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Title of Session: European Identity or Identities? Evolving views of 'Europa'

Name of Session Convener(s): (a) Robert L. Miller (b) Markieta Domecka

University/Organization incl. City: Queen's University, Belfast

Chair: Robert L. Miller

University/Organization incl. City: Queen's University, Belfast

I) Title of Selected Paper: "Notes from an island: using biographical narratives to interpret the meanings of Britishness and Europeanness"

Name/s of Author/s: Howard Davis, Sally Baker, Graham Day and Marta Kowalska

University/Organization incl. City: Bangor University, School of Social Sciences; Bangor, UK

Abstract: Research on European identities using biographical narrative data highlights the complexity of processes of identity formation and evolution over the life course. The paper reports on the analysis of selected biographical interviews collected in the framework of the international Euroidentities project. The narratives are from British respondents chosen according to their involvement in international and European Union programmes and institutions such as higher education exchanges, international careers or agricultural subsidy schemes. The data is examined for evidence of identity work being done on biographical and institutional action schemes with a European dimension. References to Europe are not uncommon in the narratives but they are of the type which denotes the mainland of the European continent in the geographical sense, and sometimes an unspecified sense of cultural foreignness. Expressions like 'going to Europe' or 'graduates from Europe versus graduates from the UK' appear to deny that Britain is part of Europe. On the other hand, openness to Europe is implicit in many descriptions of cultural encounters, language, travel, careers and personal interaction. The paper explores the possibility that Britain is different from other European societies in terms of identification with Europe. How do British interviewees talk about their place in Europe? When is Europe seen as somewhere else than the UK? How is European citizenship linked to identity? How does a person become European? Is there need for a theory of British exceptionalism?

II) Title of Selected Paper: "Multiculturalism: A Third Option"

Name/s of Author/s: Maegan Hendow

University/Organization incl. City: Universität Leipzig, Zentrum für Höhere Studien; Leipzig, Germany

Abstract: Samuel Huntington's thesis on the "clash of civilizations," names the seven civilizations of the world whose identities are clearly distinguishable from each other. These clear-cut lines, however, face problems when applied to any "civilization," problems with which the European community is currently dealing. In their attempt to conceptualize a European identity, Europeans are faced with the issue of how to reconcile an idea of a homogenous identity with their actual heterogeneous societies. France, in particular, has had distinct difficulties integrating North Africans into their conception of French identity, and can serve as an example for Europe's challenge. French society continues to view as foreign second generation North Africans, many of whom are now French citizens who view their parents' countries as foreign. These second generations are often depicted as torn between two worlds, but instead these Beurs, as they refer to themselves, are creating a new identity for themselves that is both French and North African. They apply Edouard Glissant's idea that "one can change in exchanging with another, without losing oneself" ¹ to their own situation, seeing themselves not as torn between but as enriched by two cultures. The French films "Games of Love and Chance" and "Salut Cousin!" reflect this movement, placing the traditional French literature of Pierre de Marivaux and Jean de La Fontaine into a Beur context. Their adaptation of these pieces shows how integration of new features does not challenge, but rather enhances the conceptualization of French identity in creating a multifaceted and multicultural identity.

III) Title of Selected Paper: "One Europe or Several Europes? The Cultural Logic of Narratives of Europe"

Name/s of Author/s: Maria Rovisco

University/Organization incl. City: York St John University, Faculty of Arts; York, UK

Abstract: This paper applies narrative genres and symbolic classifications as analytical tools to examine competing cultural understandings of Europe in France and Britain through the years of 2003 and 2005. Drawing on data from newspaper coverage of a set of key events of European debate (i.e., the decision of the United States to go to war with Iraq in March 2003; the EU enlargement to ten Eastern European countries; and the debate on the European Constitution) the paper discusses how narratives and symbolic configurations of Europe are constructed differently in both France and Britain in the context of the symbolic struggle to define who are the core Europeans. Through the lens of a cultural sociology approach, it is argued that in order to make their claims about Europe valid and plausible, political and cultural elites have to be able to translate the cultural idea of Europe into public narratives that resonate with the expectations and beliefs of the wider national public. This is particularly the case in moments of crisis or uncertainty over the meaning of Europe when novel demands and events, deriving from social or political pressures, generate a more active debate in the public sphere about Europe and EU affairs.

¹ Edouard Glissant, « Métissage et Créolisation ». in *Discours sur le Métissage* (Ed. Sylvie Kandé, L'Harmattan 1999), 53.

IV) Title of Selected Paper: “Russians’ European identity: international and sociocultural aspects”

Name/s of Author/s: Mikhail Gorshkov

University/Organization incl. City: Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology; Moscow, Russia

Abstract: Paper is based on the results of sociological surveys conducted in order to study place and role of democratic values in Russians’ national self-consciousness, international and socio-cultural aspects of their European identity, analyze main reasons which, according to respondents’ opinion, interfere with the development of well-wishing constructive relations between Russia and EU states. Thus, one third of Russians is sure that the main factor, suppressing mutual convergence, is EU striving for dictating its own interpretation of democracy on other countries as well as NATO expansion to the East. Approximately one fifth of respondents referred also to EU reluctance to admit Russian business to European markets and Western countries’ tendency to rewrite history of the Second World War. If in the beginning of current decade it seemed to Russians that Russia and Europe were able to understand each other, subsequent trend of developments disappointed them soundly. Collectively experienced sense of disappointment with European policy became, evidently, a reason for reevaluation of Russians’ attitudes to Europe. At the same time we observe in Russian self-consciousness a kind of loss of interest in Europe and “European example”. What is about hypothetic trends of Russia–EU countries integration? In 2002 number of so called “euro-optimists”, those connecting future of Russia with its entry into EU, exceeded number of “eurosceptics”– those with quite opposite point of view–significantly (more than 50% and less than 30% correspondingly). Today 42% of respondents are against integration with European Union, whereas 30% of them welcome such a prospect. Data obtained in 2007 showed, that part of Russian “euro-sceptics” increased during the last five years almost half as much and exceeded part of those to be “euro-optimists”. Though Russians are much more interested in EU than in CIS countries, part of respondents conceiving desire to entry EU (11%) turned to be somewhat less than part of those giving preference to hypothetic union between Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine & Kazakhstan (13%) and notably less than those wishing to live in a new united USSR (more than 18%). The most part of respondents (almost 40%) would like to live in their native country without any uniting. So, at present time Russians are rather moderate isolationists than adherents of integration with anybody, including so attractive for many European countries. Nevertheless, in social-cultural context results of surveys let us to speak about some dispositions of Russians towards convergence between Russia and Europe. In contrast to any other international orientation this process doesn’t cause undesirable psychological tension as well as significant spiritual gap in Russian society. In the long run “European way” could be accepted without any special internal resistance by all basic social-demographic groups of Russian society. Of course, on conditions that this way will not bring Russians obvious and painful disappointments.

V) Title of Selected Paper: “A far distant glance at Europe: critical perspectives from Africa, India and China”

Name/s of Author/s: Vittorio Cotesta

University/Organization incl. City: Università Roma Tre, Department of Education;
Rome, Italy

Abstract: The author examines the critiques of Europe put forward by African or Afro-American (M. Bernal, K. Wiredu, A. Appiah, V. Mudimbe), Indian (above all D. Chakrabarty) and neo-Confucian Chinese intellectuals (Zhao Tingyian).

From the African perspective on Europe, radical critiques are made i.e. the allegation of having annihilated African identity, of having established, through colonialism, a hierarchy of the different peoples in which the Europeans are at the apex and, finally, of having treated the Africans as 'not civilized' people. The 'African renaissance' must free Africa from the colonial identity imposed through violence by Europeans and must re-discover Africa's own authentic values. From the Indian point of view comes a different critique which is summarized by the formula put forward by D. Chakrabarty according to whom it is now necessary to 'provincialize Europe'. 'Provincialize Europe' is the first step towards the construction of a society in which European and Indian values might meet in a universalistic perspective. The project of Zhao Tingyang aims at reconstructing the neo-Confucian model of civilization. The formula "all that which is under the sky", which once was applied to China, today must be applied to the whole world. From such a perspective, the world seems unified from the geographic point of view but not from the political one. Even from this standpoint it emerges that the values of the European-western civilization are only one of the pillars of the construction of a new government of the world. From the analysis of these three points of view, a re-shaping of the universalistic pretences of Western and European civilization emerges and, at least with respect to the Indian and Chinese perspectives, the recognition of Europe as an important partner in the creation of the new world-order.