

11 November 2009

The 15th Anniversary 'Nations & Nationalism' Conference

National Identity in Old and New Europe Intellectuals, Culture and Popular Mobilisation

Bernhard Giesen

Montserrat Guibernau

Joep Leerssen

Sinisa Malešević

Anthony D. Smith

Shaw Library, London School of Economics and Political Science

ASEN the association for the study of
ethnicity & nationalism

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Nations and Nationalism Fifteenth Anniversary Conference

National Identity in Old and New Europe: Intellectuals, Culture and Popular Mobilisation

The purpose of this Conference is to assess how far the intellectuals and their culture who had been so critical for popular mobilisation in the national cause in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, are still active and relevant in today's Europe, both in the East and the West, and whether they continue to play a significant role in forging 'national identities' and mobilising 'the people' across contemporary Europe. Questions of this kind assume we can usefully speak of both 'national identity' and 'popular mobilisation', and their classical ideological connection. For this reason, the Conference needs first to address the theoretical issues involved, before considering the past and present trends and roles of the intellectuals and 'the people' in Europe.

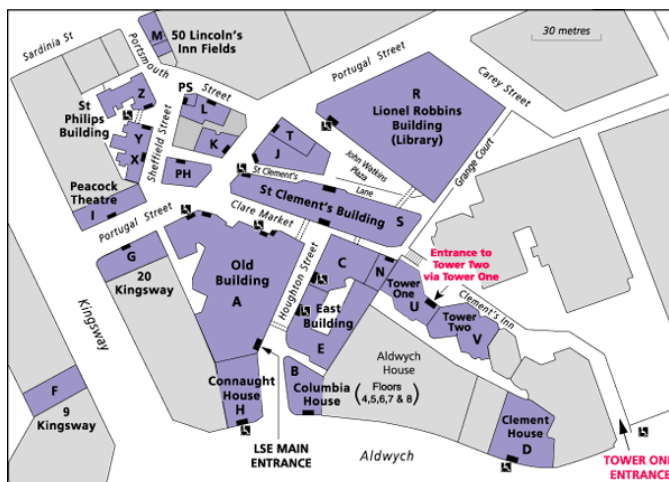
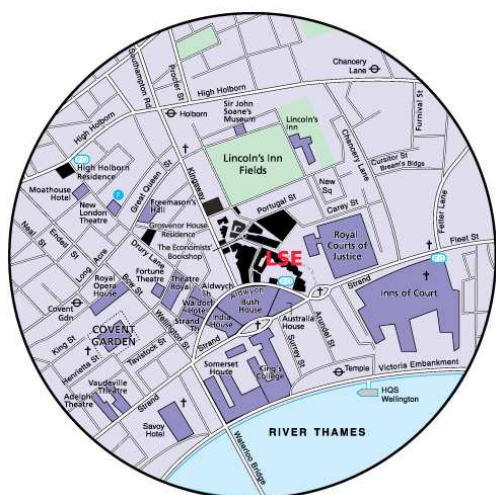
This means there will be two sessions. In the morning, Dr. Sinisa Malesevic and Professor Anthony Smith will debate the utility of the concepts of national identity and popular mobilisation, and their classical relationship, as posited in much of the literature on nationalism. In the afternoon, Professor Joep Leerssen will survey and analyse the role of intellectuals and culture in forging nations in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, to be followed by Professor Montserrat Guibernau who will assess their role in popular mobilisation and in the creation or reinterpretation of 'national identities' in contemporary Western Europe, and by Professor Bernhard Giesen who will perform a similar analysis for their role in both tasks in contemporary Eastern Europe.

**Sponsored by Wiley-Blackwell and supported by
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How to find us

Nearest tube stations: *Holborn* (Central and Piccadilly lines), and *Temple* (Circle and District lines)

Bus: Any bus stopping at *Aldwych*



Wednesday November 11th 2009

Shaw Library, 6th floor, Old Building

- 10:00-10:30** **Registration and Coffee**
- 10:30-11:15** **'National Identity' and Popular Mobilisation in Europe: A Defence**
Anthony D. Smith, Emeritus Professor of Nationalism and Ethnicity, London School of Economics
- 11:15-12:00** **'National Identity' and Popular Mobilisation in Europe: A Critique**
Dr. Sinisa Malesevic, National University of Ireland, Galway
- Chair: Professor Jack E. Spence, OBE, King's College London**
- 12:00-12:45** **Questions and Discussion**
- 12:45-2:00** **Lunch**
- 2:00-2:45** **Intellectuals and Culture in Popular Mobilisation in the European Past**
Professor Joep Leerssen, University of Amsterdam
- 2:45-3:30** **Intellectuals and Culture in Popular Mobilisation in Contemporary Western Europe**
Professor Montserrat Guibernau, Queen Mary University of London
- 3:30-4:00** **Tea break**
- 4:00-4:45** **Intellectuals and Culture in Popular Mobilisation in Contemporary Eastern Europe**
Professor Bernhard Giesen, University of Konstanz
- Chair: Dr Athena Leoussi, University of Reading and London School of Economics**
- 4:45-5:30** **Questions and Discussion**
- 5:30** **Closing Address**
Dr Athena Leoussi, University of Reading and London School of Economics

Speakers' Abstracts in alphabetical order

Professor Bernhard Giesen, University of Konstanz Intellectuals and Culture in Popular Mobilisation in Contemporary Eastern Europe

Since they originated in the axial age that established the chasm between transcendental principles and the mundane world of power and money, intellectuals have, again and again, reconstructed the tension between their vision of a good society on the one hand and political order on the other. The ideal political community as imagined by intellectuals was based on challenging historical reality. When e.g. the European states were entangled in warfare (as in the 17th and 18th centuries) intellectuals advocated an encompassing European equilibrium and transnational realm of peace (Leibniz, Kant). When, as by contrast, Europe or parts of it was dominated by a hegemonial rule (as in the Napoleonic empire, in the Habsburg monarchy or in the last years of the Sowjet empire) intellectuals imagined a diversity of national identities and thrusted for national independence.

Today Europe is embodied in a strong administration of a hegemonial supernationstate, but the critical energy of European intellectuals does neither turn against this hegemonial political order nor does it support a return to the nation state. Instead of imagining a revolutionary and victorious demos defeating the ancien regime, intellectuals increasingly conceive of Europe as a community of memory and a community of mourning: the trauma of the past has replaced the triumphant birth of the demos as the constitutive myth of European democracy. In addition to this turn to traumatic origins European intellectuals advocate the cause of minorities against the pressures to assimilation. Thus replacing national diversity is translated into and replaced by cultural diversity as a pattern of polycentrism.

Montserrat Guibernau, Professor of Politics, Queen Mary University of London. Intellectuals and the 'people': Challenges to an emerging European identity

In several respects the EU represents both a novel system of quasi-supranational governance and a novel form of political community or polity. But it is also a fragile construction for it remains a community still in the making with an ambiguous sense of identity and within which powerful forces are at work. This paper has three main aims:

First, to stress the shifting nature of Europe's geographical frontiers and assess whether cultural frontiers have remained more stable throughout time. In particular, it examines the main criteria which have traditionally been employed when having to decide who should be included and excluded from Europe. A different question concerns the requirements for EU membership and the monopoly of the adjective 'European' by the EU, which somehow has become to be identified with Europe.

Second, to explore contemporary sources of European cultural diversity. Here I argue that European identity stands as a 'non-emotional identity' in sharp contrast with traditional forms of national identity.

Third, the emergence of a European identity requires the political will to build a common project for the future, a vision encompassing socio-economic progress, commitment to liberal-democracy and the pledge to replacing conflict by consensus among EU members. The paper concludes by considering what are the main challenges currently faced by a still incipient European identity.

Joep Leerssen, Professor of European Studies, University of Amsterdam Intellectuals and Culture in Popular Mobilisation in The European Past

Nineteenth-century cultural nationalism presupposes an articulation (naming, identifying) of ethnic identity. Examples of belated self-articulation (often out of inchoate earlier patterns of ethnic self-awareness) are Estonia and Bulgaria. My paper will adduce a case within metropolitan, middle-class, north-western Europe: the Walloon movement, which emerged out of political instabilities and conflicting cultural subdivisions (Netherlandic, Dutch, Belgian, Flemish..) of the post-Napoleonic Low Countries. The case also illustrates how national awareness emerges out of a process of inter-ethnic contact and opposition rather than from within an ethnic constituency.

Dr. Sinisa Malesevic, Senior Lecturer, National University of Ireland, Galway
'National Identity' and Popular Mobilisation in Europe: A Critique

Although the two leading perspectives in the study of nations and nationalism - modernism and ethno-symbolism - disagree on many issues neither approach doubts the existence of national identity in the modern era. While ethno-symbolists insist on the cultural continuity between the pre-modern ethnic attachments and the modern national identities modernists emphasise the structural discontinuity and conceptualise national identity essentially as a product of modern conditions. In contrast to both of these positions I argue not only that there was no national identity before modernity but also that there is little empirical evidence for the existence of national identity in modern age too. While there is no doubt that many individuals show great affinity for their nation-states and often express sincere devotion for the 'national cause' none of these are reliable indicators to attest the existence of a durable, continuous, stable and monolithic entity called 'national identity'. To fully understand the character of popular mobilisation in modernity and especially the rise of nationalism in Europe and beyond it is paramount to refocus our attention from 'identity' towards ideology. In particular the central object of this research becomes the processes through which large scale social organisations successfully transform genuine micro-solidarity into the popular doxa of macro ideology.

Anthony D. Smith, Emeritus Professor of Nationalism and Ethnicity,
London School of Economics
'National identity' and vernacular mobilisation in Europe

In an era of renewed interest in 'national identities' in the West, traditional models of the nationalist 'reawakening' of nations and the role of intellectuals in national mobilisation have come under keen scrutiny. According to these critics, concepts of 'nation' and 'ethnic group' possess inescapably essentialist and 'groupist' connotations; while the recent, fashionable concept of 'identity' which has a precise meaning in mathematics and logic, when transferred to the social sciences, is ambiguous and confusing, being either too reified and inflexible or too vague and all-inclusive.

While undoubtedly overused, concepts of 'identity' and ethnic and national identity are difficult to dispense with, insofar as they provide general descriptions of the shared beliefs, sentiments and perceptions of populations, or segments thereof. Terms like 'nation' and 'ethnic community' refer to collective categories (much like 'state' and 'class'), as well as to types of historical community formation based on sets of social and symbolic processes; these in turn may be seen as ideal types of social organisation which ideologues may seek to 'realise' politically. Similarly, the concept of collective 'identity', which has an ancient pedigree, refers to shared ideas, sentiments and perceptions of both sameness and difference on the part of members of a cultural community and of outsiders. Ethnic and national identity is therefore an aspect or quality of community, expressed through distinctive traditions and sentiments of difference.

To this, modern nationalism, the ideology, adds a cult of authenticity which turns the sense of distinctiveness into an ideal to be realised, in which the individuality of the community is 'rediscovered' and nurtured. So, the national ideal of the nationalists, like one of Weber's switchmen, helps to determine the direction along which various interests and needs of people may be mobilised. But it can do so only to the extent that there is some degree of congruence with pre-existing popular traditions and cultural resources such as myths of shared ancestry, common language and literature, and shared visual and musical heritages. Even then, 'vernacular mobilisation' is likely to be successful only insofar as it can be adapted to modern conditions through both the reinterpretation of existing heritages and their historical or legendary recreation.

The latter have been particularly important in Europe. The imaginative recreation of Historical events and/or legends, whether in public festivals, epic poetry, music dramas or history paintings, as a result of their impact over many generations, have helped to make the abstract national ideal palpable and accessible. It has fallen to musicians, poets, architects and artists the delineate the 'contours' of the 'national self' and translate the ideals of national autonomy and unity and the sense of national identity into history paintings, epics, operas and symphonic poems, as well as buildings, across Europe, from England, France and Italy to Hungary, Finland and Russia.

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