

Invitation / Call for papers

Workshop: Identities in Conflict in the Enlarged Europe

Budapest, 26-27 September 2008



Organised by Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest
Venue: Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Budapest

Democracy and Identity

The RECON project attempts to analyze the possible models of democratization that are available and may be viable in an enlarged European Union. Individual and collective identities, political, religious, ethnic and cultural traditions and identifications play an important role in European citizens' representation of the EU and their expectations about democracy. Identity constructions and social traditions are closely related to democratic norms (like activism, participation, trust, consensus and cooperation) or the absence of such. The negative reception of the Constitution as well as the Lisbon Treaty proves that there is profound incomprehension among European citizens as to the goals and means of European integration. Public and private discourses also testify about the disorientation and disinterest of various publics.

RECON's *WP 8 – Identity Formation and Enlargement* attempts to examine the interrelationship between the different models of democracy and the various forms of identity that are discernible among the citizens of the EU member states. The EU as an ambitious long-term project in the making can be seen as an idealistic plan orchestrated by political, economic and cultural elites. Because of its long-term and complex processes and its elitist character, it lacks the support of large masses of the European societies. People cling to the well-known frames of their lives and to their old and habitual identities. They do not necessarily share the common goals and have only vague feelings of solidarity, which is a basic feature needed for integration. Differences in political and cultural traditions and historical cleavages between Eastern and Western Europe are still strong and may hamper the perception of common causes and issues. They may thus prevent the dialogue among members of the European societies. The project attempts to examine whether there are links between the weakness of European identification and the lack of participation and solidarity among European nations and citizens.

WP 8 focuses on problems of identity, dealing with its constructed nature, its multiple structure and its communicative use. Special attention is paid to **European identity** as a particular new construction and strong emphasis is put on identity problems of the accession countries where they are particularly complex, as demonstrated by recent and ongoing empirical research.

Research in WP 8 is conducted on theoretical and empirical levels. It attempts to examine whether European identity or some of its traces are discernable in various layers of the European societies (or THE European society?) concerning their representations, expectations and anxieties about the EU. The team also aims to investigate if it is possible to construct European identity following the previous – 19th century – schemes of nation-building or whether (and what) other processes can be applied. Is it possible and preferable to reinforce European citizens' sense of belonging to a common project in a context where the dividing lines are still strong because Europe has gone through several deep conflicts and wars, even recently?

The WP 8 research team attempts to find out whether a “common narrative” of European history and European future can be constructed. The task to find discursive and other tools to overcome the contradictions is very complex, in particular when there is no common language to support the construction of a strong European public sphere. The team attempts to seek ways in which identification can be elaborated through various forms of communication.

The workshop deals with the following topics:

- Is European identity a political programme, an ideal goal, is it a project in the making or are there any traces of its real existence? What are its forms and in which situations or contexts can it be grasped? When do people emphasize their European identity? How is it related to other existing identities, e.g. national, ethnic and religious identities, and what kind of tensions or conflicts can be detected among them? What is the relationship between Eurosceptic views and national identification?
- Compared with other forms of identity, what kinds and forms of identifications are offered by the European Union? In this respect, the role of European and national media in the EU identity formation is crucial. Do the media cultivate an elitist image of the European Union? What are the common issues according to European media? The question whether the elaboration of strong (symbolic, cognitive and emotional) representation could help the EU to be able to gain the loyalty of the masses by securing their strong identification (cf. the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy) is also open to discussion. How do the European public sphere, European media and European intellectuals participate in the definition of a common European agenda?
- How are the different identity constructions elaborated in public and private discourses? How do people define their belonging, how do they define their embedding groups and who are the meaningful “Others”? What are the main values and arguments in pro-European and Eurosceptic discourses? What methods are applicable to reconstruct various standpoints through linguistic and discursive clues?

The workshop will focus on:

- **Democratic models and identity issues**
- **Discourses on Europe**
- **Identity conflicts (universalist and particularist identity constructions)**

Papers and abstracts (300 words) should be sent by 15 August 2008 to Borbala Kriza: krizab@freemail.hu.

To register, please contact Borbala Kriza: krizab@freemail.hu.