

THE MIAMI-FLORIDA EUROPEAN UNION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Culture: Building Block or Obstacle for Transnational European Identities

Conference Participants: ABSTRACTS

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While research about the existence of a European identity, based on historical, political and other commonalities exists in abundance, there is no consensus about its meaning overall: what European identity consists of; whom it includes or what the mechanisms are that have created it or that will shape its future. In recent years, scholars have focused on the formation of a European identity on a socio-political level, investigating elements of the civic and cultural components of a European identity and posited the existence of many nation-specific Europeanized identities as a result of Europeanization, differentiation and internal homogenization. Despite these transformations, cultural aspects, either as socio-historical representations or in the mass political culture of European societies, remain ambivalent factors in the creation of a 'European identity', as they are viewed on the one hand as essential for common identification yet on the other hand, produce tensions where cultures clash and/or national cultures feel themselves threatened by integration.

In addition, liberal, post-national views clash with some of the existing problems in the EU such as the exclusion of immigrants and minorities, the post-constitutional crisis and the challenge of absorbing culturally different candidate countries. The question of a European identity is not simply self-referential, but also has repercussions for the EU's normative and geopolitical role in the world. In light of these considerations, we invite you to explore and critically assess the role of culture in the formation of European identity.

This conference will take up these challenges and explore attempts over the past six decades by various actors – institutions, groups, individuals, -- to create a transnational European identity. In particular, we are interested in getting at the cultural aspects of identity formation, whether manifested in official, institutional articulations, such as symbols, coinage, ceremonies or in the cultures of the everyday, such as through new technologies, forms of communication networks, leisure or the arts. The conference also promises to explore the cultural formations that have either reignited or emerged in resistance to the EU project, including local, regional and transregional allegiances, but not these alone. Cultural factors – and perceived cultural hierarchies -- too play a role in the current debates about EU inclusion and exclusion. Scholars studying the interplay of EU institutions and member states will also confront the question of culture, whether in terms of national political habits or economic-rational calculations. **This conference will highlight the contradictory role that culture has played -- and continues to play -- in the formation of a transnational European identity, whether as a central building bloc to unity or as a formidable obstacle to a common sense of purpose.**

ACADEMIC PANELISTS

Marion Demossier

*Senior Lecturer in French and European Studies
University of Bath, UK*

TITLE: “From *Terroir* to Territories, European Culture in the making and the uses of History”

ABSTRACT

Over the years, the notion of *terroir* has come to encapsulate the European idea of a connection between locality and quality in an era that is often described as intensively globalised. More recently the discourse of *terroir* has been applied to issues of local development and territorial definition and it has also been widely adopted by producers internationally as a commercial and economic strategy. Taking the example of wine which is traditionally associated with the birth of the history of denomination of origin, this paper argues that European concepts of *terroir* and quality hide complex social and historical processes, which illustrate some of the cultural tensions arising from European integration. The 2008 wine reform which aims, amongst other things, at preserving ‘the best traditions of European wine growing and boosting its social and environmental role in rural areas’ illustrates some of these contradictions. Putting emphasis on tradition, authenticity, history, place and identity, *terroir* has become a governance tool to promote specific values at the core of the so-called process of Europeanization. This paper seeks to examine some of these European values and the processes underlining their definition and to discuss to what extent history plays a contradictory role in the changes affecting wine producing regions. Moreover it will argue that defining wine regional cultures through European eyes might impact upon the future development of a European identity.

Sophie Duchesne-Guilluy

*CNRS Research Professor
Sciences Po (Paris), France*

TITLE: “National cultures, social belonging and questions of European identity”.

ABSTRACT

Long term analysis of European citizens’ attitudes towards integration always ends up emphasizing the influence of nationality and social belonging. However, no consensual interpretation of this dual, consistent and recurrent influence has yet been provided. In the last couple of years, the area of European studies has experienced a qualitative turn that allows us to better understand how citizens develop – or don’t develop – an interest in and attachment to their new political community. This paper sums up the results of a comparative series of focus groups organized in Paris, Brussels and Oxford with socially homogeneous and politically heterogeneous groups of participants. It confirms Diez-Medrano’s analysis of national frames: the Europe Union is apprehended in each country in reference to the national political system and culture. This national frame makes the functioning and even the existence of the European political system more or less visible and understandable in each country. However, in spite of the variety of national attitudes that emerge from these focus groups, it is possible to discern a common social pattern. Working class people and elites in the three countries tend to respond in the same way: the former are mainly indifferent – or resigned - to the integration process, whilst the latter are quite polarized on the issue. This data thus leads us to analyse political cultures without reducing them to national homogeneous value systems, and to consider them as complex socially grounded conflictive patterns of political cleavages that indeed frame social and political change, but which do so in multidimensional ways.

Dario Gaggio

*Associate Professor, Department of History
University of Michigan*

TITLE: “Tourism and transnationalism”

ABSTRACT

Since 1950, arrivals in Europe have increased from 20 millions to more than 400 millions. These arrivals represent today approximately 60 percent of international tourism worldwide, and most of this is intra-European tourism. What has been the cultural impact of this massive surge in mobility within Europe? This paper will address this question first by reviewing the sociological and historical literature on the relationships between tourism and the construction of identities over the last century, focusing on the shift from elite to mass travel. Elite tourism was a classic positional good, conferring status to those who performed it and “othering” the visited sites and populations. The paper will discuss the extent to which tourism within Europe has been democratized and the paradoxes engendered by this contradictory process of democratization. The second part of the paper will examine these issues in the context of rural Tuscany, one of the many European places to have been profoundly transformed by foreign tourism since 1960, in conjunction with other forms of political and economic integration. I will then draw some conclusions about the specificities of intra-European tourism in the context of increasing transnational integration.

Homero Gil de Zúñiga y Navajas

*Assistant Professor
University of Texas, Austin*

TITLE: “Digital and traditional media in Spain: Modeling the Process of Political and Civic Participation in the EU”

ABSTRACT

In recent years scholars have assessed the influence of people’s media use to crucial aspects of the political realm. Research has generally shown that news consumption is positively related to certain attitudes (e.g. interpersonal discussion) mediating the effects toward political participation. Similarly, scholars have also provided evidence of the importance of social identity in issues pertaining to in-group/out-group and its potential in the participatory arena. However, in the context of the European Union, little consideration has been paid to all these issues as one incorporated global model. That is, how 1) Social geo-identity and media use may be related to each other and 2) the influence these two variables may exert over European orientations and ultimately, over political and civic participation.

SEM results reveal a strong relationship between the strength of geo-identity and citizens’ preferences for local versus transnational content. These media preferences predict orientations toward the EU, mediating the effects of digital news consumption on participation, yielding different effects on voting in European and Spanish elections.

Findings suggests that the concept of social geo-identity emerges as an important notion that clarifies different patterns of media use both conventional media and digital media. Likewise, this different media use explains predilection toward the support for the integration of the EU, the support for the EU Constitution and the European currency. Finally, support for the European Union is revealed to be a fundamental variable predicting political participation at the European level in opposition to support for the EU Constitution or the Euro-currency.

Matthias Kaelberer

*Associate Professor, Political Science
University of Memphis*

TITLE: Culture, Communication and Currency: Constructing a Public Sphere for the Euro

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a critical issue for the legitimacy of European Monetary Union, namely the embeddedness of European monetary policy-making in the European public sphere. While they share a common supra-national currency, there is no “natural” public sphere through which Europeans would communicate about monetary policy. Many aspects of the public sphere remain more or less “national”- most importantly due to linguistic borders and the absence of a supra-national European press and media landscape. In addition, the information networks used previously by national central banks to communicate with other economic agents would still have to develop for the European Central Bank. This represents a challenge for the European Central Bank to create legitimacy for its decision-making. The paper examines two aspects of this issue. First, it analyzes the communication policy of the European Central Bank. How does the ECB communicate with the public in a supra-national environment? In what sense does it differ from national central banks? Second, the paper assesses the relationship between the public sphere and the development of trust in the euro. In this section, the paper looks at the cultural and institutional underpinnings of trust in money.

Tatiana Kostadinoa

*Associate Professor, Political Sciences and International Relations
Florida International University*

TITLE: “Corruption and Popular Attitudes towards National Institutions, the EU, and Democracy”

ABSTRACT

Popular trust in institutions and support for democracy are critical conditions for the survival of new democracies. The paper examines levels and sources of public confidence in national institutions in Eastern Europe, and compares those to trust in the institutions of the European Union. The analysis uses data from the World Values Survey and from the European Barometer. The study identifies government performance as the most influential factor shaping institutional confidence in the new EU member states. This impact is conditioned by some distinctive pre-Communist cultural traditions.

Felice Lifshitz

*Professor, History Department
Florida International University*

TITLE: “Action! Camera! Roots! Cinematic Medievalism and European Identities”

ABSTRACT

Film is one of the many mechanisms that has contributed to the creation of European identities, and will continue to shape their futures. Most European countries have national film industries, although in some countries these are older, more developed and better funded than in others. The products of these multiple production centers have all been part of the creation of culturally-based identities throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. However, historical films have been particularly significant in this regard, and none more so than filmed depictions of the European Middle Ages, due to the ability of such films to project national identities into the distant past, including to periods when the nation did not exist at all, as part of a venerable cultural genealogy, and thus to consecrate those identities

with the holy oil of time. Medieval historiophoty, like medieval historiography, resonates deeply with modern Europeans, virtually all of whom trace their political identities to a medieval polity whose traditions, purportedly long cherished and transmitted over centuries from generation to generation, are now entrusted for safe-keeping to the capable hands of the contemporary film viewer. However, historiophoty, unlike historiography, is powerfully accessible to all citizens of a given country, long after they have graduated from the national school system and forgotten the dull lectures and (often unread) textbooks that accompanied their educational progress. Furthermore, the techniques of filmmakers assure that snippets of cinematic medievalism are deeply embedded in the minds of anyone who has participated in the mass spectatorship of modern movie-going. With current technologies, such as cheap DVDs and even cheaper downloads of video files, all the films that ever formed part of the creation of a given national identity are once simultaneously available to shape a new generation of viewers. This includes older “classic” films, now ensconced in the canon of film history, which reflect national rivalries, even hatreds that have otherwise been (at least temporarily) left behind in the current political climate. The filmic legacy of European culture thus has the potential to reignite, perpetuate, and enshrine in national identities a whole range of historic tensions that the transnational movement has worked to eradicate, and thereby to create obstacles to European integration. In contrast, there is not a single film set in the European Middle Ages that can be said to further the cause of European integration, or to take as its subject any of the themes that are normally seen as potentially unifying for Europeans, such as the Carolingian Empire. Nationalist cultural traditions dominate European film-making, as well as American film-making about medieval Europe. My paper will explore these dynamics with reference to a number of films set in the European Middle Ages and produced both in Europe and in the United States during the twentieth century.

Milena Neshkova

*Assistant Professor of Public Administration
Florida International University*

TITLE: “Public Opinion and Decision Making in the European Commission”

ABSTRACT

A fundamental tenet of democratic theory is that policy should be responsive to public opinion. The European integration has long been an elite-driven process with predominantly economic and technocratic goals. The public has been largely excluded from the policy making at the EU level. Scholars have even coined a term to denote this pattern – ‘permissive consensus’ – meaning that the public was indifferent because its policy preferences accorded with those of the elites. Yet, the backlash against the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s and the recent Constitutional ratification crisis clearly showed that the previous assumption about the passive public was not valid anymore.

To assess the effect of public opinion on the EU policy making, I study the relationship between the Commission and European Parliament and whether this relationship is conditioned on public opinion. More specifically, I look at the changes made by the Commission to its legislative proposals in response to the requests of Parliament. I hypothesize that the amount of change made by the Commission will be contingent upon public opinion. Specifically, I expect that the Commission will be more likely to take on board the amendments of Parliament when popular approval is low. I track Parliament’s amendments incorporated by the Commission to 40 legislative proposals taken from four policy areas between 2004 and 2008. The legislative change is measured as the proportion of the amendments requested by Parliament that have been incorporated into the final proposal.

Joseph F. Patrouch

*Associate Professor, History Department
Florida International University*

TITLE: “The Role of the Holy Roman Empire in understanding European Identity: A Case Study from 2006”

ABSTRACT

2006 marked the 200th anniversary of the public renunciation of his title by Emperor Franz II. The year has been remembered as the end of the complex political unit known as the Holy Roman Empire. Spread across much of central Europe, it is said to have existed for around a thousand years. This paper will discuss some of the ways the memory of that political unit was used in the public discussions associated with European unification, EU enlargement, and the proposal for an EU constitution. The German EU presidency, for example, used references to the Empire. German politicians such as Wolfgang Schäuble in speeches and interviews explicitly paralleled the Holy Roman Empire with its complex interweaving of jurisdictions and multiple centers of authority with the current EU. Questions to be addressed in this presentation include: how do appeals to History help or hinder the project of European integration? What roles do cultural policies of memorialization play in the creation of a transnational European identity? References to German museum exhibitions including the blockbuster shows organized with the anniversary of the end of the Empire in mind will also be made.

Mishel Pavlovski

Professor on Postgraduate Cultural Studies on the Institute of Macedonian Literature of “St Cyril and Methodius” University of Skopje, Macedonia

TITLE: “History, identity and the powder keg”

ABSTRACT

In the paper will be discussed the relations between contemporary Balkan states and nations with history, and reflection of that relations to the actualization of phrase “powder keg” which very often is used like synonym for Balkan Peninsula and Balkans’ nations. Fact that each of the national histories of each Balkan state has its own “truth” (or better to say, “Truth”), is significant in creating an image of Other, as well as have a major role in creating identities - National identity, Balkan identity or European identity. Research will use newspaper articles, literary works, and theatre articles which have important influence in cultural reception

Raymond Taras

Professor, Political Science

Tulane University

TITLE: “Islamophobia & the Use of Counter Histories”**ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on the spread of Islamophobic attitudes in Western Europe. With significant and diverse Muslim minorities, many Western European societies have experienced varying degrees of fear and hostility, encapsulated as Islamophobia. This phobia has begun to shape and realign domestic and, in particular, electoral politics. Switzerland's 2007 election result furnishes a good example, but the 2009 elections to the European Parliament registered a similar increase in the salience of anti-immigrant discourses, many which target Muslim communities.

After assessing how pervasive Islamophobic attitudes are, and whether the economic recession exacerbated them, this paper examines the impact of the process of “othering” on this form of xenophobia. Do shifts in citizen attitudes towards perceived Muslim “outsiders” living in their countries originate in a return to identity politics, or are they situational and contingent? Are they the product of essentializing ethnic understandings of the national home which exclude outsider groups—immigrants and minorities? If so, what use is made by Islamophobic political leaders of “national narratives” and their purported incongruity with migrant and minority “counter histories?” Have culture wars *à l'americain* come to Europe, or is there a distinctively Western European character to the ne politics of xenophobia?

This paper presents comparative data, and analysis, on the sources and spread of Islamophobia, with a special focus on the cases of Britain, Germany, and France.

Markus Thiel

Assistant Professor

Political Science and International Relations

Florida International University

TITLE: “Xenophobia & Inclusion: The Status quo of European Civil Society”**ABSTRACT**

The latest addition to the EU's functional agencies arrived in 2007 when the previous European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia was revamped into the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), created to highlight and improve human rights in Europe. While some would view this as an admission to the precarious situation of various marginalized ethnic and social minorities in Europe and others dismiss it as a nominal change, the EU advocates the reorganization as an organizational enhancement by providing specialized expertise to governments while promoting dialogue with civil society organizations in the member states. In this paper, I focus on the FRA's contact with civil society organizations in the agency's Fundamental Rights Platform and analyze the agency's approach to civil society. In particular, questions of funding, institutional overlap, mutual exchanges and supervision are surveyed. In conclusion, it is argued that the establishment of the agency, through the stimulation of transnational civil society relations, provides for a more inclusive Union and potentially, a stronger degree of European social cohesion.