IDENTITIES AND MODERNITIES IN EUROPE

Identities and modernities in Europe: European and national identity construction programmes and politics, culture, history and religion

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CONSORTIUM

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IME Is Entering into the Final Year

With all fieldwork completed, IME has entered its third and final year. The consortium met on 13-14 June in Helsinki to discuss the strategy for the final year. The consortium first discussed the country report which consolidates findings from three stages of fieldwork and noted that there was more to do be done with operationalisation of 'modernity'. Having agreed on the revision strategy, the consortium discussed the strategy for the next stage – the comparative analysis, and came up with a set of innovative ideas for comparison: religion and education, the Bologna Process, Opposing Europe; 'Catching up', the relationship among different levels of discourses and a comparative analysis of the cases from the viewpoint of conceptual history.

The consortium was then joined by Terry Martin who introduced various issues surrounding communication of research findings to the consortium. He also provided detailed comments on some of the findings of IME to suggest some ways in which these results could be communicated to different audience.

Inspired by Terry's contribution, the consortium further discussed dissemination plans and it was agreed that briefings for non-academic users should be produced by December 2011 and main non-academic dissemination should take place in January/February 2012. Sophie Duschesne (Partner 4) and Atsuko Ichijo (Partner 1) will lead the dissemination activities at the European level. It was also agreed that the final conference on 28-29 March 2012 in Kingston should have three components: academic conference, non-academic dissemination element and the project meeting.

Highlights from the fieldwork stage

Bulgaria: Pros and cons of modernity and Europeanness

The Bulgarian research has attempted to establish how state actors, civil society actors and ordinary citizens in Bulgaria interpret modernity and especially how they perceive modernity in its relation with Europe and nation, and with European and national identities. The catalyst selected for this examination was the education. The education is among the most significant and powerful tools each state has at its disposal to shape and sustain the collective identity of its citizens and to form their understanding of the past, the present and the future. The education also provided a possibility to investigate the links between the identity construction and religion, and between the identity construction and majority-minority relations.

For the state actors, the education remains the backbone of the state's national identity construction programme. The education reform, which has begun after the change of the political system in 1989, is still ongoing and will probably continue for a decade or more. The proclaimed goal is to turn the education from monocultural to multicultural and thus recognize the multiethnic and multi-religious character of the country. However, the results are still unsatisfactory and much remains to be accomplished. One substantial and successful reform has been the introduction of the European dimension into the school

The general impression from the interviews with the civil society representatives and private individuals is that people in Bulgaria are very interested and often highly emotional about the state of the Bulgarian education. They believe that education is of exceptional importance for the development of the Bulgarian society and underline its historical role for the formation of the Bulgarian nation and state. They also perceive it as inseparable part of the process of Europeanization of the country, but there is a certain scepticism among some respondents whether education today can still be considered an agent of modernisation as was the case until recently.

Modernity is most often understood as a synonym for "European." On the one hand, this carries a positive connotation. Modernisation and Europeanization are two intertwined processes with the common aim: to make Bulgaria a better place to live in (indicators named by the respondents include standard of living, rule of law, freedom to travel, purchasing power, life quality, infrastructure, clean environment).

On the other hand, the same process is seen by others as institutionalised and imposed from outside. A borrowed, copied and mechanically assembled "European modernity" rarely fits the Bulgarian realities and thus seldom produces the desired result. A case in point, in view of such respondents, is the Bologna Process. Considered as an inseparable and unavoidable part of the EU accession process, it is described as a foreign frame and by some even as a threat.

The relation between the Bulgarian and European identity is complex. The first reaction of respondents is that "Bulgaria is and has always been a part of Europe." There is even a sense of regional pride – namely that the Balkans are the cradle of the European civilisation. On the second thought, most respondents begin to underline the differences and the Europeanness of today's Bulgaria is evaluated very critically and very often questioned, if not denied. Although Bulgaria is already an EU member-state, Bulgarians still perceive their country as somewhat "exterritorial" compared to the rest of the EU. While they are convinced that Bulgaria has a history-stamped residence permit for the common European home, Bulgarians in numerous respects feel that they live next door to "Europe" rather than in it.

Croatia

Consolidation of the Croatian case suggests that there is an interplay between national, European and modern where so called 'the modern' and 'the European' are used by the state authorities as an instrument to enforce 'the national'. The research of the educational system in Croatia has demonstrated that the authorities are implementing contradictory policies: on the one hand they proclaim the promotion of 'the European' as a main aim; on the other, they are effectively focusing on enforcing 'the national'. The Croatian authorities also adopt a functionalist approach to education.

However, this has not been well received by the citizenry. Minorities react negatively to the policies of the state authorities. In the case of the majority, the policies are not very well received, either, though they are accepted in a different way.

In this sense, minorities feels excluded and jeopardized in terms of peaceful coexistence with the majority whereas the majority feels that the official policies are threatening towards Europeanization and modernization of Croatia that is envisaged and wanted. In this case, there seems to be two parallel realities in Croatia, one of majority and one of minorities both recognizing the same issues just seeing them through different lenses. This is also the major finding that points towards existence of two conflict discourses, the one coming from the state and the citizen's response.

Finally, second major finding coming from this research is a confirmation of the suitability of the qualitative methodology that, by researching something that belongs to the everyday's problem resulted with findings on the dichotomy of discourses between the state and the citizens, a finding not found and/or confirmed in the research so far.

Finland

The comparative stage of the IME project has resulted in some interesting material in the Finnish team. The findings from WP5, WP6 and WP7 show that the Finnish collective self-construction is moving from 'a keeping up'- phase in the 1990s, entailing many references to Europe, towards a more global attitude in many domains of social life. This is thoroughly put forward in the case of education; the excellent Finnish PISA- results have changed the Finnish narrative and also national identity towards an almost omnipotent experience of the comprehensive education system. On the other hand, the situation within the university level education is subject for rapid change towards more competition both within the country but also on an international education market. Surprisingly enough, many on the Finnish respondents are not unfamiliar with the idea of tuition fees, which would be a dramatic change of the Nordic welfare state paradigm with free education for everybody.

The parliament election held in April 2011 resulted in the biggest political change in the Finnish political life for decades; the populist True Finns party is the third biggest in Finland. Its negative Europe-policy and unwillingness to compromise on e.g. the bailout programmes for the euro-crisis nevertheless meant that the party was left in the opposition. Constructing a new government took two months and ended up in a coalition with six parties, only the previous Prime Minister party, the Centre party and the true Finns were left in the opposition. One of the crucial questions was that on Europe and the euro-crisis. Having been the "good pupil" in EU Finland is now hesitating and taking a couple of steps backwards from its previously positive Europe-policy. This is much due to the fact that the populist party appears to have shaken the very fundaments of the neoliberal state.

France

The empirical investigation at the three levels of state actors, civil society members and citizens shows in the French case that the nation remains the central reference in the cultural programs that characterize French society at the beginning of the 21st century, at least when addressed through questions related to education. The increasing emphasis put on national cohesion by political speeches and decisions coming from the state is opposed by part of the civil society but nevertheless is largely reflected in citizens' discourses. The nation and the state remain major potential agents of collective agency.

However, representations of the French nation are not today more homogeneous than before. A tension remains between inherited conflictive conceptions of France but seems somehow shifted since it is now only linked to issues related to immigration and Islam. The general pattern is still clearly impervious to any recognition of ethnic, cultural or religious subgroups as legitimate possible places for individuals' identity and empowerment. Moreover, another tension seems at work, which bears upon the fundamental notion of citizens' equality: activists' denunciation of real and increasing social inequalities, paralleled by the same denunciation in a number of citizens' discourses, does contradict the republican credo.

What is indeed also striking in the French case is that most of the time the narratives hold by civil society actors and citizens are deprived of any strong sense of agency: the French education system is felt as not having fulfilled its equalitarian promises and the actors have difficulty to think about pro-active projects that would reverse this trend.

As for Europe, it hardly appears in the picture. State actors tend to confuse the European level and the world; activists, although their organisations are linked with European counterparts in most cases, denounce its liberal orientations. And citizens have difficulties in relating to a level of decision that they do not experience as such, and do not feel specific similarities with other European countries. European integration does not play a role in the shift in national identification: it is not considered a threat but not an empowerment either.

Greece

State-society relations in 'modern' Greece have been marked by two conflictual cultures. The first is the 'underdog' culture essentially pre-modern, cautious of the 'West', traditionalist, with a powerful statist orientation based on clientelistic networks of power. The second is the 'Enlightened' one, secular in its orientation, pro-capitalist, pro-Western, extrovert and privileging the formation of modern political structures. These have cut across society and the state since the country's independence in the 19th century, and are equally present within left and right political structures, state and non-state actors today.

This tightly-knit web of rival relations between attachment to elements of tradition and continuity has led us to suggest that the Greek case proposes an alternative path to modernity as defined by Eisenstadt. It has traced a pathway of a peripheral post-industrial parliamentary democracy that has moved from pre-modern economic and political forms of organisation to post-modern ones, and whose modernization and industrialization remain incomplete. It has also led to a dominant narrative that expresses a continuing ambivalence towards modernity, and also towards western Europe and the European Union.

Against this background, our research findings suggest that Greek state actors express both attachment and resistance to modernisation projects, and even to Europe 'as modernity.' They tend to argue in favour of reforms on the basis of a discourse of 'modernity accomplished.' However, this is a modernity that needs to be further consolidated or developed in the face of external contemporary challenges that are urgently pressing. Thus, they engage in a discourse of 'modernity sought' in order to encourage and justify reforms. Non-state actors react to proposed reforms often in contradictory ways, instrumentalizing and politicizing the modernity vs. tradition dilemma to suit their individual or organizational aims. This reaction is not a resistance to modernity, but an effort to define it differently through the 'peculiarities' of the national context and thereby, ultimately, to present themselves as striving to defend 'tradition' and the continuity of Greece's particularisms (whether this may be the role of religion, or public free education, etc). Lay persons interviewed by our team appear to not address the core challenges faced in Greek society as an 'either-or' impasse. Depending on the issue at stake, they are comfortable in positioning themselves in different ways, zigzagging and cherry-picking across the modernity vs. tradition divide.

These findings are particularly relevant in the context of the ongoing and unfolding Greek debt crisis that has become the deepest crisis the country has faced since the colonels' dictatorship and the EU's most severe existential crisis. This predicament has unavoidably influenced perceptions and discourses of Europe; definitions of national identity and its perceived relations with the rest of 'Europe'; criticism of pre-modern traits that are considered responsible for behaviours, attitudes and relations that led to the current economic and socio-political quandary; as well as expectations of and reactions against externally imposed reforms. We expect, therefore, that the Greek debt crisis will affect Greece's path of modernity in numerous ways as it has struck at the core of the Greek state, Greek society and the Greek political and economic system. Modernity involves the radical transformation of the conceptions and premises of the political order and realm and the breakdown of its traditional legitimations.

We consider that the current ongoing crisis, its consequences for state actors and the reactions it has triggered in non-state actors and among Greek citizens in the form of protest and contestation, will contribute to presenting different possibilities in the construction of a new order. As such the current crisis may push Greek modernity into a new phase as it will lead to a 'rebellion' towards the established political system and constellation of economic and political power. It remains however an open empirical question whether path dependency will prevail and Greece will continue on its own version of modernity without modernisation, i.e. a belief in human agency and in the individual's and society's capacity to shape their destiny without, however, subscribing to rationality (in governance) and without assigning to technological and economic progress the weight it is given in the dominant narrative of 'western' modernity. It remains indeed to be seen in the coming months and years whether the current financial but also political and ethical crisis that Greece is going through, will bring in an alternative modernity that will seek to combine the 'eastern' traditions of the country (i.e. without constructing an efficient and viable economy and a rational bureaucracy) with its 'western' political institutions and its anchoring to a fundamentally 'western' political entity such as the European Union.

Turkey

The Turkish team has found that while state actors have been traditionally perceived as the modernizing agents in Turkish history, non-state actors and private individuals demonstrated that they have a strong conviction in the role of collective and individual actors in their ability to reconstitute and restructure their surroundings vis-à-vis the process of contestation. While the role of the modernizing agent have been attributed to the state due to the top-down approach followed by the Turkish state, the significance of cognitive processes and critical attitudes towards modernity and the role of Europe as a model for modernity, have been contested in various stages of our field work.

Most importantly, we observe that while both non-state actors and private individuals maintain the importance of modernizing Turkey with certain universal reference points, which are founded on democracy, rule of law and human rights, they are not supportive of the holistic Western model. Subsequently, they emphasize that Europe and Turkey have different cultural and religious elements thus the two entities' experiences with modernity are dissimilar in nature but they are not necessarily inconsistent. As our WP8 report indicated, Europe being synonymous with the West sets a valid model of modernity for Turkey on the structural level but we also observe that the acknowledgement of societal differences play an important role in consolidating the Turkish experience with an alternative model of modernity.

UK

In considering the ways in which the three key terms – nations, Europe and modernity – are related to identity, the central concern of the project, it would be useful to start with the penetration of the social cohesion agenda in the contemporary UK public discourses. At all three levels investigated in the project, concern with the state of identity – national identity/British identity in particular – is shared. The discursive structure found here is that the British nation exists and the identity of the people who are supposed to make up the nation is something all members should be concerned. Multicultural integration appears to be accepted unconditionally. Here, the nation, regardless whether it is referred to as it is or alluded as 'society', is accepted as an important and meaningful category. This is particularly explicit in the state actors' discourse in which national identity is presented, along with citizenship, as a bond between the British people (the nation) and the government (the state). Working towards a betterment of society is presented as good by both civil society actors and private individuals, and the welfare of the nation (articulated as society) is seen as a commonly held aim. What is to be British is not explicitly defined and it appears the 'nation' operates as an empty category, not as a bearer of particular meanings.

Europe is largely irrelevant for British actors going about their business and tackling the problems they face. Being European is understood to have some cultural affinity with people of the European Continent or having familial connection which may or may not carry certain significance on a personal level, but which is not a relevant point to consider when pondering the course of action one should take. If identity is conceived as a predicator of certain behaviour, European identity amongst the British respondents is very weak in that it does not appear to frame the respondents' behaviour or the way they understand the world.

Modernity as detected from the interview data is a cognitive framework, a mindset that is based on a self-reflexive belief in the potential of human agency. In this regard, the interview data leads us back to the theoretical starting point of the project and operationalisation of the concept. Modernity could be relevant to identity because unless individuals are self-reflexive, the question of 'who am I/are we?' would not arise. However, since modernity has not manifest as a subjective topic from the analysis of the fieldwork data, it is not a relevant concept in discussing the content of identity – British or European.

For more details of each case including Germany and Hungary, please visit http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/european/ime/documents to view full reports.

And the first IME book is in press:
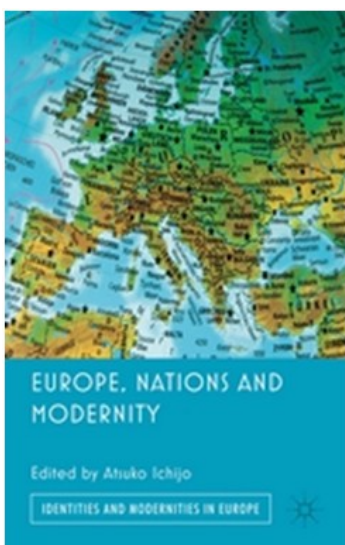
Europe, Nations and Modernity
Edited by Atsuko Ichijo
Series: Identities and Modernities in Europe
Palgrave Macmillan

The idea of Europe, European identities and Europeanization, in short 'Europe', has been conventionally studied in relation to nationalism and the hegemony of nation-states in the modern world. *Europe, Nations and Modernity* aims to open up a fresh perspective to the study of 'Europe' by placing the discussion of 'what is Europe and what is it to be European?' in a wider context of the study of modernity.

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For details see: http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?pid=508437

What the consortium members have been up to:

Hot on the heels of the Helsinki meeting, the IME consortium took part in 18th International Conference of Europeanists organised by the Council of European Studies in Barcelona on 20-22 June 2011. The session, 'Identities and modernities in Europe: The case of transforming national education in countries in and around Europe, 2000-2010', was chaired by Hara Kouki (Partner 2) and Sophie Duchesne (Partner 4) acted as the discussant.   Nuria Garcia (Partner 4), Anna Triandafyllidou (Partner 2), Ayhan Kaya (Partner 8), Ayse Tecmen (Partner 8) and Martina Topic (Partner 9) presented a paper entitled 'Bologna Process as modernisation and Euroepanisation', and Geraldine Bozec (Partner 4), Marko Hajdinjak (Partner 7) and Atsuko Ichijo (Partner 1) presented 'the place of religion in education in Bulgaria, France and the UK'. Tiina Räisä (Partner 3) presented a paper on the impact of PISA on Finnish national identity formation.

Siniša Rodin (Partner 9) has been busy presenting papers:

- 'European Union and Croatia after 20 years of Croatian Constitutionalism' presented at a conference held by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Scientific Conference on Occasion of 20 years of the Croatian Constitution, Zagreb, Croatia, December 2010;
- 'Europe´s constitutional challenges in the light of the recent case law' presented at a conference '8th European Constitutional Law Network Conference', Madrid, Spain, October 2010;
- 'Finality of European Integration?' presented at a conference UACES Conference "Exchanging Ideas on Europe, Bruges, Belgium, September 2010

And so has Martina Topić (Partner 9):

- 'Religious identities in Croatia and Serbia: Failure or advantage in building the European identity?' presented at a conference 'The culture of identity, Anthropology, religions and alternative religions', Belgrade, Serbia, November 2010
- 'Discourse on religion and reconciliation in Croatia: modernity and postmodernity' presented at a conference 'Dangerous memories and reconciliation: Contextual considerations on religion in post-conflict society', Belgrade, Serbia, June 2011

And, of course, Ayhan Kaya (Partner 8) has been engaged with a variety of activities including giving these papers:

- 'Securitization, Politicization and Stigmatization of Migration in the West as a Mode of Governmentality', RESET Conference on Overcoming the Trap of Resentment, Istanbul, Bilgi University, 21 May 2011
- 'Turkey, the EU and the Mediterranean: Arab Spring', European Forum on Cyprus organized by the Council of Europe, Istanbul, 27 May 2011
- 'Turkey and the EU', Free University and Sabancı University: Turkey and the EU: Qua Vadis?, Istanbul, Sabanci University, 3 June 2011

What's to come:

Atsuko Ichijo (Partner 1) is presenting a paper on faith schools drawing from IME findings at the European Consortium for Political Research's general conference in Reykjavik on 25 -27 August 2011.

Thea Boldt (Partner 5), Atsuko Ichijo (Partner 1) and Tiina Räisä (Partner 3) are presenting papers drawing from IME findings in the European Identity session of the European Sociological Association's conference in Geneva on 7-10 September 2011. Thea Boldt and Atsuko Ichijo will also take part in a special session, 'Approaches to "bottom up" research in a European policy environment' representing IME on Friday 9 September. Two other FP7 projects, EUROIDENTITIES and ENRI-East will be also taking part in the session. Martina Topić and Siniša Rodin (Partner 9) are also involved with the ESA conference. They are presenting a paper, 'Bologna changes between European and national: Lessons from Croatia' in the sociology of education session.

NEWS-NEWS-NEWS

Ayhan Kaya (Partner 8) has been nominated as Willy Brandt Professor at Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) of Malmö University (Sweden) from 1 September to 31 December 2011. He is also appointed by the European Commission as Jean Monnet Chair (2011-2014).

The French team is happy to announce that Géraldine Bozec will become lecturer at the University of Rennes 2 from September 2011 onwards. She will teach about general sociology, sociology of education and educational policies. Carole Bachelot, who holds a PhD in political science, will take over Géraldine's position as IME research assistant from September onwards but Géraldine will participate in the WP9. Sophie Duchesne leaves Sciences Po and joins a research center at Nanterre University (ISP - Institut des sciences sociales du politique). Sophie will remain in the IME team but Guillaume Garcia, her colleague at Sciences Po, will take over as coordinator of the French team.

Next meeting, 28-29 March 2012, Kingston University

If you would like to be keep informed of the progress of IME, please send your e-mail address to the coordinator, Dr Atsuko Ichijo (a.ichijo@kingston.ac.uk).