish presidency of the EU.

<sup>36</sup> Commission of the European Communities, 1994b. *A Strategy for Euro-Mediterranean Partnership*. Essen: IP/94/1156, 06/12/94.

defined the EU's position and which was to be presented at the Cannes summit in June 1995.<sup>37</sup>

In order to achieve its stated objectives of immigration management, trade, prosperity and peace, the EU has adopted a strategy that it termed a 'Partnership' with the MNCs. According to its formulators, this approach seeks to provide a *multilateral* framework where the MNCs and the EU can work as full and equal partners towards achieving mutually beneficial goals. This partnership was defined and adopted by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference in Barcelona in November 1995. The EMP was introduced to complement and not replace existing or forthcoming *bilateral* agreements (including those signed under the New Neighbourhood Policy) linking the EU to individual Mediterranean countries. Compared with previous association agreements, this was an innovation in that it expanded the range of content covered by new agreements (compared with previous AAs. Thus, new Generation Association Agreements were contemplated then enhanced).

As an intergovernmental, albeit one-sided power structure (at the Euro-Med regional level), the Barcelona process consists of: periodic meetings of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and meetings of the Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Process.

Barcelona was the first Euromed Foreign Ministers Conference held on November 28, 1995. This was followed by the second Malta conference (held on April 16, 1997) and the Palermo Euro-Med ad hoc Ministerial Meeting of June 3-4, 1998. The latter was conceived as an additional, informal, ad hoc event, outside the normal cycle of the Ministerial conferences in order to review the progress achieved in the EMP since its launch three years earlier and to help prepare the ground for the next Ministerial Conference in Stuttgart. This third conference was held on April 15-16, 1999 and followed by a think-tank type meeting in Lisbon in May 2000 which again served as a preparatory meeting for the fourth Euromed Foreign Ministers Conference in Marseilles (November 15-16, 2000).

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<sup>37</sup> It is important to note here that the Mediterranean countries, (the other party to the supposed dialogue), were not invited to submit a document of their own defining their position on what was to be discussed (although there were a few bilateral consultations). It may be argued that the Mediterranean countries did not have an organisation capable of articulating a common position (certainly not in the case of Israel and Syria, for example). However, for the sake of the EU's democratic structure, one would have at least expected the partners to be invited to give their views.

Another conference was held in Brussels in November 5-6, 2001 while the fifth Euromed Foreign Ministers Conference took place in Valencia in April (22-23) 2002. A Euro-Mediterranean Mid-Term Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Crete followed (26-27 May, 2003). The sixth Euro-Mediterranean Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Naples in December 2003. During the latter, Ireland proposed to host a mid-term Ministerial meeting during the first half of 2004 which was held between 5-6 May 2004 in Dublin while the Netherlands expressed the intention to organise a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs during its Presidency. The seventh Euro-Mediterranean Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs will take place in the first half of 2005 under the Presidency of Luxembourg.

The Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Process consists of high officials of the EU-Troika (past, present and future Presidency) and one representative of each Mediterranean partner, and meets every three months to prepare meetings of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and to evaluate the follow-up to the Barcelona Process. The European Commission prepares and manages the monitoring of all the partnership work. Activities are split into regional events (ministerial meetings and other meetings) and bilateral activities (association councils and other meetings). In this framework, every six months, on average, two Ministerial meetings (for example, a mid-term meeting of EuroMed Foreign Affairs ministers) and five meetings at expert level (for example, a senior officials meeting / a Euromed Committee meeting) take place. There is also preparatory work and follow-up of meetings, undertaken by the EU Commission departments, ad hoc thematic meetings (for example, a seminar of Government experts on economic transition, meeting for Euro-Med Youth platform) and conferences involving government officials and civil society members (EuroMed audiovisual annual conference). Other meetings include parliamentary and civil society fora, as well as networks such as economic institutes (including the network of foreign policy institutes - EuroMeSCo – and the Euro-Mediterranean Forum of Economic Institutes – FEMISE - seminars), industrial federations and the media. A Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum was set up in October 1998 and meets in plenary session four times and several times in the shape of working parties and includes members of parliaments (MPs) representing the parliaments of the Med partner countries of the Barcelona Process, the national parliaments of the Member States of the EU and the EP. In its resolution of 11 April 2002, the EP proposed that a Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly be established to institutionalise and strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona Process. A working party on the

conversion of the Forum into a Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly was set up for this purpose. The terms of the Assembly are based on a guarantee of North-South parity in terms of membership, etc.<sup>38</sup> The Assembly will hold responsibility for the monitoring of the application of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership indisputably facilitates the better understanding between cultures and religions as well as offering an unprecedented opportunity to bridge the socio-economic gap that exists between the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>39</sup> It is however, clearly more oriented towards the economic component of the partnership, undermining its other components. Particularly because of the failure of an agreement on a Security Charter (in the early years of Barcelona), a series of activities to reinforce *all* areas of the Partnership are now in place. Association Agreements remain at the core of the Partnership. The completion of the grid of Euro Mediterranean Association Agreements awaits the conclusion of negotiations with Syria. These agreements bring economic benefits / preferential trade terms and ‘political dialogue’ with the aim of political reform and progress on human rights and other issues. Hence, although the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements are free-trade agreements, they function as instruments of conditionality since they have a wider scope and differ from one Partner to another. Some common features include political provisions (respect for human rights and democratic principles with a proviso that each Agreement can be suspended in the event of major human rights violations), free trade (in accordance with WTO rules with trade in agricultural products to be liberalised “gradually” while trade in services is covered by the General Agreement on Tariffs in Services), other economic provisions (including high level of protection of intellectual property rights and provisions on the liberalisation of capital movements), financial co-operation (with the exception of Cyprus, Malta and Israel agreements provide EU financial assistance for the Partners but no amounts are specified), social and cultural co-operation (provisions on workers’ rights and re-admission of nationals and non-nationals illegally arriving on the territory of one party from the other, reflecting EU concerns on illegal migration) and institutional and final provisions (this explains the long delay

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<sup>38</sup> See Annex to the final Conclusions of the 6<sup>th</sup> Euro-Mediterranean meeting of Foreign Ministers, Naples December 2003. ‘Recommendation From the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum to the Sixth Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on setting up a Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly’ (2 December 2003) esp. pp 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews in Brussels, January 2004.

between signature of an agreement and entry into force. The Agreements are of unlimited duration and may be denounced: after signature, an agreement has to be ratified by the EP, by each EU member states and the Med partner before it enters into force).<sup>40</sup>

Having looked at the way in which Euro-Mediterranean relations are played out in practice, we now turn back to our conceptual frame on dialogue. When operationalising the concept of dialogue to the EMP, dialogue implies that two groups are involved and in this context this translates into the European and Mediterranean partners. However, the social context / ‘reality’ in which EMP dialogue evolves, as explained above, involves a diverse number of settings and different levels of communications. This diversity translates itself in politico-cultural exchanges that take place on the one hand, on a bilateral basis in some contexts and on some issues: while, on the other hand, in a multilateral setting in others – where complex exchanges denote a broader communication system involving more than two speakers.

A more specific example is called for: in the context of a Euro-Mediterranean seminar on religious issues, involving Europeans, Arabs and Israelis, the cultural coherence of the concept of Mediterranean partners is called into question.<sup>41</sup> Cultural diversity in the Mediterranean area goes further and Arab Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPCs) recognise this.<sup>42</sup> No matter how each group is composed (whether European or Mediterranean), none of them is as cohesive or homogenous as they might be made to appear. The Mediterranean group includes non-European countries that extend from Morocco to Syria. These countries constitute half the membership of the League of Arab States and are part of what is often collectively referred to as the ‘Arab world’. However, despite the fact that this area shares a common language (in written form at least), a common religion<sup>43</sup> (in terms of basic precepts) and a common heritage (depending on

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<sup>40</sup> *Euromed Information Notes*, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Del Sarto, Raffaella, A., 2003. ‘Israel’s Contested Identity and the Mediterranean’ in *Mediterranean Politics* 8 (1), Spring, pp. 27-58 and Tovias, Alfred, 2003. ‘Israeli Policy Perspectives on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the Context of EU Enlargement’ in *Mediterranean Politics*, 8 (2-3), Autumn, pp 214-232.

<sup>42</sup> Informal discussion with Aziz Al-Azmeh in Alexandria, Egypt during the aforementioned roundtable, October 2003.

<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to note that although a common Islamic religion is assumed, Europeans see this Islamic area or Arab Mediterranean with some exceptions (see Said Edward W., 1981. *Covering Islam. How The Media And The Experts Determine How We See The*

how one defines the term), it has rarely if ever constituted a homogenous entity. Adhering to the strict distinction that is sometimes made by academics, diplomats and politicians, requires a differentiation between the Maghreb and the Mashrek<sup>44</sup> or between North Africa and the Middle East. The latter includes Egypt and all the ‘Arab’ countries located to its east.<sup>45</sup> The former includes the five countries that are members of the Union of the Arab Maghreb<sup>46</sup> namely Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. Differences can be found not only between the Maghreb and the Mashrek groups (relating to such factors as political orientations, political regimes, alliance systems, economic status, among other things) but also within members of a given group.<sup>47</sup> Such differences are often set aside when circumstances so require.<sup>48</sup> Arab partners recognize that, although they are often categorized as one group, they hardly speak the same language and in the Maghreb, Arab governments rule over historically subjugated peoples (primarily the Berbers). If we are to take dialogue seriously, the working of language in diverse contexts needs to be appreciated and understood. As Neumann points out:

‘The working of language, including the isomorphic patterns that form with the invariable use of metaphors and entail speaking about one phenomenon in terms of another, is a key site of social inquiry; here is where meaning is created’.<sup>49</sup>

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*Rest Of The World*. Pantheon Books: New York [reprinted in 1997, New York: Vintage Books] for more on this issue). Two of the non-Arab partner countries in the EMP are treated with a certain preference (Israel and Turkey. So are Malta and Cyprus). It is therefore important to observe not only the membership of the non-EU Mediterranean countries but who they seem to be – are these partners seen as Arab and Islamic in a ‘region’ which poses challenges to the EU? More recently the EU seems to be changing its course and is taking a sub-regional approach without abandoning its EMP’s purported ‘global’ approach.

<sup>44</sup> Significantly, as mentioned earlier, the derivation of these terms is Arabic.

<sup>45</sup> Egypt is sometimes placed in both categories.

<sup>46</sup> Historically, there have been various different notions of the extent of the Maghreb. (In fact, it has always been variously defined).

<sup>47</sup> For example, there is great rivalry within the Maghreb between Morocco and Algeria.

<sup>48</sup> This EU approach may also be analysed as a post-colonial reading of the area. Former colonies are perceived as being such weak states that they must be guided, presumably by a stronger EU.

<sup>49</sup> Neumann, 2003a.

In the case of the Maghreb, it is also important to note that there are important cultural differentiations with the Berber population of Morocco for example.<sup>50</sup>

This complexity within Mediterranean (and likewise within European) societies brings us to the discussion on the legacy of colonialism. The need for dialogue between the ex-colonialists (Europeans) and the ex-colonised (the Mediterranean partners) cannot be underestimated, but dialogue cannot stop at this point. Looking into colonial texts and colonial history one notes the intercultural competition within the MPCs themselves. In Algeria, for example, one reads of the struggles within the Independence movement between different factions and organizations.<sup>51</sup> In Morocco, the greatest resistance to Spanish and French colonialism was offered by the Berbers (rather than the Arabs). Abdel Krim El Khattabi's resistance struggle in the Rif mountains led to a huge defeat for Spanish forces at Annual in 1921.<sup>52</sup>

These texts suggest that in reality, Euro-Mediterranean dialogue is about a series of dialogues, historical as well as contemporary, which take place at various levels - including bilateral and multilateral, but also within MPCs themselves. We can therefore understand Euro-Mediterranean politics as a series of multiple dialogues or alternatively as broader politico-cultural exchanges, that is monologues, dialogues and multi-logues. What is important is to recognize and value the mosaic of possibilities for communication between European and Mediterranean partners.

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<sup>50</sup> Hart, David, M., 1997. Berber Names and Substrata in Mauritania and the Western Sahara: Linguistic and Ethno-Historical Guidelines for Future Research on a Paradoxical Problem. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 2(1), Summer, 58-71 and Ibid., 1999. Scratch a Moroccan, Find a Berber. *Journal of North African Studies*, (Issue on Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco), 4(2), Summer, 23-26.

<sup>51</sup> Evans, Martin, 1997. *The Memory of Resistance: French Opposition to the Algerian War 1954-62*. Oxford: Berg (French Studies series).

<sup>52</sup> Although this event still goes unmentioned in Moroccan school textbooks today. Communication with Professor Richard Gillespie.

## **Conclusion. Implications for future Euro-Mediterranean dialogic relations.**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the cradle of both imperialism and a liberal world order. A majority of ‘subjects’ living under regimes that have considered themselves liberal have actually been denied rights of political participation. The key trend today is the US push towards building a formal empire of bases rather than colonies.<sup>53</sup> There is no logical reason whatsoever why neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism and American imperialism may duplicate this dubious heritage of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a cultural monologue. The alternative, ill-defined as it is, is dialogue. The EU has long shown signs of wishing to move away from the overall (particularly American) trend of less dialogue and more monologue. It has long been acknowledged that the US approach to its role in the world is a rather different way of approaching questions of security than what one finds in Europe. The American tendency for unilateralism is at loggerheads with half a century of uninterrupted European tradition of multilateral diplomacy.

Through its various Mediterranean policies, particularly the EMP, the EU has created a number of forums on dialogue with Mediterranean partners. If EU-Mediterranean participants in such forums claim to be engaging in dialogue on behalf of the communities they represent, rather than in the interests of a powerful, albeit unrepresented elite, it is important to highlight the requirements EU policy forums must meet. What does it take for a practical outcome to ensue from dialogic debates? A dialogic relationship focuses on a set of relations rather than on any one specific relation. Rather than having a dialogue, it is what the dialogue converges to (the horizon) which is crucial. For a plurality of inter-cultural consciousness to blossom, a dialectic understanding of dialogue is crucial.

Institutional contexts have the ability to keep dialogic interactions together. Inasmuch as the EMP, as an institutional context, also speaks of its predecessors (previous EU Mediterranean policies) and inasmuch as meaning is created in dialogue, each new policy also *transforms* earlier policies. Such a view implies that even ‘minor’ policy areas, like the third

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<sup>53</sup> See Johnson, Chalmers, 2004. *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic [The American Empire Project]*. Metropolitan Books. See also Kagan, Robert, 2004. *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. Vintage Books.

basket of the EMP, live on as more or less acknowledged parts of the whole policy framework.

In order to add to the debate about the realities and direction of EU influence in the world, particularly in the Mediterranean area, this paper has focused on the concept of Euro-Mediterranean political dialogue. It has argued that for a true dialogic encounter, Euro-Mediterranean partners need to find the space for critical self-reflection. Moving away from relations of domination, critical dialogue entails an overlap of the Self and the Other. Self identity always owes a debt to alterity, and the Other always exists within as a source of internal difference. In the interest of both European and Mediterranean partners, the practice of dialogue means adapting to the language of the Other. The effectiveness of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership depends on the partners' capacity to 'read' each others' worlds. The more the effort at reading the Other's world, the less likely the unintended consequences of this special relationship.<sup>54</sup> If we understand the Other, we are more likely to share with our partners local or global visions and to anticipate behaviours and reactions of our partners. The opening up of spaces in dialogic encounters to the voices of the Other enables us to act effectively. This means some hard realities: Europeans have to face their colonial past and Europe's colonial legacy while Mediterranean partners have to engage in more self-criticisms. The recognition of one's own participation in another's 'language' can create a bridge and a common horizon for dialogic interactions, or as Fabian describes a co-presence with the Other.<sup>55</sup> In so doing, each party to a dialogue has to move away from the idea that the Self and the values and norms it upholds are exclusive. For true dialogue and participation recognition of one's particularities is one step toward realizations of the particularities of Others. Euro-Mediterranean dialogic relations must work towards establishing this overlap.

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<sup>54</sup> Inayatullah and Blaney, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Fabian, Johannes (1983) *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

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