



*Towards a European Society? Transgressing Disciplinary Boundaries in European Studies Research.* Portsmouth: Centre for European and International Studies Research (CEISR), University of Portsmouth, 28.06.2012-30.06.2012.

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## **Towards a European Society? Transgressing Disciplinary Boundaries in European Studies Research**

The Centre for European and International Studies Research at the University of Portsmouth (UK) held its flagship conference on 28-30 June 2012 with the sponsorship of the Union Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES). This three-day international conference brought together academics and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines including History, Sociology, Politics/International Relations, Linguistics and Gender Studies.

The parallel panels addressed the topic of the conference from various thematic and methodological angles. This thematic and methodological variety provided a rich conceptual and empirical grounding for a more interdisciplinary practice of EU/European Studies.

A number of panels investigated the manifold Europeanization processes, highlighting the growing popularity of the concept amongst political scientists, historians, sociologists, and International Relations scholars. Looking at the EU external relations, a panel discussed the value of the concept of Europeanization as an interdisciplinary tool in the analysis of European studies. Another panel focused on the Europeanization of both cultural policy and cultural practice in the EU, a theme, which the panellists argued, requires cross-disciplinary cooperation combining and even integrating, political science, sociological, historical and cultural studies conceptual and methodological approaches to better understanding linkages between multiple actors in the EU and between policy-making at different levels and cul-

tural change. The discursive dimension of Europeanization was the key theme of another panel whose papers explored the interconnection of commonly experienced moments of crisis and challenges on a European scale with the Europeanization of the related media discourses.

Several panels also explored a variety of non-state actors, reflecting the growing interest of scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds in these actors. Engaging with different kinds of interest groups involved in key transnational policy fields, such as trade, agriculture, and industry, a panel explored from an historical and political science perspective the change over time of the role and influence of economic and business interest groups in EU integration and discussed their long-term, formal and informal, influence on EU governance practices. Social policy represented another policy area in which non-state actors, and in particular international organisations (IOs) such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) or the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), were active. A panel investigated the attempts to develop an integrated social policy, emphasizing the activities of these IOs in the construction of social housing for European workers. International non-state actors as experts and network of expertise were the central theme of another panel that considered issues arising from the inclusion and exclusion of non-expert voices and forms of knowledge. Drawn from the fields of political science, international relations and European studies, the papers provided an interdisciplinary survey of emerging trends in multi-level governance.

Transnational contacts also featured prominently in a number of panels. A panel explored and discussed the various aspects of transnational groups of elites as well as networks and organisations. The papers focused more specifically on questions of the emergence of transnational networks, the main objectives of the organisations and associations who establish and promote them, and the impact of such co-operations on the national and international level. Transnational networks were discussed in another panel that brought together political scientists, sociologists and historians. The papers discussed the two main research traditions in which the concept is embedded, comparing the research agendas, central claims as well as strengths and weaknesses.

The conference also served as a platform to present a number of studies, recently published or to come out soon. A panel discussed for instance three of six books in a new book series provisionally entitled 'Making Europe, 1850-2000' that will come out from 2013. All three books and papers took a pan-European transnational perspective and addressed interlinked dimensions of European integration broadly speaking, studied here through the lens of technology. The books focus in particular on the role of International Organizations, of experts and knowledge societies, and of users of technology. In another panel, three monographs on EU staffs and elites from three different disciplinary areas (history, anthropology/ethnography, political sociology) were presented. The panel experimented with an innovative cross- and interdisciplinary reading, each author having to discuss the other papers in order to build bridges between topics and disciplines.

Keynote lectures and a plenary session gave ample opportunities to elaborate upon particular issues and aspects of transdisciplinary research in European Studies and to foster dialogue among the participants.

In their opening joint keynote lecture, TANJA BÄRZEL and THOMAS RISSE (both Freie Universität, Berlin) addressed the issue how to research and understand the role of Europe in a changing global world. In the second part of their lecture they introduced the focus of the second part of their DFG-funded Kollegforschergruppe 'Transformative Power Europe' at FU Berlin. In this four year research period they plan to concentrate on comparative regionalism and the present-day EU as a recipient of inward diffusion. In this context they stressed the great importance they attach to working with historians in particular in developing a refined theory and approach to the negotiated character of diffusion, or what

historians normally call cultural, political or policy transfer.

Organized at the end of the second day of the conference, a plenary session allowed to take stock and to discuss the benefits and pitfalls of multi- and cross-disciplinary research in a broader setting. The panel featured representatives from four different disciplines and sub-disciplines: History (KIRAN KLAUS PATEL, Maastricht University), Political Sociology (DIDIER GEORGAKAKIS, Institut d'études politiques, Strasbourg), Comparative Politics (MARTIN SCHAIN, New York University), and Anthropology (NIKOLAI VUKOV, Bulgarian Academy of Science). In short presentations the panellists addressed what they considered as the potential and challenges of transdisciplinarity not solely in terms of academic production but also career progression. The lively discussion that followed the presentations raised a number of additional issues related to interdisciplinary research and teaching. It demonstrated that, although cross-disciplinary studies create useful synergies and result in heuristic play-offs, disciplines are 'to paraphrase Stanley Hoffmann' obstinate rather than obsolete.

The conference was concluded with the keynote lecture by MICHAEL SHACKLETON (Maastricht). In his lecture Professor Shackleton, a former head of the European Parliament office in London, provided a practitioners' perspective on the work of European institutions. He advanced the claim that the shape and powers of European institutions are not just the result of the interplay of the Member States' interests but also of powerful ideas.

All in all, the conference provided a fascinating overview of the variety of interdisciplinary studies currently undertaken in the field of European Studies as well as a welcome opportunity for researchers with an interest in the EU and the wider Europe to engage with one another's work and methodology. The conference also showed that transdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation across disciplinary boundaries have much to offer to refine our understanding of the increasing complexity, depth and breadth of European integration broadly speaking and of the manifold dimensions of the emerging European society.

#### **Conference overview:**

Keynote Lecture by Tanja A. Bärzel and & Thomas Risse

#### *Parallel Session 1*

Interface of Political Discourse and Popular (Media) culture: Minorities in Europe

Vera Messing, Central European University Budapest, Hungary

Delaine Le Bas, Artist

Annabel Tremlett, University of Portsmouth, UK

International Organizations: Responding to the Housing Question in Postwar Europe

Flavia Cumoli, FNRS-Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Christel Frapier, CNRS/Université Paris I, France

Mark Timpson, Oxford University, UK

Nicolas Verschuere, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

The Transformative Power of Europe? Norm and Policy Diffusion in the Context of EU Enlargement and Regionalism

Katia Biedenkopf, Free University of Berlin, Germany

Bilgin Ayata, Free University of Berlin, Germany

Julia Langbein, Free University of Berlin, Germany

Ulrike Lorenz, Free University of Berlin, Germany

#### *Parallel Session 2*

Sustainable Europeanization? European Union External Policies

Charlotte Bretherton, Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Paul Flenley, University of Portsmouth, UK

Karolina Pomorska, University of Maastricht, Netherlands & Nicholas Wright University of East Anglia, UK

John Vogler, Keele University, UK

Negotiating Europe's Past and Future: Europeanization of cultural Policy and Practice

Wolfram Kaiser, University of Portsmouth, UK

Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland

Uta Staiger, University College London, UK

Nanna Thylstrup, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

#### *Parallel Session 3*

European Integration through the Lens of Technology: The Longue Durée

Martin Kohlrausch, University of Leuven, Belgium

Ruth Oldenziel, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands

Johan Schot, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands

Challenging Europe à Debating European Chal-

lenges: Media, Society and European Politics

Xiudian Dai, University of Hull, UK

Amelie Kutter, Lancaster University, UK

Tobias Reckling, University of Portsmouth, UK

Paul Statham, University of Bristol, UK & Hans-

Jørg Trenz, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Ulrike Zschache, Lancaster University, UK

Authors Cross-Reading: New Perspectives on European Union Staff and Elites

Didier Georgakakis, University of Strasbourg/Institut Universitaire de France, France

Karin Geuijen, Free University of Utrecht, Netherlands

Katia Seidel, University of Westminster, UK

#### *Parallel Session 4*

Extending the European Linguistic and Cultural Areas: Policies, Practices, Perspectives

Svetlana Kurtes, University of Portsmouth, UK

Igor Lakic, University of Montenegro, Montenegro

Tatiana Larina, Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia

Anabella-Gloria Niculescu-Gorpin, Romanian Academy, The "Iorgu Iordan - Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics, Romania

Teodora Popescu, University of Alba Iulia, Romania

New Perspectives on Legitimacy: Scholars and European Constructions

Julie Bailleux, Université Paris 1, France

Antonin Cohen, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, France

Brigitte Leucht, London School of Economics and Political Science, Westminster, Portsmouth, UK

Claudia Schrag, University of Oxford, UK

Transnational Networks or Transnational Fields: Competing or Complementary Concepts?

Karen Heard-Laurate, University of Portsmouth, UK

Jan-Henrik Meyer, Aarhus University, Denmark

Kristine Midtgaard, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

Antoine Vauchez, CNRS, France

#### *Parallel Session 5*

Networking Europe: The Role of Experts in Transnational Dialogue and Diffusion

Nina Boeger, University of Bristol Law School & Joseph Corkin, Middlesex University, UK

Mark Field, Chris Huggins & Ed Stoddard, University of Portsmouth, UK

Karin Geuijen & Sebastiaan Princen, Utrecht University, Netherlands

Paul Stephenson, University of Maastricht, Netherlands

New Minorities: (Im)migrants as a New Cultural Reality in Europe

Monika Kopytowska, University of Lodz, Poland & Renata Sedlakova, Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic & Kaya Tampere, Tallinn University, Estonia.

Monica Mosca, University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy  
Alcina Sousa, University of Madeira, Portugal

European Feminism: The Era of Women's Liberation  
Hilde Danielsen, University of Bergen, Norway

Natalie Thomlinson, Kings College, Cambridge, UK  
Monica Threlfall, London Metropolitan University, UK

*Plenary Session with Didier Georgakakis, Kiran Patel, Martin Schain, Nikolai Vukov*

*Parallel Session 6*

Europe and the Cosmopolitan Citizen

Kathryn Brown, Tilburg University, Netherlands

David Owen, Southampton University, UK

Bert van Roermund, Tilburg University, Netherlands

Alan Thomas, Tilburg University, Netherlands

The European Idea, Africa and Decolonisation: A Comparative Perspective

Martin Evans, University of Portsmouth, UK

Anne-Isabelle Richard, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

Alex Keese, Humboldt University, Berlin and Visiting Scholar, University of Portsmouth, UK

Brian Shaev, University of Pittsburgh, USA

Experts and Networks of Expertise: International Non-State Actors

Angela Crack, University of Portsmouth, UK

Robert Frith, University of Portsmouth, UK & John Glenn, University of Southampton, UK

Patricia Shamaï, University of Portsmouth, UK

Keynote Lecture by Michael Shackelton, Head of the London European Parliament Office and Special Professor in European Institutions at the University of Maastricht

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